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Poetry.

I WONDER WHY.

I wonder why this world's good things
Should fall in such unequal shares;
Why some should taste of all the joys,
And others only feel the cares!

I wonder why the sunshine bright
Should fall in paths some people tread,
While others shiver in the shade
Of clouds that gather overhead!

I wonder why the trees that hang
So full of luscious fruit, should grow
Only where some may reach and eat,
While others faint and thirsty go!

Why should sweet flowers bloom for some,
For others only thorns be found?
And some grow rich from fruitful earth,
While others till but barren ground?

I wonder why the hearts of some
O'erflow with joy and happiness,
While others go their lonely way
Unblessed with aught of tenderness!

I wonder why the eyes of some
Should ne'er be moistened with a tear
While others weep from morn till night,
Their hearts all crushed with sorrow here!

Ah! well; we may not know, indeed,
The whys, the wherefores of each life;
But this we know—there's One who sees
And watches us through joy and strife.

Each life its mission here fulfils,
And only He may know the end;
And loving Him we can be strong
Though storms or sunshine He may send.

Religious.

THE DESERT OF THE EXODUS.

JOURNEYS ON FOOT IN THE WILDERNESS OF THE FORTY YEARS' WANDERING. BY E. J. PALMER, M. A., FELLOW OF ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE. TWO VOLUMES, 8vo.: pp. 576.

A REVIEW BY REV. DR. CRAMP.

Among the very creditable enterprises which have distinguished the last fifty years may be reckoned the expeditions for the discovery of the North-West passage, the explorations of Africa, and the researches in Palestine. The Holy Land has been trodden from Dan to Beersheba by tourists innumerable, and from the pains-taking and accurate Dr. Robinson, whose volumes have become classic, to the last flash-traveller, who had but a month to do Palestine in, and sends out a bulky volume on his return, professing to tell the public all they need to know, and reporting much that he never saw. A good deal of paper has been wasted and ink spilt by ambitious book-manufacturers. But as it is true that every Christian is not fit to be a minister—and every preacher is not fit to be a pastor—and every pastor is not fit to be a metropolitan;—so it is true that every body who has money enough to go to Palestine, and muscle enough to endure the wear and tear of the journey, is not fit to make a book about it. If there had been a conscientious feeling on that score, library-collectors would have been spared some disappointment and mortification at their luckless purchases, and publishers would not have groaned at the sight of the heavy loads of "remainders"—doomed to be sold for waste paper. It is refreshing, notwithstanding, to think of some sterling works which have been of late years issued from the press, and which no one need be afraid to buy. Dean Stanley's "Sinai and Palestine" is a marvel of condensation and fulness. Tristram's "Land of Israel" is a mine which will always repay the labour of digging in it. Thompson's "The Land and the Book" contains much information, given in a cheerful style. Barclay's "City of the Great King" is replete with interest. McGregor's "Rob Roy on the Jordan" furnishes afternoon reading which will prevent sleepiness. There are books of older date which should not be overlooked:—such as, Dr. Wilson's "Lands of the Bible," the "Travels" of Irby and Mangels, Lord Lindsay, and Dr. Olin, Roberts's "Sketches in the Holy Land," &c.

Mr. Palmer's elegant volumes must now be added to the list. The only objection we have to them is that they are "plagued dear," as the farmer said of the clergyman's tithes. Twenty-eight shillings sterling is a large sum to pay for 576 pages of printed matter, even though the printing is faultless, the illustrations admirably executed, and the maps warranted to be complete and trustworthy. Not that we grudge the money, for we like to see good-looking books on our shelves; but there are many ministers, of all denominations, in these colonies, to whom such volumes as we have mentioned would be very valuable and useful, whose salaries are so miserably small that it is as much as they can do to pay for food and clothing for themselves and their families. An expensive book is a luxury which they can ill afford. Wealthy members of their congregations might appropriate liberal donations to the enlargement of the ministers' libraries. The Churches would reap the benefit.

