

did the year after a company of Americans visiting the Jordan.

We get no lunch that day, except what we eat in the saddle. We hurry down side by side with river to the Dead Sea, to get out of the infested plain. We stand at last on its shore. It is about the size of the Lake of Geneva, being some 40 or 50 miles long, and at its greatest width some 10 miles. Its waters are so clear that we can count the little pebbles several feet down. The mountains around it are lofty, rugged and bare. Thus far all travellers agree; but in matter of sentiment, how wide the difference! Some describe the surrounding scenery as terrific, others as beautiful: some say it is gloomy, others say it is pretty. "It bore a great resemblance to Loch Awe," says Van de Velde. "It reminded me of the beautiful lake of Nice," says Paxton. The truth lies, we suppose between, and should be put in this form. Before the overthrow of Sodom and its sister cities, when the vast bulk of that sea was a garden, the plain up to the sea of Galilee, like Eden and the surrounding hills covered with foliage, then it was a spot of great beauty. But now over the traces of its ancient glory there has come a curse, desolation and ruin. Here is a face that was once supremely beautiful, but crime and grief have disfigured it, though they have not obliterated all trace of what it one time was.

The heat is intense, so we hurry as quickly as possible away, casting back as we ascend the hills of Judea many a look at the mysterious sea and its setting of everlasting hills, clad in blue mist, as if their smoke was still ascending. On the cool uplands we pass an Arab encampment of black tents, surrounded by flocks of sheep and goats and a few camels. They greet us with kind words, for they are of the same tribe with our escort, but we hurry forward without tasting of their hospitality, anxious to reach the convent of Mar Saba before sunset.

On leaving Jerusalem the day preceding, we crossed the Kidron, quite near its source at the foot of Zion; to-day we cross it near its mouth into the Dead Sea. Yesterday we saw its bed dry; to-day it contains water. Yesterday its valley was shallow and its sides gently sloping; to-day it is dark and deep, and its sides rough and rugged. Yesterday it was Jerusalem that crowned its western side; to-day it is the Convent of Saint Saba, a strong fortress in the heart of the stern desert, at whose strong iron gate we gladly draw bridle. As there is no admittance for ladies, we pitch our tents right under its walls, and pass the night much better than we did at Jericho.

Next day on reaching a certain stream, our Arab escort told us they could go no further, as this was the southern boundary of their tribe. We there parted with them, and after several hours hard riding, struck the road from Hebron to Jerusalem, where we arrived before the closing of the gates.

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It becomes the servants of God to digest, in their own souls, the messages they bring to others in his name, and to be suitably affected therewith themselves. It becomes them to deliver every message with which they are charged, whether pleasing or unpleasing to men. That which is least pleasing may be most profitable. God's messengers, however, must not keep back any part of the counsel of God. Rev. x.—*Matthew Henry*.

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Public prayers are so far from being intended to supersede our own secret prayers, and make them needless, that they are designed to quicken and encourage them, and to direct us in them. When we are alone we should pray over the prayers that our ministers have put up with us. Acts xx.—*Matthew Henry*.