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## Contributors and Correspondents

### DIARY IN THE EAST.

DAMASCUS.

One day we paid a visit to the English Consul, Mr. Green. His house is a good specimen of the more decorated native houses. Along the walls round the court were intricate patterns painted and inlaid in white and black marble. The room where we were received was made in the usual style on two levels, the inner part rising by some steps from the portion beside the door. On this lower part any native on entering would leave his shoes before ascending to the other. The walls of the room were also painted in bright colours, which were well blended in the patterns formed, so that the effect was not gaudy. Every house has a tank or fountain in the court. The river Abana as it passes through Damascus is divided into a great many channels, and from those the tanks have supplies of living water. The gardens of Damascus which are so celebrated are not much like what we should call gardens, for there are no beds of flowers. They are mere groves or shrubberies, through which little channels of water run. By the side of these under the shade of the trees, the inhabitants of Damascus delight to sit smoking and sipping sherbet, enjoying in dreamy idleness the cool shade, and soothing murmur of the running water.

I was sorry to hear that in some of these gardens the use of stronger drinks had been introduced. Amid all the misery, and oppression, and superstition, and ignorance of which I was witness in the East, the one pleasant feature was the absence of drunkenness. If that should be added to all the other evils I cannot see any end but that the people should die off the face of the earth. It certainly was a comfortable thing to be able to get out about without any fear of being pained and disgusted by the horrible sights and sounds of drunkenness which so disgrace our Christian lands. Where among us could any one be found that could say after a six months residence in our country, "I have not seen one drunk person while I have lived here." That is what I can say of Palestine.

I heard of drinking among the pilgrims to Jerusalem, and was told of one or two who had been seen drunk, but I never once saw an intoxicated person during all these six months; while at home I can scarcely live six hours without seeing evidences of that horrible vice in one form or other.

The W's and I joined a party of travellers from the hotel in visiting the great Mosque of Damascus, which is interesting as bearing traces of having been a Christian Church. There is no difficulty in gaining admission at certain hours of the day. On entering we either removed our shoes which we had put on for the purpose, or put on over our boots a pair of the yellow native slippers which a man had ready at the entrance. Passing through a large gateway we entered an oblong quadrangle of great size. To our left on entering was a long covered court or piazza forming one side of the quadrangle; opposite it was the Mosque which we entered.

It is more than 400 feet long by some 120 in breadth. The roof is supported by two ranges of Corinthian pillars on round arches. The floor is of tessellated marble, over which mats and carpets are laid here and there, on which the faithful kneel and prostrate themselves in going through their devotions. Like all Eastern mosques it had neither bench nor seat of any kind. The walls are in many parts encrusted with coloured marbles in patterns, or with mosaic, much of it in very good preservation. These ornamentations belong to the Moslem era, while the bulk of the building dates from early Christian times, and there are remains in the foundations of a still older date. From Arab writers, confirmed by later researches, it appears as if the Christian Church had been built on the remains of an ancient heathen temple, so that some have imagined that here may be the very place where Naaman went with his master into the house of Rimmon, and where Ahaz saw that altar of which he sent the pattern back to Jerusalem.

From the Mosque itself we went to the opposite gate from that one by which we entered. The folding doors covered with brass in embossed patterns have evidently no connection with a Mahomedan place of worship, for conspicuous amid other forms in the mouldings is the Christian emblem of a sacramental cup. There is another closed up gateway still more interesting, for over it there still remains a cross with the inscription in Greek, "The Kingdom, O Christ, is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth through all generations." But a view of this most interesting relic of the better days of Damascus can only be obtained by getting out on the roofs of some of the houses that are thickly built all round the court of the Mosque. Perhaps its obscure position ac-

