

ART. IV.—DR. GEIKIE'S "THE HOLY LAND AND THE BIBLE."

The Holy Land and the Bible. By CUNNINGHAM GEIKIE, D.D. 2 vols. Cassell and Co.

THIS work, which bears the modest title of "A Book of Scripture Illustrations gathered in Palestine," will, if we mistake not, add considerably to the author's well-deserved reputation. Without any disparagement of the remarkable and scholarly "Lives of Christ" which we owe to Archdeacon Farrar and Dr. Edersheim, it must be confessed that Dr. Geikie's work on the "Life and Words of Christ" stands by itself as a great monument of the author's judgment and skill. It is a book much prized by theological students; and the remark made by the late Dr. Swainson, "that where Dr. Geikie is strong, he is strong indeed," will often occur to the reader of special passages where a master's hand is felt. In the "Hours with the Bible," Dr. Geikie has shown the greatest skill in gathering together apt illustrations of the Old Testament. There are few books more deserving the attention of those who have to conduct Bible-classes than these six volumes.

In his preface, Dr. Geikie makes an apology for adding one more to the many books on the Holy Land. But we think that the general opinion as to these volumes, possessing as they do the first requisites which such books should aim at, will convince him that he has not laboured in vain. He writes his experiences in a pleasant and unaffected style; and, in spite of all that has been done since the publication of Dean Stanley's "Sinai and Palestine" to the present time, it seems as if such a book as this was needed for those who have not time or opportunity to consult some of the larger works abounding in illustrations of the Bible.

Dr. Geikie begins with Jaffa and its neighbourhood. The whole chapter is a favourable specimen of the way in which he combines his personal experience with happy illustrations of the Bible. He has given a most interesting description of the scene from the house which stands near the traditional site of the house of Simon the tanner. The unchanging character of Oriental dwellings enables the traveller to realize something of the grandeur of the Apostle's vision. "From such a terrace," says Dr. Geikie, "St. Peter's eyes rested on the wide heavens above and these shining waters—the highway to the lands of the Gentile; and fishermen were then, perhaps, wading between the rocks of the harbour or moving over them as now—a sight recalling long-past days to the old fisherman of Gennesaret."

Dr. Geikie is particularly happy in the sixth chapter of his first volume, where he enumerates the localities famous in the life of David. The whole of that wonderful history is vividly illustrated by the clear and distinct narrative of his experiences in the region. Much has been written of the way in which the many passages of Scripture, where reference is made to shepherds and sheep, acquire a fresh meaning from the experience of Eastern travel. We do not remember any clearer or more vivid account than that which the reader of this book will find in the chapter on the "Way to Gerar." The passage which we extract is an admirable specimen of the way in which Dr. Geikie gives life to a familiar subject :

Yet there is a bright as well as a dark side to the shepherd's life. No occupation could be more delightful to the simple mind to which the flock is the chief concern in the universe, than when he leads forth his sheep or goats to green pastures, and beside still waters as they glide over the stones in some still-flowing brook. The patient sheep follow meekly ; even among the lively goats some do so, and the rest follow them. His charge once busy feeding, the shepherd can take his pipe and play artless melodies, or cheer himself by his simple songs. In the rare case of genius, the glory of the morning or the evening may make higher aspirations, as it once did in the soul of David, calling forth some of his wondrous Psalms, first sung to his own accompaniment on the harp which he had himself invented. In the burning heat of noon, on the treeless plain or hillside, the shepherd leads the sheep to the shadow of some great rock in the weary land, as I have often seen ; the panting creatures pressing close to the cold stone alike for deeper shadow and to feel its natural coolness. Often indeed, in these overpowering hours, I have noticed them crouching into the open caves which abound everywhere in the chalky hills. When evening falls they follow their guide to the nearest well, if there be no running water—not unfrequently to find other flocks before them. In such a case, strife as to priority often arises in a land where water is so scarce ; as in the old days, with the "herdsmen of Abraham's cattle" and those of the cattle of Lot, or with Philistine herdsmen of Gerar and those of Isaac. Sometimes the deep wells are covered by a great stone, so heavy that it can only be moved by the joint strength of several men, thus securing the water against the selfishness of any single shepherd, and forcing him to wait till his brethren who have an equal right to it have arrived. If it be the season for leading them to the fold by night, the sheep are guided thither as evening falls, the shepherd standing at the rude gate with outstretched staff, counting them on entering, as in the morning. Then comes the watch by night, till the next morning brings back the same daily occupation.

The fourteenth and fifteenth chapters abound in admirable descriptions. Dr. Geikie has bestowed great pains in his account of Hebron. Readers of his pages will not fail to notice a most interesting illustration of the journey of Balaam. But, indeed, this portion of the work has particular distinction and brightness. In the account of Abraham's purchase of the cave of Machpelah, we are inclined to criticise the use of the expression "a shrewd man of business." The words grate upon us, and the grand conception of Abraham's character,

which we gain from the Book of Genesis, seems somewhat to suffer from the words, which we should like to see omitted in another edition.

