

British American Presbyterian

Vol. 4—No. 49.

TORONTO, CANADA, FRIDAY, JANUARY 14, 1876.

[Whole No. 205]

Contributors and Correspondents.

DIARY IN THE EAST

EXCURSIONS FROM NAZARETH.

We passed one of the villagers in the plains; Dr. Vartan recognized him by some peculiarity in his dress. The doctor was on friendly terms even with these bigots. We reached the fountain about half-past eight a.m. It was a very pleasant sight. The water is bright and sparkling, flowing out from the cave, and filling a large shallow pool in which many little fish were swimming about. After our four hours ride it was very pleasant to sit in the shade near the pool, and eat a second breakfast, and think of all the Scripture stories which the scene recalled. From the days of Gideon downwards, what wonderful events had happened in these places now within range of our vision. Our guide stooping over the fountain to drink, and lifting its water in his hands, reminded me of the text applied to Gideon's men when they drank from this same pool.

It was easy to realize how he and his small host came across the hills behind us from the south, and as they came to their camping ground at the pool saw spread out on the plain before them the immense host of Midian, "as the sand by the sea-side for multitude." Looking eastward the long stretch of plain seemed to be bounded by the mountains on the other side of Jordan, whence the Midianites came. Now, as then, the ford of Jordan, away there to the east is the favourite crossing place for the predatory tribes on the other side of the river. By it they came across with their flocks and herds, tempted by the rich pastures of the plain, and spread themselves abroad "like grasshoppers;" eating up all before them. No wonder that as Gideon's little army saw the multitude of their enemies many of them, who did not share his entire trust in God, were afraid, and were glad to be sent home again. From Gideon, my thoughts passed on to Saul and his sons, and David's most touching lament over their miserable fate on these mountains of Gilboa. Before us to the east, the object of our expedition was seen in the distance—that Bethshan, where the body of Saul was hung up in triumph by his enemies.

Jezebel recalled the history of Ahab and his wicked wife; while looking across to Shunem Elisha's wonderful history came up before me. In the harvest field of this plain before me the little son of the woman of Shunem so long desired, so dearly prized, received the stroke of death which so wrung his mother's heart, even when she said that all was well. There, in the distance to westward, is that Mount Carmel where she sought the prophet in haste. What long hours must they have seemed to her as she hurried across the weary plain, looking on longingly to these heights where the prophet dwelt who might, even yet, restore her boy to her.

How interminable the way would appear as we returned, yet bringing him with her these was hope in her heart, a hope soon fulfilled in the glad hour when Elisha restored her boy alive again to her embrace.

Then again, as I looked over the plain, I could fancy I saw the chariot coming up from the east in which one was sent to "drive forth furiously." His approach is seen from the watch tower then in Jezreel to our left, and one messenger after another rides forth to enquire his errand, till at last the king himself salutes forth, going out to meet the death that God is sending him by the hands of Jotham.

How real it all seems. That long flat plain is the very place one would say for chariots to career on. Yet now not a wheel of any kind traverses it, and the few tracks that cross it in different directions are so solitary, that in my long eight or ten hours on them, I do not suppose I met above ten or twelve wayfarers, if so many.

After half an hour's rest we mounted again, and started eastwards towards the Jordan valley. This eastward offshoot of Esdraon, along which we rode, must be some six miles long, and about half as broad. The centre of it was still so wet from the long-continued rains that we were warned not to take the usual track to Beisan, but to keep to another path close to the very foot of Gilboa. It was longer but very pleasant. We began by crossing the little stream flowing from the fountain of Jezreel close to a tiny mill which it turns. On stones in the stream there were a good many small tortoises lying so still, but in the sun, that I might have mistaken them for stones had they not been alarmed at the sound of our horses' feet, and drop into the water. Far up the side of Gilboa there were one or two patches of grain. I suppose they would belong to the inhabitants of the village on the top, who would prefer to cultivate the poorer, thinner soil of the hill near them rather than go down to the rich plain, where crops would be in much greater danger of being seized on by the Bedouins from the other side of Jordan. We saw several encampments of Bedouins, their clusters of black tents dotting the plain, and their herds and flocks scattered about at

