

Sunday Reading.

FISH OF GENESARETH.

Peculiarities of the Waters of that Lake Whereon Christ Walked.

Lieutenant Lynch of the United States navy has established the fact, that the depression of the Dead Sea is over 1,300 feet below the level of the Mediterranean, while that of Lake Genesareth is 800 feet lower than the ocean. Lake Genesareth is connected with the Dead Sea by the Jordan flowing through from north to south, and engineers and scientists are satisfied that the bed of the Jordan is gradually sinking.

My observations on the shores of Lake Genesareth and those of the inhabitants of the neighboring towns and villages indicate that the lake is falling towards the bottom, while the water is becoming denser from year to year writes a correspondent of the Chicago Inter-Ocean. The salt strata in its neighborhood are growing constantly, and sulphur springs are becoming frequent on the plains surrounding it. In the north east of the lake the tops of palm trees, some alive, more of them dead and barren, rise above the water at a distance of from twenty to forty feet from the shore. That they should have taken root in the water is impossible, and the supposition is that originally they stood on little islands that were submerged with the sinking of the lake's bottom.

The catastrophe which resulted in the destruction of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah and in the formation of the Dead Sea is computed to have occurred about 1,600 years before Christ. The Dead Sea has puzzled scientists ever since, and many of its remarkable features have never been explained. Its depression below the level of the Mediterranean is the deepest known on earth. The bottom of Lake Genesareth is on a much higher level at present, but it continues to sink as it has done in the last twenty years a repetition of the events of 4,000 years ago is not improbable.

Josephus, who was born in the year 37 B. C., reports that the water of Lake Genesareth was "clear as crystal, sweet and wholesome." I tried to drink of it, but found it putrid and nauseating. It left a salty taste in the mouth. I asked the fishermen plying their trade on the lake, as in biblical days, whether the water was always unfit for drinking purposes and received answer that it grew more and more foul every year.

This seems to indicate that the surmises as to the change of condition in the lake are correct. The water of the Dead Sea, as is well known, is entirely unfit for use by man. The stench arising from it creates a pestilential atmosphere for miles round. I have never been able to approach the lake in summer, but the natives have informed me that about this time of the year the water, even a foot below the surface, acquires a ten perature of 90 degrees. It has been observed that past midnight the temperature of the water on the surface measured in the neighborhood of 100 degrees.

The Dead Sea is not dead as to animal life. Hawks, partridges, frogs, and pigeons are numerous upon its shores and all sorts of crawling insects abound there; the sluggish waters are, too, covered with ducks; in fact the fauna is the same as that inhabiting the shores of Lake Genesareth with this difference, however, all specimens of the animal world about the Dead Sea are slate colored, while those enlivening the shores and the surface of Lake Genesareth wear their ordinary plumage and scaly dress respectively.

The Lake Genesareth, also called the Sea of Tiberias or Galilee, is situated sixty-five miles north of the Dead Sea. Its extreme length is fifteen miles, its greatest width six and three-quarter miles. The water is very deep even at the shores. In some spots its depth measures 160 feet, in others 750 and more. In the northeast and northwest the shores are flat and swampy; the mountains of Saled approach the lake in the north, in the west we have the hills of El Hanna and Hattin. The volcanic plateau of Jaulan commences in the east; it is distinguished for many dead craters.

Palms that bring forth no fruiting, papyrus plants and oleanders flourish in the neighborhood of the shore. The stones at the edge of the water are literally covered with turtles, some of which grow over a foot and a half long. Ducks are plentiful in some parts; in others the pelican holds forth in large numbers. This water fowl, remarkable for the enormous pouch formed by the extensible skin between the lower jaws of its bill, is the most interesting bird. It requires for its sustenance a vast supply of fishes, which it pursues under water. Having obtained a prize, the pelican rises to the surface just long enough to swallow the prisoner or prisoners in its pouch.

Big lobsters are in evidence everywhere. Inhabitants of the many ruined cities, towns, and villages on the western shore—notably Tiberias, Capernaum, and Magdala—subsist almost entirely upon the lake product. I have been here nearly two months, and have not met a man who, with Simon, would say, "We have toiled all night and have taken nothing" (Luke v. 5). On the contrary, the lake seems to be overflowing with fish, and many that came filled their ships with them, at the expense of little labor, so that they began to sink" (Luke v. 7).