The work on our table gives an account of two journeys. The first was in connection with gentlemen of the Ordnance Survey Expedition, appointed, under the sanction of the British Government, to make a correct survey of the Peninsula of Sinai. They left Suez Nov. 11, 1868. Mr. Palmer describes their first experience of camp life in the following terms:—

"There is but little variety in camp life in the desert, and a description of one day's journey may answer for all the rest. At sunrise every one is astir; a simple toilette, a still more simple meal, and you pack up your things in preparation for the start. Then comes a repetition of the noise and clamour incident on loading; you mount your dromedary, and, when once fairly under weigh, the whole caravan trails noiselessly along the sand. Following the path marked out by the skeletons of camels which lie bleaching in the sun, you ride on until the noonday heat and glare compels you seek a little rest beneath some friendly shade, if there is any to be had, though very frequently you must put up with such shelter as a white umbrella, or the unsavoury vicinity of a kneeling camel can afford. In England one knows nothing of the luxury of shade, and cannot appreciate what it really means. How often, when reclining, five of us, beneath a dried-up furze-bush no bigger than a good-sized geranium, have we consumed our lunch of dates and biscuits, washed down with just one drink of lukewarm water beautifully flavoured with goat-skin, and envied the happy terrier that laps the cool puddle of his native land!

"After lunch the march is resumed till sunset, and then commences the really enjoyable part of the day. The tents are pitched, and dinner is prepared. The Arabs settle themselves cosily round the camp-fires to prepare their evening meal, and for an hour or so before retiring for the night comfort and repose reign around. The first night in the desert was an era in my life; it seemed as if all the vague images of my early dreams were about to assume a life-like reality which they had never worn for me till then. A fresh breeze blew into the tent, causing no apprehensions of nightly chills, but infusing new vigour into both body and mind. The flickering camp-fires shed a lurid glow over the little knots of swart Bedawin as they reposed after the fatigues of the day, and produced a wondrously picturesque and Rembrandt-like effect. The hushed tones of those who had not yet fallen asleep, the whirring of a hand-mill here and there, the half-plaintive, half-sultry growling of the camels—these were the only sounds which disturbed the stillness of the night. I contemplated the scene around me with mingled feelings of delight and awe. I was reclining perchance upon the very spot where the Children of Israel had encamped when fleeing from their Egyptian persecutors, and I could not help comparing my situation to some extent, with theirs. I had just left the noisy bustling crowd of Cairo's streets, and had escaped into the freedom of the great lone wilderness,

and I too felt that sense of special Divine protection which must have been present to them, for never so much as in the desert does one feel that God is nigh. He it is that enables man to pass in safety through this dreary waste, and whether it be by direct miraculous intervention, as in the case of the chosen people, or by the scarcely less wonderful agency of reason and foresight, still it is His hand alone that guides them on." pp. 32-34.

Several months were employed in executing the survey, during which the party were exposed to numerous inconveniences and dangers, and endured no small amount of fatigue. The results of their investigations were twofold:—first, that the geographical features of the district fully confirm the sacred narrative as a whole; secondly, that Jebel Musa is the veritable Mount Sinai, from the summit of which the law was delivered when "the Lord descended on it in fire, and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace," and the whole mount quaked greatly." Mr. Palmer says, "the natural route from Egypt to Sinai accords exactly with the simple and concise account given in the Bible of the Exodus of the chosen people." He adds, "We are thus able not only to trace out a route by which the Children of Israel could have journeyed, but also to shew its identity with that so concisely but graphically laid down in the Pentateuch. We have seen, moreover, that it leads to a mountain answering in every respect to the description of the mountain of the law; the chain of topographical evidence is complete, and the maps and sections may henceforth be confidently left to tell their own tale." pp. 276, 277.

Much has been written respecting Wady Mokatteb—the "written valley"—and the inscriptions (so called) found everywhere on its stones. Some have gone so far as to conjecture that they were the work of the Israelites as they passed through the valley. That theory, however, is now pretty well exploded, and Mr. Palmer's view of the case may be taken as expressing the decisions of modern travellers and critics.

