

its present desolate appearance. The prophets and the poets of the Old Testament speak in rapturous strains of the fertility and resources of the land. "It is," say they, "a land flowing with milk and honey, a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; a land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil, olive and honey; a land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness," etc. At the present day, however, the truthful traveller cannot put so much of the *couleur de rose* in his picture. Many of the hillsides are bleak and bare, and utterly bereft of the beautiful fruit trees which once adorned them. And in many places where once were populous and prosperous towns and villages, you can see only ruins which faintly indicate vanished greatness. When you ask for the cause of this desolate appearance of Palestine, the stereotyped explanation usually given is the blighting influence of the Turkish Government. Certainly we cannot speak too strongly of the withering effect of this tyrannical Government on the place and the people. There is truth in the proverb which says: "Where the Turkish horse sets its hoof the grass never grows." Under the iron hoof of Turkish despotism the fellahs, that is, the peasantry, of Palestine, are crushed to the dust by the exorbitant taxations imposed upon them. And worse still, they are left in utter ignorance of the first principles of scientific agriculture. But the true explanation of the present desolate appearance of the land is found in the sinfulness of the Jews, to whom God gave it. The inspired Psalmist says of God Himself: "He turneth a fruitful land into barrenness for the wickedness of them that dwell therein." The Jews, as a people, failed to appreciate and improve the precious privileges, temporal and spiritual, bestowed on them, and then, in the exercise of His retributive justice, God permitted them to be carried away out of their own land, and allowed Mahomet and the Sultan of Turkey to throw their blighting influence over it. It is the story of Eden repeated on a larger scale in the history of a nation.

(3) But there is hope in Israel concerning this ban of Heaven under which the Promised Land has been groaning for

eighteen centuries. In the plans and purposes of the Great Eternal there is a limit set to the withering misrule of the Turk in Palestine. "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." "Blindness in part is happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in." Already, with the first throbbings of the renewed religious life of the people, I could see many hopeful indications of the renewed fertility of the Land of Promise. At Jaffa, and Jerusalem, and Bethlehem, and Tiberias, and many other places, I found the missionaries of the Cross busily engaged in their noble work, and quite a number of people are turning to the crucified Jesus of Nazareth as the Saviour of the world. And the invariable testimony is, that as soon as any of the people, Jews or Gentiles, become Christians, they begin to be more industrious, and more economical, and, by the blessing of God on their labours, they become greatly improved in their worldly circumstances. And it is a very remarkable fact, well worthy of notice, that just at this time, when so many eyes are turning towards the Crucified One, God is sending "the former and latter rain," of which we read so frequently in Scripture. I can testify to the fact of abundant showers of refreshing rain in places where it has very rarely fallen for a great length of time. I can also certify that even within the narrow limits of Palestine, as we now use the term, there remaineth yet very much land of excellent quality to be possessed. Around the Lake of Galilee, for example, and on the great Plain of Esdraelon, and on the Plain of Merom near the sources of the Jordan, I saw thousands of acres of neglected land as fertile as any I have seen in our own Prairie Province, or in any other part of our Dominion. But the indications are that these untilled acres will ere long be cultivated by an industrious population emancipated from the blighting influences of Mohammedanism and the Turkish Government.

COME, labour on!

Who dares stand idle on the harvest plain,
While all around him waves the golden grain,
And every servant hears the Master say,

"Go, work to-day?"