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AROUND THE WORLD

Scenes Surrounding the Sea of Nazareth, Bethsaida,
Capharnaum and Chorazian.

DAMASCUS, SYRIA, March, 1903.

Greek writers have called the Abana "the rivers of gold." Convbear and Howson's Life and Epistles of St. Paul refers to this city with the following language: "This stream is the inestimable, unexhaustable treasure of Damascus. The habitations of men must have always been gathered round it, as the Nile has inevitably attracted an immemorial population to its banks. The desert is a fortification around Damascus. The river is its life. It is drawn out into water courses, and spread in all directions. For miles around it is a wilderness of gardens—gardens of roses amid the tangled shrubberies, and with fruit in the branches overhead. Everywhere among the trees the murmur of unseen rivulets is heard. Even in the city which is in the midst of the gardens, the clear rushing of the current is a perpetual refreshment. Every (large) dwelling has its fountain, and at night when the sun has set behind Mount Lebanon, the lights of the city are seen flashing on the waters." As one walks the streets of Damascus he is impressed that any complimentary description of the city is overdrawn and entirely uncalled for. It is only at a distance or some towering minaret that Damascus presents even a semblance of beauty. It is no wonder that the scribe who desires to paint a pleasant word picture of Damascus, takes Damascus as a subject and then swings out from it in his quest for subject matter. It is almost like the divine who is guilty of taking his text and then sailing away so far that at no time he is within signalling distance of it nor can he see the tops of its masts above the rolling sea which separates him from it. In the following extract from Damascus note the view point of the writer. He knew better than to choose as a point of observation any position within this dirty, filthy, cholera ridden city. After two complete sentences, he packs his trunk, and hies away to a spot without the city. "Damascus remains the true type of an oriental city. Caravans come and go from Bagdad and Mecca, as of old; merchants sit and smoke over their costly bales in dim bazaars; drowsy groups sip their coffee in kiosks overhanging the river; and all the picturesque costumes of the last meet and mingle in the streets. The first view of the town from one of the neighboring ridges is like a view of the earthly paradise. Marble minarets, domes, massive towers and terraces of level roofs rise out of a sea of foliage, the white buildings, shining with ivory softness through the broad dark clumps, of verdure, which miles in depth and leagues in circuit, girdle the city, making it as the people love to say, a pearl set in diamonds. It is a wilderness of bloom and fragrance and fruitage, where olive and pomegranate, orange and apricot, plum and walnut, mingle their varied tints of green, sweet with roses and jasmine blossom, and alive with babbling rivulets. And close up to the edge of the gardens comes the yellow desert, and around it are the bare mountains, with the snowy crest of Herman standing like a sentinel with shining helmet, on the west, the tower of Lebanon which looketh toward Damascus." Paul, an unbeliever at Jerusalem "desired letters to Damascus to the Synagogues" (Acts 9:1-2) which letters he secured. He hoped to put an end to Christianity and expected to bring "bound to Jerusalem" any whom he should find "whether they be men or women." But what happened? "As he journeyed, he came near Damascus and suddenly" something happened, "and he fell to the earth." In a few seconds came that historic and laconic reply, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (Act 9:3-6.) It is not long until it is known of him that "he preached Christ in the synagogues that he is the son of God, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus proving that this is very Christ." (Acts 9:20-22.)

Next only to Jerusalem among strongholds that might well be termed football cities stands Damascus. The soldiers of almost every nation have encamped here to test their fighting strength. The Persians, Arabians, Greeks, Egyptians and Turks have each in turn unfurled their flags above the Damascus battlements and all have lowered their flags and hastened away in complete rout except the Turks who remain in possession of the city. Once Alexander the Great, while besieging Acre himself, sent his general Parmenio to capture Damascus. But of the butchering incident to Damascus

history occurred in 1860. An article in the treaty of Paris, signed in 1856, provided that foreign nations should not interfere in the affairs of Turkey, which practically placed the Christians at the mercy of the Sultan and his treacherous underlings.

Being encouraged by a false report from the mutiny in India Ahmed Pasha gave an order to massacre the Europeans in the city and country. The terrible slaughter began but it had not been long in progress until a chief-tain appeared upon the scene; it was Abd-el-Kader and may his memory never fade from its deserved rank in history. Colonel Churchill, who was conversant with the situation, wrote the following in memory of that chief-tain who proved to be superior to his race.

"No sooner had Abd-el-Kader gained intelligence of the frightful disaster than he sent out his faithful Algerines into the Christian quarter with orders to rescue all the wretched sufferers they could meet. Hundreds were safely escorted to his house before dark. Many rushed to the British consulate. As night advanced, fresh hordes of marauders—Kurds, Arabs, Druzes,—entered the city, and swelled the furious mob of fanatics, who now, glutted with spoil began to cry out for blood. The dreadful work then begun. All through that awful night and the whole of the following day the pitiless massacre went on. Hundreds disappeared, hurried away to distant parts of the surrounding country, where they were instantly married to Mohammedans. The churches and convents, which in the first paroxysm of terror had been filled to suffocation, presented piles of corpses, mixed up promiscuously with the wounded, and those only half dead, whose last agonies were endured amidst flaming beams and calcined blocks of stone falling upon them with earthquake shock. The thoroughfares were choked with the slain. To say that the Turks took no means whatever to stay this huge deluge of massacre and fire would be superfluous. They connived at it; they instigated it; they ordered it; they shared in it.

Abd-el-Kader alone stood between the living and the dead. Fast as his Algerines brought in those whom he had rescued, he consoled them, fed them. Forming them into detached parties, he forwarded them under successive guards to the castle. There as the terrible day closed in, nearly 12,000 of all ages and sexes, were collected and huddled together, fruits of his untiring exertions. There they remained for weeks, lying on the bare ground without covering, hardly with clothing, exposed to the sun's scorching rays. He himself was now menaced. His house was now filled with hundreds of fugitives, European consuls and native Christians. The Mohammedans, furious at being thus balked of their prey, advanced towards it, declaring they would have them. Informed of the movement, the hero coolly ordered his horse to be saddled, put on his cuirass and helmet, and mounting, drew his sword. His faithful followers formed around, brave remnant of his old guard, comrades in many a well-fought field, illustrious victors of the Moulala, where 2500 men under his inspiring command, attacked the army of the Emperor of Morocco, 60,000 strong, and entirely defeated in. The fanatics came in sight. Singly he charged into the midst, and drew up. "Wretches!" he exclaimed, "is this the way you honor the Prophet? You think you may do as please with the Christians, but the day of retribution will come. The Franks will yet turn your mosques into churches. Not a Christian will I give up. They are my brothers. Stand back or I will give my men orders to fire." The crowd dispersed.

Soon the French and English fleets appeared at Beirut, and retribution followed swiftly upon the tracks of those who had caused the massacre.

A fine of one million dollars was levied upon the city. Ahmed Pasha was executed, along with 120 of the city officials connected with the outrage of the century; no less than 400 others were condemned to imprisonment or exile.

Abd-el-Kader is due the credit for staying the massacre. What wonderful words those—"Not a Christian will I give up; they are my brothers"—to come from the lips of a follower of Islam!

E. C. HORN.

[To be continued.]

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