"They are mere scratches on the rocks, the work of idle loungers, consisting, for the most part, of mere names interspersed with rude figures of men and animals. In a philological point of view they do possess a certain interest, but otherwise the 'Sinaitic inscriptions' are as worthless and unimportant as the Arab, Greek, and European graffiti with which they are interspersed. The language employed is Ormaean, the Semitic dialect which in the earlier centuries of our era held throughout the East the place now occupied by the modern Arabic, and the character differs little from the Nabathean alphabet used in the inscriptions of Idumæa and Central Syria." * * *

I imagine that the greater part of the inscriptions are due to a commercial people, traders, carriers, and settlers in the land. No less than twelve of those which we copied were bilingual, being written in Greek and Sinaitic by one and the same hand." pp. 190-193.

At Wady Magharah and at Sarabit el Khadim, not far from Wady Mokatteb, there were in ancient times extensive turquoise mines, worked by the Egyptians, as the inscriptions still remaining testify, before the Israelitish exodus. A tablet at Wady Magharah "represents a group of miners at work superintended by a soldier armed with a bow and arrow, the prototype of the present Egyptian police-officer, who is still called a *cawwas*, or archer. This tablet is exceedingly interesting, as it shows the form of tools employed in working the mines. These consist of a chisel of the ordinary pattern, and a kind of swivel hammer, which would seem to have been used by placing the heavy part upon the ground, and working it from the handle. The hammer itself was probably of greenstone, many such being found in the neighbourhood of the excavations." p. 202.

Again:—"One of the principal tablets at Sarabit el Khadim refers to a certain

Har-we-ra, superintendent of the mines, who arrived there in the month of Phamenoth, in the reign of some monarch not mentioned, probably of the 12th dynasty. The author of the inscription declares that he never once left the mine; he exhorts the chiefs to go there also; 'and if your faces fail,' says he, the goddess Athor will give you her arms to aid you in the work. Behold we, how I tarried there after I had left Egypt;—my face sweated, my blood grew hot, I ordered the workmen working daily, and said unto them, there is still turquoise in the mine, and the vein will be found in time. And it was so; the vein was found at last, and the mine yielded well. When I came to this land, aided by the king's genii, I began to labour strenuously. The troops came and entirely occupied it, so that none escaped therefrom. My face grew not frightened at the work. I toiled cheerfully; I brought abundance, yea abundance of turquoise, and obtained yet more by my search.' It is probable that this inscription was set up about four thousand years ago. A man's praises of himself seldom remain so long before the public.

There are copper mines in the neighbourhood of Jebel Habashi, which appeared to be more ancient than the turquoise mines.

"They are situated in a wady called Regaita, where a large dyke runs through the granite, along the top of a low ridge of hills, and contains thin veins of the metal in a very pure form. The grain of the rock itself also contains a considerable quantity of the ore in minute particles; but the miners appear to have been ignorant of any method for crushing the stone, and seem to have contented themselves with picking out the thin layers of sulphate of copper from the dyke. At the end of the ridge the ore has been worked out in a small cave, and in one place, where the vein takes a dip, a shaft has been sunk to a considerable depth. As we had no ropes with us we could not properly explore this shaft, which we much regretted, because the rock here appears to have been extensively undermined. The neighbouring hills are covered with pathways in every direction, and the numerous remains of smelting furnaces which may still be seen, show that mining operations were once carried on upon a very large scale in the vicinity. They were doubtless Egyptian." p. 256.

These mines seem to have been known in the days of Job, whose description of the operations of the miners is acknowledged to be as correct as it is striking and impressive.

