

CHAPTER LVIII.

Damascus.

Antiquity and Beauty of the City—History of the Great Mosque—Massacre of the Christians—The Street that is Called Straight—Improbable Legends—Protestant Mission—Grave of Henry Thomas Buckle—Salahiyeh.

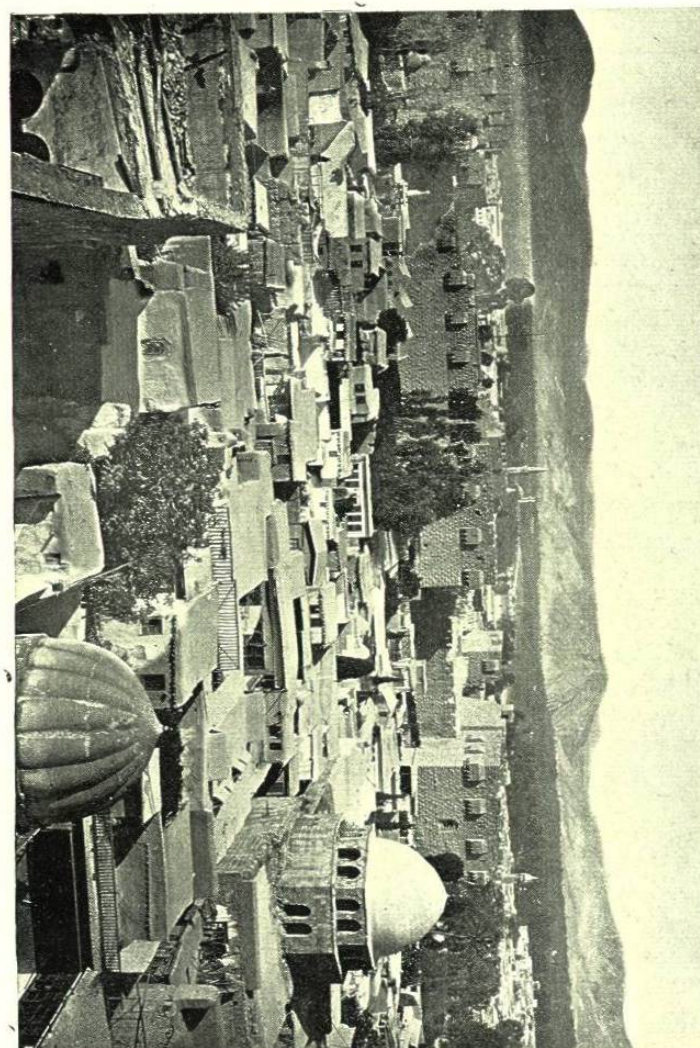
DAMASCUS was an old city in the time of Abraham, whose prayer is recorded in Gen. xv: "Lord God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus?" Tradition makes it much older, locating the murder of Abel at this place, to which Shakespeare refers in "King Henry VI:—"

"WINCHESTER: Nay, stand thou back;
I'll not budge a foot;
This be Damascus, be thou cursed Cain
To slay thy brother Abel, if thou wilt."

David conquered it in a bloody war, described in 2 Samuel. Elijah and Elisha frequently visited it, and the Books of Samuel and Kings abound with accounts of wars between the Israelites and the Damascenes. Ezekiel describes its great prosperity in the vision of Tyre: "Damascus was thy merchant in the multitude of the wares of thy making, for the multitude of all riches; in the wine of Helbon, and white wool." It obtains its beauty and fertility from "the streams from Lebanon."

Next to the relation of Paul to Damascus, the story of the interview between Elisha and Naaman invests it with interest to the Bible student. He had good reason to say, "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean?" No doubt since that time these rivers have changed their channels, like all streams in plains and deserts, but the configuration of the country and the sources of the streams, as in

Damascus from Cemetery.



the Mississippi and the Nile, are such as to show that these rivers are essentially the same as those spoken of in the Bible as situated here. The Arabians have always considered Damascus as the best earthly type of Paradise. Its situation, streams, and fruits harmonize with the description in the Koran. The city is charming and imposing, lying on the edge of a desert nearly half a mile above the sea level, and bounded on the other sides by mountains.

