

Christian Visitor.

A Family Newspaper—Devoted to

Religious and General Intelligence.

BAILEY & DAY, Proprietors.

"BY PURENESS, BY KNOWLEDGE—BY LOVE UNFEIGNED."—ST. PAUL.

{ Rev. E. D. VERY, Editor.

VOL. I. SAINT JOHN, NEW BRUNSWICK, WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 1848. NO. 11.

THE WALDENSES AND THE BIBLE.

We make the following extract from the speech of Rev. Mr. Todd, of Pittsfield, Ms., delivered at an anniversary of the American Bible Society.

It is affecting to read the history of those days and to hear a Roman Catholic historian complain in bitter terms that those poor mountaineers [the Waldenses] used to go out in the character of pedlars, that they might give away the word of God, secretly, and thus, as he says, spread heresy. Long, long before a Bible Society was formed or thought of, these poor, pious men, went up and down the mountains and valleys in the character of pedlars, in order to distribute the word of God! And I am sure this audience will be willing to hear the simple story of one of these glorious though persecuted saints:—

"Oh! lady fair, these silks of mine
Are beautiful and rare;
The richest web of the Indian loom,
Which beauty's self might wear;
And these pearls are pure and mild to behold,
And with radiant light they vie;
I have brought them with me a weary way—
Will my gentle lady buy?"

"And the lady smiled on the worn old man
Through the dark and clustering curls
Which veiled her brow, as she stoop'd to view
His silks and glittering pearls.
And she placed the price in the old man's hand,
And lightly she turned away;
But she paused—at the wanderer's earnest call—
My gentle lady, stay!"

"Oh! lady fair, I have yet a gem,
Which a purer lustre flings
Than the diamond flash of a jeweled crown,
On the lofty brow of kings;
A wonderful pearl of exceeding price,
Whose virtue shall not decay;
Whose light shall be as a spell to thee,
And a blessing on thy way!"

"The lady glanced at the mirroring steel,
Where her youthful form was seen
Where her eyes shone clear and her dark locks
Waved,

Her clasping pearls between;
Bring forth thy pearl of exceeding worth,
Thou traveller gray and old;
And name the price of thy precious gem,
And my pages shall count thy gold.

"The cloud went off from the pilgrim's brow,
As a small and meagre book,
Unchased by gold or diamond gem,
From his folding robe he took;
Here, lady fair, is the pearl of price—
May it prove as such to thee!
Nay, keep thy gold—I ask it not—
For the word of God is free!"

The hoary traveller went his way—
But the gift he left behind,
Hath had its pure and perfect work
On the high born maiden's mind;
And she hath turned from her pride of sin
To the loveliness of truth,
And given her human heart to God
In the beautiful hour of youth.

"And she hath left the old gray halls,
Where an evil faith had power,
And the courtly knights of her father's train,
And the maidens of her bower;
And she hath gone to the Vandois vale,
By lordly feet untrod,
Where the poor and the needy of earth are rich
In the perfect love of God!"

Jacob's Well and the Samaritans.

BY HARRIET MARTINEAU.

Our last view of Jerusalem was very fine. We looked back from a ridge on the northern road, and saw it lying, bright and stately, on its everlasting hills: but it looked lower than from most other points of view, from the Moab mountains forming its lofty background. We descended the slope before us, and lost sight of the holy city forever.

Again we were struck with the vivid coloring of

the scenery. All this day, the hills were dressed in brilliant hues;—the soil, red, grey, and brown; the filled portions of the brightest green; and the shadows purple or lilac. All the hills show traces of having been once terraced; and they were still completely so in the neighborhood of our encampment this evening.

The next morning we saw the Mediterranean, like a basin of deep blue water between two hills. We were not going towards it, however, but to Nablous, the ancient Sychar; where lies that Jacob's well at which the woman of Samaria was wont to draw water.

Our road lay through a most fertile valley now called Hawarrah, where the crops were splendid for miles, and the villages were, thickly planted on the hills. The ground rose in a series of table lands, of which there was a succession of three, when we were leaving to the Hawarrah valley. The roads in this part of the Holy Land were mere lanes, full of stones, between walls, or tracks through olive grounds and meadows, or paths running along shelves of the rocks, with a bit of rocky staircase at each end, about ascending or descending which our good horses made no difficulty.

