

center of the Syrians who fought with the Israelites for many years <sup>until</sup> ~~though~~ they were finally subjugated by the troops from far away Assyria. In Roman times <sup>Desert ~~attracted~~</sup> Damascus was again a great city, and it is prominent in the New Testament. In the Middle Ages it was one of the great Mohammedan capitals. As one sees the beautiful crystal clear water of the Aban<sup>a</sup> which flows through the city, and of the Pharpar a short distance further ~~from it~~, and contrasts <sup>them</sup> ~~it~~ with the muddy, rushing, dirty water of the lower Jordan, and as one thinks of the pride of the citizens of Damascus, the great capital and commercial city, located strategically on one of the most important trade routes in the ancient world, the home of skilled artisans who made Damascus Steel famous all through Europe in the middle ages, one can easily understand the feeling of Naaman, the Syrian general who said, on being told to bathe in the river Jordan to be healed of his leprosy, "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the rivers of Israel?" We can well understand the feelings of Naaman. Let us not feel too sure that we would have spoken differently had we been in his place. We are often tempted to think that <sup>that</sup> which looks finest and greatest according to our human judgment and which is more satisfying to our human pride is the best way. But our judgment may be altogether different from that of God. What appears to us least important and least satisfying to our human pride, may be His way and that which we should adopt.

The region of Syria extends roughly to the upper end of the Euphrates River, South of the river the region is desert, the wildest sort of desert. Before the war it was a long trip by caravan across this desert. Now the trip is made in two days by rapid automobiles. This desert is not soft sand but rather hard soil, almost any part of which forms <sup>a</sup> good roadways <sup>bed</sup> for <sup>an</sup> Automobiles. ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~. The regular parties cross twice a week, accompanied by escorts of soldiers in armed cars. Occasionally there <sup>are</sup> attacks by the desert peoples. This danger is a real one, though it is perhaps somewhat over-estimated. There is another great danger in this section. Crossing here, ~~XXXX~~ one passes, somewhere in the middle of the unsettled ~~XXXXXX~~ desert, from the French mandate of Syria to the British mandate (now an independent kingdom) of Iraq. I have heard that it has happened on at least one occasion that two automobiles, <sup>coming</sup> ~~have~~ ~~gone~~.