To the northward is the range of Anti-Libanus opposed on the west by Mount Hermon, dwarfing the volcanic mountains in the south.

The lakes which are near and the streams running through the city are filled with water of unusual clearness. One of the rivers divides into seven branches, two filling the conduits that supply the city, and the others watering suburban orchards.

Like most oriental cities Damascus is divided into quarters, Jews, Christians, and Moslems living separately. In general character Damascus is similar to Cairo; the bazaars are attractive features to strangers, for in them the products of the East are displayed, and mechanics may be seen at work.

I went to the horse market, but could not find any of the magnificent animals such as in ancient times were common in Syria, and doubt whether the Arabians ever had finer horses than are raised in Kentucky. The saddle market is a gay display, as the Syrians always made much of decorations of that kind. We had been put on our guard against the dealers who begin by demanding extortionate prices, sometimes finally selling the goods for less than a quarter of what was at first charged. The glory of the Damascus blade has departed, and the daggers sold are said to be made of an inferior article of steel brought from Germany. The tobacco-using habits of the people cause a demand for all kinds of pipes, the stems of which are of cork.

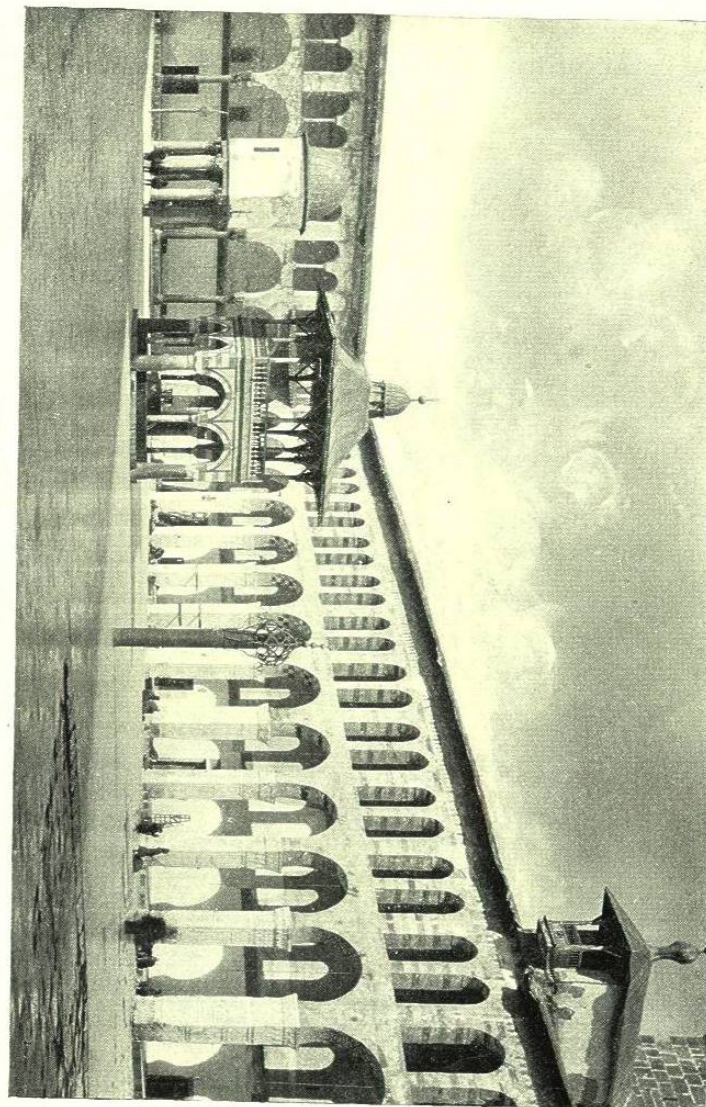
An extensive business is done in the sale of the fez. By a small investment we transformed ourselves into Turks, but found the caps too warm for use. One of the things which surprise strangers is that in that hot climate men will wear a form of head-covering giving no protection to the eyes and

warm enough for the cold days of an American winter. None of the merchants are in haste; all who were not busy were smoking, praying, reading the Koran, or conversing. They appeared to be on good terms with each other, but are united in a desire to allure to the utmost possible extent unwary travelers.

