FROM MISSIONARY FIELDS.

Letter from Beyrouth.

Beyrouth, April 17, 1898.

To the Editor:

According to 2 Samuel 6: 5, 6, we find that Damascus was conquered by King David. It is a very ancient city. The origin of the city is not now known, but that it is a very old city, is shown plain by the many legends about concerning its origin and of the great men that lived in it or near it, such as Cain, Adam, Abel, Noah, Elijah and many more modern prophets are said by Mohammedans to have been born in the shadow of Sham. The blood of righteous Abel is said to have been spilt on the hillside north of Sham, and on an irregular the red ledges there are shown, which are said to have been stained by his innocent blood.

The country around Sham for miles is one grand orchard filled with olive, fig and apricot trees. Apples there, of course, others, but they are in the minority largely. A few apples may be seen up here, they do not do well here, but in the high mountains of the Anti-Lebanon they are said to do well. A few peaches and a few plums may be seen. Pomegranates are also quite plentiful. Peaches are here, but not plentiful. Almond trees do well, and the fruit is eaten as soon as it is well formed, long before it is ripe. Vegetable peddlers in the orient are found here in great quantities.

After visiting the different shrines and curiosities of the city, we left Sham after attending to some business matters relating to our mission, we left Sham one beautiful morning on the Beyrout Damascus and Hauran railroad for Beyrout. The road has been built by the Baradis, who live in the source in the Anti-Lebanon, where it crosses a summit and leads into the valley of the Baradis. The train winds along this stream through cheerful dells and well watered orchards, now and then quietly reached down a little more or bringing in view some thrilling mountain scenery. Many places the Arabs may be seen, dressed in their lands in their primitive way, men, women and donkeys, the whole family at work at something. Villages are formed at frequent intervals either in the canyon or on the mountain side, for the mountains where are found are very fertile and the climate here is delightful. Grapes and mulberry trees grow in great abundance.

In the Anti-Lebanon are found many fine valleys where cattle, goats and sheep are found grazing in large numbers. Mount Hermon to the left or rather east of the city of Sham, was white with snow, even this day, showing the snow fall to have been very heavy. This winter has been very cold all over Turkey and Syria, and many people have in consequence suffered a great deal. The railroad, after making a long curve towards the north, turns suddenly west and soon lands in the valley of El Bekaa. This valley and broad valley is very fertile, but is cultivated much in the same way as the rest of Syria, and it is reported that a good part of the land is laid out into mulberry groves for silk culture.

After crossing the valley of El Bekaa the road leads up to Lebanon at a very steep grade. So steep is the grade that the ordinary locomotive is insufficient, wherefore the company has had to put on the cog wheel system, consisting of a third rail in the middle which is a cog rail into which a wheel of the engine is made to fit, thus keeping the drive wheels from switching. With this assistance the locomotive does fairly good work and the speed is reasonable when the grade is considered. On both sides of the Lebanon the view is most beautiful. To the east and southeast are obtained a bird's eye view of the Bekaa with the Lebanon and Hermon on the background. On the left are the fine vineyards and odd-looking villages; toward the top snow-capped peaks and cool air. Looking along the mountain side pure little streams of water can be traced from their source, trickling over the rocks and winding their way into the Litany and thence into the Mediterranean.

After reaching the summit, 1,437 meters above the sea level, one catches a glimpse of the Mediterranean, whose broad expanse is like a huge glass spread out before the eye. At the base of the mountain lies Beyrout with its orchards to the east, its harbor and ships to the west, and a huge sand hill to the south. Descending the east slope of the mountain train seems as though it is going carelessly down the mountain slope. Looking down and one may see a whole mountain-side laid out in well cultivated vineyards, on the other mulberries, olive groves, apricots, apple, peach and plum trees are seen growing; many of which are just putting forth their bloom; others just putting forth their young leaves, and for every mile one descends the change of climate and of springtime is quite perceptible. Pigeon houses and cedars are seen here and there in large groves. And among all this vegetation may be seen villages, old and new, summer resorts of all styles, ancient and modern. Every hill and every valley seems covered with houses. On the very mountain ridges, on the peaks, everywhere, buildings are seen and cultivation of the soil is taking place some three and four thousand feet above sea level, yet within five miles of the city.

The sight made a lasting impression on my minds. It was one of the most pleasant days of our travel; the several times for turn were few, and the attention was called to something new in nature and its gift; as well as to the works of man, which have been spent on that historical Mount for centuries. The people have seen their days of pleasure and their days of pain as well. Many a bloody battle has been fought on those hills, and many a brave soldier has laid down his life in the defense of his native hill. No one need wonder why it is so well loved by all, for its advantages are many.

F. F. HINTZE.

Letter from Damascus.

Damascus, Syria,
April 12, 1898.

