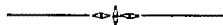


useful instruction should be given in our schools;¹ that teaching and advice should be imparted by the district visitors in every parish and at mothers' meetings, by means of the distribution of the literature of the National Health Society, which for the last thirty years has been working in this cause, and giving lectures about it to gatherings of working men and women.

At the present time we are lamenting the decline of the birth-rate in England; would it not therefore be well to consider more seriously how we may preserve those lives which we have, and which are now being wasted in thousands by the ignorance or vice of those to whose care they are committed?

In concluding these thoughts, it only remains for me to say that they are recorded by one whose memory extends back to the age of two years, and thus over seven decades, comprising a longer period than falls to the lot of many. I would ask my readers also to believe that my object in this review of past years has been to assist in forming a right judgment on some important questions of which I have seen the commencement, and not in order to relate the part I have been permitted to take in them.

LOUISA TWINING.



ART. VI.—A VISIT TO JERICHO.

TRAVELLERS in Palestine can now drive from Jerusalem to Jericho in about six hours. Formerly the route was both difficult and dangerous, and could only be accomplished on horseback, but about three years ago the Government made a good carriage road from the Holy City to Jericho.

We started about 8 o'clock one lovely morning in February and drove through the dirty but prettily situated village of Bethany. Here an old tower was pointed out to us called the Tower of Lazarus, and near it is the so-called tomb of Lazarus in a vault reached by a flight of steps. The house of Martha and Mary was also pointed out to us.

On leaving Bethany and descending the steep and circuitous road to the bottom of the hill, we came to what is called the Apostles' Spring, from a legend that here the Apostles rested

¹ At the recent meeting of the Sanitary Institute, held at Manchester, the President said in his address that "teachers should be able to impart to their scholars the simple laws of health and domestic hygiene."

on one of their many journeyings. Near by is a small "khan," or inn, where one can rest and water the horses.

From here we travelled for about two and a half hours through wild mountain scenery, till we came to the khan which has been built on what is supposed to be the traditional site of the parable of the Good Samaritan. It seems a khan has always stood on this spot, and as it was the only one between Jerusalem and Jericho in those days, no doubt our Lord thought of it when He told the parable. Here we had our mid-day meal and rested for about an hour.

At last, after what seemed to us interminable windings in and out and up and down the hills and valleys, we came upon what must be one of the grandest views in Palestine. Before us was the great chain of Moab Mountains like a huge blue wall, beneath it the wonderful Dead Sea, while below us lay the valley of the Jordan, with a line of dark foliage marking the course of the river.

After gazing for some time upon this beautiful scene, we descended the hill to the valley and drove to the Russian Hospice, where we intended spending a few days.

During our sojourn in this interesting place we visited first of all the Mount Quarantania, or Mount of Temptation.

This is a high, precipitous mountain and one of the most imposing features in the landscape round the Plain of Jericho, and is the traditional scene of our Lord's temptation. The side facing the plain is perpendicular, white, and bare, and is burrowed by holes and caverns where hermits used to retire for fasting and prayer. At one time it was almost impossible to climb to the summit, but now a convent has been built midway, and a rough kind of path has been made by the Greek monks who live there. At the foot of the mountain is the Sultan's Spring, or the spring of water which Elisha healed (2 Kings ii. 19, 20). Here we dismounted and commenced our climb. I must here mention that I was with the Russian Consul and his party, and word had been sent to the convent to prepare them for our visit. One of the monks had been set to watch for our approach, and as we drew near the bells were rung and a procession of monks was formed, and with the Igumen at their head came out to welcome us.

According to Greek custom, trays of jam and water were handed round as soon as we entered the convent, the favourite jam on such occasions being made of rose-leaves. We were next offered small cups of Turkish coffee and glasses of tea, served in the Russian manner with slices of lemon and sugar.

After a short rest we went into the chapel, which has been made in a large natural cave in the rock. This cave has been used as a chapel since the first century, and although the

convent is quite a recent one, it has been built on the site of one founded in the time of the Crusaders.

In this chapel is a round stone seat, which is pointed out to visitors as the place where Christ rested before He was taken to the summit by the devil.