counts for the preservation of the cross and inscription, for in general all such symbols have been carefully obliterated in the many ancient churches appropriated by the Moslems on their conquest of Syria. From the gate we crossed the quadrangle to one of the three minarets connected with it. Mounting its many steps we reached the little gallery whence the Muezzin announces the hour of prayer. It afforded us a fine view over the thickly crowded buildings of the city, of which in this way we saw the extent within the walls which hem it in. Beyond the walls a cincture of green surrounds the city; the gardens, the groves in which its inhabitants delight. Here and there suburbs appear amid the broad line of verdure. Looking beyond this we have to north and east nothing but desert bounded by low lines of barren hills, their outlines quivering in hazy mist under the glowing sun. To the west, immediately beyond the green wall of verdure that is as strongly marked in its outline as the actual wall of Damascus, rises the mountain range of Antilibanon, it looks barren and burned up, for the heights where the snow lingers all the summer are not within view of Damascus. Looking southward or rather south-west, one point was of especial interest to me—the lower range of hills over which the old road from Jerusalem came, and which is still the track for travellers from Palestine. By it came that fiery persecutor, who, in his eager zeal for Judaism, and blind rage against the Nazarine, came on 'breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord.' As he surmounted that crest of the hill he would come within sight of Damascus, and would feel almost as if his errand were accomplished, and he had already exterminated all who believed in the name of Jesus there.

What a moment that must have been. It was high noon. A blazing sun beating on the heads of the travelers. The green shades around the city were already in view. Suddenly even the light of that mid-day sun was paled by the vivid flash of a heavenly splendor, in which the glorified Saviour appeared before him who, while he at once recognized him as "Lord," yet knew him not as that same Jesus whom he had so often reviled. Blinded by that unutterable glory he falls prostrate before him, prostrate not only in body but in the bowed spirit. He who the moment before was the proud Pharisee is now ready to say to him whom he had regarded as a crucified malefactor, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" and his whole life after proved that these were no vain words dictated by a passing fear or sudden awe, but that in that moment he received the spirit of a little child, without which none can enter the kingdom of heaven. He learned then the wonderful fact that the very Being whom he hated with all the force of that passionate heart of his, had "loved him, and given himself for him," and that while he was "breathing out threatenings and slaughter" against the followers whom Jesus loved and spoke of as his very self, the Crucified One had meantime been standing before his Father as the "Lamb slain," and pleading for sparing mercy for their persecutor.

Looking down over the thick clustering houses we could trace the line of that "street which is called Straight," which still runs from end to end of Damascus, and which (it may be) still marks the line of march of that blind man who crept humbly along led by the hand, scarce noting where they led him, or heeding the awed whispers in which they speak of the strange vision. His wrapped soul sees naught but him whom he has persecuted; his ear is only alert to try and catch some further utterance of that voice which is henceforth for him to be the one voice in the Universe worth listening to, the only voice to be obeyed—humbly obeyed—whether it speaks to him direct, or whether by means of an Ananias, who is thus for one moment to appear in the page of holy writ and to be heard of no more.

May 14th was a sorrowful day, as I then parted with the W's, those dear friends with whom I had passed so many days of surpassing interest, and by whom I had been so tenderly cared for during all our wanderings. They had to hurry back to Beyrout, to get the steamer thence to Jungfrau, where Mr. W's mission work claimed his speedy return.

Though thus left alone I was not solitary in Damascus. My countryman, Mr. McIntosh, and his kind wife were ready to care for my comfort, and as their house was too full to admit me they took a room for me close to them where I felt more comfortable than alone in a hotel, and paid not one half so much. The McIntoshes superintend the schools, and mission work connected with the British Syrian schools. In the school establishment where they reside a large number of girls are gathered daily to receive a good, useful and Scriptural education. Most of the children are of the Greek and other native Christian Churches, but there are a few Moslem girls. I was much amused at seeing those duck down behind the other girls when Mr. W. came into the school. It was not proper that a man should look on their faces. Many more of the Moslem population would gladly send their children to a school to be set going in the Mahomedan quarter of the town, but the habits of the people make it very difficult to send little girls for any distance through the streets daily. The Syrian School Committee greatly desire to set up a school in the Mahomedan quarter, but hitherto the funds have been wanting.

Mr. Macintosh took me out one day to an outskirt of Damascus where they have another school. It was quite a long ride, but donkey's are easily got for hire in Damascus, and not at all expensive to those who know what they ought to pay, but to travellers the charges are often exorbitant.

While a ride of two hours or more cost me sixpence or sevenpence at the proper rate, and a ride of about double the time was charged nearly five shillings, a very large addition being put on for the use of a side saddle. It is the same with everything. We thought one penny moderate for a delicious tumbler of cold sherbet, but found afterwards that we had been charged at least double the price which a native would pay.