ture. We passed two other very pretty fountains, and at the stream near one of them a very large herd of cattle were being watered, under charge of their Arab guards. We rode by one poor little village, the huts all built of mud. We could see some of the women from the high on the side of Gilboa, bringing down their bundles of brush-wood for fuel. All the way as we went we saw a conical hill in the middle of the plain before us, and knew that was where we were going. As we got near it we had to pass several water courses still full. A good many long-legged birds, cranes and others, were fishing in them. Gradually the ground sunk till we found that we had to descend into a deep gully which, dividing into two, surrounded the curious abrupt conical hill on which the fortress of ancient Bethshan (The Roman Synchops) was built. Rapid streams rush down the gullies, and on each side of them the ground is covered with remains of the great city which once stood here. The remains cover a space of some three miles in extent. We first visited the theatre, the form of which is still easily traced. Our horses scrambling, and stumbling over stones, and through tangled thickets of thorny bushes, we rode on to the wide area of the theatre, and looked up to the tier above tier of seats. We were on the very spot where it is said that numbers of Christians gave up their lives for love of the Lord who bought them with his own precious life, while thousands of spectators on these seats gazed over their sufferings.

Crossing the stream we rode on to the foot of the hill, passing dozens of fine columns, many of them still erect. Here Dagon, the fishy God of Philistia, was worshipped, and many another idol of wood and stone in the many temples of which the ruins lie scattered around. In approaching the hill we had ridden round among the ruins to eastward of it. At that side it is very steep, but circling round again in the gorge to the west we found a way by which we could ride to the very top. It was rather rough riding, for the tall weeds hid the scattered ruins, and made it impossible to see what sort of ground the horse was going over; but we reached the summit without accident. We were now 200 feet above the ravine, and obtained an extensive view towards the Jordan valley into which the plain of Esdraon here breaks down. The valley is about three miles wide, and some 300 feet below us. The Jordan itself lies hid in the deep bed which we can trace on the other side of the valley by the trees which border the river. The mountains on the other side rise steeply in sort of terraces, one of which the site of ancient Pella can be described. Deep gorges cut into the mountain wall; one of these a little south-east of us is the ravine down which the men of Jabesh Gilead came on their expedition to Bethshan, when they rescued the remains of Saul from the hands of his enemies.

The top of the hill around us is covered with a smoky kind of grass now quite dry. Our horses seem to relish it, though the seeds are so sharp that as I walk about I cannot help wishing I had my boots to protect my legs from their countless prickles, which make my clothes like pin-cushions. It was now about mid-day, but the heat was not excessive, though there was not an atom of shade to be had. We ate the dinner which our saddle bags contained, and lay about resting and scanning the scenery with a binocular glass. Looking over the steep side of the hill, which, partly from its natural form, and partly by scarping is almost perpendicular; we saw numbers of beautiful little birds flitting about the rocks below us. They seemed to have their nests there. On a sort of plateau on the other side of the ravine is the present village of Beisan. We avoided entering it as its inhabitants bear a bad character for lawlessness, and there is nothing worth seeing in it. We did not stay quite an hour on the hill. We had a long ride back to Nazareth before us, though we returned by a shorter road than the one we took in going. We all walked a little way down the hill, as the ground was so rough with hidden ruins of the ancient fortress. It was not pleasant walking. Every weed seemed covered with prickles, and they grow nearly as tall as myself, so that I was glad when we could mount our beasts again.

We kept along the north side of the plain, and passed some fields of bearded wheat of such an immense height that Dr. V. thought he would ride in, and see how tall it was. His horse was a very tall animal, and he himself sat a pretty good height on it, yet I could only see a little of him over the wheat, the horse was quite hidden. The heads were large and heavy, so that altogether I could believe a Scotch farmer when he said that he could feed all Palestine from the plain of Esdraon were it in his hands. Instead of skirting the west side of Little Hermon as before, we took a slanting course over the eastern shoulder of the hill, which brought us over into the northern branch of the plain, between Little Hermon, Tabor, and the hills around Nazareth. This was an interesting route to me, as it was the line which Saul must have pursued in making his night journey from his camp near the pool of Jezreel to Endor, when he went to consult the witch there. He must have gone this way, both as being the nearest and as avoiding the camp of the Philistines, who were posted near the foot of Little Hermon further to the west. As we rode over the hill the day, over clouded, the wind rose, and there were a few drops of rain, so that we feared a regular storm, but it did not come to anything. Dr. V. was far from sure of the road, and we rode on in much uncertainty, wishing much that we could meet some one who could guide us, but not a creature was to be seen till we came to a

little village near the top of the part of the hill we were crossing. There Dr. V. inquired, and we were glad to find that we really were all right. The ride was very beautiful. Whole fields of a large mallow with beautiful mauve flowers waved in the breeze, looking quite gorgeous in the sunshine. As we came down the side of Little Hermon, Tabor rose before us to the east, showing its full height as it rose abruptly from the plain, and straight in front of us the hills of Galilee rose up like a wall, from which we were separated by the plain here only a few miles wide. Turning westward we rode for some miles close under Little Hermon.

