

Methodist Magazine and Review.

DECEMBER, 1896.

EVERY-DAY LIFE IN BIBLE LANDS.

MODES OF TRAVEL IN THE ORIENT.

BY THE EDITOR.



SHIP OF THE DESERT.

"All aboard for Jerusalem!" "All out for Bethlehem!" The words give rather a shock to our ideas of the proprieties of travel in the land of the patriarchs and prophets. But nowhere are the living present and the long dead past brought into sharper contrast than in this old land. The electric telegraph follows the highway over the mountains of Ephraim and Hermon, and a telegraph station is but a stone's throw from Jacob's Well. From ancient Hebron, or still more ancient Damascus, one may communicate by the electric wire to the ends of the earth. But, except on the short railway line to Jerusalem, one's feelings are not much shocked by modern facilities of travel. It seems almost a profanation to go hurtling past the biblical sites of Joppa, Lydda, and Arimathea, in a railway train, and many tourists still prefer the old

horseback route. Nevertheless, for the development of trade and the carrying of heavy material, the iron horse beats out of sight the slow moving camel.

The idea of connecting Jerusalem by rail with the Mediterranean is not a new one. As far back as 1868, Mr. Zimpel, a German engineer, prepared plans for the construction of a harbour at Jaffa, and a railway from that port to Jerusalem. His scheme, however, failed, and the same fate befell the similar project of an Egyptian capitalist, Lutfy Bey. In 1888, a concession was obtained from the Turkish Government, for the construction of the railway, which was completed in 1892. Its inauguration took place with many ceremonies, among which was the sacrifice of large numbers of sheep by the Moslems at the station outside of Jerusalem.

The line is fifty-four and a half miles long. It has a zigzag course up river valleys, and in consequence has the great number of 176 bridges, seven of which are of iron, the rest being of stone. The termini at Jaffa and Jerusalem are well-built structures, provided with telegraph apparatus, water tanks, etc. Starting near the sea at Jaffa the line makes a curve to avoid injuring the orange groves, and then enters the lovely, verdure-clad Plain of Sharon, dotted with