Before entering the valley where old Sychar lay, between the mountains Ebal and Gerizim, we came to the fine fertile parcel of ground which Jacob bought. The valley opens out into this wide basin; and near the junction of the valley and the basin is the old well which is the supposed scene of the conversation of Jesus with the Samaritan woman. Some of our party wound round the base of the hill to the well; and some (and I for one) rode by the upper path, over the shoulder of the hill, and came down on the other side. I had thus a fine view of the whole locality; of the valley where the city lies—a narrow valley, rich with fig and olive groves, and overhung by the rocky bases of Ebal and Gerizim, where the square, black entrances of tombs dotted the strata of the rocks.—From this height Jacob's well looked a beautiful expanse. The well is a mere heap of rough stones, with a hole in the middle, nearly closed up. What there is below ground I cannot say; but this is all that is to be seen on the surface. It is not a well likely to be in use now, for there are many springs and shallow cisterns (though no well) between this and the town, which lies about a mile and a half off.

Everybody knows that the Jews had no friendly dealings with the Samaritans in the time of Jesus.—So the Samaritans were excluded from the rebuilding of the temple above 500 years B. C. And not being permitted to help, they did all they could to hinder.

About 100 years after, they obtained leave from the Persian court (in which both the Jews and they were subject) to build a second temple to Jehovah; and they built it upon Mount Gerizim. This was a shocking impiety in the sight of the Jews; and it was the occasion of a number of lax minded Jews, who had broken the law, by marrying heathen wives, or otherwise, and who yet wished to worship Jehovah in his temple, resorting to Sychar, to join the Samaritans, and render their race yet more mixed. This was the quarrel which the woman of Samaria referred to when she spoke of the question, whether "men ought to worship in this mountain or in Jerusalem!" and thus is explained her wonder that Jesus, being a Jew, should ask water of her who was a Samaritan. There was also a quarrel about their Scriptures; the Jews insisting to this day, that the Samaritans had altered two or three texts, relating to these two mountains, Ebal and Gerizim, in their own sacred copy of the books of Moses; the Samaritans insisting, of course, that theirs was the true copy.

From my early youth I had always taken a strong interest in this old quarrel, feeling sympathy with both parties, and a keen delight in the wise and soothing words of Jesus concerning it. What a truth it was for both parties to hear, that God was now to be worshipped everywhere; and that all places were henceforth to

be as sacred as the Jerusalem temple, or the mountain at Sychar! And what a lesson in liberality it was to the Jews when he gave honor to the Samaritan in the parable, on account of his good works, above the sacred priest and the servant of the temple at Jerusalem. Both parties were, of course, wrong in their fierce anger; but each had much to plead on his own side. The Jews were bound to keep their race and worship pure; and held, as an essential matter of faith, that Jehovah would have but one dwelling place; which was their view of their temple. And the Samaritans were surely right in persisting in their endeavour to worship Jehovah, in accordance with the laws of Moses, as they did not believe in strange gods; and, if the Jews could not admit them to worship in the temple at Jerusalem, they could not be blamed for building one for themselves.

Such was always the view of the matter; and such being my view it was with indescribable interest that I looked this day upon Mount Gerizim, and remembered that somewhere in the city we were approaching was treasured that sacred copy of the Samaritan Pentateuch, (books of Moses) which the possessors believe to be the true one, and to be 3,500 years old. The most learned men among the Christians do not believe it to be nearly so old as that; but they have a high opinion of its value, and would follow it sooner than any other, I believe, excepting instances where the disputed texts about Ebal and Gerizim are concerned.

The present inhabitants of the city hate the Christians as heartily as the old inhabitants used to hate the Jews. The present inhabitants are Mahomedans of the most bigoted character; and they would admit neither Jews nor Christians within their gates, till within a few years, when the government of the country (then Egyptian) compelled them to better manners. They dared not refuse us admission, but they behaved with great insolence. We had to ride from end to end of the city, our tents being pitched on a green on the other side. Our horses had to go as slowly as possible through the narrow street, which would not hold two abreast, and was paved with large slippery stones. As we rode along, one behind another, at this funeral pace, all the people came out to stare, and many to mock.

