

Letters from Palestine.

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Written for the Review.

NOTES ON BEYROUT.

(Continued from last week.)

An important factor of the development of a city depends on its educational advantages. In this respect Beyrout is highly favored. It is perhaps the most important centre of Christian education in western Asia. Throughout Syria and Palestine are met teachers and Christian workers trained in its institutions, and on every hand are heard acknowledgments of the indebtedness in which the country at large lies for the uplifting influence thus exerted. For the day is now far past when the statement needed to be argued that education permeated with Christian truth, goes to secure individual municipal and national supremacy. In this same connection it should be mentioned that Beyrout and the Lebanon enjoy Christian government, have a comparatively large western population and are professedly in large numbers Christian people. With such facts lying before them, there is little wonder that those who have large interests in Beyrout flatter themselves that their city has bright prospects for the future, and that it is destined to exert a large influence in the future history of Palestine and Syria.

At the present the population of Beyrout is said to approach one hundred and twenty thousand. Six years ago some authorities estimated its population at over eighty thousand. Thirty-nine years ago Dr. Thomson stated that its population was then not less than forty thousand, and that thirty years previous to that date it was only five thousand. These figures show that even should the one hundred and twenty thousand given above considerably exceed the actual; the growth of the city has been very rapid indeed. Perhaps the most important industry of the place is the manufacture of silk, an industry that can be almost indefinitely extended. As one walks the streets he will hear at many a point the clattering of the hand loom as it weaves its costly fabric for the luxurious in different lands. The coast fisheries also would prove productive were it not for the crushing burden of a short sighted local tax. Already sufficient has been said by implication in regard to the fruits and cereals which change hands on its markets. The leading educational institutions of the city have all Christian ends in view. The most prominent of these is the Syrian Protestant College. This institution as its name implies is undenominational in character but emphatically Protestant. It was founded by a number of wealthy gentlemen in the United States, is supported by a large endowment, and is controlled except in local affairs by a board of trustees resident in New York. Its departments of instruction are numerous. It has a preparatory school for the younger pupils. A more advanced department in which the senior students received what is virtually a university training, and a large medical school. The latter is said to provide the best medical training to be had within the limits of the Turkish Empire. The classes are open to all students irrespective of their religious views, but all are compelled to attend the daily religious service held for the benefit of the students. Perhaps the most pleasing sight seen in Beyrout during a recent visit was the orderly assembly of the scores of students enrolled in this institution as they united outwardly at least in the public worship of God. In the work of the college one of our young Canadians, Rev. Dr. Webster, takes a prominent share. Dr. Webster formerly was a missionary of our church laboring among the Jews at Haifa. While there he (as was learned during a stay of two days' at that place) had succeeded in winning the confidence of those among whom he labored, and a place of influence in the community. His present position, however, is a more commanding one, and provides a far wider sphere of usefulness. Among organizations more strictly missionary, stands at the front the American Mission in connection with the American Presbyterian Church. Two buildings in connection with this organization call for notice. One of these is the handsome church in which is held every Sabbath a service in English in addition to the ordinary Arabic services. The other is the Theological College building situated on the grounds of the Syrian College. At the present the classes are not conducted in this building but in a similar building erected in the mountains which was found better fitted for the training of Syrian theological students. The "Syrian Schools for Syria's Daughters," is an organization with very considerable prominence. It was in this city that the founder of these schools spent her riper years, and it was while living here that she directed the movement that resulted in establishing these homes of Christian education throughout the length and breadth of the land. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that the visitor hears much about the late Mrs. Mott and her Syrian schools. Lesser

Christian institutions are so numerous that time would fail to make mention of all. Suffice to quote "Beyrout is famous for its missionary and philanthropic institutions, and every traveller will do well to visit them, as they represent a great power which will revolutionize Syria."

Beyrout this year was brought into special prominence through the quarantine regulations of the Turkish government. For some months there were cases of cholera appearing occasionally at Alexandria. To prevent the spread of this dread disease within its territory, the government wisely issued an ordinance that all passenger boats calling at Alexandria should be quarantined in landing passengers at any other port in the empire. Beyrout was appointed quarantine station for Palestine and Syria. Accordingly all visitors to the Holy Land found it necessary before disembarking to proceed northward to Beyrout and there 'do' quarantine. Willingly or unwillingly, therefore, all paid that place a visit. The manner of introduction was not a very happy one. Those who have passed through a similar experience elsewhere know very well that unfavorable impressions are almost sure to be made. In this case, however, they proved to be of only a very temporary character. For a few hours of freedom spent in the city went to remove them all and to make the new comers kindly disposed not only to the place itself, but to the country at large. The English speaking inhabitants proved so hospitable, and the comforts of the hotels so superior to what one had reason to expect, that the hours spent in meeting the demands of the sanitary laws of the hour, soon became a mere memory helping in some slight way to illustrate the well known truth that the bitter going before the sweet makes the sweet the sweeter. The fact is that no one will have reason to regret the necessity that obliges him to enter the Holy Land from the north. For the beauty and fertility of that more remote part will be a useful introduction to the more arid districts of the south.

TWO DAYS' ON CARMEL.

There is no mountain in the east better known to the Bible reader than mount Carmel. If Hermon, Sinai, Horeb, and the mountains of Jerusalem be excepted perhaps there is none so well known. And it may be that in the memory of the majority, the location of even these is less accurately fixed. Let there be presented a map showing the conformation of the country, and the probability is that the tardy finger will be laid upon Carmel more readily than upon any other of its mountains. Its prominent position and its associated history have united in producing this result.

The conception ordinarily had of that mountain, however, is not proportionately accurate. It is indeed very inaccurate. After one has visited some of the well known localities in Palestine he will be prepared to say that his conception of Carmel was less in harmony with the reality than was that of almost any other place. He knows either Jordan, the Dead Sea, the Sea of Galilee, Olivet, Ebal, or Gerizim as soon as he sees it. His conception formed from description and engravings was in these cases sufficiently true to make it easily possible to recognize the original whenever seen. Not so in regard to Carmel. When it is approached for the first time either by land or sea surprise will break through every restraint and embody itself in the question: Is this Carmel? The original proves so different from the conception formed from different sources throughout the years!

In conversation with different parties it became evident that perhaps in the majority of cases those who have not seen Carmel think of it as a mountain peak rising precipitously out of the sea; a second Gibraltar only in its natural condition and overlooking a broad expanse instead of a narrow strait. On such a peak, in bold defiance to the record, Elijah is supposed to have discomfited the priests of Baal; and such a peak in equally bold defiance to the truth of inspired poetry is supposed to have aroused the prophetic spirit to speak of the "excellency of Carmel" and "the fruit of Carmel."

The truth in regard to the topography of Carmel may be summed up in the statement that it is not a mountain peak but a mountain range, that it is not a "bold promontory" overlooking the sea, but a range of some elevation extending inland several miles from the sea. No one can coast along the shore without seeing the truth of this statement, nor can he take his stand on any point of vantage to the north or east of Esdraelon without doing so. Carmel designates a mountain range as emphatically as does "Lebanon" or the "mountains of Ephraim."

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It is said that the Christian natives of the South Sea Islands prepare their Sunday food on Saturday. Not a fire is lighted, neither flesh nor food is cooked, nor a tree is climbed, nor a canoe seen on the water, nor a journey by land undertaken on God's holy day.