

## PEREGRINE PAPERS

By Rev. W. H. T. Squires, D. D.

## BAAL-BEK.

V. (Continued.)

"I see it now. Baal-Bek was made by the hand of God, a place for worship. The magnificent fountain of pure, cool water that here bursts from the bosom of earth to bless a dry and thirsty land, the long, lateral valley of Coele-Syria draining to the north by the Orontes to Antioch and the sea, to the south by the Litani and the 'Entering in of Hamath' to the sea, the gigantic shoulders of barren Anti-Lebanon holding back the sweeping, yellow sands of Arabia, the green ridge of Lebanon, fertile to the top, the naked rock on Lebanon's summit like queer Arabic characters inscribed by a giant's hand—all would direct the hearts of men, even stolid, idolatrous men, to erect their altars here. Baal-Bek was the religious, as Damascus was the political centre of Syria. It was inevitable. And here Solomon raised a temple for one of his Baalite wives."

At the mention of Solomon the young Syrian frowned. "Don't say that. It is not true. No Jew ever worshipped here." At the word "Jew" he spat on the ground. "I hate them—hate them—hate them," he cried in a very storm of passion. He stamped the ground and gesticulated violently.

I was astonished. "What have the Jews done to you? You are worse than Henry Ford."

"Not a thing, but in my blood the hatred of two hundred generations burns like fire."

"But they are your nearest neighbors and your kinsfolk by blood."

"Indeed you are mistaken, sir. The Syrians are Canaanites, from Canaan, son of Ham, son of Noah. The Hebrews are of the blood of Shem. We have been fighting them since Joshua, since Abraham, and we usually whipped them. We fight with them still."

"Ah," I replied, "you claim kin with Hiram, king of Tyre, Ben-Hadad, king of Damascus, Hannibal, the near-conqueror of Rome."

"Yes, that is our blood. We have lived on these mountains since the grandson of Noah settled here. We are the oldest nation on earth—perhaps the only people who live in their original homes."

"I never saw a young man who could hate so intensely. I wonder if you can love with the same ardent, passionate, Southern blood that stirs to such wrath?"

A smile spread over his handsome face and swept the storm away. He was silent a little and then replied so softly I could hardly catch the words, "I can love as never man has loved. Love is stronger than death."

"You speak with authority; no doubt from experience."

After a long pause, he replied: "I love the dearest, sweetest, purest, noblest maid in this world. I would lie down and die for her. I swear I could; I would. Oh, sir, you are a stranger. Did ever a young man in America have such trouble as I?"

"Why, of course. They all have trouble. That is a part of the love game. What's bothering you? Some wild, handsome, gallant, young Arab out of the desert yonder is after the dearest, sweetest, purest, noblest and so on? Keep up heart, my boy. I will guarantee you win her. I never met a young man of finer timber. She can do no better. Don't commit suicide yet."

"An Arab!" he echoed the word with the quintessence of contempt. "It is no Arab. It's my own father. He has betrothed me to a Jew"—he spat again—"because she is rich,

awfully wealthy, and I am bound by Syrian custom and law."

"Aha! I have seen her, met the dearest, sweetest, purest, noblest and so forth." As I spoke I took a bit of lace from my pocket. He snatched it from me, kissed it passionately and then returned it. It was evident that this lad took himself seriously.

The shadows were rapidly deepening. We could hear the weird call of the camel-drivers floating up from the long, white roads below. We could see the inhabitants of the village drinking their coffee on distant housetops. Lebanon was robing his massive flanks in deep tints of purple. At last Khlal spoke. "What would an American boy do?"

"Do you want me to tell you exactly what I think an American boy would do?"

"Yes."

"He would borrow his father's automobile, without thinking to ask permission, pick up Alice, Amaryllis, Ellen or Anne, race over to Beyrout with a couple of speed 'cops' taking his number and would send the old man this wire:

"Amaryllis and I married just now. Perfectly happy. Please forgive us. Am dead broke. Wire thousand quick. Your dutiful son, Jim."

"What would his father do?" in awed tones.

