

THE TRAVELLER.

THE NESTORIANS.

JOURNAL OF DOCTOR WRIGHT AT OORONIAH.

Commemoration of Imaum Houssayn.

FEB. 23, 1841.—This is the first day of the Musliman month, Moharrum, the first ten days of which are spent, by all good Mussulmans of the Sheeah faith, in lamenting the unhappy fortune of the imaum Houssayn. According to our meerza, "All Mussulmans assemble in their mosques during these days, to listen to the preaching of the moolahs. All men are clad in black, and all spirits, men, and angels weep and mourn for poor Houssayn, whose misfortunes were greater than those of any man, who ever lived."

25.—At an early hour this morning, having first learned that my presence would not be unacceptable, I went to the house of the beglerbeg, the former governor of this province, and a very devout Mussulman, to witness the daily services of the Moharram, which are performed there as well as in the mosques. Although the sun had but just risen, a large congregation had assembled, and were seated on carpets, spread in the yard and in the adjoining rooms. An elevated platform was standing in the midst of the crowd, for the convenience of those who took the lead in the services. A company of moolahs opened the performances by singing in oriental style. Two boys, then, who had been trained by the moolahs, mounted the platform, and recited, with great effort, a piece, containing many touching strains relating to Houssayn. Another youth followed them, when three moolahs, one after the other, entered the pulpit, and related the incidents in the last days of the beloved imaum. Their discourses consisted principally of simple narrative, drawn from the life of the unfortunate man. The speakers often manifested the deepest emotion, rising from their seats, and throwing all their energies into their address. The crowd often cried aloud, sobbing like children.

March 4.—With Mr. Breath, I attended a representation of the closing scene of imaum Houssayn's life. Before the exhibition began, several moolahs addressed the assembled multitude. One of the principal moolahs took the opportunity to call upon the people to contribute to the support of the ecclesiastical order. As an inducement for them to give, the moolah assured them that he would offer up prayer in their behalf. One young man, whose brother was absent on a distant journey, pledged two tomans (five dollars) if the moolah would make prayer for his safe return. When ever a pledge was sent in, the moolah would at once invoke a thousand blessings upon the donor, and assure him of a place in paradise.

During these preparatory performances, many little boys were passing to and fro among the multitude, with a bag of water suspended on their shoulders, from which they presented a draught, in a small cup, to whomsoever wished, being assured, as I was told, that, in return, water would be given to them in paradise, and also to their mothers and friends. One is reminded by this custom, of our Saviour's words, "He that giveth a cup of cold water to a disciple, in the name of a disciple, shall not lose his reward."

After a while, the trumpet sounded, and the representation began. The origin of the tragedy is briefly this:—

There was a mortal feud between the friends of Omar and the friends of Aly. The king of Damascus, a Soonce, took Houssayn prisoner, and condemned him to death. He was subjected to great indignity, and the sad story of his wrongs, as related by his friends, is not a little affecting. His wife and children are in chains, and come forward, rending the air with their shrieks, to move upon the hard heart of the king, who had determined that Houssayn should die. Their importunity was unavailing. The king's order was executed, and "the good imaum" was no more.

During the whole scene the multitude sobbed and wept, and at times broke forth into loud lamentation. Never did those affecting incidents in the history of the Jewish people, as related in the Scriptures, seem so full of reality, where it is said, "all the people lifted up their voices and wept." I question if it ever occurs in the West as in the East, that a whole congregation is convulsed with emotion, giving vent to their feelings in cries and tears. During most of the representation, the multitude were beating their breasts,

which are laid bare during the month of lamentation, and often with great violence.

We long to see this benighted population thus mourning on account of their sins, and turning away from them. They weep easily at the story of the wrongs of their imaum, but have no tears to shed on account of their alienation from God.

17.—A Koord, chief of a neighbouring tribe, called and spent two hours. He and a large number of his warriors are remaining in the city to be in attendance on the Ameer Nizam. Unlike most of his race, he is mild and polished in his manners, being quite equal in this respect to any Persian.

20.—Just after sunrise this morning, three women appeared at my door, sent by the prince-governor. One of them was quite ill, and she a negress, the prince's slave, brought from Africa. While she was waiting in the passage for the medicine which I was preparing for her, one of her attendants, wishing to gratify her curiosity, entered my room. When she saw all my books, arranged in view, she exclaimed, "How many Korans! I think, with so many, you can write a prayer which will restore the alienated affections of a husband to his wife." Probably most of the books which she ever saw were Korans, and she inferred that mine must be the same. There is a class of men in the country who profess to write prayers which act as charms in controlling conjugal affection.

