

production of solid and abiding advantage. Devoted to these principles, they have been almost invariably found—like sharp and polished weapons in the hands of a lunatic—to inflict a mortal wound on their possessor, and strike deep at the best interests of society. In the history of our Literature, more particularly of the drama, it will be my painful duty to point out too many names which exemplify this assertion:—too many, whose wreath of imperishable laurel is interwoven with bitter and deadly herbs, which, like the venomous diadem that encircled the brow of the Christian virgin in the days of her persecution, insinuate a subtle poison into the veins, and convey it even to the heart!"

SACRED GEOGRAPHY.

From the *Critica Biblica*.

THE LAKES OF PALESTINE.

The *Lake Asphaltites* is a collection of water of considerable magnitude. It is surrounded by high hills on the east, west, and south, some of them exhibiting frightful precipices, and on the north it is bounded by the plain of Jericho, through which the river Jordan flows into it. The Keron, Arnon, and Zaret, rush down the hills in torrents, and along with other streams, discharge themselves into the lake.—Its real size, we believe, is not yet ascertained, for we are not aware that any modern traveller has measured it; and the measurements of Josephus, who found it seventy-two miles long and eighteen or twenty-one in breadth. Pococke agrees with Diodorus, and Dr. Clarke with Josephus: and the Abbe Marin, who seems to have paid much attention to its peculiarities, maintains, that it is one hundred and eighty miles in circuit. We cannot but consider it singular that its dimensions should not have been more precisely ascertained.

The waters of the *Dead Sea* are clear and limpid, but uncommonly salt, and even bitter. Their specific gravity exceeds that of all other waters known: Josephus and Tacitus say that no fish can live in it; and, according to the concurring testimony of several travellers, those carried thither by the Jordan instantly die. Maundrell, nevertheless, states, that he found some shell-fish resembling oysters on the shore, and Bishop Pococke was informed that a monk had seen fish caught in the water; these are assertions, however, which require further corroboration. The mud is black, thick and fetid, and no plant vegetates in the water which is reputed to have a petrifying quality. Branches of trees accidentally immersed in it are speedily converted to stone, and the curious in Jerusalem then collect them. Neither do plants grow in the immediate vicinity of the lake where every thing is dull, cheerless and insipid; whence it is supposed to have derived the name of the *Dead Sea*.—But the real cause of the absence of animals and vegetables, Volney affirms, is owing to the saltness and acridity of the water infinitely surpassing what exists in other seas. The earth surrounding it is deeply impregnated with the same saline qualities, too predominant to admit of vegetable life, and even the air is saturated with them. The waters are clear and incorruptible, as if holding salt in solution, nor is the presence of this substance equivocal, for Dr. Pococke found a thin crust of salt on his face after bathing in the sea, and the stones where it occasionally overflows are covered with a similar crust. Galen considered it completely saturated with salt, for it would dissolve no more when thrown into it. There are mines of fossil salt on the south-west bank, from which specimens have been brought to Europe; some also exist in the declivities of the mountains, and have provided from time immemorial for the consumption of the Arabs and the city of Jerusalem.—Great quantities of asphaltum appear floating on the surface of the sea, and are driven by the winds to the east and west bank, where it remains fixed. Ancient authors inform us, that the neighbouring inhabitants were careful to collect it, and went out in boats, or used other expedients for that purpose. On the south-west bank are hot springs, and deep

gulleys, dangerous to the traveller, were not their position indicated by small pyramidal edifices on the sides. Sulphur is likewise found on the edges of the *Dead Sea*, and a kind of stone, or coal, called *musar* by the Arabs, which on attrition exhales an intolerable odour, and burns like bitumen. This stone, which also comes from the neighboring mountains, is black, and takes a fine polish. Mr. Maundrell saw pieces of it two feet square in the convent of St. John in the wilderness, carved in bas relief, and polished to as great a lustre as black marble is capable of. The inhabitants of the country employ it in paving churches, mosques, and courts, and other places of public resort. In the polishing, its disagreeable odour is lost. The citizens of Bethshean consider it as endowed with anti-septic virtues, and bracelets of it are worn by attendants on the sick, as an antidote against disease. As the lake is at certain seasons covered with a thick dark mist, confined within its own limits which is dissipated with the rays of the sun, spectators have been induced to allege that black and sulphureous exhalations are constantly issuing from the water. They have been no less mistaken in supposing, that birds attempting to fly across are struck dead by pestiferous fumes. Late and reputable travellers declare, that numerous swallows skim along the surface, and from thence take up the water necessary to build their nests; and on this head Heyman and Van Egnout made a decisive experiment. They carried two sparrows to the shore, and having deprived them of some of the wing feathers, after a short flight, both fell into, or rather on the sea. But, so far from expiring there, they got out in safety. An uncommon love of exaggeration is testified in all the older narratives, and in some of modern date, of the nature and properties of the lake. Chateaubriand speaks of a "dismal sound proceeding from this lake of death like the stifled clamours of the people engulfed in its waters"—that its shores produce fruit beautiful to the sight but containing nothing but ashes—that it bears upon its surface the heaviest metals—these, and a thousand other stories of a like character, have been perpetually repeated with hardly any foundation of truth. Among other facts apparently unaccountable, has been ranked that of this lake constantly receiving the waters of the Jordan without overflowing its banks, seeing there is no visible outlet. Some have therefore conjectured the possibility of a subterraneous communication with the Mediterranean: others, more ingenious, are of opinion, that the daily evaporation is sufficient to carry off all the waters discharged into it, which is a simple solution of the apparent paradox.

