

of Syria, shut in before by the sea, behind by the desert, on the south by waste lands, and on the north by the Lebanon range, is Palestine. Four parallel lines running north and south divide it naturally into as many parts. Beginning at the coast there is, first, the maritime plain, across whose great shore road the armies of the nations marched. Overlooking the entire length of the plain is a range of mountains of varying heights. On the east of the mountains lies the Jordan valley, in which the one river of Palestine rushes to the Dead Sea, sinking 1,290 feet below the level of the ocean. Then on the east side of the Jordan valley, another series of mountains closes the prospect towards Arabia. Besides these general features, there are plains crossing the mountains and gorges from the higher to the lower levels. All together have gone to shape the course of the nation's history.

**CLIMATE**—The remarkable range of level, the nearness of the sea and the desert, combine to cause immense differences of climate and fertility. Within a hundred miles, the traveller passes from the snow and ice of the Lebanons, to the tropical region of the Dead Sea, with corresponding contrasts in the animals and plants of these parts. The great feature of the climate is a dry and rainy season. During the latter, which lasts from April to October, scarce ever a cloud is seen in the sky. The winds, too, are important to the life of Palestine, bringing moisture from the sea in winter, tempering the heat of summer, and sometimes carrying destruction from the desert. Palestine is not a land of forests: the woodland is open and scattered, yet abounding in variety and contrast. From the place of the oak and the pine, is but a few miles to the palm, the fruits, and the flowers of the tropics.

## LESSON XII.

### GALILEE AND JUDEA

In the time of Jesus western Palestine fell into three divisions: Galilee, Samaria and Judæa. We are concerned chiefly with the first and the last of these.

**GALILEE**—The most northerly of the three provinces, once known as "Galilee of the Gentiles," it held a population at the time of

our Lord mainly Jewish. Its boundaries are evident: the gorge between it and Lebanon on the north, the valley of the Jordan and the Lake of Galilee on the east, the Phœnician plain on the west, and the large plain of Esdrelon on the south. With an area not more than that of an average Ontario county, Galilee possessed all the variety of mountain, valley and plain. A rich and fertile land, her people led a busy life, a life affected by many diverse influences. They were a chivalrous and gallant race, less averse to Gentile influences than the Judæans, but not less devoted to the faith and hope of Israel.

Away from the lake, Nazareth was the one town of supreme interest. But the lake was the focus of the province's activities and industries, hundreds of feet below the level of the sea, in a climate almost tropical. Near this lake of thirteen miles in length and eight in width; Christ spent the greater part of His ministry, and His teaching took its form from the life that He saw. The corn-fields, the fisheries, the merchants and the flowers were fitting symbols in Galilee.

**JUDEA**—Judæa was the sanctuary of the race, pre-eminent in historical and political interest, and Jerusalem, the home to whose festivals the scattered members of the Jewish faith regularly came. Yet Judæa was less favored physically than Galilee. Secluded in a land of seclusion, she became selfish, bigoted and unprogressive, though, when occasion demanded, she was courageous and passionately patriotic.

But little larger than Galilee, the centre is table-land, two or three thousand feet above the sea, stony and rough, without distinct features, where water is scarce and crops meagre. To the borders of this table-land Judean history owes much. The Jordan valley is here at its greatest depth; there are roads from Jericho to Judæa—on the south a barren stretch, on the west a lower range of hills, and on the north the valleys and the mountains of Samaria. Judæa had all the advantages of an island, and was as difficult to conquer as England.

**NOTE**—No lesson is allotted for the closing week of the year.