

CHRISTIAN FAMILY.

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Cities of the Bible.

NUMBER I.

DAMASCUS.

Under the blue dome of a Syrian sky lies a ruinous heap, showing forth in their fulfillment the power and truth of the prophecies of the Lord. While the lamentation was going up on account of the curse which destroyed the city of Tyre and the wail for the departed glory of Babylon, queen city of the world. The prophet Isaiah in very few words gives us the burden of Damascus, "Behold Damascus is taken away from being a city, and it shall be a ruinous heap." Thus it stands as it has for centuries, while the many rich cities of the Syrian plains have crumbled and scarce a relic of their former grandeur can be found beneath the sands of the desert.

No change has taken place in the city of Damascus since it received the curse of God, and there will it stand till the end of time. Travelers tell us of the caravans from the east that still stop there, of the low square houses, and of the files of garbage and filth that make the exploring of the narrow, crooked streets a serious matter. Damascus is believed to be the oldest city in the world, at least, it is the oldest of which we have any record being mentioned in the xiv chapter of Genesis, as the city of Eliezer. Its history is a meager one, as it is mentioned but a few times in the Bible, and seldom in secular history. David conquered it, slaying more than two thousand Syrians, and then he put garrisons over Damascus, and the Syrians became servants to David and brought gifts. There was one, however, who fled when David came to Zebah, and this was Rezin, who gathered men unto him until he became captain of a band and dwelt in Damascus and reigned there. "And he was an adversary to Israel all the days of Solomon, and he abhorred Israel and reigned over Syria."

Afterward, during the reign of Ahaz over Judah, there arose a fearful strife between Rezin and the hosts of the Lord who had forsaken the way of righteousness and had given themselves over to every wickedness and foul idolatry. Ahaz fearful of being defeated sent messenger and great treasures to the king of Assyria that he would come and help him overcome the king of Syria. "And the king of Assyria hearkened unto him; for the king of Assyria went up against Damascus and took it, and carried the people of it captives to Kir and slew Rezin." Josephus tells the story of this war and the capture of Damascus in almost the same words as those of the Bible already quoted and adds that the people of Damascus were carried off into Upper Media, while the city was again peopled by a colony of Assyrians. Thus was fulfilled another prophecy of Isaiah, "The riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be taken away before the king of Assyria." It was finally taken by Pompey, who, with his Roman legions, overran and conquered the entire east, making from the Orient a thoroughfare which ended in Rome and oppression.

Every Bible reader familiar with Paul's conversion, knows that our great interest in that old eastern city lies in the fact that it witnessed the first labors of Paul in turning sinful souls to the faith of Jesus. A short distance from Damascus the light of the Lord shone round about him, and he heard the voice of the Lord saying unto him, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" How very different his entry into the city than he had imagined; instead of breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the

Lord, he was led within the gates blind and helpless, until the hands of the pious Ananias fell upon him. Up through the long narrow street called straight (merely called so, without any appearance of truth, says Mark Twain), Ananias sought for Saul of Tarsus, at the house of one named Judas, where to-day the wise of eastern traffic and Arab Sheiks with turbaned heads are heard and seen. The bright sparkling waters from Lebanon still curve in "ribbons of silver" and rivers of gold as they were wont to do through the plains of Syria, but "Damascus is waxed feeble and turneth herself to flee," for thus saith the Lord, "I will kindle a fire in the wall of Damascus, and it shall consume the palaces of Benhadad. Yea, for three transgressions of Damascus and for four I will not turn away the punishment thereof."

With the downfall of Damascus were lost some of the arts that the world knows nothing of at the present time. The Damascus blade has never been equaled since Tamerlane carried the artists away into Persia, and thus lost the secret of tempering Damascus steel. The luscious apricot of Portugal called Damasco came from Damascus, and our blue Damson plums, showing their purplish blue clusters through their shining green leaves in October, had their origin as well as their name from the city of Damascus. Damask cloths, so highly prized by housekeepers, came first from Damascus, as also that beautiful art of inlaying wood with gold and silver, called damasking. The Damask rose was transplanted by Henry VII. from Damascus to England, and brightens many a home with its fragrance and rich color. When the "head of all Syria" Damascus must have been a magnificent city, for Mahommed would not at its loveliness, said, "It is given but once to man to enter Paradise, and I do not want to enter mine on earth."

MAY WELLING.

Dosing.