On our way to the school we rode past a slaughter house. There was nothing very unpleasant in the outside of the place itself, but beside it, standing blinking in the sunshine, were some vultures that had been gorging themselves with the refuse of the slaughter-house animals. I had never seen these birds so near or in such a state before. They were most revolting objects, yet in the East I do not know whether they or the wild dogs are of most use as scavengers. In that way they are protected, and they sat on the ground beside the road as we past without the least appearance of fear or molestation. I might truly say "their tameness was shocking to me."

(To be Continued.)

### NOTES FROM MANITOBA.

The following letter, received by the Students' Missionary Society of Knox College, from Rev. J. S. Stewart, has been handed us for publication:

To the President and Members of the Knox College Students' Missionary Society.

BROTHERS AND FELLOW STUDENTS.—As your missionary to the Province of Manitoba, I left Toronto on the morning of the 8th of June last by rail, and on the evening of the same day took the boat at Southampton for Duluth, where we arrived on Saturday morning. In the afternoon I met with Mr. and Mrs. Bell, who came by another boat and were on their way to Manitoba. It was pleasant and cheering to meet with an old classmate and proceed on our way together to engage in the same great work. Having spent a pleasant, and we hope profitable Sabbath in Duluth, on Monday morning we took the train, (N.P.R.) and after travelling all day, partly through woods and over rocks and marshes, and partly over the open prairie, came to the muddy streets of Moorehead, and the muddy waters of the Red River. There was no time to be lost, for it was now getting dark, and the boat had waited for us since Saturday morning, and now amidst oaths and curses we and our baggage had to be got aboard. Our journey from Toronto to Moorehead was very pleasant, but from Moorehead to Fort Garry was not so much so. On Friday morning, shortly after daybreak, we, therefore, the more gladly welcomed the sight of Winnipeg, and the prospect of bidding old "Selkirk" (the steamer) a last and long farewell.

I shall not attempt to give you any description of Winnipeg and its surroundings—its old fort, the place of crime and bloodshed, the home of Archbishop Tache, etc.—these are all well known to you. Your time is precious, so I shall try to confine myself to what is strictly missionary, and as briefly as possible give an account of my stewardship.

As some of you are already aware, I met Rev. Mr. Robertson, of Winnipeg, in Toronto before I left, when on his way to the Assembly. I inquired concerning the mission work here, and whether either of the fields supplied by our missionaries of last year was vacant, and where I was likely to labour during the summer. He replied to the effect that the Manitoba Presbytery had decided that I should labour as one of the regular missionaries, and that my labours should be divided among several fields, taking these in turn with their own missionaries. I felt this was not the purpose for which you appointed me to come to Manitoba—to labour as a probationer. I was at a loss how to act. I met some of the members of our committee and spoke to them on the subject. They, though not approving of my labouing in this way, advised me to come to the field and see what could be done. So on arriving in Winnipeg, I called upon Prof. Bryce, and made these and other facts known to him. A meeting of the Presbytery's Home Mission Committee was called, at which it was decided to recommend to Presbytery at its next meeting on the 14th of July, a re-arrangement of the mode of supplying the field, and that Palestine should be left to be supplied by the Society. I was quite satisfied with this, and in the meantime, as Mr. Glendinning was in Palestine, and I was to remain for a Sabbath or two, and as the Home Mission Committee promised to supply it for the remaining Sabbath, till after the meeting of Presbytery, and as I wished to appear for my licensure, at the request of the Home Mission Committee I agreed to go for three Sabbaths to the Boyne and Pembina Mountain field, distant from Winnipeg between fifty and sixty miles. On Sabbath the 20th of June, I preached in the afternoon in the "sheds" to the immigrants, and in the evening in Knox Church, to Mr. Robertson's congregation. Tuesday, Wednesday, Prof. Bryce kindly sent his horse and buggy as far as Headington, and I went with me, and Mr. Donaldson kindly lent me his horse.

return from the Boyne. I had yet fully forty miles to go, and thirty of these over the open prairie, without a single house, and only an occasional willow bush to break the monotony. I was told not to venture alone, as I should get lost. I found that on Friday afternoon two of the settlers were going in with an ox and cart, so I resolved to go with them and have their company. At 3 p.m. we left, travelled all night, and early in the morning came to the Boyne. Word was sent round that there would be services on the morrow and for a few Sabbaths, so the whole settlement came out. Here I remained and visited all the people, (Mr. Peter Campbell, whose warm hospitality I enjoyed while here, going with me as a guide) till the 12th of July and then left, leaving them the hope that they might expect regular supply during the summer. At the meeting of Presbytery I was "appointed" to supply Palestine, the recommendation of the Home Mission Committee being adopted.

