

The Christian Visitor.

"HOLD FAST THE FORM OF SOUND WORDS"—2d Timothy, i. 13.

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Poetry.

[For the Visitor.]

Faith.

BY LUCY C. GILSON.

When-walking midst life's roses
With sunny skies above;
Upon our brow soft breezes,
Around us those we love;
Without a doubt to trouble
Our calm, unruffled way—
We trust to God's great wisdom
To guide us day by day;
Can this be faith?

Ah no! but when the blossoms
Are dead around our feet,
When skies are dark at noonday,
And all that makes life sweet
Has faded with the flowers,—
If then no doubt intrude
Of Him who of our life-walk
Has made this solitude—
O, this is faith.

Catching Fish in the Jordan.

BY REV. J. STOCKBRIDGE, U. S. N.

The territory between Jerusalem and the river Jordan maintains its ancient reputation as the haunt of robbers, and up to this day tourists are obliged to pay tribute to the robbers by employing half a dozen of them when they make the excursion to the Dead Sea and Jordan. We pitched our tents at Mar Saba, going there from Solomon's Pools; and at that point our guard of robbers join us. The captain of the guard, a short, stout and rather vicious looking fellow in a sheep-skin jacket, the wool outside, accompanied us to the Dead Sea, while the rest of the guard conveyed our tents and luggage, directly to Jericho.

Arrived at the Dead Sea, our party tried the buoyancy of the water, and accidentally its taste. Floating was an easy thing to do, but swimming most difficult; because the buoyancy of the lower limbs brought us down by the head, and our faces would go under unless we instantly assumed an upright position. The mishaps of one and another raised a laugh which was attended with a splashing of water that gave us all a taste. I can testify that the water is not fit to drink; nay, more—I have drunk Blue Lick water on the Mississippi, and can assure the reader that it is a delicious cordial in comparison with Dead Sea water. And what an oily, horrible feeling it leaves on the skin! and how we hurry away to the Jordan to get a bath of purification!

While we were bathing, our dragoman and the gentleman in the sheepskin jacket guarded our clothes. Mine lay on the trunk of a tree that had come down the Jordan, and been thrown up on the shore by a strong wind. As I dressed, the captain of the guard took particular notice of my watch, which was fastened to my vest; and I showed him the time of day, at which he seemed pleased.

Greek pilgrims at Easter do not hasten with greater alacrity to the ford of the Jordan, than we did on that occasion; and no leper ever felt more the need of cleansing than we.

One hour brought us to the ford, and in haste we disrobed and took a plunge. The river makes a bend at the ford, and in the elbow the water is comparatively still, while it rushes with great impetuosity a few yards below, and makes crossing a foolhardy thing. It seems like a special interposition of Providence, that five or six thousand Greek Christians can bathe here annually on Easter Monday, and none of them are drowned.

After our refreshing bath, my gold watch, with which the captain of our guard was so much pleased an hour or two before, was missing. At the moment, I did not suspect him of the sheepskin jacket; and our dragoman made a vain search for it. I was glad not to be left in the plight another tourist was who lingered behind his party to take a bath, and when he came up out of the water discovered that the robbers had not left him a single garment. There is no Chatham St. in Jericho, where one can get an outfit; but fortunately, he found among the willows a copy of the New York Observer, which he wrapped about him, and hastened to join his companions. It is painful to think what would have been the condition of the unfortunate tourist had he been overtaken by a shower; for the Observer don't hold water "worth a cent."

We saw numerous little fish in the eddy of the river, under the shadow of the willows, and wishing to give variety to our menu, a Vermont Yankee, who is a Philadelphia dentist, set his wits to work to improvise fishing-tackle. From his riding whip he untwisted a piece of cord, and lengthened it out with a few feet of twine. A large pin was bent into a hook; a stick from the willows made the rod, and the dentist was ready to extract fish from the Jordan. And he did. That night at Jericho, near the fountain of Elisha, we enjoyed greatly a dish of fried fish, the little fellows being from ten to twelve inches long. The Arab in sheepskin was as smart in extracting my watch, as the Yankee was in drawing fish from the Jordan; but the latter exercised his wit in an apostolic calling.

After dining that evening, our dragoman invited us to contribute a few francs to pay for a dance by our guard. We did so; and they danced to a monotonous song which they sang. The movements of the dance, and the song as well, reminded me of a similar performance of our North American Indians, and indicated a common origin in the distant past. True to their character, our vigilant guard that night stole every little thing they could lay their hands on outside our tents.

Thought and Work on our Foreign Mission Field.

A friend furnishes the following extracts from a private letter of our esteemed Missionary Churchill. They have value as a vivid picture of Mission life, and as an inner view of Mission work. The letter was not intended for the press. It was written from Bobbilly, where brother C. had gone to oversee the building of a Mission House. Its first date is Nov. 24th, 1878.

After reference to family and personal experience, brother C. thus writes of

MISSION LIFE AS A TEST OF CHARACTER:

"If a man wants to get a good chance of forming a correct opinion of himself, let him come here and go to work. If he has any flaws in his make-up, he will easily discover them. Happy will he be if, instead of them growing worse, he can mend them. This country thus tests moral as well as physical strength."