Mohammedan fatalism has some curious features, one of which is mentioned by Baedeker, who says there is no jealousy between rival venders of similar wares. If one who has nothing to do sees another driving a fine trade he simply says: "Allah has sent a good customer to my neighbor, and will in due time send me one also." An extensive business is done in clothing, as the people sleep in their clothes and soon wear them out. Barbers work in the open air, whether they are shaving or bleeding; for when a native feels ill he steps into a barber's shop and submits to phlebotomy to the extent of half a pint or more, after which he departs with the conviction that he must be better.

The tombs of three of Mohammed's wives are in the Damascus burying ground, and the view of the city from that cemetery is one of the best. Probably the largest plane tree in the world is on the river bank near the Saddlers' Bazaar. The trunk is more than four yards in diameter.

Where the Great Mosque now stands there once was a heathen temple in which pagan rites were performed until the growth of Christianity caused it to fall into decay, but about the beginning of the fifth century it was restored and transformed into a church. Its managers said they had the head of John the Baptist—one of the many heads of John that are in different parts of the world. After Mohammedanism arose the eastern part of the church was taken possession of by them, and for years the western left to the Christians. Finally it was taken by the Mohammedans, and this mosque erected upon the foundations. Ferguson gives an account of the seizure. The Caliph entered the church with guards and ordered them to remove or destroy every vestige of Christian worship, and standing upon the altar, he directed the work. There being an image of Christ near, one of his followers said: "Prince of the Faithful, I tremble for your safety; the power of that image against



Court of the Great Mosque.

which you lean may be exerted against you." "Fear not for me," replied the proud Moslem, "for the very first spot on which I shall lay my battle-ax will be that image's head." Thus saying he lifted his weapon and dashed the idol to pieces. The Christians raised a cry of horror, but their voices were drowned in the triumphant shout "*Ullah-u-Akbar*." The Arabians pretend that supernatural beings assisted in erecting the church, and (which has some foundation) that one thousand two hundred Greek artists were brought from Constantinople to decorate it. In its grandest days six hundred golden lamps hung from the ceiling. The mosque is four hundred and twenty-nine feet long and one hundred and twenty-four and a half feet wide. As the wall was not entirely destroyed, what was left is a part of the mosque, on which is written an ancient inscription in Greek: "Thy kingdom, O Christ, is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations," a quotation from the 145th Psalm, with the words "O Christ" inserted.

Saladin, whose virtues were recognized even by the Christians while they were terrified by his power and overthrown by his victories, is counted among the Mohammedan saints. It was Saladin who took Damascus, Aleppo, Diarbekir, drove back Renaud de Chatillon, and defeated the Christian army at Tiberias, captured Guy de Lusignan, who called himself King of Jerusalem, finally besieged and took Jerusalem and drove all the Franks from the country. It was he who took the gold cross from the dome of the Mosque of Omar and purified the edifice with rose water, and reconverted it from a Christian church to a Mohammedan sanctuary. Not till Richard I distinguished himself by the exploits which gave him the name of Cœur de Lion, did he meet a serious check. Saladin was undoubtedly the greatest warrior that Mohammedanism has produced, and equally distinguished for "temperance and chastity, humanity and generosity, patience and affability;" wherever he went he built hospitals, colleges, and mosques. His tomb is in a perfect state of preservation.

Of all wars since the classic times the Crusades are the most romantic and best adapted to stir enthusiasm in the young.