When Dr. Geikie approaches Jerusalem, we perceive an increasing glow and interest in his description. Great pains have evidently been bestowed upon this portion of his task; and he has availed himself of the researches of Captain Conder and others, who have made the topography of the Holy City a special study. The description of Bethany is particularly graphic; and the country around Jerusalem has been treated with great skill.

Our next extract is the conclusion of the chapter on the Dead Sea:

No one appears to have passed along the eastern shore of the lake since the famous traveller Seetzen did so in 1807. The whole journey is over a region in vivid keeping with the story of the destruction of the doomed cities. It was only with the greatest difficulty that any progress could be made, so rough and almost impassable was the track. The rocks stand up in a succession of terraces, on the lowest of which, but still far above the water, lies the path, if path it can be called, which leaves one to climb and force himself through and over a chaos of enormous blocks of limestone, sandstone, and basalt, fallen from the cliffs above, or brings him abruptly to a stand before wild clefts in the solid walls of the precipice. The range of salt hills at the south, known as *Jebel Usdum*, is no less worthy of its place as a boundary of the Sea of Death. Mr. Holman Hunt resided here for several days in 1854, and has given us in his terrible picture of "*The Scapegoat*" an embodiment of the landscape of that portion of the Dead Sea at sunset; a vision of the most appalling desolation. The salt hills run for several miles nearly east and west, at a height of from 300 to 400 feet, level atop, and not very broad; the mass being a body of rock-salt, capped with a bed of gypsum and chalk. Dislocated, shattered, furrowed into deep clefts by the rains, or standing out in narrow, ragged buttresses, they add to the weird associations of all around. Here and there harder portions of the salt, withstanding the weather while all around them melts and wears off, rise up as isolated pillars, one of which bears among the Arabs the name of *Lot's wife*. In front of the ridge the ground is strewn with lumps and masses of salt, through which streamlets of brine run across the long muddy flat towards the beach, which itself sparkles in the sun with a crust of salt, shining as if the earth had been sown with diamonds. Everywhere, except at the very few spots where fresh springs or streams enter it, the lake deserves the evil name it has borne for ages. The stillness of death reigns. Here and there, indeed, birds sing and twitter on its banks, and in favoured spots rich vegetation covers the rocks; Bedouins, pilgrims, and travellers visit its shores; but these gleams of life only deepen the impression of its unutterable loneliness. In connection with the awful story of Sodom and Gomorrah, it seems written over with a curse and blighted with the judgment of Heaven, and this seems to have been the feeling even in Bible times, for in the blissful days of the Messiah, as painted by Ezekiel, the salt sea is to give place to a wide expanse of living and cheerful waters.

We reluctantly abstain from extracting portions of the account of the interesting Samaritan community in Nablus. It is to be hoped that before long some definite information

may be obtained as to the ancient copy of the Pentateuch still cherished among the treasures of the Samaritans. Many will join in Dr. Geikie's wish that the desire of the high-priest for a teacher, who should enter with interest upon a very difficult task, may be realized. Those who hope much from the sagacity and interest already shown by Bishop Blyth in his great enterprise may reasonably, we think, expect that he will find opportunity for approaching these interesting remnants of a forgotten religious body. Dr. Geikie gives a most encouraging account of the famous missions at Beirut. Great care is evidently taken in the preparation of native preachers. One of the students of this college was ordained by Bishop Hannington in 1885—not "1855," as it stands in a book wonderfully free from misprint.

We have said enough to indicate the high opinion we entertain of Dr. Geikie's work. Every year as it passes seems to increase the interest of all thoughtful students of Scripture in the questions of sacred geography and Biblical illustration. Multitudes of tourists are now to be found on the Nile, in the Desert, and the Holy Hills, and no doubt a cheap edition of this book, which will probably soon be called for, will become indispensable to travellers in the East. We cannot help expressing a wish that the book contained some illustrations, like the exquisite view of the country round Nazareth which is to be found in the Archbishop of York's edition of the New Testament, from a sketch by Dr. Malan, or the now, we fear, forgotten views of the Holy Land buried in the edition of "Josephus," commenced by Dr. Traill and completed by Isaac Taylor. These illustrations were called by Dr. G. Williams, author of "The Holy City," "Photographs of the East."

G. D. BOYLE.

ART. V.—THE LORD'S FORECASTS OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.—MATT. XIII.

THE Parables of the Kingdom are to us interpretations of things as they have been and as they are; but when spoken, they were forecasts of things as they were to be. We are so used to them as instruction, that we scarcely think of them as prophecy; yet in this character they form a distinct and important feature in our Lord's ministry. The King of the Kingdom is also the Prophet of it; and that in the way of prediction, as well as in the larger sense of prophecy. In these parables He gives His forecasts of the historic character of His Kingdom—its historic as distinguished from its ideal character.