A small quantity of the water of the *Dead Sea*, lately brought to Britain by Mr. Gordon of Clanie, at the request of the late Sir Joseph Banks, has been analysed by Dr. Marceet. It was perfectly transparent, and deposited no crystals on standing in close vessels. Its taste was peculiar, bitter saline, and pungent. Solutions of silver produced from it a very copious precipitate; showing the presence of marine acid. Oxalic acid instantly discovered lime in the water. Solutions of barytes produced a cloud, showing the existence of sulphuric acid.

The specific gravity was ascertained to be 1.211, which is somewhat less than what had been found by Lavoisier, being 1.250, in a portion submitted to his examination. From different experiments in the analysis which we refer to, the result proved the contents of 100 grains of water to be, muriate of lime, 3.920; muriate of magnesia, 10.246; muriate of soda, 10.360; sulphate of lime, 0.054; total 24.580.

Whence it appears that this water contains about one-fourth of its weight of salts in a state of perfect desiccation; but if these salts be desiccated only at the temperature of 180 deg. they will amount to 41 per cent. of the water.

The *lake of Gennesareth* or the *Sea of Galilee*, though of much narrower dimensions, does not yield in beauty to the *Dead Sea*. This immense lake was anciently called the *Sea of Chinnereth* or *Cin-neroth*. The description which Josephus has left us of it is like all the other pictures drawn by him, admirably faithful in the detail of local features. "Now this Lake of Gennesareth, is so called from the country adjoining to it. Its breadth is forty furlongs, and its length one hundred and forty; its waters are sweet and very agreeable for drinking, for they are finer than the thick waters of the fens, the lake is also pure, and on every side ends directly

at the shores, and at the sand, and it is also of a temperate nature when you draw it up, and of a more gentle nature than river or fountain water, and yet always cooler than one could expect in so diffuse a place as this is. Now, when the water is kept in the open air, it is as cold as that snow which the country people are accustomed to make by night in summer. There are several kinds of fish in it different both to the sea and the sight from those elsewhere." All these features are drawn with an accuracy that could only have been attained by one resident in the country; the size is still nearly the same, the borders of the lake still end at the beach, or the sands, at the feet of the mountains which environ it; its waters are still as sweet and temperate as ever, and the lake abounds with great numbers of fish of various sizes and kinds.

The waters of this lake lie in a deep basin, surrounded on all sides with lofty hills, excepting only the narrow entrance and outlets of the Jordan of each extreme; for which reason, long-continued tempests from any one quarter are unknown here; and this lake, like the *Dead Sea*, with which it communicates, is, for the same reason, never violently agitated for any length of time. The same local features, however, render it occasionally subject to whirlwinds, squalls, and sudden gusts from the hollow of the mountains which, as in every other similar basin, are of momentary duration, and the most furious gust is instantly succeeded by a calm. A strong current marks the passage of the Jordan through the middle of the lake, in its way to the *Dead Sea*, where it empties itself.

The appearance of the *Sea of Galilee*, viewed from the town of Capernaum, which is situated near the upper end of the bank on the western side, is extremely grand; its greatest length runs nearly north and south, from twelve to fifteen miles, and its breadth seems to be, in general, from six to nine miles. The barren aspect of the mountains on each side, and the total absence of wood, give, however, a cast of dullness to the picture; and this is increased to melancholy by the dead calm of its waters, and the silence which reigns throughout its whole extent, where not a boat or vessel of any kind is to be found.

REVIEW.

From the *Westleyan Magazine*.

The Christian and Civic Economy of Large Towns.—Nos. I. to VIII.—By THOMAS CHALMERS, D.D. Minister of St. John's Church, Glasgow &c. pp. 358. 8s. 6d. bds.

This is the first volume of a work still in the process of publication, in the form of quarterly numbers; but the present volume is complete in itself, as far as relates to the important concern of suggesting an efficient plan for carrying the moral and saving influence of Christianity into every dark walk of ignorance and vice, which may exist in the large towns of the empire.

Part of this volume relates more immediately to Scotland, part to the church of which Dr. CHALMERS is so distinguished a Minister, but much more to the nation at large, and to all who by profession, or the impulses of religion, charity, and zeal, are engaged in promoting its "instruction in righteousness," the elevation of its morals, and the advancement of its happiness.

In bringing this work before our readers, we shall first consider what the author offers in explanation of its main design, leaving some of the subjects into which he has made very instructive digressions, for subsequent notice.

No man can be a true believer in Christianity, who does not admit its complete moral efficacy to accomplish the purposes of its Author,—to dissipate the most accumulated ignorance,—to put to shame the boldest vices,—to correct the most corrupt state of society,—to wrestle with and subvert the most inveterate aberrations of the human heart from truth, justice, and holiness.

If, in countries where it has long existed, these mighty effects have been but partially developed, and a great part of society is seen wandering through the paths of various evil, as though quite out of the sphere of its influence, and is, in consequence, sunk into a misery almost as extreme, as though the divine benevolence had made no provision for the fal-