

*VAN-LENNEP ON BIBLE LANDS.*¹

DR. VAN-LENNEP'S long residence in the East, and his familiar intercourse with the men of many Oriental races and classes, give a singular value to his descriptions of the physical and moral conditions of human life in the lands which the Bible has made sacred to us. And as, in "the unchanging East," moreover, the "customs and manners," which are very largely the result of the climate and the physical conditions and resources of its inhabitants, have an unusual vitality, and have for the most part been handed down by an unbroken tradition from the earliest times, to acquaint ourselves with them in their modern forms is really to acquire a clue to the meaning of many parts and passages of Holy Writ.

Dr. Van-Lennep has used his unusual opportunities with no mean skill, both in describing the customs which have their origin in the physical features of the East, and those whose origin must be traced in the history of the most ancient times. No man can read these two volumes carefully without getting wrought into his mind the very background set in which the leading historical incidents of Scripture shew to most advantage. Every minister and teacher of the Word will do well to read them, and to read them again.

But I can hardly advise those who give themselves to the study and exposition of the several

¹"Bible Lands : their Modern Customs and Manners. Illustrative of Scripture. By Henry J. Van-Lennep, D.D. London : John Murray.

Books of the Bible habitually to consult this work. It is valuable rather for its general effect on the mind than for any light it throws on this passage of Scripture or that. Indeed, as I have read it, I have a little wondered that so good a scholar, and so diligent a student of Holy Writ should have cared to load his foot-notes with references to Scripture which his text does little to illustrate. The remark of an Arab that with a fleet and intelligent horse "caravans are arrested and brought to your tent," hardly throws light enough on Job i. 17 to warrant a reference to it. Nor have I found Job i. 19 grow much the clearer for being told that "the camel instinctively knows the approach" of the simoom, "and, uttering piteous cries, lies down with its back to the coming storm."

The passion of Job's grief (Chap. i. 20) does not grow more impressive to us when we are reminded or informed that the Easterns do not tear the stuff of their robe, but simply rip open a seam, "so that the damage can easily be repaired by a few stitches." While the most graphic and sublime description of a spiritual apparition (Job iv. 12-17) in the literature of the world is simply degraded by the implication that the awful Spirit, before which Eliphaz quaked with a nameless terror, was one of the "Jins"—"a class of beings, both male and female, good and bad, which hold an intermediate position between angels and men, were created before the latter, are made of fire, or *perhaps of gas*, and are capable of assuming a variety of forms, or of becoming invisible at pleasure."

It is not in these detailed applications of his wide knowledge of the modes of Eastern thought and custom to the elucidation of Scripture that Dr. Van-Lennep shines, but in general descriptions of what he has seen and learned during his protracted labours in the East.

EDITOR.