

Family Circle.

LETTER OF THE LATE REV. JOHN MACDONALD TO HIS SISTER, ON HER MARRIAGE.

"Together with health, may the Lord grant you every other temporal comfort consistent with the covenant of grace, and contained therein; and however much you may desire it, may he never give you any other, lest you fall into sin, which is worse than sorrow. The desires of my heart for you are larger than I can express, for they are spiritual, the tongue cannot speak them, nor the pen write them, but God knoweth and comprehendeth them; and that is all I want, seeing that it is from him I seek them. While a gracious and all-sufficient Father understandeth my poor hisping soul, I am not concerned about results.

But there are some of my desires that I can, to some extent express. I desire that the Lord may be with you in your union. Your natural life is from him; hold your conjugal life from him too, and in him; seek its continuance in conformity to his will who binds and unlooses as he pleases; and seek its enjoyment's no further than is consistent with his holy and spiritual law and presence. That relation which you have formed by his original institution, and in the course of his providential appointments, you must discharge and exercise according to his revealed will. Search out all his mind on this subject, scattered through his word, and study it, and pray over it; and thus set the Lord before you, and he will be with you.

Love Christ above your husband: this is essential to true and lasting happiness. I rejoice to think that your husband is one who would love you more for loving Christ better than himself. Be thankful for this mercy, and improve it. It will be a source of increasing conjugal love; for if you find that your husband loves you in proportion as you love Christ, and he finds that you love him in the same proportion, then this will prove as a mutual attraction to the one centre, even the heart of Jesus; and oh! who can tell the serene, pure, ardent, and spiritual enjoyments of two souls as one in Christ! May the supreme love of Christ save both of you from idolatry, and may the mutual reflection of Christ's love and image be the unchanging basis of your mutual delight.

Be careful my dearest Margaret, as to your own personal religion: let not your change of state prove an interruption to this. You have just been withdrawn, by the kindness of God, from the many anxieties, vanities, snares, and wearisome imaginations of unmarried girlhood; and in a little time you may be called into the many cares, sorrows, solitudes, occupations and necessary bustle of married womanhood.—You are now in a transition state. You have a temporary interval of calm tranquility and retirement, peculiarly favorable for spiritual improvement—though, alas! I have too often seen in my own little sphere of observation, that it is an interval too often given up to sloth and indulgence; and therefore, that the Lord must soon afterwards arise with his rod in his hand, to awaken and chasten such slumbering children: let it not be so with you. Bestir you to prayer and the Word now—to meditation, repentance, and faith. Redeem time for the doing of good. Take an active, spiritual, and decided part at once. You have been called to a new and strange scene of action, and this is always an advantage to those who will improve it. May the Lord make you a mother in Israel, even to his own little ones! Be a fellow-worker in promoting your husband's ministry; by prayer, by character, by the hand, by the lip, work for your Lord in heaven. The pious wife of a gospel minister may be of incalculable benefit in winning and encouraging souls; but she who is not so will incur the fearful responsibility of arresting the Lord's work. Render yourself, then, up unto the Lord as his walk in the Spirit, and seek constant love, light, and strength."

SEND YOUR CHILDREN TO SUNDAY-SCHOOL.

Parents of the following classes, hear us when we propose to you that your children should be sent to sabbath school.

I. *You that care about your own and your children's souls.* We believe you are seeking out the best means of benefitting those under your care. We, therefore, do no more than ask you to consider whether or not it would be useful to send your children to our schools. If other circumstances are suitable, then your example might influence some of your neighbors and by your attention to your children, in preparing them at home for sabbath school, you would have the satisfaction of seeing your children become a pattern to others.

II. *You that care about your children, though you are not yourselves converted.* We know that this is no uncommon case; even infidels have wished their children to know Christ. Now, if you feel that yourselves have got no change of heart, we entreat you to send your children to sabbath-school. There, by the blessing of God they may be led to Christ. The teacher's whole aim is to bring them to the cross of Christ, to carry them to the Shepherd who gave his life for the sheep, and to bathe them in the fountain-open for sin and uncleanness. But if you allow them to spend evening, and perhaps all the day too, in whatever manner they please

you may expect soon to hear them uttering oaths, and be grieved by their profanity, their contempt for the ordinances of God, their filthy and foolish deeds, and other signs of a hardened heart. But oh, if they were saved, you would be freed at the great day from the reproach of their ruin! and perhaps they might even carry home salvation to you! What if they should lead you by the hand to Jesus?—What if your experience should be that of a parent who said, "I was thirty years old before I knew that I had a soul! But one of our boys went out on a sabbath to play, and was brought in with his ankle-bone out of joint. Next sabbath another of the boys got himself lamed, and I learned through them, that I had a soul!"