"Iron is taken out of the dust, and stone is fused into copper. He puts an end to the darkness; and he searches out, to the very end, stones of thick darkness and of death-shade. He drives a shaft away from man's abode; forgotten of the foot, they swing suspended, far from men! The earth, out of it goes forth bread; and under it, is destroyed as with fire. A place of sapphires, are its stones; and it has clouds of gold. The path, no bird of prey has known it, nor the falcon's eye glanced on it; nor proud beasts trodden it, nor roaring lion passed over it. Against the flinty rock he puts forth his hand; he overturns mountains from the base. In the rocks he cleaves out rivers; and his eye sees every precious thing. He binds up streams, that they drip not; and the hidden he brings out to light." Job xxviii. 2-11 (Dr. Conant's translation).

(To be continued.)

1872.

BY MRS. M. A. HALLOCK.

During the 1872 before Christ, Abraham was living, not many miles from the eastern shore of the Mediterranean sea in the promised land. Thousands of cattle and sheep owned by him, covered the hill-side, while the tents of his herdsman and shepherds, spread over the plains like the whitened sails upon the bosom of the ocean. He was rich in gold and silver, in cattle and servants. He was a prince in the land, and associated with kings

who delighted to honor and pay him tribute.

Look at his venerable form as he sits in his home, dressed in the flowing robes of the times. He is over a hundred and twenty years old, but has the life and elasticity of a younger man. His long white beard lies low upon his breast, and his bleached and thin hair falls loosely upon his shoulders. His loved Sarah is by his side, fresh and lovely still though near a hundred years of age; and near them both is Isaac—the long looked for—the heir of all his father's wealth and promises. The boy has seen several summers already, but every year added to his life binds him more closely to the hearts of his parents. He is affectionate and respectful, and in loving tones prefixes the words, "My father," when he has a question to ask, or a request to make. To his inquisitiveness in regard to things in the past we imagine the aged patriarch answering him in words like these:

"When I was a child, my father Terah lived in the northern part of Chaldea. I had two brothers, Nahor and Haran, but after several years Haran died leaving one son, named Lot, and two daughters. Nahor married one of these girls, and your mother is the other. She was young and very beautiful then. Lot came with his sisters into our family and we cared for him.

"All our neighbors and friends worshipped the sun, moon, and stars, and so did my father. Thus matters went on till I became seventy-five years old, when God, the God whom I have taught you to worship, called me to leave my father's house, and go to a land which he would show me; and I gathered my flocks together, and with my father and Lot, set forth, not knowing whither I went. My father died on the way, only about thirty miles from his home, and there I buried him.

"Our journey from that grave was tedious, being more than three hundred miles towards the south, but we finally arrived at the promised land and I built an altar and worshipped.

"A famine soon drove us to Egypt where we remained for three or four years, but when it was past I returned to the altar I had builded, and sacrificed to Jehovah.

"Lot's flocks as well as my own having greatly increased, it seemed best that we should separate, and he went to Sodom. I have told you of the three angels who stopped and ate with us, and predicted your birth, and then went down to destroy Sodom. Lot was ruined—but God is righteous. For more than twenty-five years I waited anxiously for you, and my faith was sorely tried. I have also told you of Hagar and my son Ishmael. I loved the lad; but when he mocked at you as the promised heir, I obeyed God and sent him away. You can remember what has befallen us since. God is faithful to his promises, my son, and this land will be given to you and your posterity."

Abraham retired to his bed one night in this year of 1872 before Christ, happy in his family, and strong in faith. But that night was momentous. God appeared and commanded him to take his beloved Isaac the child of promise, and sacrifice him for a burnt offering on a mountain in the land of Moriah. What a command! What a trial! Did Abraham hesitate? He rose up early in the morning, saddled his ass, called two servants and Isaac, cut the wood for the altar, and set forth to obey the command. His way was north, and for three long days they travelled towards the fatal spot. They reached the mountain, the wood was laid upon Isaac, and Abraham with the fire and the knife, walked by his side.

At length the silence is broken and the confiding voice of Isaac repeats the familiar words, "My father?" What a thrill ran through that aged frame as the child added, "Behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" Isaac