To the Editor:

Leaving Sham we also left the peculiar Syrian villages to the north. South of Sham the villagers built their houses with flat roofs, like those in Palestine, whereas those north built their houses like Cones. These singular structures look like the great mounds or wigwams in the distance. They are very usually white, which makes them shine out in the bright sunshine. One of the houses are so constructed that they need no timber of any sort. They are built up entirely of stones, and have a perfect peak, so that the arch supports itself. Many of them are neatly finished on the inside, according to Syrian fellah style, an architecture peculiar to the country and its people. In the corners from the floor to the ceiling are, and in other places of the house are built bins, so that when filled with grain they can be easily reached; also shelves are built in the walls, so that convenience can be had without taking room. We stopped one night, and found them to be about fifteen or eighteen feet high, and the arched roof hanged at an even twenty dirty lines of adobes, one tier being placed just a little inside the other, so that they finally closed to a peak. All the outhouses and kitchens are built on the same principle.

From Hama to Homs we had a good, well built road. We crossed the Orontes twice at Bostan, a city built on a spur of the mountain standing out boldly into the narrow valley. Homs was found to be quite a strategic city place, and here the police were extraordinarily good. They called and got our names and sent us on our way to another, with whom we might deposit a little backshish. The country around Homs was moderately good, though somewhat hilly in places and a good deal of rocky land. A little further along the road led up over the mountain of the Syrian desert, there being few ranges formed from the eastern slope of the Anti-Libanon, the ranges from the west part dry. At Nebk we struck the road to Palmyra and Bagdad. Here we found a city of land well cultivated. Nebk is a small town and has a good stream of water, hence good gardens.

The people sold it was good, pure water, and we supposed it was, but as we looked up the stream we saw the people, donkeys, cows, etc., wade in the stream together dipping out the water. No one cared to dip above his own feet or donkey's, but below it was fresh and what difference does it make. Often we saw the women who carry water on their heads into the spring and stand in the water or pool and dip up the water, which they were first washing themselves, or their houses use. The filthiness of these people is indescribable.

At the village we put up at next Brother Mayrock made a discovery that spoiled our Damascus appetite for the next day. Now Brother Mayrock has an eye open for the curious, and his curiosities at times get him in a little but baking, so he invited himself to look, accepted the invitation and looked in. Now the woman had commenced baking slap-jacks in a large earthen vessel about the size of a forty gallon barrel. The woman, baker had and had had, a hot fire on, made in the bottom of the open vessel or large stock. The baker, woman, was made up of the grass the cows and camels had eaten a few days ago, and when the fire was out, down she quietly reached down a little more or bringing in view some thrilling mountain scenery. Many places the Arabs may be seen, dressed in their lands in their primitive way, men, women and donkeys, the whole family at work at something. Villages were formed at frequent intervals either in the canyon or on the mountain side, for the mountains where are found are very fertile and the climate here is delightful. Grapes and mulberry trees grow in great abundance.

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IN VIRGINIA.

Delightful Branch Conference—More Converts Baptized.

Sandy River, Pittsylvania Co., Va.,
May 20, 1898.

To the Editor:

With pleasure I submit for the perusal of the readers of the News a few lines of a brief account of a branch conference held at Patterson, Wythe county, Va., April 30 and May 1, 1898. Those were present: Elder Samuel H. Taylor, E. M. Wilkinson, T. C. Romney, and a goodly number of the Saints and friends.

The conference days rolled around, bringing with them delightful weather, and we had a good time, a very good time. Just a happy medium. The surface of the earth was covered with a beautiful carpet of the dandelion, the fragrance of which was broken here and there by its rich decorations of wild flowers of various hues, which the gentle breeze was wafted to and fro on the refreshing zephyrs as they played gaily o'er hill and vale.

The birds sang sweet lays, filling the air with varied melody as they flitted about in the tree tops.

In fact, the whole scene was well calculated to draw one's mind from this earth and ascend heavenward, allowing his thoughts and imaginations to fly back six thousand years to the time when God walked in a well watered garden, swaying his scepter over the entire universe. One thing was lacking, the sweet enchantment of the scene, and which was not enjoyed in the days of Eden was the presence of our Father and Mother, and singing to do the time religion is good enough for me."

Our conference, which began at 10:30 Saturday morning, was held in a vacant building which was seated for the occasion, and which was filled to its capacity. Twelve sons conducted the services. The principal speakers at our conference were Elders E. M. Wilkinson, S. H. Taylor, and T. C. Romney, though strong testimonies were borne by the president of the branch, Elder C. O. Richards, Elder J. Rotenberry and W. O. Tomlinson, Teachers of the branch, and John Wilcox, an aged brother of the branch, both school. The chief topics treated were Faith, a Principle of Power, Repentance, Baptism, Revelation, and the Word of Wisdom.

The Spirit of the Lord was richly poured out on the Elders and the Saints and friends listened with rapt attention and deep interest to the instructions given as they came from the servants of the Lord laboring under that divine Spirit. Three meetings were held on Sunday, the last the second, all of which were well attended. The endeavor was made by the Elders to impress upon the minds of the Saints the idea that though they had been adopted citizens into the kingdom of God, that salvation was not obtained nor would it be till they had perfected their lives.