We passed under Endor. It clings to the hill side, some of the villagers even inhabiting caves. I thought it an evil looking place, quite fit, even now, for a witch's abode. Nain lies also at the foot of Little Hermon, or rather in a little recess of the hill, some distance up its slope. We did not go up to it; that would have taken us considerably out of our way, and we had not time for that, but we could see the poor little village very well from our path. There are now very few inhabited houses. Its whole inhabitants, if they turned out, could not now be called "much people," but there are ruins which show that it must once have been a much larger town. In the hill side to the one side of the village there are many rock tombs.

Perhaps it was there that they were bearing the widow's only son when they were met by that little company of thirteen weary, dusty men, approaching their town from Capernaum, it may be by the very track along Hermon's side by which we rode.

Before we got as far west as Nain we struck across the plain to the foot of the hill to the north of it. Just at the foot of the hills we came to a considerable village, evidently on an old site, for there were many curious tombs set perpendicularly into the flat rocks that here crop through the soil. Near some of them there lay large flat stones that evidently had been used to cover the graves. As we drew near to the hill it looked so fearfully steep that I could scarcely believe Dr. V. when he told me he was going to take me up there on horse back. It looked like asking me to ride up a wall, and the zigzag path among the rough rocks looked like a mere scratch on the face of the wall. Yet up it we went. Palestine horses seem up to anything of that sort. I might have ridden to the top, and would have done so had I not my horse's good creature though it was had a slight lameness, which was scarcely perceptible in walking, and not at all so in cantering. This now became a most uncomfortable hobble in going up hill, which gave me a hard lurch at each high step it took in mounting the rocks. So to save both it and myself I got off, and walked up, and very tired I was when we got to the top.

After we got to the top of the hill we just had a mile or two of rough road to Nazareth, which we reached at dusk after being fourteen hours a day. I was not a quarter so tired as by half the length of time at a much slower pace in coming from Tiberias. The difference in the air accounted for this, so that instead of going to bed I was able to enjoy a pleasant chat over all we had seen with a Scotch lady who had come to see me. She was then taking an interim charge of the girl's school at Nazareth, superintending the two young teachers who were going, who it was the learning of Arabic easy to them, unfitted them for being left all alone in a strange land.

(To be continued.)

FORMOSA.

Editor BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

DEAR SIR,—It's nearly three months since I last wrote you. Some of your readers will be wondering why I don't write. The reason is not far to seek. When pressed with work it is easy to procrastinate what can as well be done tomorrow as to-day. Besides, it is sometimes as difficult to know what to write about as it is for a minister to choose a text. Not because there are so few texts but so many. What shall I write about?

Suppose a few notes about the "customs of the road" here.—Note I don't undertake to say in China; I say here.—Well what about the roads themselves, first? None like we have in Canada, but as some of them are there. The ordinary country road, at its best, is a winding path in and out among rice and sugar fields, and up and down hills, and consists of a single row of boulders, with flat sides up, sometimes quite unevenly laid, always hard to walk on, in summer very hot, and in the winter rains very slippery. The highways between town and town are better; not straight, but about twice the width—room for two to meet and pass without either getting off the road—and more evenly paved. Here there are no carriages—not even ox carts—so that we have no roads suited to them.

Suppose now we set out on a journey! That *quadruped* thing we see borne on the shoulders of two or three men is a Sedan-chair. If you don't care to walk the only alternative is to sit in a Sedan-chair, and for some reason you might as well sit astride the roughest trotting farm horse that could be found. But the Chinese seem to like it, and if you are on a highway you will meet the literati and their ladies lolling lazily in their Sedan chairs, carried by their sun-facted coolies at the rate of say five miles an hour. No Chinese ride in chairs except women, who of course can't walk very well with their small feet, and gentlemen who are too proud to walk.