On the ninth day of July, 1860, the Christian quarter was set on fire; the whole Mohammedan population was in a state of wild excitement; hordes of fanatics, Kurds, Arabs, and Druses flocked to the city, and for twenty-four hours murder was systematically and furiously committed. Six thousand were killed, and the grossest outrages perpetrated upon their wives and daughters. The streets were blocked with the bodies of the slain, and had it not been for the courage of Abd-el-Kader they would have all been destroyed. I received accounts of the dreadful scenes from some who were in the city at the time.

Beneath the affable aspect which the ordinary Mohammedan presents when he wishes to make a sale, or expects any advantage, lurks a fanaticism that would find vent in deeds of incredible atrocity were it not for the military stationed there, and the fear the people feel of foreign powers.

And the Lord said unto Ananias, "Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus." Unquestionably we saw the same street, although it is not quite straight, and was formerly wider than it now is. It is more than a mile in length, and ornamented with a colonnade of which traces remain. We visited the supposed house, which is converted into a church. The mythical house of Ananias is shown in another part of the city. The abode of Naaman is pointed out without a vestige of probability for the statement, but there is a propriety in its being a leper hospital. Several hospitals for these poor wretches exist in Damascus; there they sit, dying as they live, suffering the horrors of decomposition before the vital spark is extinct. Yet marvelous are the susceptibilities of human nature: they chat and laugh, and appear happy.

Another adventure of St. Paul took place here, given in his own words: "In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me: and through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands." There is a gate in the wall of the city, Bab-kisan, which has been closed for seven hundred years, and tradition says that this was the place where St. Paul was thus let down. There are many houses along

the wall where such a thing could have been done. Not content with this, they exhibit a tomb under drooping trees which they call the tomb of St. George. This St. George is the man who helped Paul to escape, and lost his life for his part in the matter!

While in Damascus we had the pleasure of several interviews with the head of the Protestant Mission, the Rev. John Crawford, whom we found to be highly respected and beloved. The mission is doing a good work, and the influence of Mr. Crawford and his family is excellent.

Accompanied by him we visited the Protestant cemetery, a small inclosure kept under lock and key. After trying for years to secure the privilege of a piece of ground for this purpose, wearied with the delays of the Turkish government, the Christians took possession of it, and no objection has ever been urged.

Henry Thomas Buckle, the historian and political writer, is buried in Damascus. He went to the East, in the autumn of 1861, in the hope of improving his health, which had always been delicate. The epitaph is brief: "In memory of Henry Thomas Buckle (only son of the late Thomas Buckle, and Jane, his wife), who died of fever in Damascus on May 29, 1862, aged 40 years. This stone is most affectionately dedicated by his loving and only surviving sister. 'I know that he shall rise again.'"

Jobar is only about half an hour's walk from the city, and the scenery along the road is indescribably beautiful. The place is inhabited entirely by Mohammedans, and is of no interest except for its traditions.

The oldest point of contact between this suburb and the Old Testament is in the declaration that when Abram rescued Lot from the kings he "smote them, and pursued them unto Hobah, which is on the left hand of Damascus."

Mohammedan legends cluster about Salahiyeh. In the hills near it are buried thousands of Mohammedan saints. There Mohammed himself, while yet a camel driver from Mecca, gazed upon the entrancing scene, and turned away without entering the city, saying: "Man can have but one paradise, and my paradise is fixed above." They also hold that near

this spot the unity of God was revealed to Abraham. The finest view we had of the suburbs was from a point halfway up an absolutely barren hill, three or four miles from the center of the city. Conybeare and Howson's *Life and Epistles of St. Paul* contains an admirable description of Damascus; and the authors are not extravagant in saying that "for miles round it is a wilderness of gardens—gardens with roses among the tangled shrubberies, and with fruit on the branches overhead. Everywhere among the trees is heard the murmur of unseen rivulets. Even in the city, which is in the midst of the gardens, the clear rushing of the currents is a perpetual refreshment. Every dwelling has its fountain, and at night, when the sun has set behind Mount Lebanon, the lights of the city flash on the waters."