III. *You that care wither for your own nor your children's souls.* Whether you care or not still it is true there is a Saviour standing with open arms, saying, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not." Mark x. 14. Will you allow us to be kind to them, and lead them to this Saviour? You would wish them to be obedient, to be well behaved, to be useful; you would not wish to see them grow up to be thieves, drunkards, and pests to society. Let us then try what we can do to lead them to Christ. Do not hinder us from showing kindness to your children. We entreat you not to be unmerciful to their souls.—Let not your eye be evil toward the children of your own bowels. Would you wish that any of them should yet curse the day that ever they were born in your house, and had you for their parent?

And now that we have ended our few words of exhortation, we must say to those of you who agree to put your children under our care for a few hours on sabbath, that we do not in any degree free you from the obligations you yourselves are under to attend to their souls. No; we cannot take upon us your responsibility, which became yours at your children's birth, and was sealed on you at their baptism. We cannot stand in your place at the judgment-day. You must yourselves at home watch over them, pray for them, help them in their lessons for their classes, and speak to them on their returning home, as anxiously as if we had never said a word. We offer only to help you. It will prove your more sure condemnation at last if it be the case that strangers cared more for your children's souls than you yourselves do,—the father that begat them, and the mother that bare them. But oh, how blessed, if led by the Holy Spirit yourselves, you become the means of leading your children to Jesus!—We will stand by, rejoicing to hear you say, "Behold Lord, I and the children whom thou hast given me!"

THE WAY TO BE HAPPY.

A story is told of two travellers in Lapland, which throws more light on the art of being happy than a whole volume of precepts and aphorisms. Upon a very cold day in winter, they were driving along in a sledge, wrapped up in furs from head to foot. Even their faces were mostly covered, and you could see hardly anything but their eyebrows, and these were white and glistening with frost. At length they saw a poor man who had sunk down and frozen in the snow. "We must stop and help him," said one of the travellers. "Stop, and help him!" replied the other, "you will never think of stopping on such a day as this! We are half frozen ourselves, and ought to be at our journey's end as soon as possible." But I cannot leave this man to perish," rejoined the more humane traveller, "I must go to his relief," and he stopped his sledge. "Come," said he, "come, help me to rouse him." "Not I," replied the other, "I have too much regard for my own life to expose myself to this freezing atmosphere more than is necessary. I will sit here, and keep myself as warm as I can till you come back." So saying, he resolutely kept his seat, whilst his companion hastened to the relief of the perishing man, whom they had so providentially discovered. The ordinary means for restoring consciousness and activity were tried with complete success; but the kind-hearted traveller was so intent upon saving the life of a fellow creature, that he had forgotten his own exposure; and what was the consequence? Why the very effort which he made to warm the stranger warmed himself!—and thus he had a twofold reward. He had the sweet consciousness of doing a benevolent act, and he also found himself glowing from head to foot by reason of the exertion which he had made. And how was it with his companion, who had been so much afraid of exposing himself? He was almost ready to freeze, notwithstanding the efforts he had been making to keep warm!

The lesson derived from this little incident is very obvious. We are all travellers to a distant country. At every step of our journey we find other travellers, who need our friendly aid. Nay, God has brought them around our path in great numbers; and, far as the eye can reach we see their dense and gloomy ranks. Now, there are two ways of meeting these objects of Christian sympathy and brotherly regard. We can go forward with the stern purpose of a selfish and unloving spirit, saying, in reply to every appeal which is addressed to our better feelings, "Depart in peace; be ye warmed and filled; or we can say with the warm-hearted

traveller, "I cannot see this man perish! I must hasten to his relief!" And the rule which we adopt for our guidance in such cases will determine the question, whether we are happy or unhappy! The man who lives only for himself cannot be happy. God does not smile upon him, and his conscience will give him no peace. But he who forgets himself in his desire to do good, not only becomes a blessing to others, but opens a perpetual fountain of joy in his own bosom!