By this time I had decided not to buy a horse, as it would add greatly to the expenses of the Society, seeing the contributions from the field would be very small, owing to the grasshoppers having destroyed everything in most places, and in Palestine especially.

The next question was, "How can I get to Palestine?" On Friday I found that two sons of Mr. Munroe, of Rat Creek, were on their way home from working on the railway, and so inquired if they could bring me along. They kindly welcomed me to ride with them as far as they were going, and that free of charge. There were two wagons, and five of us in all. When Friday night overtook us we camped by the river side, almost under the shadow of a Roman Catholic Church. Two of us slept in the wagon and three under it, and rose refreshed in the morning. In the afternoon of Saturday we came to Rat Creek Settlement, and on Sabbath I preached at Rat Creek and Portage Creek. On Tuesday morning I left by stage for Palestine, having to leave my box behind. I began work without delay, taking up the four regular stations supplied by Messrs. McKellar and Carrie—Palestine, Golden Stream, Second Crossing, and Totogon.

Both these missionaries did good service to our Society and to the Church in this Province; their names are household words, and their memory will not soon be forgotten.

The Palestine field is a very large one. The distances between the stations are as follows:—From Palestine, southwardly, to Golden Stream, seven miles; and to Second Crossing, eastwardly, ten miles; and from the latter place to Totogon, eastwardly, is twelve miles. To enable me to undertake the work in this large field, Mr. Broadfoot, of Palestine, very kindly came to my help by placing his horse at my disposal free of charge. Services were held on alternate Sabbaths in each place. There was also a Sabbath school started in each station—weekly in Palestine, and conducted by the people themselves, and fortnightly in other places. A Bible class too, was begun in Palestine and Second Crossing. We had also a weekly prayer-meeting in Palestine, partly in English and partly in Gaelic. Very imperfect though my Gaelic is, I felt it my duty to make use of what little I had, when I was told by several, that they had "not a word of English." At all the meetings the attendance was good considering the number of settlers in each locality. I shall trouble you with the numbers at Sabbath services only:—Palestine, fifty to sixty; Second Crossing, fifteen to twenty; Golden Stream, ten to fifteen; Totogon, fifteen to twenty. In Palestine the attendance was Presbyterian with very few exceptions, and Golden Stream the same. At Second Crossing there are only three Presbyterian families, and at Totogon the same number. I visited all, and was heartily welcomed by them. In these stations I laboured only six weeks.

So I left Palestine with a sad heart and came on my way as far as Winnipeg. I was then asked to take the Boyne and Pembina Mountain field during the remainder of the time for the Society.

After waiting in vain for two days for a chance to the settlement, I walked to Headington, and there found a friend in Mr. Cunningham, who very kindly lent me a horse, free of charge, to bring me the remaining forty miles. I then set to work as best I could in this extensive field—forty miles between its extremes. And here I have to record the kindness of Mr. Jas. Campbell in enabling me to overtake the work by giving me a horse free of charge again. The field consists of two settlements—Boyne and Pembina Mountain, twelve miles apart at their nearest points, and both of which have been quite recently settled—the first settler came to the Boyne four years ago, and the first to the mountain only a year ago last July. The latter settlement is now the larger of the two, and is fast filling up. Quite a number came in late this Fall. At present there are eighteen families and about as many young men settled on claims. In the Boyne there are nineteen families and a few young men. Six families profess to be Presbyterian at the Boyne, and at the Mountain eight. At the Boyne there are two preaching stations, four miles apart, which received two thirds of the services. The attendance averaged about fifteen and twenty in the places respectively. On every third Sabbath supply was given in two different places at the Mountain, eight miles apart, and distant from the Boyne, twenty miles and twenty eight miles respectively. The attendance in these places was very small, owing to the distance between the settlers and other like causes. In all, I could visit these places only four times; and one of these Sabbaths was so stormy and cold that one

could not venture out on the open prairie, where there was no road, without being almost certain of getting lost and perishing in the storm. To do justice to the section of country there should be two missionaries, one in each settlement, as it is impossible for one to overtake the work as it ought to be done. Indeed most of the fields in this province are too extensive for the labours of one man. Of this whole "Land" it may be said: "The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few, and although one after another has found it necessary to leave, it was not because there was no longer any more room in these parts to preach the Gospel.