CHAPTER LIX.

Damascus to Beirut.

Varieties of Weather and Scenery—Through the Lebanon Pass—Unique Lunatic Asylum—Origin and Situation of Beirut—Syrian Protestant College—Other Christian Missions—Grave of Bishop Kingsley.

AT Damascus we dismissed our caravan, separated from Selim, to whom we had become much attached, and took the diligence for Beirut (Beyroot).

Wherever the French build roads, the traveler is happy whether he walks or rides, for they are the best road builders in the world. When, as the guardians of Roman Catholic interests during the disturbances in 1860, the French, to protect the Christians, sent forces there and occupied the country, they built a magnificent carriage road from Damascus to Beirut, and one may take the journey of seventy miles between 5:20 A. M. and 5:30 P. M., or between half past seven at night and half past eight in the morning. Horses are frequently changed, which affords ample time to study the country.

The day of our journey gave us every variety of climate: the heat of summer and the shivering cold of winter, with blinding snow. Like every other path leading out of Damascus, the way led through gardens and conduits, the landscape being adorned with trees of rare beauty. The villas were handsome; a small one is known as that of Abd-el-Kader, who, after he was defeated by the French, received a pension and was allowed to live there on condition of not leaving the district of Damascus.

After three or four miles we reached the desert. At six miles we changed horses, and entered upon a fine tract watered by the Barada; but when we had ridden six or eight miles more we came to a desolate wilderness, a portion of which is elevated and used for encampments and reviews of the Damascus troops. Hermon, Lebanon, and other magnificent mountains appeared on either side; broad table-lands; wild glens several miles long,

with legends of banditti; dull valleys and steep ascents were traversed. On leaving the village of Shtora, whence the road diverges to Baalbec, we ascended to the Lebanon pass, five thousand six hundred feet above the sea. Behind were wild and barren mountains, and before us the path by which we were to descend to Beirut. The houses of that city showed far away as white specks upon a blue ground: that blue was the Mediterranean, which we had last looked upon from the mountains of Palestine.

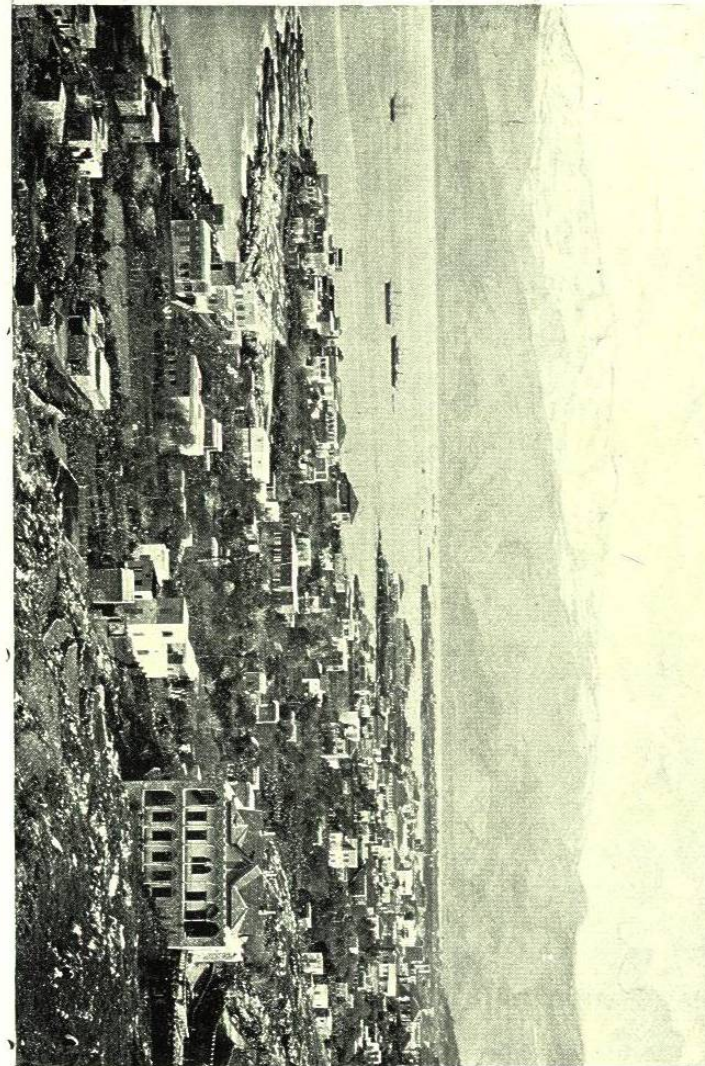
Half a day's ride from this point is a lunatic asylum that has no parallel. It is in the village of Karyaten, and only the Bedouins patronize it. The process of cure is peculiar; a mixture of faith and works, and it is managed with as much shrewdness as the Christian science and faith healing operations of this country. The patient is bound and confined in a room by himself for a single night; the next morning he is found cured and without his fetters. The marvelous superiority of this method over all others is seen in this; that if he omits to pay for his miraculous recovery he at once relapses into insanity.