"Oh, his father would tear his hair, crush the yellow paper in his fists, fling it on the floor, stamp on it, beat the table until he broken a couple of cut glass vases, declare that Jim never was worth his salt, and never would be. He would announce his immediate intention to dismiss Jim from the office, and he would also change his will. Then he would slam the door behind him.

"Jim's mother would pick up the yellow paper, spread it on her lap, read it sixteen times and cry copiously over it."

"When Jim's father caught her at it, he would make some uncomplimentary remarks about Jim's relations on his mother's side. The lady would then tell Jim's father that he was a brute and that she always had regretted that she didn't marry her other suitor twenty-five years ago. He at least was a gentleman, even if poor. Then she would shed more tears.

"In about half an hour Jim's father would come in with a bit of paper in his hand. He would give it to Jim's mother, and kiss her and tell her she was right, he was a brute. She would fling her arms around his neck and tell him that he was the dearest old thing in the world, and that she wouldn't stand for anybody calling her husband a brute. Then she would go to the telephone and in ten minutes Jim would be worth a thousand dollars.

"That's what would happen in America."

We walked together through the cool shadows of twilight to the hotel. He parted from me, hat in hand, saying that he had enjoyed the day. The darkness fell between us, and I have seen him no more, and never expect to see Khlal again.

Three weeks later at Jerusalem a card was handed me from Baal-Bek. It read:

"Honorable Friend. I did like you say Americans do. We were married two days now. I told her it was heroic to take chance for love's sake. We are very happy. Khlal Haddad."

(To be continued.)

## ROTATION IN CHURCH OFFICE: SOME REASONS FOR IT.

By a Pastor.

This is not the first time the churches have been asked to decide this question, and unless it is settled affirmatively it will keep recurring, for the matter too deeply concerns the welfare of the church to be ignored, as some Presbyteries insist on doing or defeated through the indifference of those who have never seriously thought it through. Not only does it vitally concern the more than 25,000 officers primarily affected, but every church and pastor has reason to be interested. Their usefulness is largely at stake. Will you then consider the following points advanced in favor of adopting this system in those of our churches which wish it?

1. It is, as has just been stated, permissive, not obligatory. No church has to adopt the plan unless it so wishes. Since this is the case, should not those churches which do wish it be given the privilege of so doing? No small number of our churches so wish, as is evidenced by the fact that last year thirty-eight of our Presbyteries voted for the overture permitting rotation, with thirty-two voting against, and seventeen not voting at all. (They should have been required to vote.) So far on the voting this year, of the Presbyteries voting, a majority have voted for it. Doesn't this indicate that a demand for it exists in the church? Shall this large number be denied this privilege?

2. The present system of removal of unworthy officers is inadequate. Most of the unworthiness consists in mere indifference to duty, crankiness, opposition to up-to-date measures and such things. These are not cases which admit of judicial action. To attempt their removal would only divide churches and make bad matters worse. Any pastor can tell you that. But grant the churches rotation and these obstructionists would be eliminated so quietly and naturally that there would be no feelings hurt and no occasion for church quarrels to arise. Mistakes are made in electing officers, as well as pastors, but the difference is that the pastor can soon be dispensed with, while the mis-fit elder or deacon, like the brook, goes on forever, or so long that it seems forever to the poor church. No use to say that churches should be careful about their electing; mistakes are made anyhow.

3. It has been urged that rotation would cheapen the office. But would it? It doesn't in the Presbyterian Church U. S. A. On the contrary, what can cheapen and degrade the office more than to have men in it who are either doing nothing or worse, preventing others who would do something from doing their duty? Good officers find their efforts blocked and thwarted by their fellows who object to any progressive measures. The good ones have to bear the blame for the bad. Further, what great endorsement would an elder or deacon wish than to be repeatedly returned to office by an appreciative people? And such would be the case. Of the present officers probably 90 per cent would be returned. Faithful officers have nothing to fear from rotation. The others ought to be made to fear the rejection by the church which they have wronged by unfaithfulness.

4. Our present system of life tenure is not Presbyterianism. We claim to be republican in our form of government, but we are not. The people who elected the present elders and deacons are in many cases dead or removed from the church. They represent the graveyards, not the living congregation. We have a perpetual oligarchy instead of a republic.