

From the Christian Keepsake.

THE PASSAGE OF THE JORDAN.

BY REV. J. H. CLINCH.

I.

The hosts of God, by Joshua led,
Approach the Jordan's eddying tide,
And priests, with veiled and bended head,
Bear to its grassy side
The Ark, beneath whose cherub wings
Are kept the pure and precious things;—
Behold, the morn its radiance flings
On bannered lance, and buckler bright,
And brazen trump, whose music rings
To hail the dawning light.

II.

The flood before them boils and leaps
Along its deep and rocky bed,
But still the moving column keeps
Onward its fearless tread,
As though no foamy current flowed
Between it and the blest abode
To which, by many a thorny road
And desert plain its steps had passed,
And which in morning's glory glowed
Green, beautiful and vast.

III.

And now, the Levites' sandalled feet
Are moistened by the river's edge,
Which curls and breaks, with murmur sweet,
Amid the bending sedge;—
Yet pause they not;—with heart of prayer
And faith-supported strength, they bear
That which the torrent shall not dare
Submerge or mar with angry tide;
They know not now, but know that there
God will a way provide.

IV.

Their faith hath triumphed;—with the sound
Of rushing thunder backward fly
The affrighted billows, and the ground
They moistened now is dry:—
Cleft in the midst, the waters stand
Obedient to their God's command,
Towering aloft on either hand
A glassy and resplendent heap,
Where scenes that bless the promised land
In mirrored beauty sleep.

V.

And fearless down the dark defile
The countless hosts of Israel go.
And loud from trump and harp the while
The strains of gladness flow:—
The depths, that voices never gave
But those of warring wind and wave,
Send from their dark and oozy grave
The echoing tread of joyous throngs,
And praise to Him whose hand can save,
In loud triumphant songs.

VI.

And now the further shore they gain,
And kneeling kiss the promised spot
Which, through long years of toil and pain
Their anxious steps had sought;
Whilst with a wild and maddening roar
The tides, disjoined from shore to shore,
Their long suspended waters pour
To fill the yawning gulf between;
Closed is the bright, mysterious door,
By which they entered in.

VII.

Christian! behold the typic shade
Of that dim path prepared for thee,—
Behold in Jordan's tide displayed
Death's ever-flowing sea:—
Thou treadest still Life's desert plain
In toil and sorrow, care and pain,—
Trials, and doubts, and fears maintain
With thee a fierce and bitter strife,
And but for heavenly aid would gain
The conquest o'er thy life.

VIII.

Yet soon that toilsome war shall cease;
And thou beside the flood shalt stand
Beyond whose waves are realms of peace—
A pure and holy land:—
But if thou still has kept the ark
Of God before thee as a mark,—
Fear not the troubled waters dark
How'er they rage, and chaic, and roar,—
On that mysterious voyage embark,—
And God will guide thee o'er.

IX.

Press boldly on in faith and prayer,
And waves of doubt and floods of fear
Shall part, and leave a passage there
To changeless glories near;
The dim obscurity shall fail
In Death's dark pass and shadowy vale,
And thou with gladdened eyes, shalt hail
Bright glimpses of the glorious things
Which lie beyond, and render pale
The angels' flashing wings.

X.

And when thou'st gained that blessed shore
For ever freed from sin and pain,
Death's cheated waves shall hiss and roar
Mingling their streams again,—

Thence, ever closed, that shadowy door
Shall entrance give to Earth no more;
And thou shalt reach the golden floor,
By Jesus lit and angels trod,
Ever and ever to adore
Thy SAVIOUR and thy God!

Dorchester, (Mass.)

For the Pearl.

ILLUSTRATIONS OF PROPHECY.

RUINS OF BABYLON.

No. 2.