The common people all walk, and to fall in with some one walking is one's only chance for "a chat by the way." A Sedan chair is a most unbecoming vehicle, they never seat more than one at a time. Add to this the fact that the roads are too narrow for two to go abreast, and to follow or to take the lead is to be, on occasion, of the length of the poles by which the Sedan is borne, out of ear-shot of your companion, and you can see the impossibility of keeping up a conversation by the way. Say you don't take a Sedan then, as we can't talk to anyone, and as it's next to impossible to read, owing to the motion. But, if we walk, we'll have to keep a sharp look out that we don't come into collision with some body. The road is narrow, and has usually a stream of people passing both ways. No heavy waggons, loaded with sixty or eighty bushels of wheat, and drawn by a fine span of sleek horses, but instead, ten or twelve Chinamen at a pace half that of half walk, each with a piece of bamboo pole over his shoulder, about five or six feet long, and from each end of it suspended say fifty pounds of rice in a coarse bag. The same with every thing else. Tea, sugar, indigo, grass for thatching houses, brick, stone, lime, tiles, wood, charcoal, meat, fish, everything in deed that is bought and sold is carried in the same way. The pedlar, the butcher, the baker, and confectioner, the fisherman, the barber, all ply their trades with their kit in boxes, or baskets, or bags, or bundles as the case may be, suspended from the ends of the individual's bamboo pole. A thrust from one of these sticks, in the breast or shoulder, is not a very pleasant occurrence, and unless one has his eyes about him nothing is easier than to get such a blow. Now though we are on foot, and promised ourselves a little conversation, we'll find it hard to manage it. Try talking to a man either leading or following on a narrow path and you'll find how hard it is to talk under such circumstances. The language of the features lit up by a smile or darkened by a frown, of the eye, twinkling with good humor or flashing with passion, is all lost, and the conversation degenerates into brief remarks and monosyllabic replies. So we can't have a talk. But what are the salutations by the way? I know your readers would like to know what takes the place of "Good morning," and "How are you?" "Fine day!" &c., &c. The two most common forms of salutation here are "Lee Cheah bag!" and "Lee bag for Khee?" The first is used most frequently near meal times, and means "have you eaten yet or not?" The second, used most frequently between meals, but often just following the former, means "Where are you going to, or coming from?" Chinamen don't think it at all rude or strange to ask such questions. Indeed such interrogations as "what is your name, what is your surname, where do you come from, are your parents alive, how many sons have you, are quite allowable, of course with the understanding that the catechizing is to be mutual. After a few such friendly questions, and the usual remarks about the weather which are as common here as at home, you may take up any subject of conversation you please. As a usual thing, however, very little talking is done on the road for reasons already mentioned. Instead of talking then, let us look about us. It is easy to repeat one of Paul's experiences at Athens. It is easy to see that in all things the people are too superstitious, for as we pass by the booths everywhere the evidences that he is in a heathen land. These squares of common paper, about three inches by four, with about a square inch of tin foil pasted in the centre, and which are scattered by the wayside, are supposed to be silver money, and are thus used to purchase the favor of the evil spirits while some one is being carried forth to the burial. That curious smell is from those three sticks of incense stuck in the door post of a house. That strange looking little house, about six feet wide, eight feet long, and five or six feet high, (sometimes larger, but often very much smaller) without any front in it, is the shrine of some idol, or idols. Here the people come to make offerings, to burn incense, and to offer worship. Here the candles are lighted and incense burned perhaps every day in the year. Inside sits the idol—often grotesque but seldom hideous—the unconscious object of the people's adoration. Beside him and strowed about are usually to be found scraps of idolatrous paper, bits of unconsumed incense sticks, old ancestral tablets, dead men's bones, old and dry, (belonging probably to the great-grand-fathers of the present generation) &c., &c.; all strowed about in confusion and covered with dust. To "see their devotions," is a commentary on the second commandment such as those who have never been in a heathen land know nothing about. The heart melts for them. O Lord have mercy upon them, and turn them from the evil of their ways unto Thee! O God forgive thine own people throughout the world for their infidelity towards the heathen! How long, O Lord, how long? When will the Christian Church undertake in earnest the conversion of the heathen? "A little one shall become a thousand and a small one a strong nation." The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. Lord hasten it in Thy mercy! we are praying for mere labourers.

The hot weather is past and we breathe more freely. The children extremely miserable and almost prostrate during the summer, are now moving about again as merry as ever. Mrs. Fraser and I are quite well. Mr. Mackay, better than usual, goes everywhere preaching the word, strengthening and establishing the young church. The Lord protects and prospers us. Pray for us, that He may continue His favour, which is His love, and His loving kindness, which is better than life. Yours very sincerely, J. B. FRASER.

Toronto, Nov. 4, 1875.

Presbytery of Manitoba.

