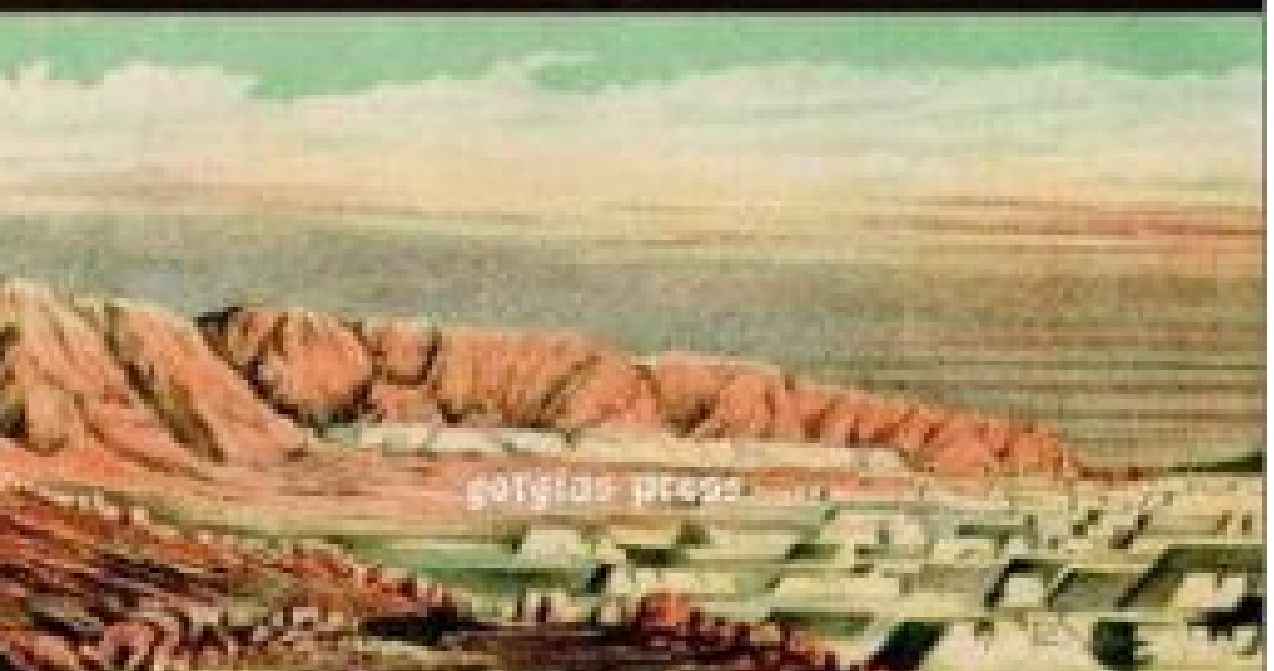


# The Land of Israel

## A Journal of Travels in Palestine

H. B. Tristram





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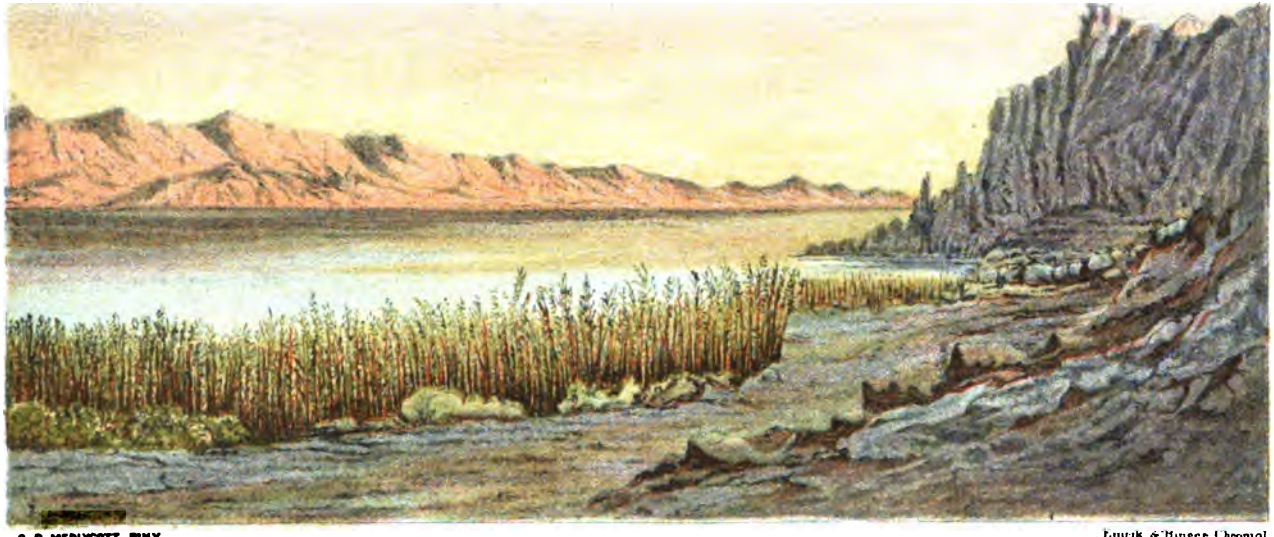
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# THE LAND OF ISRAEL:

A

## Journal of Travels in Palestine,

UNDERTAKEN WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO ITS PHYSICAL CHARACTER.

BY

H. B. TRISTRAM, D.D., F.R.S.,

*Canon of Durham.*

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# PREFACE.

DIVINES, antiquarians, and poets have trodden the fields of Palestine, and made the world familiar with its most interesting and striking features. Not to enumerate others, the researches of Dr. Robinson and the glowing pictures of Dean Stanley have, upon most subjects connected with the country, left little to be filled in by their successors.

Notwithstanding this, however, and although libraries teem with volumes of geographical and archæological investigations, the physical history of the Holy Land appears, hitherto, to have scarcely received the attention that is due to it, and there may in this direction be still room left for a contribution to our knowledge.

In the belief that this field was not yet exhausted, I spent, accompanied by a small party of friends, in 1863–4, a period of nearly ten months in the examination chiefly of the geology and natural history of the country. Our attention was particularly directed to the basin of the Dead Sea, and to the districts east of the Jordan, as being those least accessible to travellers, and of which our knowledge was least complete.

Every country is interesting to the student of nature, but the interest is vastly enhanced when he wanders among the scenes which suggested their imagery to Prophets and Psalmists; and, far more even than this, which supplied illustrations for the teaching of our Divine Redeemer; and which are also consecrated by the memories of Himself and His Apostles.