"It is only in ascending the ruins of the Tower of Babel that the traveller finds he is walking on a vast heap of bricks—the total circumference is 2,286 feet, which gives to the ruins a greater extent of base than to the original edifice,—the surplus is very great, when we consider the quantity that must have been removed by the Macedonian soldiers, and how much also must have been removed by workmen digging for bricks. On the top is the appearance of the Castle in the distance; it is a solid mass of kiln burnt bricks, 37 feet high 28 broad—the bricks are excellent—laid in with fine cement. The summit of the mass is much broken so as to leave evidence by the shape of the fractures that violence has been used to reduce it to this shape. Distinct from the pile of bricks thus described and lower down on the north face of the large mound is another mass exactly similar—pieces of marble, broken bricks, and stones lie scattered over the ruin. The most curious of the fragments are several misshapen masses of brickwork quite black except in a few places, where regular layers of kiln burnt bricks are perceptible;—these have certainly been subjected to some fierce heat, as they are completely molten—a strong presumption that fire has been used in the destruction of the tower,—which in part resembles what the Prophet Jeremiah says it would become, a "burnt mountain" lxi: 25. Travellers who have visited this spot have been struck with the curious appearance of these fragments—and having only seen the black surface have rejected the idea of their being bricks. In the prophecies against Babylon, fire has been particularly mentioned as an agent—to this Isaiah evidently alludes when he says it shall be as when "God destroyed Sodom and Gomorah," and Jeremiah also says her high gates shall be burned with fire. Mr. Rich thought he could trace four stages to this building, and our party were of a like opinion. Wild beasts were very numerous here. Mr. Lamb gave up his examination from seeing an animal crouched in one of the square apertures;—I saw another in a like attitude, and the large foot prints of a lion was so fresh that the beast must have stolen away on our approach. From the summit we had a distinct view of the vast heaps that constitute the ruins of ancient Babylon. A more complete picture of desolation could not well be imagined—the eye wandered over a barren desert. It was impossible to behold this scene and not be reminded how exactly the predictions of the Prophets had been fulfilled even in the appearance that Babylon was doomed to present—"that she should become heaps—that her city should be a desolation, a dry land and a wilderness." In Rich's memoir on Babylon is an account of some earthen vessels containing human bones similar to those seen by us;—with a view to compare them we went up the river this day—our boat was of a peculiar construction. It was in shape like a large circular basket—the sides were of willow covered with a coat of bitumen. The bottom was laid with reeds—it had two men with paddles, one of whom pulled towards him; the other pushed from him: this boat is common on the Tigris and Euphrates, and is best adapted to the strong currents common to these rivers. May not these boats be of the same kind as the vessels of bulrushes alluded to by the Prophet Isaiah, xviii: 2. We continued our trip up the river about a mile, but the current was so strong against us, that we declined going to the place proposed. Our excursion however proved most satisfactory, though we did not see the vessels mentioned by Rich; for on returning to Hillah we found a number of the same description we had seen, and containing human bones,—thus fully confirming the statements of Mr. Rich. These vessels were on the west bank of the river—the place appeared an ancient burying ground encroached on by the Euphrates. As this mode of burying appears at variance with the customs of the Babylonians and ancient Persians, it appears probable that the tombs may contain the bodies of some of the Greeks who accompanied Alexander on his eastern expedition. In marching through a country where the scarcity of wood first suggested the idea of the hanging gardens, the substitution of the famous clay for coffins appears natural and obvious. The Asiatic collections contain an account of some vessels of earthen-ware having in them human bones, which were found near Bushire—near which place Alexander must have met his fleet under Nearchus, after his return from India.

March 28th. "We left Hillah this morning to resume our examination, and took with us a party of workmen to dig for us. The ruins on the west bank of the river commence two miles north of the town, including the Muzillebah—they extend 3 miles N. and S. and upwards of two miles E. and W. The first heap of ruins, though of considerable extent, has a very indeterminate form,

