

NAAMAN THE SYRIAN.

The history of Naaman the Syrian as it is recorded in the fifth chapter of the Second Book of Kings, is exceedingly interesting and instructive. When he was told how to be cured of the disease with which he was afflicted, he treated the divine prescription with neglect and even contempt, just as many treat the simple gospel of the grace of God at the present day. When told to go and wash in Jordan seven times and he would be instantly and effectually healed of his leprosy, he indignantly asked "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them and be clean?" so he turned and went away in a rage."

It is quite evident that Naaman had a very high opinion of his own country and the rivers and streams that ran through it. To love one's own country is not only harmless, it is commendable. We all love our native land,—the land that gave us birth, and where we spent our childhood and youth. We love the scenes of our earliest recollection,—and can never forget the hills and mountains which we climbed, and the streams and river banks along which we have often walked and in which we often bathed in days that have passed away never to return. Indeed we are sometimes tempted, either by prejudice, or partiality, or something else we don't know very well what, to fancy that the scenery around our own birthplace is more beautiful, and the streams and rivers of our fatherland lovelier and better than any we have seen. It was natural for Naaman to believe that Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus were better than all the waters of Israel. And in addition to this, he was confident, that if simply to wash in a river was enough to cure him of his disease he would not be indebted to Israel or its rivers for a remedy so easy and so simple. But he had no faith in the prescription; he looked upon the message which Elisha sent to him as far too easy a way, and utterly inadequate to meet his case. Indeed he viewed the prescription, "Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean," as an impertinent insult both to his feelings and his understanding, "for he turned and went away in a rage." This shews clearly that Naaman needed to be divested of self. He was destitute of humility and faith. His proud heart rebelled against the divinely appointed method of cure. He thought he must do some great thing, and he was willing to do