In a former number, we noticed the arrival of Dr. GRANT at Mosul, in Mesopotamia, after a narrow escape from a band of predatory Arabs. The following is the Doctor's own account of the journey:—

I reached this city on the 25th ult., (Aug. 1841) after spending six weeks among the Nestorians of the mountains, from whom I met with the same cordial reception which I had experienced on my former visits. So interesting was the field, that I would fain have protracted my stay, and was on my return to the residence of the patriarch, when I received the afflictive intelligence of the death of Mr. and Mrs. Mitchell, and of the serious illness of myther and sister Hinsdale, which constrained me to alter my course, and hasten to the relief of my surviving associates as speedily as possible, notwithstanding the route was rendered dangerous by the hostile attitude of the neighbouring Koords. In consequence of this, the Nestorians were unwilling to accompany me beyond their own borders, and many of them remonstrated against my proceeding at all. But I regarded the indications of Providence as clear, and at length prevailed upon the malek of Lezan to send an escort with me to the borders of Amadiéh. To avoid the intervening Koords, they chose to make the journey in the night; and after a slow and toilsome ride and walk (for I was obliged to climb several of the most difficult passes on foot) of twelve hours, I found myself the next morning upon the summit of a mountain which overlooks the impregnable fortress of Amadiéh, and two or three miles distant. Here my Nestorian attendants, now nine in number, two having gone out on the way, returned with the single mule which conveyed myself and my effects, and left me to pursue my way down the mountain, attended by a single Koord, with whom I could exchange but a few simple phrases, as he knew neither Syriac nor Turkish, the two languages with which I have been conversant in these countries.

As we trudged along down the deep narrow defile, which led from the summit to the base of the mountain, we suddenly met two lawless Koords, who manifested some disposition to take possession of my property, which my Koordish attendant was carrying upon his back, and which they might easily have done, as neither myself nor attendant was armed. But with some parleying and inquiry who I was, they passed on; and after a tedious walk of nearly two hours, ascending to the fortress, I entered the walls of Amadiéh. Here I obtained another mule, and proceeded the same evening on my way to Mosul.

As I emerged from the mountains, I was met by other perils in a powerful tribe of Arabs, who, in the absence of the pasha, who had gone with his soldiery away to Mardin, were ravaging the country around Mosul, and had robbed or taken possession of several villages on my route, and driven away the flocks which fell in their way.

By diverging from the direct road, and making careful inquiries, I was enabled to avoid the Arabs; and, through the ever watchful care of Him who in faithful verity has said, "Lo I am with you always," I was brought in safety to my anxious, afflicted, and still suffering friends in Mosul, and at a time when my professional services were particularly important, as a means of restoring brother Hinsdale from a relapse of his fever, which seized him the day after he last wrote to you, and had brought him so low, that I had many anxious fears for the result for four or five days after my arrival. But, through the blessing of God, the means used have been so far blessed to his improvement, that I regard him in a convalescent state, and with a fair prospect of an entire recovery, though it will be long before he regains his strength.

RELIGIOUS LITERATURE.

HOW TO BEGIN THE DAY.

As soon as ever thou awakest in the morning, keep the door of thy heart fast shut, that no earthly thought may enter, before that God come in first; and let him, before all others, have the first place therein. So all evil thoughts, either will not dare to come in, or shall the easier be kept out; and the heart will more savour of piety and godliness all the day after. But if thy heart be not at thy first awaking filled with some meditations of God and his Word, and dressed like the lamp in the tabernacle, every morning and evening, with the oil olive of God's Word, and perfumed with the sweet incense of prayer, Satan will attempt to fill it with worldly cares or fleshly desires, so that it will grow unfit for the service of God all the day after. Begin, therefore, every day's work with God's Word and prayer. Meditate how Almighty God can, in the resurrection, as easily raise up the body out of the grave, from the sleep of death, as he hath this morning awakened thee in thy bed, out of the sleep of nature. At the dawning of which resurrection day, Christ shall come to be glorified in his saints, and every one of the bodies of the thousands of his saints, being fashioned like unto his glorious body, shall shine as bright as the sun. All the angels shining, likewise, in their glory, the body of Christ surpassing them all in splendour and glory. If the rising of one sun make the morning sky so glorious, what a bright, shining, and glorious morning will that be, when so many thousand thousands of bodies far brighter than the sun shall appear, and accompany Christ as his glorious train? Let not any transitory profit, pleasure, or vain glory of this day cause thee to lose thy part and portion of the eternal bliss and glory of that day which is properly termed the Resurrection of the Just—but endeavour thou, with the eyes of faith, to foresee the glorious light of that day.—*Bayly*.

THE POWER OF SIN.

SIN, as Newton says, first deceives, and then hardens. In northern climes, travellers are so overcome by cold, as to sink into the arms of death without feeling the agonies of dissolution. So it is with sin. Read the context: "Who being past feeling, have given themselves over to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness." Beware of trifling with little sins. Every sin themselves into stones. We are none of us safe from this, but in the mercy of God in Christ Jesus. "But ye have not so learned Christ." An eminent man seeing one suffer for a heinous crime: "I see myself," said he, "in that man, but by the grace of God." Jesus teaches us by the Spirit. Our frequent falls ought to lead us to the covenant office of the Spirit, by which he teaches his people.—*Rev. W. Howells*.

AFFLICTION MAKES "POLISHED SHAPTS."

BENYAN had not written the "Pilgrim's Progress" if he had not been shut up twelve years in Bedford jail; Baxter had not written the "Saint's Everlasting Rest," if sickness had not brought him to a near contemplation of heaven; Edwards' dismission from Northampton, gave him leisure at Stockbridge to compose his "Inquiry into the Freedom of the Will;" and if Balaam had not lived "on the shores of eternity," the untutored Indian had not dropped his tomahawk, and cried out, under his overwhelming preaching, "Gut-tumak-ah-um-meh, Gattumak-ah-um-meh!"—"Have mercy upon me, have mercy upon me."