and presents only the general appearance observable throughout—mounds channelled by the weather, and strewn with fragments of buildings. I shall therefore pass them without further mention, and proceed to describe those which I consider to be the site of the hanging gardens and of the Palace. Diodorus says the Palace was near the bridge. Strabo and Quintus Curtius state the gardens to have been near the Euphrates, whence they were supplied with water by means of engines. All authors are agreed as to their being situate within the walls of the Palace. The entire mound comprises a square of 2800 feet. In addition to the usual vestiges are found several alabaster vessels; we remarked also great quantities of varnished tiles, the colors of which were remarkably fine. According to Diodorus the walls and towers of the Palace were covered with tiles of different colors, representing a grand hunting piece, more than four cubits in size—in this were described a great variety of wild beasts—here was to be seen Queen Semiramis on horseback brandishing a spear, and near her Ninus in the act of killing a Lion—the colors were laid on before the bricks were baked.—Diodorus, Volume i: p. 121. We have a singular confirmation of this account of Diodorus in the Prophet Ezekiel, who speaking of the defection of Judah in the character of Abolibah, says "She saw men portrayed upon the wall, the images of the Chaldeans portrayed with vermilion, girded with girdles upon their loins, exceeding in dyed attire upon their heads, all of them princes to look to, after the manner of the Babylonians, of Chaldæ." This mode of decoration is still common throughout the East—numerous specimens came within my own observation, in the course of this journey, particularly in the cities of Bassorah, Bagdad and Teheran. Captain Hart brought me the portion of a highly varnished blue vase, to which were sticking some fragments of human bones, that had undergone the action of fire. I attempted to separate them from the vessel, but they pulverised on being touched. The bricks are finer here than in any other part of the ruins—numbers were digging for them—the ruins were so perforated in consequence that the original design is entirely lost:—all that could favour any conjecture of gardens built on terraces, are two subterranean passages which we saw at some distance from each other. The people digging for bricks say that they are of great extent, and very high in many places. We made our workmen dig at each entrance, hoping to trace a communication, but we were unsuccessful as they were only closed up with bricks and rubbish and our men were afraid to continue their work—many persons having been accidentally buried in the ruins. To judge from what we saw there can be no doubt that both passages are of vast extent; they are lined with bricks laid in with bitumen, and covered over with large masses of stone—this is nearly the only place where stone is observable. While we were exploring the cave, an enormous wild bear of a reddish color started up from amongst the ruins—our party gave chase, but he eluded us. In the eagerness of the pursuit I snatched a gun from the servant and fired: luckily I missed the animal, as the shot was too small to kill him, and his revenge might have made me pay dearly for my temerity. The Prophecy of Isaiah, that Babylon should be inhabited by wild beasts, was fulfilled after the extinction of the Seleucids, for their successors the Parthians turned the city into a park and stocked it with wild beasts for the purpose of hunting. Amongst these the wild bear is mentioned by St. Jerome. It has been supposed that many curious trees are to be found on the site of the hanging gardens; this is not the case—there is one only, and that in the most elevated spot—it is a kind of cedar; possibly one of those mentioned by Diodorus—one half the trunk is standing five feet in circumference. Though the body is decayed, the branches are still green and healthy, and droop like those of the willow. Except one at Bassorah, there is not five like it in Irak Arabi. Our guides told us that this tree was left in the hanging gardens for the purpose of enabling Ali to tie his horse to it after the battle of Hillah. Not far from this tree we saw indications of a statue which had been imperfectly seen by Beauchamp and Rich. We set our men to work, and in two hours found a colossal piece of sculpture in black marble, representing a Lion standing over a man. When Rich was here the figure was entire, but when we saw it the head was gone—the length of the pedestal, the height of the shoulders, and the length of the statue measured in each of their respective parts nine feet. I would venture to suggest that this statue might have reference to Daniel in the Lion's den, and that it formerly stood over one of the gates either of the Palace or of the hanging gardens. It is natural to suppose that this signal miracle would have been celebrated by the Babylonians, particularly as Daniel was afterwards Governor of their city. The Prophet was also Governor of Shusa the Shushan of the scriptures, where he frequently went in discharge of his official duties and where he died also. A short time ago Shusa was visited by some French officers in the service of the prince of Kermansbah in Persia: amongst other antiquities they found a block of white marble covered with Babylonian characters, having sculptured on it the figures of two men and two Lions—this may also allude to the same event. The finest specimen of Babylonian structure is a large building called by the workmen the "Kasa or Palace"—its form is quadrangular and it faces the cardinal points—it is composed entirely of kiln burnt bricks of the finest quality, which are laid in with a