

above the sea, and more than 6,000ft. above the bed of the valley.

After five hours' ride we found our camp pitched at Rasheya, on the north-west side of Hermon. Resuming our journey, we descended the hill and rode north-east through a pretty, oval-shaped valley, and by a little lake. Two and a-half hours up a big hill, and through a series of ascents and descents, brought us to Rukleh. Here are the ruins of another temple. The road from Rukleh lies through a narrow wady. Deir el Ashavir, a village inhabited by Druses and Christians, stands at the edge of the plain in which the wady opens. Here are the ruins of another temple, much more extensive and perfect than those at Rukleh, but evidently not so ancient. One hour down the plain brought us to the French turnpike leading from Beirut to Damascus. One hour and a-half more and we branched off to the old road, and encamped on a hill-side by the village of Damais, four hours from Damascus.

The next morning we were in the saddle by six o'clock. On crossing the bridge at Dummarr, a villa-like place, we turned to the left on the old road. I had seen nowhere hills more sterile and unattractive than those we were now crossing. And it seemed as though they were interminable. At last, just ahead, was a wady perched on an eminence, which we knew overlooked the valley. Some of the party spurred their horses up to it, but I kept the road which winds to the left through a deep cut, and as I emerged from it the city lay before me. The effect was as if a vision were suddenly let down from heaven. As far as the eye could see, a broad strip of green, glistening like an emerald, stretched along the plain. Through this strip of green could be seen an occasional quiver of the abn as it rushes along, sending out, like threads of silver, through innumerable canals, its life giving waters to the roots of every tree, and to the homes and shops of the people. Amid and above a vast forest of trees rose domes, towers, and minarets, springing gracefully into the air, all shining in their whiteness with intense brilliancy as the rays of the morning sun fell upon them. This was the picture, while the bare, grey, glaring mountains on either side of the valley furnished the framework. It is impossible for language to exaggerate the beauty of the scene; though often described, no description has ever yet done justice to the reality.

We descended from the hill whence we obtained our first view of the Plain of Damascus, and entered the city on the north side, winding through crooked lanes between high mud walls, which enclose fertile gardens filled with all sorts of fruit trees: the tall, spreading walnut overhauling the walls, the graceful pomegranate, the richly laden apricot, with fig, plum, pear, olive, and apple trees. We struck into the French road, and followed it until, crossing the Barada by the Derwishes' Mosque, we found the customary camping ground by the side of the mosque.

On Sunday we attended service at the Reformed Presbyterian Church. Our party made up almost the entire congregation, as the missionary families were absent, dwelling in mountain villages during the hot season.

A ride of a few hours took us to the chief points of interest about the city. One of the first of these shown to the stranger is the "street which is called Straight." (Acts ix. 11.) A part of its course is through the bazars, and it is not now quite straight, but its identity is unquestioned. In Roman times, and long afterward, a noble street extended in a straight line from east to west through the city. It was a mile in length, and a hundred feet wide, and was divided by Corinthian colonnades into three avenues. On our riding around the south-east wall, the spot was pointed out where St. Paul was let down from the wall. It is marked by a doorway with an arch above, and also a break in the wall. Near by stands a tower on the wall, the foundation work of which is evidently Roman. We could still see houses built and standing in the manner, perhaps, of the time of Paul. Near by is the tomb of St. George, who, it is claimed, was the instrument of Paul's escape from the city. A few hundred feet farther we came to the Christian cemetery. This is the traditional site where Saul of Tarsus was stricken to the ground when "suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven." (Acts ix. 3.)

On returning, outside of the wall we saw a dilapidated, lonely house, which is used as a leper's hospital, and which is said to stand on the site of Nauman's house. Passing thence to the north side of the wall we came to an old

mosque, where is buried one of Mohammed's most noted saints, and in the cemetery near by are the tombs of three of Mohammed's wives, and others of his family. Entering the city again through the east gate, we turned aside not far from the entrance to visit the house where Ananias found Saul and baptized him. (Acts ix. 17, 18.) The ground floor is now at least ten feet below the present surface of the street, and a Latin chapel occupies a part of the grotto.

June 16. We broke camp early in the morning, but did not leave Damascus until after lunch. We followed the French road out of the city as far as Dummarr. The ride by diligence over this road from Beirut to Damascus and return, winding over and among the Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon ranges, is one of the grandest and most comfortable in the world. It is easily made in about fourteen hours. The morning ride into Beirut was charming. The view from the bold headland above the river was very grand, embracing the broad expanse of sea, the mountains, and the city. Once down from the pass, our route lay along the sea-shore on a hard, smooth beach around St. George's Bay. The bay derived its name from the traditional spot, still pointed out, where it was supposed St. George slew the dragon that was spreading terror and devastation throughout the land.

Beirut is at present the most prosperous town of Syria. It has grown rapidly during the last quarter of a century, and has lost many of the peculiar features of an Oriental town. The site of the city is very beautiful. It stands on a point which projects far out into the sea, and on a hill which rises gradually back from the coast. It is sheltered by a broad bay, into which vessels from all nations come. The Lebanon mountains rise on one side, forming a wall of indescribable majesty, the higher peaks perpetually crowned with snow, while in sheltered nooks are many villages where the tillage is carried on by terracing the mountain side. Around the town are fruit-trees and vines, and countless mulberry-trees, which give to the environs an aspect of great verdure and beauty. The place was occupied and probably important under the Phœnicians, but historical mention is made of it only two centuries before Christ.

We sailed soon after seven in the evening; the twilight yet lingered, and the day was still bright as we bade adieu to Syria, with mingled feelings of thankfulness and regret. The journey of journeys, the most arduous, the most perilous, the most instructive and romantic of life, was ended.

We had travelled from one end of the Bible Land to the other, well-nigh 2,000 miles, on camel and on horse—much of the time among comparative savages, and far away from ordinary human habitations, yet all the while with a feeling of safety and contentment—and now had come to the consummation of our plans with increased bodily vigour, and with mind and heart enriched.

The noble steamer glided swiftly out to sea, and the beautiful city faded in the distance. As we sat on the upper deck, aft, watching the shore, a bright light appeared over the tops of the Lebanon, and suddenly the moon rose, full-orbed, and cast across the distance a long line of beams, which sparkled upon the water. She seemed to say, in her queenly beauty, Farewell! Farewell our hearts responded to the Lord's Land, the land of all lands!

UNITED PRAYER.

BY THE REV. JOHN THOMAS.

"Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in heaven."—Matt. xviii. 19.

THAT prayer is a means of grace is not a matter of simple faith to the Christian. Experience of the most positive and unmistakable kind puts the question out of the realms of mere belief altogether. Not only does experience confirm the numerous and direct assertions of Scripture relative to the Divine recognition of and answers to prayer, but the Christian enjoys a positive consciousness of spiritual enlightenment—an increase of faith in God—and the blessedness of the Divine nearness, as among the inseparable results of faithful praying; and so it becomes impossible for him to doubt the reality of the grace that he obtains in the exercise. But it will be well to say at once that this is not the object for which the duty and privilege of prayer is appointed. However much the simple exercise of prayer may seem to react for the spiritual advantage of the soul by which it is