I was shown the place where the Lord "stood by the Lake of Genesareth and saw two ships standing by the lake; but the fishermen were gone out of them and were washing their nets."

The sort of nets employed by Simon Peter, James, and John previous to the time when "they forsook all and followed him to catch men henceforth" is still in use at Lake Genesareth. There are nets "spread upon the waters" (Isaiah XIX.,

8), but I have seen fishermen "that cast angles into the water."

"The net works" mentioned by Isaiah are simple woven affairs, seemingly very strong without a bit of metal.

Josephus says: "The Lake Genesareth contains peculiar specimens of fish, which differ in taste and form from those of other waters." One of the species by him referred to is the chromis, popularly known as the "apostle fish." The legend has it that Simon's barks became loaded with them when the Lord commanded him to throw out his nets. In a single draught I landed many species of the genus chromis. An Englishman recognized one as Chromis Simonis, another as Chromis Andree, the third as Chromis Magdalene, a fourth as Chromis Tiberiadis, etc. according to the classification of the British Museum. Chromis Simonis is very like our carp with its sides stove in. He is about eight inches long, with a greenish-brown back, the belly glittering in bluish silver. The fins are very sharp, and the belly fins are situated immediately behind the breast fins. Risking a second draught, I took several hundred of the Chromis Tiberiadis, which is twice as big as the other and has a coat of silver green; its tail is reddish, with green spots.

The Tiberiadis prefers still water and swampy ground; that probably explains its presence in such large numbers in Lake Genesareth. I have eaten this fish from Lake Genesareth in Jerusalem and in Saled in winter time. The natives send it as far as N. zareth in cold weather.

If the Tiberiadis is caught in the Jordan stream it is as bad as it was caught in a net. The water will carry him to the Dead Sea, and, arriving there, the fish at once turn on their backs and die. A month ago I found in my net a number of Chromis Simonis without eyes. Others of the species, when I lifted them up, dropped a number of little fishes out of their mouths, which swam away lustily. The natives explain the phenomenon. The blind chromis are the victims of sea hawks. When these birds have taken their fill they begin to look out for tit-bits. After catching a fish they hit its forehead with their sharp beak, knocking out the middle part, in which the eyes are set. The bony structure is dropped into the water, but the eyes are eaten by the birds with great relish. The natives tell me that the fish generally survive this rough treatment. The wound heals up quickly in the water, and they continue to ply the lake for food as if nothing had happened.

The Chromis Simonis is more careful of its young than fish generally are. The fish father takes the eggs in his mouth and keeps them in his natural side pockets where they are regularly hatched, and remain until able to shift for themselves. By this ingenious arrangement the brood is comparatively guarded against its natural enemies; it is easily fed, too, but it is a puzzle how the little ones escape being eaten alive by their papa.

There is another apostle fish in Lake Genesareth. Josephus describes it in his book. This species is frequently in the waters of Western and Central Africa, but its presence in the lake is quite extraordinary, as it is found nowhere else in Eastern Africa. This fish is about a foot long, has a brown back, a silvery belly, and yellowish green fins.

A very pretty fish, too, is the capocata, which grows to be one and a half feet long. Its head is dark green, its back silvery green, and its belly yellow. Along the sides run deep pink lines. The back, tail, and breast fins are green, the others yellow. This fish is a native of Asia, and it is a mystery how it became an inhabitant of Lake Genesareth.

A very remarkable fish from many points of view is the clarias macracanthus, of which I have caught several specimens in Lake Genesareth. It is from two to three and a half feet long, the head being one-third of the length of the body. The mouth is very capacious. When caught the clarias acts in the net like a serpent, winding itself and jumping about. A fisherman in my presence took one of the captives and threw it hard upon the shore, whereupon it began to move like an enraged cat. The tones were quite loud, and continued for some time. Josephus also names this fish as an inhabitant of Lake Genesareth at the time of Christ.

Procrastinated Too Long.

An old man, relating his experience to Dr. Cuyler, said: "When I was about seventeen I often felt deeply, but I determined to put off a decision until I was settled in life. After I was married I remembered that the time had come when I promised to attend to religion; but I had bought this farm and was anxious to avoid all expense, such as church-going would involve, and I put it off for ten years more. When the ten years came round I thought no more about it. I often try to think now, but I cannot keep my mind on any subject one moment. It is too late now. I fear that my doom is sealed, and it is just that it should be so, for the Spirit strove long with me, but I refused him. Now it is too late." The poor man died as he had lived. One of the many millions who had extinguished the offered light and groped through a midnight of darkness into a hopeless eternity!