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Though Palestine boasts in its productions neither the tropical splendour of India, nor the gorgeous luxuriance of Southern America, yet from *its* fowls of the air are drawn for us our lessons of faith and trust, from the flowers of *its* fields our lessons of humility. The phenomena of its climate, the character of its agriculture, the fishes of its lakes, the bears of its woods, the wild goat of its rocks, the turtle and the stork returning to their haunts amidst its groves, the sparrow and the swallow sheltered in its temple, are subjects, an acquaintance with which may not be essential to a comprehension of the lessons of Sacred Writ, but yet may be of considerable value in enabling the reader to appreciate the force and beauty of the parable or the narrative, and in impressing the scene or the story upon his imagination and his memory.

There are two circumstances which must be impressed upon every thoughtful visitor to the land which was selected to be the cradle of God's revelation to man, and of a faith that was intended to be universal: first, the absence in its scenery of the *romantic*—of all that could bewilder the imagination or foster a localised superstition; and, secondly, the marvellous variety of its climate, scenery, and productions,—from the dreary deserts of Southern Judæa to the wooded glades of Gilead and Galilee—from the seething valley of the lower Jordan, 1,300 feet below the level of the sea, to the almost Arctic heights of Hermon and Lebanon. When Solomon "spake of trees, from the cedar-tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall," his botanical range extended from the hardy pine under northern snows to the plants of the sultry deserts of Arabia. No land could have been found more capable of providing illustrations

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for a book which was to be read and understood by the men of North and South alike—which was to teach the lessons of truth equally to the dweller in the tropics and under the pole—than this, in which the palm, the vine, the oak, and the pine flourish almost side by side.