Three times things were thrown into my face; men and women laughed and sneered, and children thrust out their tongues. I felt what a lesson this was to intolerance about matters of opinion. In the streets of other cities, men take upon themselves to pity and despise one another, with no better knowledge in reality of one another's views and feelings, than these Mahomedans had of our's, or we of their's.

At last we were through! and glad I was to issue from the gate of that further end. But a sad sight awaited us there. A company of lepers were under the trees, crying out to us for charity, and stretching out their maimed hands. It is a terrible sight, which we see too often in that country. It saddened us at Jerusalem, almost every day.

Our tents were pitched on a weedy plot of ground, among gardens, orchards, and rippling streams, and looking up to Ebal on the one side, and Gerizim on the other. Ebal is still the sterner looking mountain of the two; but Gerizim has lost much of its fertility. Both have tombs and votive buildings on them, which show them to have been places of pilgrimage.

After dinner we ascended a height, past the Mahomedan cemetery, whence we had a fine view, in the last sunlight, of the most beautiful

city. It was once the capital of Samaria; and it is still, and must ever be, from its situation, a very striking place. It completely fills the valley, from side to side, and ascends a little way up the skirts of Gerizim. Its houses, with their flat, white roofs, are hedged in by the groves which surround the town; vines spread from roof to roof, and from court to court; two or three palms spring up in the midst, and, higher aloft still, a graceful minaret here and there.

Then, to my delight, we descended to seek the Samaritan synagogue. We were guided to it, and I saw nearly all the Samaritans of the place, good-looking people, the men wearing the high, helmet-like turban, which we see in the portraits of Josephus, and the other old Jews. They said their number was sixty in this place, and about forty more elsewhere;—only a hundred in the whole world. They declared their chief priest and the rest of their sect to be at Genoa. They keep three great feasts in the year, going up to Gerizim, as the Jews used to go up to the Temple.

The synagogue was a small, ordinary looking chapel, within a curtained recess of which is kept the old copy of the Pentateuch. It was shown to us, after some entreaty on our part; but I found it was impossible that I could be allowed to touch it.

I felt it a great event to have seen it. It is written on a sort of vellum, in the Samaritan text, clear, small, and even. The vellum is tattered; but it is well mounted on parchment. The priest himself dares not touch the MS. without careful purification; and he holds it by the ends of the rollers on which it is fixed as a scroll, like the copies of the Jewish law in synagogues.

We were lighted through the archways of the street on our way home, and down the hill, by a single candle, which burned steadily in the still air.

Our employment this evening was reading aloud the history of the Jewish and Samaritan controversy, and the fourth chapter of the gospel of John. While we were thus reading in our tent, the jaekal was in full cry on the slopes of Gerizim.

The Structure of the Body.

Did you ever think of the great ingenuity and wisdom which appear in the structure of your bodies? Did the fact, that you had a framework of solid bone, ever cause you to wonder? If it did not, let us talk about it a little while, and see whether it is calculated to excite admiration or not. When people build houses, they get large, strong pieces of timber, out of which they make the frame of the building. They do this to make the house substantial and firm.—If the house were without these strong pieces of timber, it would be in constant danger of being blown over by the wind, or falling down of its own accord. Well, your body would be quite as useless, without the good, strong bones that make so large a part of it, you could not walk or run, or play, or do any of the things in which you now take delight. I once knew a little boy who had some disease or other, when an infant, which caused the bones of his legs to become soft. He never could walk afterwards, as you do every day. He made out to hobble around on crutches, but it cost him a great deal of labor and effort. Is it not wise and good in God to give you sound limbs, with bones of proper strength, uninjured by disease? But the most wonderful thing about the frame of your body is the way in which it is put together. It is not enough that this frame should be solid and strong.—You must be able to change its position, otherwise you would still be helpless. It must be full