The attempt was made to impress upon the minds of our friends the necessity of obeying the principles taught by the Latter-day Saints, in order that they might be exalted in the eternal worlds. The words took effect. They had been made to see and hear that they will live better lives in the future, and five of our "friends" were baptized at the close of our excellent conference, which raised the number belonging to the Patterson branch to twenty-eight. Three of which were baptized last August by Elder H. D. Smith and myself at the place where the waters are wont to hold in a church, Elder E. M. Wilkinson, who so ably assisted us at our conference was the first to enter the waters of baptism. He was a Methodist exhorter, a leading medical doctor of Wythe county, and held a high county position. Last fall he was ordained an Elder and set apart to fill a mission to the Southern States by Apostles Lyman and Cowley, who came down to pay us a visit, and which visit was highly appreciated by all the Elders of this conference.

My itinerary in the "Old Dominion" has been something over three and one half years duration (having left my home in Old Mexico three years next September) during which I have been with a variety of experiences, most of which has been very agreeable. This is the second conference I have had contact with some contradictions, but the joy which he encounters in the knowledge of having a share in doing the Master's will fully compensates him for all inconvenience. A great portion of my time has been spent in canvassing and holding meetings in the cities of Richmond, Norfolk, Portsmouth and Lynchburg, where we saw the hand of God made manifest in our behalf upon many occasions. One time I was arrested in the manner prescribed by those placed over us in the Priesthood and was immediately without purse or scrip, and as a result of our obedience unto counsel given, we were speedily relieved of our embarrassment, clothing, stationery, stamps, food and shelter were all provided, in fact we received nothing that would have been for our good.

In traveling among the Elders in the circuit of our district, we find them all imbued with the proper spirit, which should and always does attend all successful ministers of God's Holy Word. They are accomplishing a noble work. Under their administrations the sick are healed, the lame made to walk, and the eyes of the blind are opened.

Ever praying for the welfare of Zion I remain an Elder in the cause of truth.

THOMAS C. ROMNEY.

CHEROKEE CONFERENCE.

Report of Conference Meetings—Condition and Prospects.

To the Editor:

As per appointment the Elders of the Cherokee conference met in number, including mission president, Wm. T. Jack—assembled in the city of Coal Gate, Indian Territory, for conference on the 6th, 7th and 8th of May. The first meeting was held on the night of the 6th, which was well attended by residents. After singing and prayer, David Elder Byron H. Alfred Jr. as the presiding Elder, gave a good address the first speaker. Elder Alfred occupied the whole evening in a very forcible manner on general and individual salvation. The next day was spent in Priesthood meetings, at which each Elder gave an account of his work and expressed his willingness to push ahead in the work of the Lord. The day closed with a public meeting where President Wm. T. Jack addressed the congregation on the first principles of the Gospel.

Three public meetings were held Sunday, the first at 10 a. m., at which Elders spoke: President Joseph J. Richardson, Byron H. Alfred Jr., Daniel T. Ickesley, Hiram B. Lunt, Joseph Jarrett, W. Anderson. Two Priesthood meetings were held between the public services. In addition to the regular business transacted in them. Three of our oldest workers, President Joseph J. Richardson, Hiram B. Lunt and Daniel T. Ickesley, President Wm. T. Jack and President T. Hawkley, were released from this conference to labor in Kansas. The Saints spoke highly of the Elders called with a public meeting where President Wm. T. Jack addressed the congregation on the first principles of the Gospel.

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Thus closed a season of rejoicing and the good people of Kiowa will long be remembered by their faithful treatment of the Elders while in their town.

The work accomplished since November 1st, 1897, when the Elders met, numbering thirty-one. But, though our efforts have been crowned with such success, we feel to render all honor to our heavenly Father, for we realize that it is the Lord of Heaven and Earth, may water, but it is God who gives the increase.

The working force in Cherokee conference at present is as follows:

Elders Anderson, Robert Kirby, Samuel Linton, Jos. Bitmead, Lorell, Solomon D. Chase, Richard N. Lund and the writer.

WILLIAM R. PALMER.

Coal Gate, Indian Territory, May 14.

In Kentucky.

To the Editor:

I left my home in March, 1897, for a mission to the Southern States and on arriving in Chattanooga was assigned to the Kentucky conference, and on our last conference held in Lexington in December, I labored in the county of Casey. I had a pleasant time. The people were very kind to the Elders and we had the privilege of baptizing twenty-two honest souls into the fold of Christ.

At the December conference I was assigned to labor in the Callaways county branch with Elder H. D. Ross, traveling companion. Our labors thus far have been those of pleasure and profit to us. We have had much opposition in meeting with on account of much prejudice existing among the people, but we have never had to suffer for food nor yet sleep with the Uncle Sam, and therefore we praise the good people in Calloway county.

Though we have had our funeral sermon preached (as we Elders call it) yet we have not neglected our work, but have been blessed in seeing a well watered garden, swaying his scepter over the entire universe. One thing was lacking, the sweet enchantment of the scene, and which was not enjoyed in the days of Eden was the presence of our Father and Mother, and singing to do the time religion is good enough for me."

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