Geographic and Historic.

DAMASCUS.

Damascus, called by the natives Es Sham, a city of Syria, capital of an important pashalik of the same name, and, indeed, the chief or capital city of Syria, lies in a plain at the eastern foot of Anti-Libanus. It was sometimes spoken of by the ancients as an Arabian city; but in reality, it belongs to Syria. In 2 Sam. viii. 5, 6, "the Syrians of Damascus," are found in Isa. vii. 8. It is expressly said, "the head of Syria is Damascus;" also, Isa. xlviii. 3, "the kingdom is to cease from Damascus." So that this place was obviously the metropolis of a Syrian empire. Damascus—by some held to be the most ancient city in the world—is called by the Orientals, "a pearl surrounded by emeralds." Nothing can be more beautiful than its position, whether approached from the side of Mount Lebanon, from the Desert to the east, or by the high road from the north, from Aleppo and Hamah. For many miles the city is girdled by fertile fields, or gardens, as they are called, which, being watered by rivers and sparkling streams, give to the vegetation, consisting principally of olive trees, a remarkable freshness and beauty. Of all the cities of the East, Damascus is, probably, the most oriental.

The view of Damascus, when the traveller emerges from Anti Libanus, is of the most enchanting kind. One of magnificent prospects in the world bursts upon the sight; like the first view of Constantinople, it is unique. A view is presented from an elevation of a thousand feet; from whence the spectator looks down upon a vast plain, bordered in the distance by blue mountains, and occupied by a rich, luxuriant forest of the walnut, the fig, the pomegranate, the plum, the apricot, the citron, the locust, the pear, and the apple, forming a waving grove of more than fifty miles in circuit, possessing a vast variety of tint, a peculiar density and luxuriance of foliage, and a wildly-picturesque form, from the branches of the latter trees throwing themselves up above a rich underwood of pomegranates, citrons, and oranges, with their yellow, green, and brown leaves; and the conceptions of the view will be still more heightened by stating, that from the same point are seen, grandly rising in the distance, above this vast superficies of rich, luxuriant foliage, the swelling domes, the gilded crescents and the marble minarets of Damascus; while, in the centre of all, winding towards the city, runs the main stream of the river Barrada. In descending from the above elevation, the opening in the trees, here and there, display little patches of green verdure, or a glimpse of richly-cultivated gardens; the whole of this rich tract being surrounded by a mud wall, beyond which all is arid and desert.

The interior of the city does not correspond with the exquisite beauty of its environs. In the Armenian quarter the houses are built with mud, and pierced towards the street by a very few small grated windows, with red painted shutters. They are low, and the flat arched doors resemble those of stables. A filthy dung-hill, and a pool of stinking water, are almost invariably before the doors. In some of these dwellings, belonging to the principal Armenian merchants, there is great internal richness and elegance. The furniture consists of magnificent Persian or Bagdad carpets, which entirely cover the marble or cedar floor; and of numerous cushions and mattresses, spread in the middle of the saloon, for the members of the family to sit or lean against. There is a fine wide street, formed by the palaces of the agas of Damascus, who are the nobility of the land. The front of these palaces, however, towards the street, are like long prison or hospital walls, being mere grey mud walls, with few or no windows, whilst at intervals is a great gate opening on a court. But the interior is magnificent; the ornaments of their saloons alone cost upwards of £1,000 sterling. The bazaars are very striking. The great bazaar is about half a league long. They are long streets, covered in with high wood-work, and lined with shops, stalls, magazines, and *cafes*. The shops are narrow, and go only a short way back. The merchant is seated in front, with his legs doubled up below him, and the pipe in his mouth. The magazines are stored with merchandise of all sorts, and particularly with Indian manufactures, which are brought in great profusion by the caravans from Bagdad. In the midst of the bazaars stands the finest khan in the East, that of Hassan Pasha. It is an immense cupola, whose bold springing arch recalls that of St. Peter at Rome; it is in like manner borne on granite pillars. The gate of this khan is a piece of Moorish architecture, the richest in detail, and most imposing in effect, that can be seen in the world. The khan has been built only about