The Longest Sermons.

The two longest sermons on record were those preached by the Master of Trinity College, Cambridge (the Rev. Isaac Barrow, D. D.), and the Rev. Thomas Doolittle, respectively; the former, which was preached at Westminster Abbey, occupied three hours and a half in delivery; and the latter, which in print filled 214 pages of the volume, occupied much about the same length of time. John Howe, a celebrated Puritan (born 1630, died 1705), usually held a religious service on public fast-days which lasted from 9 a. m. till 4 p. m., an unbroken round of prayers, reading exposition of the Scriptures, singing, and sermons; each of the two sermons occupying an hour in its delivery. The auditors, however, used to retire for refreshment and return. Sir James Stephen says that Richard Baxter could not deliver his sermon before Charles II. in less than two hours. It is in small quarto and contains seventy pages. The Japanese Christians are said to listen to seven sermons in succession,

each an hour long, with only an interval for tea after the third. The late Mr. Spurgeon, speaking of long sermons, said that if a man studied for a week he might be able to preach for half an hour, but if he studied only for half an hour he could preach for a week.

HAMLIN THE BAKER.

The Success that Attended His Firm Stood for a Right Principle.

Rev. Cyrus Hamlin the first president of Robert college, Constantinople, was the first man to establish a steam flour-mill and bakery in Turkey, says a writer in the Youth's Companion. In spite of the opposition of the whole guild of bakers, the enterprise was highly successful, for the reason that Mr. Hamlin sold good bread always above weight.

During the Crimean war, Lord Raglan established his military hospital in the Selimieh barracks at Scutari, which had been built by the great Moltke. One day Mr. Hamlin was asked by an orderly to call upon Dr. Mapleton at the hospital. After some demur he did so. As he entered, the doctor asked brusquely, without salutation: "Are you Hamlin the baker?"

"No, sir, I am the Rev. Mr. Hamlin, an American missionary."

"That is just about as correct as anything I get in this country. I send for a baker and I get a missionary."

There happened to be two loaves of bread on the table, and Mr. Hamlin said: "I presume it is the bread you want, and you don't care whether it comes from a heathen or a missionary."

"Exactly so," answered the doctor.

After some sparring between the American missionary and the English officer, Mr. Hamlin agreed to furnish bread for hospital use, and taking up the printed contract to do this, in order to sign it, noticed that it said: "To deliver bread every morning between the hours of eight and ten, or at such other hours as might be agreed upon." Dr. Hamlin paused a moment. "It will be necessary to insert in this contract the words 'except Sunday' after the word 'morning'." The bread can be delivered Saturday evening, say at sunset.

"The laws of war do not regard Sunday," replied the agent of the British Government, curtly. "I cannot change a syllable in that form of contract."

"Very well, sir; then I will not furnish the bread. I have not sought the business."

To the hospital this refusal meant the loss of fresh food; to the missionary hundreds of dollars for the cause for which the good missionary had given his life. Nevertheless, he did not flinch, so the other had to give way.

"The chief purveyor," said the doctor after a pause, "is a good Scotch Christian, and he will arrange with you for that."

So Mr. Hamlin furnished the bread on his own conditions.

Later, a large camp of the English army was formed at Hyder Pasha, and again Mr. Hamlin was engaged to supply the bread at the rate of twelve thousand pounds a day.

The first delivery at the camp was dramatic. The soldiers were waiting impatiently to receive it. They seized the loaves ravenously, and tasted them. Then the bread was hurled high in the air and, the joyful cry rang through the ranks: "Hooray, for good English bread!"

The provost of the camp was anticipated over the double Saturday delivery. On the first Saturday, sunset, Mr. Hamlin, proceeding the long line of carts, saluted the provost and said:

"As it is Saturday, I deliver the supply of bread for Sunday: as at the hospital, so at the camp."

This was met with a volley of oaths, and the order to take the bread back and deliver it in the morning. Mr. Hamlin, unheeding the order, left the bread and departed quietly. To the missionary's astonishment the next Saturday morning the provost wrote on his receipt, "Remember the double Saturday delivery."

God's Power in Life.