Most of our readers are aware that the Board has determined to open a new station under the charge of brother C. He speaks thus of

PREPARATIONS TO REMOVE TO BOBBILLY.

"When word came from the Board that I was to come to Bobbilly, I went to work at once to get ready for building. I bought some teak logs and in August commenced sawing stuff for doors and windows for brother Sanford's home and my own. Since that time the work of keeping carpenters and sawyers engaged has seriously interfered with my studies. For the last few weeks I have been especially busy getting things into such a shape that I could come here to Bobbilly." (Our read-

ers will know that this preparatory work is carried on at Bimlipatam where brother C has hitherto resided.) "On the whole I am well pleased with what I have thus far accomplished. The doors and windows are a heavy item of expense in building. We need for our two houses forty pairs of venetian doors, and fifteen to eighteen pairs of venetian windows. These would cost at Cocanada over 2000 rupees. I think ours will cost less than two-thirds of that sum. I brought out a good supply of tools with me, and they are doing excellent service. I have been fortunate in getting two good carpenters, and with my tools they can work at least one half faster than with native ones. I had all the stuff for our doors and windows sawed and planed when I left home in Bimlipatam last week, and the work can go on now in my absence. I intend staying here but a few days, long enough to get the work started. I shall then leave it in charge of an Eurasian, a member of one of our churches. I should like to remain right along, but I am needed at Bimili. I am a good deal behind here, owing to the unusually late rains, which should have ceased two weeks ago."

TRIP FROM BIMLIPATAM—A NIGHT OF IT.

"I left Bimlipatam for this place on Thursday, 21st inst., feeling sure the rains had ceased, but I was mistaken. We had a nasty time coming, owing to bad roads, but by making forced marches, driving all night and part of the day we got here on the morning of the 23rd. We did not bring our tent as I planned to stay in a thatched house belonging to the Government, but we found it occupied, and so were left out in the cold. We secured a tent, however, and stowed our things away, and I went to sleep. About midnight I was awakened by a pouring rain outside, and by water coming in upon me. The tent had been hurriedly put up, and not expecting rain, I had not dug a trench, and the water was running in under the carpets. I roused up, got my spade, and in my night dress dug a trench and fixed up things as well as I could, and lay down again. The rain continued to pour, how long I can't say, as I was soon asleep, but the appearances are to-day that a great amount of water fell.

DIFFICULTIES IN THE WORK.

This is no place for one in rainy weather. I ran a risk in coming here before it is fine and the ground dry, but unless I get to work soon, I shall not get settled here this cool season. It is tedious getting anything done. The people talk and humbug almost as long as it would take to do the work. I am greatly tried with them. In judgment they are children, in deceit and trickery they are adepts. You can hardly imagine how despicable human nature may become under the training of heathenism. . . . Even among the Christians the sin of lying is especially hard to overcome." Under date of December 1st., brother C. continues: "I am still in the flesh, but with less of it than a week ago. Such a week of work and worry! One must have experience to appreciate it. O these people! One needs patience to bear with them. The amount of inertia in one of them is terrible to contemplate, especially where you think of moving them out of their old habits and ways. The Lord help me."

RECENT CONVERTS—LIONS IN THE WAY.

"I intended returning to Bimlipatam yesterday to baptize two men on the 3rd inst., who have asked for the ordinance. Mrs. C. writes me that they have not been able to get their business all arranged, and so have decided to wait till the 13th. I trust they are cases of genuine conversion, but time will show. I became acquainted with one of them nearly a year ago. He speaks English pretty well, has a fair education and a good deal of experience. He is between twenty-two and thirty years of age. If he is what I hope, a true Christian and anxious to work, as he says, he will be a valuable help, indeed, just the man I have been looking for. He is a Brahman, belonging to one of the best families in Bimili. He will not only have to give up his employment, but family, friends and everything. His wife, a girl of thirteen or fourteen, will perhaps cleave to him, but his family will cast him off and

regard him as dead. They will perform funeral ceremonies for him, and if they meet him will either pass him by unnoticed, or notice him but to curse him! He does not wish his people to know of his intentions, as they might shut him up and keep him from us, or might raise a mob and ill-treat him and us. We shall probably baptize him quietly. We might call out the police to protect us, but it is doubtful if it would be of much use, as the leading people here, the English, are very unfriendly towards our Mission.

The case of the other man is very similar. He came to me as my teacher in May. He knows no English, but has a fair Telugu education. He studied at the Normal School and has been teaching a native school for some time. He belongs to a respectable caste, and will be treated as the other by his family and friends. He is at present helping Mrs. C. in her caste girls' school. The baptism will probably quite break up that, for I expect a great commotion when it takes place. Such a thing is almost unknown here. In the seventy years that the London Mission has been at work here, there have been but two Brahmans baptized, and their baptism caused a great excitement. The ordeal through which these men have to pass is a severe test of their sincerity. People at home cannot realize what it means for a Brahman to become a Christian.

SERIOUS QUESTIONS: WHAT SHALL BE OUR STANDARD?

