

linked to death.”¹ “The flowering of phanerogams is often at once the climax of the life and the glory of death.”² Death is a transformation of energy. This is the vision which Nature gives us. The growth of the children in Bethlehem is arrested, that they may be morally reproductive by death. They have bloomed as things of beauty and joy. They die, and become a sanctifying memory and vision; they become the parents of moral forces. They seed the land with sadness and wisdom. Therefore, cheap as massacres make human life, “precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.”³ “Except a corn of wheat shall fall to the ground, and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit,” is the large physiological law, which rises up from Nature to man, and from man to the Son of Man. Reproduction contains the rudimentary idea of sacrifice and of joy in sacrifice, the sweet-smelling savour of the flower of reproduction.

W. W. PEXTON.

THE HOMELAND OF JESUS.

IT is impossible to point out with certainty any spot on which our blessed LORD stood; and it is well, the tendency to degrade sacred places with mean superstitions being so human. We can, however, mark in broad outline the boundaries of His earthly wanderings, and fill in with ample details the hamlets and hills and glens among which He lived His lowly life.

“Come see the place where the LORD lay” are the words by which the angel restored the faith of the women who hovered in fear and sorrow by the rocky grave of their dead Friend. And they saw the empty tomb and the grave

¹ *Evolution of S. x.* By Professor Patrick Geddes and I. Arthur Thomson, p. 238.

² *Ibid.*, p. 234.

³ Ps. cxvi. 15.

clothes laid aside, and we know that He had sounded the loneliest depths of death and won immortal life for all believers.

The Prince of life died for His people, but He also lived for His people. On the border land and beyond the veil, He completed the work for which He had taken upon Himself the form of a servant, and, "It is finished." We linger affectionately by the Cross and tomb as we meditate on the depths and mysteries of the crowning act of His passion for us; but we would also devoutly follow the Man Christ Jesus in His intensely human life, in the patience and power of His unstinted love, and in the exhaustless grace of His pity as He unswervingly carried the burden of our life amid the pressure of home needs and duties, and in all the vigilant forms of kindness that marked His intercourse with His fellow men.

"A city set on a hill cannot be hid," was an assertion palpably true to the multitude who listened to the Sermon on the Mount, and who probably, following the eye or gesture of the Speaker, looked up at the remarkable town Safed, perched on its lofty cone 2,773 feet high. "Safat" is mentioned in the Jerusalem Talmud and by the Arabian geographers as an important place. It was held in high esteem by the Jews, and became a Rabbinical centre and school of learning at an early date. There is no actual proof, but every probability, that the town of Safed existed in the time of Christ. It suffered from Crusader and Saracen, destroying Turk and desolating earthquake, and still survives, and there is no reason to doubt that it flourished like other Galilean towns under Roman rule.

I invite my readers to take their stand with me on the hill of Safed, the most elevated town in Galilee, and as such a city cannot be hid from those who dwell on the plain, so we shall find the whole landscape disclosed as we look down from the summit.

We approach from the north by dusty roads that wind among the curved hills of Galilee, and clamber up to the castle which crowns the hill to which the hamlet clings. The castle itself has special interest for western travellers. It was built around the oval summit by the Crusaders, stormed by the gallant Saladin, demolished by the Sultans of Damascus, restored by the Templars, held by the French, and overwhelmed by an earthquake which yawned in numerous chasms and swallowed up most of the inhabitants of the place in 1837.

We may picture to our minds the fearful struggles witnessed around the base of the hill on which we stand, and especially that awful scene when Bibars received the surrender of the place, and then, in good Turkish style, massacred the entire multitude who had entrusted their lives to him.

But we have come to look at the Homeland of Jesus, and we must not dally with those who thought to extend His glory by carnal weapons. The most interesting spot on earth lies before us like an open book, and we can take in every feature of it at a single glance.

Among these brown hills and purple glades our blessed LORD lived the full-orbed human life that we could not live. His feet trod those dusty paths that wind among the hills from village to village, and His eye rested daily on the outlines of the little district that spreads beneath us. Jerusalem is associated with the contradictions and contentions by which a self-righteous and priestly mob of placemen dogged His steps, and finally brought about His betrayal and cruel death; but His home, the men and women around whom His natural affections were entwined, the little children who stopped their play to gaze lovingly as He passed, were familiar to Him in that little district.

At first the Homeland of Jesus appears marvellously small, and somewhat insignificant, compared with the uses

to which it was set apart in the working out of our redemption: but it grows upon us in wealth of human interest, and as it unfolds associations sacred and heroic, we become convinced of the Divine fitness of the scene to the circumstances by which it was consecrated.