There is a great deal more which might be said, but I have already taxed your patience too much—more than I intended when I began, and still I feel there is a question you would ask, and on which I cannot forbear saying something. You would ask, "What are the future prospects of the country?" I reply the prospects are good—politically and ecclesiastically. I feel persuaded that there is a grand future for this Province and Territory. True, year after year sees the labours of the husbandman devoured by the grasshoppers, and God has a wide end in view in its being so; but judging from what little we are able to comprehend of his wise and mysterious ways, it seems to me that this fertile soil which is "as the garden of Eden" before them, and a "desolate waste" behind them, was prepared for the abode of man. And wherever man is, is the place for the Gospel, and wherever the Gospel is preached it will produce blessed results, for it has lost not a particle of that power which it had when declared to be "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." Viewing matters in this light there is every encouragement for our Church "to come up and possess the land," and though at present the people can do but little in most cases to support the Gospel, yet in time to come, and that, I feel persuaded not far distant, they will be able not only to bear their own burdens, but also to support the weak. They are now calling loudly for help, and if two or three more missionaries do not come, some fields must do with very scanty supply. Should you feel able to send one, and see your way clear to do so, by all means send him, for I am certain you will have no difficulty in finding one willing to come.

Heartily thanking you for the honour you have conferred upon me, and the confidence you have placed in me, I shall ever seek to remember my obligations to our Society, and shall ever try to do my humble part in promoting its interests in endeavoring to advance the kingdom of our Saviour in the world, praying that He will own and bless our humble efforts. Yours truly, JAS. S. STEWART.

### Letter from Mr. Chiniquy.

Editor BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

Sir,—I am taught that the best way to employ the days which the Providence of God wanted me to give to recruiting my health was to visit the fields of labour of our young evangelist friend, Mr. Edward Pettier. I have, in consequence, passed the greater part of last week among the French emigrants who work in the Vale Colliery, and Stallerton Mine of Pictou County, and I cannot sufficiently thank God for what my eyes have seen and my ears heard there.

I do not exaggerate when I tell you that one of the most remarkable evangelical movements of this continent, among the Roman Catholics has taken place there; and you will easily believe me when I tell you that nearly two hundred Roman Catholics there, have opened their eyes to the errors of Popery since less than a year ago, and they have accepted the Gospel of Christ as the only rule of their life.

It has done me good indeed to hear their singing our beautiful evangelical hymns, and see them searching the Scripture with the eagerness of men hungry for the bread which comes from heaven, and thirsty after the waters which flow from the fountains of eternal life.

One of these converts, who is a most intelligent man, told me, after signing his act of recantation of the errors of Rome last Sabbath, "If I go back to France, I will have many battles to fight, for there are five priests among my relatives. But I do not fear them. With the Bible in hand nothing is more easy than to seal the lips of a priest. Their monstrous dogma of a Water-God is such a ridiculous piece of idolatry and nonsense that a moment of reflection is enough to see that Romanism is, from head to foot, a fearful imposture." Let us pray God to give to His Church many faithful and able laborers, such as our dear young friend Pettier. Let every disciple of Christ in Canada pray that he may work as faithfully and successfully during many many years more. Truly yours, C. CHINIQUY.

Halifax, N. S., Feb. 28th, 1876.

On Monday last a *pro re nata* meeting of the Presbytery of Toronto, was held in the lecture room of Knox Church. Rev. Prof. McLaren, on behalf of the committee on old St. Andrew's Church, reported that they had organized the Church, with the above name. The report was accepted, and the diligence of the committee commended. Thereafter a memorial from the new congregation was presented, praying for the moderation of a call in favour of Rev. David Waters, L.L.D., of St. David's, St. John's, N.B. Rev. Prof. McLaren was appointed to moderate in a call on Wednesday, 22nd inst., at the old St. Andrew's Church.