After being shown a few more holy sites we continued our way to the top, from where we obtained a magnificent view of the surrounding country. To the north were ranges and ranges of mountains, and as it was a very clear day we could see in the far distance the smaller range of the Lebanon Mountains, which, with their covering of snow, looked very strange in that hot climate; on the south were the Judæan range and Dead Sea; on the east the mountains of Gilead and Bashan, the tower on the Mount of Olives being easily discernible; and on the west the valley of the Jordan and the mountains of Moab and Edom.

Jericho itself lies 750 feet below the sea-level, and as Quarantania rises 294 feet above it, it is therefore 1,044 feet above the plain.

There must at one time have been a large building on the summit, because, in making some excavations lately, the monks came across eight large round pillars.

When we descended to the monastery we found to our satisfaction that the monks had kindly provided a meal for us, and as it was then about 11 a.m., we were all ready to do ample justice to it. After resting for some time and seeing all they had to show us we began the descent, being accompanied part of the way by the monks. The following day we drove through a sandy tract of land, destitute of vegetation, to the Dead Sea. As we approached we noticed that every mound and hillock was white with salt, and even the very air we breathed was salty. The sea itself is forty-six miles in length, and its greatest breadth is nine and a half miles. It is bounded on two sides by mountains. The beach is pebbly, and what strikes one most about the place is its death-like stillness, the kind of stillness that inspires one with awe. The place seemed utterly deserted by man and beast.

We did not stay long after bottling some water to take home with us, as everybody seems to do.

We had taken some fruit with us to quench our thirst, but I cannot say that we enjoyed it, for, like everything else, it also tasted salty.

About an hour's ride from the Dead Sea brought us to the Jordan. We stopped at the monastery, about fifteen minutes from the banks of the river, and here, as usual, we were offered (1) jam and water, (2) liqueurs, (3) small cups of Mocha coffee. After seeing over the monastery and church,

which were both very interesting, we walked down to the Jordan. The river itself is very dirty—at least, it was when we were there, which was just after the rainy season, and this, having been rather a long one, had caused it to overflow its banks. These present a very different appearance to the banks of the Dead Sea, being rich in foliage, trees of every description growing there. It has been difficult to identify sites on the Jordan, but tradition has it that the passage of Elijah and Elisha and the Baptism of our Lord took place at what is now known as the Pilgrims' Bathing-place. We were fortunate enough to see some of the Russian pilgrims bathing. These poor creatures bathe in their shrouds, which are then considered holy, and put away, of course, without being washed, till they are needed at their burial. At Easter the bathing-place of the Greeks is the resort of thousands of pilgrims, who come in a body from Jerusalem. The Latins have a bathing-place further along the river. We again bottled some of the water to take back to our friends in England and drove back to Jericho.

In the evening the garden of the hospice was lit with hanging-lamps, and some Bedouin women, about ten in number, came in and danced for us. Two of the number danced very gracefully, swaying backwards and forwards and waving their long draperies about, while the others stood in a row clapping their hands and singing a monotonous kind of chant. Then one girl, waving a long curved sword, danced before a row of twenty men, who, with their fierce expressions and dirty sheepskins, looked most ferocious clapping their hands, stamping their feet, and at the same time making a growling noise in their throats. As the noise increased they by degrees advanced towards the dancer, looking as though every moment they would seize and rend her, while she, moving gracefully about, bent lower and lower, till, almost sitting, she suddenly turned the sword point downwards to the earth, at which signal they all fell on their knees before her. The men, we were told, represented prisoners taken in war, who were beseeching the victorious queen to spare their lives. She threatened them with the sword, but in the end, by bending it point downwards, showed them that she would be merciful, at which they knelt and promised to serve her. The dimly-lighted gardens filled with the delicious aroma of the orange and other tropical fruit-trees, the graceful dancing of the women, and the strange garments and gestures of the men all combined to make one of those never-to-be-forgotten pictures of the East a traveller brings back with him, and which, in spite of its dirt and many discomforts, makes the East so beloved by those who have lived there.

HANNAH MOORE HENDERSON.