twenty years. Not far distant is the principal mosque, formerly a church, dedicated to St. John whose skull and sepulchre, found in this holy place, give it such a holy sanctity, that it is death for even a Mahomedan to enter the room where the relics are kept. Situated at the edge of the desert, at the mouth of the plains of Coele-Syria, and the valleys of Galilee of Judæa, and of the coasts of the sea of Syria, Damascus was needed as a resting place for the caravans to India. It is essentially a commercial town, two hundred merchants are permanently settled in it. Foreign trade is carried on by the great Mecca caravan, Bagdad caravan, the Aleppo, and by several small ones to Beirut (its seaport), Tripoli, Acce, &c. The population of Damascus is variously stated at from 150,000 to double that number; of whom that portion which may be denominated Christian, is estimated to be at least one fifth. Damascus is an eminently interesting town. It is thoroughly Oriental, though, at the present time, the representatives in person and costume of most other distinguished countries of the world may be seen in the streets. Its proximity to Baalbec and Palmyra, which are mere ruins, and its still highly flourishing condition after having existed for, perhaps, a longer period than any other city on the face of the earth, combine, with many facts connected with its history, to throw around it a calm and, attractive, not to say sacred, light.

Political changes and social influences have lessened and mitigated the proverbial bigotry of the Damascenes. The lower classes, indeed, are still fanatical; but a better feeling on religion prevails amongst the higher. The Damascenes nourish hatred of the European name and costume. They alone amongst the Orientals have been the most averse to the admission of consuls, or even consular agents, to Christian powers. Till within the last few years the appearance in the city of a Frank costume was a signal for a riot. Christians and Jews were alike prohibited from riding on any other beast than an ass. This state of things is clearly traceable to the fanatical disposition of the inhabitants, who deem the city to be holy, and, consequently, have been very careful that nothing should enter within its walls which, in their estimation, would pollute it. There is now, however, a greatly improved state of feeling in Damascus. The former insolence of the Damascenes has been curbed. Horses are permitted to be used, and Christians may be seen in great numbers mixing with others, and pursuing their business, or taking recreation dressed in their proper garb, without molestation. This improvement may be in part ascribed to the residence in the city of a British consul.

A spot is pointed out where, according to tradition among the Christians, the apostle Paul, spoken of in the Acts of the Apostles as Saul of Tarsus, saw the light from heaven on his way to this city. In winding round the walls on the outskirts of Damascus, the traveller arrives at a part where they are broken at the top; this is shown as the spot from whence Paul is believed to have made his escape from the indignation of the Jews, as we read in Acts ix. "The disciples took him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket." From hence passing on through some pretty lanes, the visitor is brought to an open green spot, surrounded by trees, over which the tops of which are seen the distant summits of Mount Hermon. At this place he is informed Saul had arrived, when (Acts ix. 3), "as he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly there shined round about him a great light from heaven." These localities are pointed out with the greatest confidence by the Damascene Christians of all sects, and are held in great veneration; nor is it difficult to suppose, that the true spots have been handed down by tradition among the followers of the cross. "The street which is called Straight" (Acts ix. 11,) is still found in Damascus; or, at any rate, a street bearing that name. It is stated to be a mile in length, and to have derived its name from the circumstance of its leading direct from the gate to the castle or palace of the pasha. The house of Judas, also, to which Ananias was directed, and to which he went, and his own house likewise, are still pointed out. How much credulity may have had to do in fixing on perpetuating the recollection of these localities, it is probably easier to suspect than to ascertain.

A BARBER'S DESPOTISM.—We were greatly amused to night by the appearance of a little Hungarian count, who had come with us from Smyrna, but whom we had not seen since we left Constantinople. I positively did not recognise him; he used to have a very sufficient supply of curly hair, and now he appeared with a silk handkerchief sentimentally twisted round what was evidently the baldest of heads. His solution of the mystery was very absurd. At Constantinople, he had gone to a Turkish barber, for the purpose of having his moustaches and whiskers arranged, but having been unable to explain altogether what he wanted, the Turk had chosen to judge for himself what was necessary, and had deliberately laid hold of him, along with two of his assistants, and had shaved his head completely, in spite of all his resistance.—*Wandering Sketches among the Greeks and Turks.*