On arriving in Beirut we were met by Mr. McFadden, who had been left in the hospital at Cairo. After several weeks of sickness and debility, he had recovered sufficiently to make the journey by sea. Disease had changed him, but the hope and the pleasure of meeting friends put fresh color into his cheeks, and in three weeks from that day he seemed in better health than before the attack.

Beirut was founded by the Phœnicians, and was important in the time of Alexander the Great. To-day it is the most important seaport and commercial town in all Syria, beautiful in situation, surrounded by mountains, some snow-clad, and forming a striking contrast with the sea. In the last thirty years the population has quadrupled, and now amounts to more than eighty thousand.

The Syrian Protestant College presents missions at their best, and we were afforded every facility to examine them. Each of us being acquainted with President Bliss, or one or more of the faculty, we enjoyed a rest and refreshment of several days in Beirut, which affected us as favorably as did the encampment at Elim the Israelites.

Beirut.



The American Mission has been established in Syria for more than fifty years, and the names of Dr. Thomson, author of *The Land and the Book*, Dr. Eli Smith, and Dr. Van Dyke are known throughout the Christian world. The college was opened in 1866, though a preparatory class had been formed the year before. It has a complete system of buildings, among which is the Ada Dodge Memorial Hall, erected for the use of the preparatory department by the Rev. D. Stuart Dodge, son of William E. Dodge of New York. The president lives in a fine structure known, from its donor, as the Marquand House.

When we were there, there were about one hundred students in the preparatory department, and sixty-five in the collegiate. Few American colleges have so fine a system of buildings, and none a more magnificent site. One was delightfully reminded of home by the Alcott collection of two thousand species of the plants of the Eastern and Northern States of America. We heard Dr. George F. Post, who has the reputation of being the best physician in Syria, lecture to the medical students on botany.

I had the pleasure of calling upon Dr. Van Dyke on the fiftieth anniversary of his arrival in Syria. This distinguished man went there originally as a medical missionary, but has become famous in the world of scholars and linguists because of his translation of the Bible into Arabic.

Beirut is the center of mission work which extends into the regions round about, and is superintended efficiently.

The cemetery near the church contains the tombs of some of the godly men who laid the foundations of this mission. The church, an imposing building, is well attended.

At the college we met the Hon. Edward L. Pierce, of Boston, the biographer of Charles Sumner, and formerly one of the professors of the Boston University Law School, and an hour was well spent at the hospital witnessing surgical operations performed by Professor Post, who, surrounded by students, relieved the sufferings of the sick and maimed.

There are other Christian missions in Beirut. The British Syrian institutions have their headquarters there, and in the district which they cultivate are schools containing nearly one thousand pupils. The Roman Catholics have an orphanage which