There are a host of people who seem to have little else to do but to consider their physical condition and administer doses for its improvement; people who are positively dissipated and intemperate in their use of medicines, and appear to think this world not so much a vale of tears as of drugs; people to whom a new prescription affords a delight only equalled by that which a savant would derive from the possession of a bone of the extinct megatherium. If they are troubled with insomnia, instead of resorting to the natural assistance of occupation and exercise, they turn to the bromides for aid, and call in chloral for their defense; if they have low spirits, they lay siege with blue pills; if rheumatism invades their borders, they summon colchicum rather than endurance; a slight attack of indigestion is an occasion for a Sedlitz powder; if colic threatens, they advance upon it with castor-oil; quinine is their pass-word, and camphor the panacea for all their ills from hysteria to heart-burn; while they entertain the idea that Death himself is afraid of carbolic acid! In fact, rhubarb, senna, thoroughwort, and all the ghastly array of drugs, the mere mention of which is agitating to a well-bred stomach, are familiar words with them, and household gods to whom they sacrifice almost daily. If they are in the least degree under the weather, it never occurs to them to allow Nature to work out her own salvation, but they take her affairs into their own hands, and having small acquaintance with her processes, the result resembles that of a novice attempting the tasks of a superior, and making them the more difficult for that superior to accomplish. One of the peculiar pleasures of such per-

sons consists in persuading others to try their methods of cure. The most delicate compliment you can pay them is to swallow some nauseating mixture upon their recommendation, which all the while bears a strong family likeness to that of those who with bad complexions, assure you that soap is wholesome for the skin, or of bald people who extol the virtue of certain washes which they have employed. This art of dosing does not interfere, however, with the usefulness of the family physician, but rather supplies him with practice by laying the foundations for positive disease. The stomach which has been unrighteously corrected rebels at length; the nerves that have been too often artificially soothed finally refuse to acknowledge the power of the charmer; the strength engendered by stimulants proves but a broken reed; appetites fortified by frequent tonics surrender one day without reserve. If the science of medicine itself is as yet only experimental, must not amateur dosing, beyond question, belong to the most objectionable class of empiricisms? Almost every body with whom it is a habit cultivates her favorite nostrum. To one cod liver oil is the fountain of perpetual youth and health; another's salvation lies in sulphur; to the disparagement of orthodoxy; a third worships blue pill and confides in calomel; while there yet remain those who have such respect for all medicaments that they slight none.—*Ex.*

The Rainbow in the Bubble.

Cheerfulness is to the mind what sunshine is to the earth—its rejuvenating force. The cheerful people are always young, however gray their locks, dim their vision, or wrinkled their faces. Nay, cheerfulness will keep gray hairs and wrinkles at bay more effectually than any cosmetic. It is the rainbow in the bubble, man which attracts affection and regard to those who wear it. The cheerful person is every where welcome, and nowhere out of place. She lights up the darkest day, and has the same genial and stimulating effect as the sunbeam; she makes the best of every thing—even misfortune seen through her spectacles does not look so ugly; she anticipates happiness ahead, and is sure that trouble will get detained on the way; she sees the silver lining of every cloud, and the first rift; where another murmurs and doubts, she is full of thanksgiving and hope. The small discomforts of life do not fret her as many another. She is the best traveler the world over—beats the jolts on the road only to laugh at them; breakdowns and detentions are only so many novel experiences to her; and we doubt if even a highwayman could rob her of the habit of looking at the bright side of every thing. She does not make faces over a poor dinner or a hard bed, but resigns herself to inconveniences so complacently that one might be deceived into thinking her accustomed to them. That she is a most companionable personage, the comfort of her presence attests. Her example is infectious, and we find ourselves groping our way out of the slough of despond by the light of her countenance. If "good nature is stronger than tomahawks," as the sage tells us, then cheerfulness is its twin sister. With many of us, perhaps, cheerfulness is no more a virtue for which we are responsible than a quick ear for music would be, than a Grecian profile, or a fine head of hair. It is bred in the bone with a few of us, just as a talent for carpentry, for sculpturing, or versifying is; and as it is reckoned a disgrace to spell badly, but no virtue to spell well, so the talent for cheerfulness, being our birthright, is not so much set down to our credit, but so much subtracted therefrom if we do not develop it into a genius. But it is none the less a sweetener of existence, and such a charming thing

to meet with, in man or woman, that we are apt to treat the owner as if it were a plant of his own selecting and sowing, since we do not stop to inquire how much is indigenous or how much exotic; for though the effect is the same upon the spectator, yet the mead belongs to those who, having no natural inclination toward cheerfulness, have yet succeeded in grafting it upon the barren stock of a despondent disposition, who have been obliged to fight bravely for the sunshine they spend lavishly. We do not question but it is a more certain recipe against the encroachments of disease than the specifics of medical science. By examination we should doubtless find that the few who reach the nineties are those who cultivate a sanguine temper; who wear life like a garland rather than a yoke; who do not wring their hands when their stocks depreciate, but are certain they will rise to-morrow; who, when the ship is leaking, are on the outlook for a sail; who, when their case is desperate, do not make it worse by desperation—people who can say,

"If life an empty bubble be,
How sad are those who never see
The rainbow in the bubble!"