The long low wall of mountains stretching out into the sea, in a north-westerly direction, is Carmel, the vineyard of the LORD. "The excellency of Carmel" is not a thing of the past. Its wooded slopes and jutting promontory retain their verdure throughout the entire summer.

The Carmel range bounded the south-western horizon of Jesus during His early years. Every morning He looked into its sun-lit glades, and as every day drew to its close He saw the purple shadows drawn up its sides, as the sun sank in fire behind its crest. The name *Jebel Mar Elias*, Mount of Saint Elijah, kept fresh in the memory of boy and man the signal victory gained by the prophet of the Lord over the priests of Baal. As He stood by the door of His early home He could mark the spot associated with David and Abigail, and the track across the plain by which the Shunammite woman sped to the house of Elisha.

Nearer by the breadth of the plain of Esdraelon rises the hill of Nazareth, whose thymy declivities were often trod by the feet of Jesus. Shoeless as a boy He many a time traversed the path over the eastern shoulder of the hill, on errands to Kana and Sephoris, and at its further base lay the town in which He grew in mind and stature. In that Nazareth home He was subject to His parents. There He learned village carpentry, and by the side of Joseph worked on the common utensils that were needed by the Galilean hamlet. There His hands constructed ploughs, and sharpened ox-goads, and made easy yokes for oxen before He linked those simple agricultural instruments with the deep lessons of Christian life. There in the daily discharge of pressing duties He lightened the burdens of a mechanic's

home, and while doing the work that came to hand, set an example of holy living. Daily He saw weary and heavy-laden men returning from their field labour. Hour by hour He saw the maids and matrons with pitchers on their shoulders toiling to and from the fountain for the perishable water. With the gathering shades He marked the sheep and goats that had grazed together during the day separating and filing off to their distinct folds. Amid the rough and homely surroundings of Nazareth, the simple objects that unfolded to His sight were pictures of Divine things, and gave point to the lessons which He taught. With our yoke pressing upon Him, He passed amid the corruptions around Him unsullied as a sunbeam, until His turbulent neighbours, feeling the reproach of His blameless life, and failing to apprehend the spirituality of His doctrines, drove Him from the home of His childhood.

Eastward from Nazareth stands the cone of Mount Tabor, down the sides of which Deborah, the bee, descended with her swarm of warriors, and routed the hosts of Sisera. Tabor used to be considered the Mount of Transfiguration, but as its top was covered with houses and fortifications in the time of our Lord, the identification has been generally given up in favour of Hermon, which fits in much better with the circumstances of the event.

Beyond Tabor, in the line of Deborah's march, lie Endor and Shunem and Nain, with their dismal and joyous memories, and beyond in the distance are the wave-like hills of Gilboa, where the leal-hearted Jonathan and his father fell.

About half way between Tabor and our standpoint, but a little to the east, rise the jagged horns of Hattin, the traditional Mount of Beatitudes. On one of those arid elevations Jesus sat and spoke to the hungry and thirsty crowd of the spiritual hunger and thirst which have in themselves the earnest of the blessing.

That rugged brown mountain is the Sinai of the Gospel. On one of its commanding peaks our blessed LORD unfolded the laws and principles of His kingdom for all lands, and for all time. The seed was sown on the beaten pathway, and perhaps it was never more ruthlessly trampled on than on the Mount of Beatitudes itself.

On the very spot where Jesus promised fulness of blessing to "the poor in spirit," the proudest spirits of Christendom assembled and fought, professedly for Christ, with weapons that were not of His kingdom.

A little over seven hundred years ago King Guy de Lusignan and his demoralized crusaders held those heights. Salah ed-Din, the flower of Moslem chivalry, the Saladin of romance, hemmed them in with blazing forests, and a circle of eighty thousand Saracens. The Crusaders, hungry and thirsty, and shut in by a sea of flame, awaited the enemy among the rocks that heard the Sermon on the Mount. The fiery hosts of Saladin surged up those slopes like a rising tide, ebbing and flowing, but still rising higher and higher, until they swept in triumph over the summit. Then among those hot rocks, on that July morning, there was a short fierce struggle, and the cross of the Crusader went down before the crescent of Islam, for they who had taken the sword contrary to the law of the Gospel had perished by the sword according to the warning of the Gospel. The mount is now a Golgotha.

From the Mount of Beatitudes the eye wanders to the sea of Galilee, the fairest object in the whole landscape. It lies more than three thousand feet below our standpoint. The lake, which appears to be an irregular oval, seems very near, and very small, though it is some sixteen miles long by six broad, and is distant nine or ten miles.