It would help us greatly if we should teach ourselves to remember that all high duties—all life, indeed—touches the supernatural world, or what we call such. Rather call it the spiritual world. There lie the power and efficiency, the quickening energy, of all that we do. We should never forget that all our work lies within this world and touches it at every moment. The servants did not know the power that was present as they gathered the water-jars and brought the water; but Mary knew in part. Jesus knew perfectly that God's power stands ready to break into the present order at any time. It is always at hand, ready to work its transforming miracles upon the elements of earth. It can change toil into heavenly rest, and turn the stones of earth into bread. Sorrow, weakness, trouble, our very faults and defects—these it renews and transforms into spiritual qualities and powers. The whole trend of things in creation is from lower to higher, from coarser to finer; and Christ is but changing water into wine, the poor and the evil into the rich and the good.

We Should Live for Others.

The periods of our lives which give us the most joy at the moment, and which are most exquisite in memory, are those when we have gone most wholly out of ourselves, and lived for others. She who seeks excellence and not reputation alone, rises highest in her pursuits; and she who forgoes her own pleasures—ignoring, it may be, her own rights—and forgets herself, in her genuine interest for others, attains to the surest and most satisfactory enjoyment. The secret of many low and miserable lives is the complete absorption of the man and the woman in their own pleasures and wants, cares, character and prospect.—Mary A. Livermore.

A Shrewd Malay Merchant.

The recognized trustworthiness of Christians is well illustrated by the story of a Malay merchant related by the "American Messenger."

A ship commanded by a New England sea captain visiting India was boarded by a Malay merchant, a man of property, who asked him if he had any tracts he could part with.

The captain, surprised by the request

from a heathen, as he considered him, asked: "What do you want of English tracts? You cannot read them."

"True, but I have a use for them nevertheless," said the Malay, "through his interpreter. 'Whenever one of your countrymen or an Englishman calls on me to trade I put a tract in his way and watch him. If he reads it soberly and with interest, I infer that he will not cheat me; if he throws it to one side with contempt, or with an oath of profanity, I have no more to do with him—I cannot trust him.'

God's Voice in Silence.

As the flowers follow the sun and silently hold up their petals to be tinted and enlarged by its shining, so must we, if we would know the joy of God, hold our souls, wills, hearts and minds still before him whose voice commands, whose love warms, whose truth makes fair our whole being. God speaks for most part in silence only. If the souls be full of tumult and jangling voices, his voice is little likely to be heard.—Alexander MacLaren.

The Spirit of Love.

A spontaneous, glad, willing spirit of love and reverence, of trust and devotion—this is the life of all religion, as it is everywhere the life of all noble sentiments, of all worthy action, as it constitutes the sacredness of the child's obedience, the glory of the patriot's sacrifice, the inspiration of heroism and labor like that of Paul—not counting the cost.—Dr. Chapin.

What Work Does for Us.

Thank God every morning when you get up that you have something to do that day which must be done whether you like it or not. Being forced to work and forced to do your best will breed in you temperance, self-control, diligence, strength of will, content and a hundred virtues which the idle will never know.—Charles Kingsley.

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The hot weather invariably produces thousands of miserable feeling mortals. They lack nerve force, strength and vitality. They are usually tormented by dyspepsia, flatulence, biliousness, heart trouble, constipation, nervousness and sleeplessness, they cannot rest day or night, and life becomes a burden heavy and intolerable.

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The Charm in Scotch.

I wonder if persons who can write Scotch are sufficiently aware of the great literary advantage they have over writers who are not born to that ability. It is no credit to them that they can do it. It is a gift to nature dropped in their lap. I never heard of any one who learned by artificial means to write Scotch. Scotch writers do it, and no one else. It has long been obvious that the proportion of good writers to the whole Scotch population was exceedingly large, but I do not remember that it has ever been pointed out how much easier it is for a Scotchman to be a good writer than another because of his innate command of the Scotch tongue.

There are such delightful words in that language; words that sing on the printed page wherever their employer happens to drop them in; words that rustle; words that skirl, and words that clash and thump.—Scribner's

Increase as They Fall.

Raindrops always increase in size as they fall. This is occasioned by the accumulation of moisture from the air through which they fall. And this being so, it is evident that their size will depend upon the height of the clouds from which they descend, as well as the rapidity of condensation. Hence we find that tropical rains and summer showers fall in large, heavy drops, while the fine, drizzling rains, mists and fogs are characteristic of cold latitudes.

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