Finger Nails.

The nails of the human hand have a language of their own, and the manner of keeping them is eloquent. Some keep them long and pointed like reminiscence of claws; some pare and trim and scrape and polish up to the highest point of artificial beauty; and others, carrying the doctrine of nature to the outside limit, let them grow wild, with jagged edges, broken tracts, and hangnails or "back-friend," as the aging ones call them. Sometimes you see the most beautiful nails, pink, transparent, filbert-shaped, with the delicate, filmy little "half moon" indicated at the base—all the conditions of beauty carried out to perfection, but all rendered of no avail by dirt and sloveliness; while others, thick, white-ribbed, square, with no half-moon, spotted like so many circus horses with "gits" and "friends" and the like—that is, without beauties, and with positive blemishes—are yet pleasant to look at for the care bestowed on them, their dainty perfection of cleanliness being a charm in itself. Nothing indeed is more disgusting than dirty hands and neglected nails, as nothing gives one such an idea of freshness and care as the same members well kept.—*Ex.*

History of the Onion.

Very few members of the vegetable kingdom exist that can boast an older record than the onion. Theophrastus alluded to it as follows: "There be divers sorts of onions which have their surnames of the places where they grow; some also lesser, others greater, some be round, divers others long." This is ample proof that, even in his early days, a variety of sorts were grown, and in many places. Pliny adds the questionable information that "none grow wilde." The onion is also spoken of in Holy Writ, where, in connection of the leek and other vegetables, it is referred to as a luxury belonging to the Egyptians, at the earliest date we possess any history in regard to them. Though Theophrastus shows by his statement above that distinct sorts existed, we are inclined to believe that there were not more than three distinct types then. They derived, however, a variety of names from the various places where they were known as "Ascalontides," a name said by Gerard to be "of a town in Judea, otherwise called Pompeiana." Singularly enough, however, the English name of this kind by this latter authority as "Scallions," and along with it is given an illustration and the following statement: "This hath but small roots growing many together; the leaves

are like to onions, but lesse. It seldom beares either stalks, floure, or seed. It is used to be eaten in salads." Both Theophrastus and Pliny refer to this, the latter in the sixth chapter in his nineteenth book, where he says: "The one serving for a sauce or to season meat with." Can it be then, that in Pompeii of old, chives, as we know now, were used popularly.—*Gardener's Chronicle.*

"That's How."

After a great snow storm, a little fellow began to shovel a path through a large snow-bank before his grandmother's door. He had nothing but a small shovel to work with.

"How do you expect to get through that drift?" asked a man passing along.

"By keeping at it," said the boy, cheerfully. "That's how."

That is the secret of mastering almost every difficulty under the sun. If a hard task is before you, stick to it. Do not keep thinking how large or how hard it is; but go at it, and little by little it will grow smaller until it is done.

If a hard lesson is to be learned, do not spend a moment in fretting; do not lose breath in saying, "I can't," or "I don't see how;" but go at it, and keep at it—study. That is the only way to conquer it.

If a fault is to be cured, or a bad habit broken up, it cannot be done by merely being sorry, or only crying a little. You must keep fighting until it is got rid of.

If you have entered your Master's service, and are trying to be good, you will sometimes find hills of difficulty in the way. Things will often look discouraging, and you will not seem to make any progress at all; but keep at it. Never forget "That's how."—*Child's Companion.*

Expert.

You want us to tell you what is shoddy. Well, the first difference is the material; instead of using long fibres, as found in wool and other materials, such short fibres are used as are found in the refuse material of both and woolen manufactures, or even old worn-out clothes are torn up and treated as if a paper pulp had to be made of them. The material is then purified from dust and such fibres as are altogether too short; and as even the remnant is too short to be spun into threads and woven, it is simply felted. Now felting is well enough, and may be as strong as woven cloth, providing the fibres are long enough, as is the case with the new fur of the beaver and the hare, which becomes so mutually entangled by the curling produced in felting, as to strongly resist any force which may be used to tear the stuff apart; but it is clear that if the fibres are short they cannot well be held together in this way, and hence the case with which material made of such short fibre tears and wears out.

During the late war, blankets by the thousands were sold to the government made of material of fibres so short as literally to fall apart. Such stuff could only be approved of and accepted through sheer ignorance or bribery—most likely the latter. It was the same with the clothing, and not only short woolen fibre, but short cotton fibre was used, mixed up with the rest; in fact, the material was only fit for paper, and a rotten paper at that, as paper made of a good long fibre is indeed stronger than the shoddy sold to the government by contractors without consciences.—*Ex.*

"There's something in this cigar that makes me sick," said a pale little boy to his sister. "I know what it is," responded the little girl, "It's tobaccor."

The bump of destructiveness—a railway collision.