Apart from all sacred associations there is something wonderfully striking and supremely beautiful in the sea of Gennesaret, so deep among the hills, so still and silent, so

hemmed about by rolling tablelands and furrowed ridges, like a shining mirror set in a rigid framework of purple mountains.

Down by the western shore of that lovely sheet of water Jesus spent the years of His manhood. That solitude, lighted up by the golden glow of evening, was then a centre of population. The Greek and the Roman were there, and their flatterers and ministers. One Herod built Tiberias, the only inhabited town now on the lake, and foundations which extend far beyond the limits of the present town give evidence of the splendid monument which he dedicated to his abominable patron. Another Herod built Julias at the north-east corner of the lake, in honour of the profligate daughter of Augustus. Chorazin, Capernaum, and Bethsaida, in the neighbourhood, were cities exalted up to heaven, and by the suburbs of those splendid cities and along the shore there were Roman villas, and the costly mansions of rich Galileans who imitated the luxurious habits of their masters. And Arabs were there with their "ships of the desert," to exchange the products of East and West by the shortest route to India. A Roman road ran from the lower end of Gennesaret, past Bosra and Sulkhâd, direct to the Persian Gulf, and the road remains to this day an abiding witness to the energy of the Empire.

In the days of Jesus the lake swarmed with boats, carrying and distributing merchandise among the cities on its margin, and the phosphorescent flash from many oars showed that the fishermen were reaping the harvest of the sea for the dwellers by its shore. The precipitous eastern coast, rising from lake to tableland, is "the country of Gadarenes over against Galilee," and the herds of swine that fed on its declivities prove the presence of a large Gentile population, for neither Jew nor Arab partook of the flesh of swine.

In that busy throng, and among the multitudinous

peoples who met by the lake, Jesus passed the years of His manhood. His life down there was summed up in five words: "He went about doing good." In healing diseases and relieving distress generally He acted from sympathy with pain and human weakness, and though His aim was not to astonish the crowd, His doings were so far above the ordinary course of things as infallibly to show the hand of God at work among His own forces.

He fed the five thousand on the grassy sward, at the north-east corner of the sea of Galilee, because "He had compassion on the multitude."

When the leper whose bodily disease was the type of sin and ruin in the soul came kneeling to Him, "Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth His hand and touched him, and saith unto him, I will, be thou clean." At another time, "Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and He healed their sick."

Nor did Jesus after His resurrection cease to put forth His superhuman power on behalf of His people. He watched His disciples toiling all night, in faith, on Genesaret, and catching nothing, doing their duty uncheered by success; and, in the morning glow, the voice that once stilled the tempest sounded across the waves in accents of tenderness, "Children, have ye any meat?" Then in following His directions they secured a great draught of fishes, and thereby enjoyed a foretaste of success in the great work of catching men. Nor did His love stop short at vouchsafed success. The ruddy fire and ready meal showed His care for the common wants of weary and hungry men.

A thousand memories crowd upon us as we gaze and gaze on the placid lake. There He called twelve unlearned and uninfluential peasants to follow Him, and they overthrew the temples of idolatry, and set up the kingdom of

Christ on the ruins. Down there He cast His lot among the industrious poor, the salt of whose life was honest, manly toil. The labourers in every field, and the women at every well, and the children at play down there all knew Him. That lake side was the loved home of His manhood. He taught by its rippling shore. He walked over its submissive waves. He spoke the dialect of the district, and the common objects that lay about Him became signs and symbols by which He communicated His message to all men. His Gospel speaks to man in forms of speech which had their natural birth by the shores of that peaceful lake. The customs of the district are woven into its texture. Its physical roots are in the homely phraseology of Capernaum and Bethsaida. The thoughts that guide our lives, and stir our hearts, and kindle our spirits into life and consciousness, took form and substance in the homeland of Jesus.

WILLIAM WRIGHT.

REPLY TO PROFESSOR RAMSAY.

IN the EXPOSITOR, September, 1896, pp. 194-201, Dr. Ramsay has called attention to an inscription found in old Carnuntum, in Pannonia (on the Danube below Vienna), in which an "Italic cohort" is mentioned. The inscription makes it probable, as Dr. Ramsay points out, that about 69 A.D. an "Italic cohort" was stationed in Syria. For this information I am very thankful, and I could contemplate the fact with an undisturbed joy. But Dr. Ramsay has for some time felt, and still feels, the need of refuting me on every possible occasion, and now this new find has stirred up anew his zeal for refutation. He thinks (p. 194) that the newly found inscription "will probably be held by most scholars as a sufficient proof that, in our present state of knowledge, the verdict of Dr. Schürer is