The Presbytery of Manitoba met in Knox Church, Winnipeg, Dec. 8th, 1875, at 10 a.m., for the transaction of business. Mr. Robertson reported that he had visited Clear Springs and English River, and called on a large number of the people. The Protestant population is about 150 souls, three-fourths of whom belong to the Presbyterian Church. The number of Presbyterian families is about 25, and members in full communion about 30. Services were held in both places on the Sabbath, and 27 and 33 adults attended in the respective districts, and 7 children were baptized. The report was received and adopted, and arrangements made to supply these settlements every four weeks. After information received from Mr. Matheson, it was agreed to supply Park Creek with part service, and enable him to preach every alternate Sabbath at Sallark. The Foreign Mission Committee was instructed to consider the advisability of supplying the Indians along the Red and Assiniboine Rivers with the means of grace, and report as soon as convenient. Mr. Black informed the Presbytery that an American Missionary and an interpreter were laboring among the Sioux Indians in the neighbourhood of Fort Ellice. The missionary is a full-blooded Sioux, and ordained some years ago, and is at this time a member of the Presbytery of Dakota. Copies of papers were sent Mr. Black by Mr. M. Donald, Hudson Bay Factor at Fort Ellice, and in connection with our own Church. The committee learned, late in the fall, that they were unable to obtain supplies for the winter, and to prevent suffering, authorized Mr. McDonald to supply the minister with food and clothing to the amount of \$200. The committee also reported the whole matter to the General Assembly Foreign Mission Committee. The action of the committee was approved of, and the convener instructed to correspond with the clerk of the Dakota Presbytery of the American Presbyterian Church to ascertain the nature of their mission more fully, and intentions for the future, and their relation to the American Church. The committee was also instructed to correspond with the people at Prince Albert to ascertain the amount they are able to contribute towards the support of a teacher. The reports of mission stations, except in a few cases, were received. For the support of missionaries, Patrick in Prairie and Burnside contribute \$500; Hugh B.uff and Portage Creek, \$44; Boyne and Pembina Mountain, \$327; Little Britain and Parks' Creek, \$232.57; Riviere Salto, \$48; and Rockwood and Greenwood, \$60. Pilesgate is unable to contribute, but partial reports were received from Headingly, Woodland, Springfield, and Sannyside. Union Church, White Mud, petitioned Presbytery to have Mr. Stewart sent to that part of the field, and the Boyne and Pembina Mountain for organization. The Presbytery, though sympathizing with Palestine, could not send Mr. Stewart in the meantime, and agreed to continue him at the Boyne, etc. He was instructed to hold a meeting of the people in the district, make up a communion roll, and report to the next meeting of Presbytery. The Presbytery, agreeing to supply the White Mud region as formerly till the next meeting of Presbytery, requested Messrs. Frazer and Bell to preach, each once in four weeks at Pak-time, Golden Stream, and the adjacent localities, that each of these places might have ordinances every alternate Sabbath, and to give the First Crossing such supply as may seem practicable. The Presbytery recorded its appreciation of the labors of Mr. J. S. Stewart since he came into the Presbytery, and knowing that his time with the Students' Missionary Society was about expiring, unanimously and cordially agreed to ask the Home Mission Committee to employ Mr. Stewart for six months, and instructed the clerk to write Mr. Stewart asking him to remain in the Presbytery for that time. It was also agreed to ask the Home Mission Committee for another missionary, with the view of supplying Springfield and Sunnyside, Clear Springs and English River more efficiently. Messrs. Frazer, Donaldson, and Bell were appointed a committee to make arrangements for missionary meetings in the western part of the Presbytery, and Messrs. Robertson, Hart, Bryce, Black, Matheson and Glendinning for the eastern part. Prof. Bryce read a series of resolutions in regard to the Common School Education of the Province, and on motion duly seconded the Presbytery appointed a committee consisting of Prof. Bryce and Hart, and Messrs. Black, Robertson, Sutherland, M.P.P., and the representative elder of Knox Church, to collect information in reference to the present system, consider what change may be advisable, and report as soon as practicable. In the evening the Presbytery considered the question of Sabbath observance. The committee on this subject reported, presenting a Draft Act and a pastoral letter. The letter was approved and copies ordered to be sent to ministers and sessions to be read to congregations. The Draft Act was renounced to the committee on Sabbath observance, with the names of Messrs. Glendinning, Bell and J. Sutherland, M.P.P. A led, to petition the Legislature for such legislation as is desirable. The Presbytery agreed to meet again in the Presbyterian Church, Ardmore, on the second Wednesday of March next, at 10 a.m. It was agreed to consider the subject of Sabbath Schools at the evening session, and Messrs. Hart, Scott and Glendinning were appointed to introduce the same. JAMES ROBERTSON, Clerk.

Mr. CARROLL on completing his eightieth year received an address, accompanied by a gold medal, in honor of the day. A telegram from Germany acknowledged him as "the valiant champion of German freedom of thought and morality."