"I once thought, I suppose many do now, that when the heathen are ready to ask for baptism, the work is about done. Great mistake, it is only begun. The more that come the greater the burden. When one comes to us, the first questions are, is he sincere? Is he converted? Here is where I experience one of my chief difficulties. How are we to judge? By what standard shall we test their profession? If we wait till they can tell such an experience as we look for at home, we should receive few if any. What they can tell us is usually unsatisfactory, partly because they do not think and feel as we do, partly because they cannot readily express their feelings. They do not appear to have passed through an experience of deep conviction of sin and sweet assurance of forgiveness. Two years ago they were heathen, worshipping idols. . . . They have come to see the foolishness of Hindooism, and the superiority of Christianity. As they have studied they have become more and more convinced, and now believe firmly ("very well" as they say) on Christ. They are no doubt intelligently converted and in earnest about being saved, but whether they really embrace Christ with a saving faith is another question. They understand the theory of salvation like many at home who have no real faith.

Another question hard to decide is, what shall we do for them when they are baptized? They expect the Missionary to be father and mother to them. The people have very little self-reliance, and avoid the responsibility of caring for themselves. (The London Mission has set a poor example in this respect, and their converts are a very poor class in this particular, judging from the example before.) The whole subject is difficult to deal with. The matter of getting a living in this part of India is very important. The people swarm, and competition for every chance is very keen. What wonder that men are glad to find some one to look out for them. Besides the Christians are few and have little influence, and are thus cut off from many chances that heathens have. For the present, then, we must look out for them. We will have abundance of work for the two men referred to in preaching and teaching. The one who speaks English wishes to give his time to preaching, after being further instructed. The other does very well as a teacher. Mrs. C. is well pleased with his way of imparting Christian truth.

FUTURE PROSPECTS AT BOBBILLY.

It will be difficult to find employment for this man in teaching at Bobbilly. The district is fine for paddy growing. The people are, as a rule, well, and content to live and die as did their fathers. There is little desire for education, except on the

part of those who seek Government employ. Humanly speaking, it is a hard field to which I am coming. Years of hard work may be needed before we reap much fruit. While nothing is too hard for the Lord, yet, I presume that the history of our Mission here will be like that of others in this country, a long period of seed sowing. But in time hard, earnest, faithful work will tell. It may be long before we have anything like this movement in Ongole. The work there going on is a wonderful one, but knowing the people as I do, I rejoice with them trembling.

PROGRESS OF BUILDING.

December 4. It is hard to get people to work now as the crops are ripening, and they get employ in the fields. Still I am making progress. I have foundations for a house dug, nearly enough stones drawn to lay them, a lot dug in the hills, and almost brick enough for my house. Yesterday I was away cutting and drawing trees. One, a large one 2½ feet through, eight feet from the ground. No experience of work that I had at home comes amiss. When I cannot get others to work, I do it myself. I can do the work of three natives. There is no help for it if I would get anything done. Yesterday was a beautiful cool day like a summer one at home, and I did a day's work that would pass muster there. The house I am building will be of sundried brick, with tiled roof. I hope to bring its cost under 500 rupees. The people are difficult to work with. Can these dry bones live? Only the Spirit of God can give life. We must work and wait, and shall know hereafter.

RETURN TO BIMLIPATAM.

December 15. The storm I anticipated came, and such a storm. All Thursday night and part of Friday, beginning again Friday evening and raining till Sunday. Such a time in the tent, the ground soaked, clothes all damp, food gone. There has been no such storm at this season within the recollection of the people. The crops have been badly destroyed, and there is still another hard season ahead for the people. Being unable to do more at Bobbilly for a week or two, I decided to return home for a while. I left Bobbilly on Thursday 12th, at 1-p. m., and arrived here Saturday 14th at 5.30 p. m. The road was completely washed away in some places, so we had to turn off into the paddy fields with the mud to our knees. The bandy got stuck, one bullock lay down, and I had to off with shoes and stockings, plunge into the mud and help pull the bandy through. At five places we were forced to get help, besides at the river crossings. At one of these latter, the current was very swift and up under the arms. It took twelve men to bring the bandy across, I riding in it perched up as well as I could out of the water. The mail was detained several days. Found all well, and had the pleasure of welcoming Miss Hammond, who arrived during my absence. The teachers have not been able to arrange matters, and so will not be baptized to-day as expected.

Items of Interest.

The Congregational Church of Chenoa, Ill., rejected a candidate for its pulpit solely because he used tobacco.

The aggregate of church debts which Mr. Kimball has been instrumental in dis-solving is not far from \$2,000,000.

Mr. Max Moses, a young Israelite of Cincinnati, has been converted to Christianity and joined the Ninth Street Baptist church.

Vice President Wheeler is a member of the Congregational church in Malone. For years past he has been accustomed to give \$500 to Home Missions. This year, on account of the debt of the Board, he doubled the amount, and sent a check for \$1,000.

His Grace the Duke of Sutherland has ordered one ton of good coal to be delivered to each of the poor cottage tenants at Coalpit Bank and throughout his Ketley estate. His grace's agent has also made arrangements for supplying the poor on the estate with soup and bread.