My attempt in the following pages, which are for the most part a transcript of letters written on the spot, has been simply to convey the observations and impressions of each day as to the scenery, features, and products of the country through which we were passing; and I have kept back those technical details and enumerations which would have little attraction except for the naturalist, though, for the sake of definition, I have thought it advisable generally to insert the scientific names of such animals, plants, and fossils as are incidentally mentioned in the text: nor have I scrupled occasionally to enter upon topographical disquisition when on comparatively untrodden ground, or when the sacred narrative seemed to be thereby elucidated.

To the zealous and indefatigable co-operation of my fellow-travellers, whose companionship enabled me to accomplish my long-cherished desire, I owe much, and more than I can adequately acknowledge. To the accurate and artistic pencils of my friends, Mr. W. C. P. Medlycott and Mr. P. Egerton-Warburton, and to the careful photographs of my friend, Mr. H. T. Bowman, all kindly placed at my disposal, the volume is indebted for its illustrations. The scientific knowledge and perseverance of my companion, Mr. B. T. Lowne, were devoted to the botany of the country, and his ready information on this subject has been largely drawn upon in the preparation of my notes; while to the keen eye and indefatigable labours



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of my zoological assistant, Mr. Edward Bartlett, a young naturalist of no ordinary promise, are due the discovery and preservation of many specimens which would never otherwise have enriched our collections. My friends, Mr. H. M. Upcher and Mr. C. W. Shepherd, were unwearied in their efforts to promote in every possible way the objects of our expedition. Nor must I omit my grateful acknowledgments to Messrs. J. H. Cochrane, Barneby-Lutley, and Garnier, by whose kind assistance and in whose society, with Mr. Egerton-Warburton, I was enabled after the return of our original party to accomplish, at length, the most interesting part of my trans-Jordanic excursion. For the facilities which were afforded to us wherever Turkish authority carries influence, we are much indebted to the efforts of our friend R. S. Newall, Esq., of the Electric Telegraph Company.

In the hope that this humble contribution to our knowledge of sacred scenes may conduce in some degree, however slight, to the elucidation or illustration of Holy Writ, and in the firm conviction that every investigation of even the minor details of the topography and the natural character and features of the land has tended to corroborate the minute accuracy of the Inspired Record, and to confirm our faith in its divine origin, these pages are committed to the press; not without a deep sense of gratitude to the Divine Providence which enabled us to complete our journey in health and safety; and an earnest prayer that God may prosper this and every attempt to illustrate His Holy Word.

GREATHAM VICARAGE,
*23rd March*, 1865.

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## NOTE TO THIRD EDITION.

ANOTHER edition of the "Land of Israel" being now called for, the whole has been carefully revised, and much detail of personal incident has been omitted, while everything bearing on the topography, geology, and natural history of Palestine has been retained. It is a source of satisfaction to find that, though the sacred land has been thoroughly surveyed and examined by a scientific staff, in the decade which has elapsed since the work was first given to the public, there has been little to correct or amend in its account of the topography and physical history of the country, and that the officers of the Palestine Exploration have borne kind testimony to its accuracy, and especially to that of the chapters on the Dead Sea. Some corrections have been made in the details respecting Nebo, the result of my careful examination of Moab in 1872, which has been already published in the "Land of Moab." As to the severe attacks which have been made on this point by an American writer, supported only by one English tourist with no experience or knowledge of the country, I may refer to the note at page 530.

The circulation of 4,000 copies of this work in its more costly form leads to the hope that a cheaper edition may prove of some little service to many students of God's Word and works. In the full conviction that the interest of Christians in all that bears on the external incidents of Revelation has, of late years, steadily increased, this attempt to contribute to its illustration is again sent forth.

COLLEGE, DURHAM,
*31st May*, 1876.

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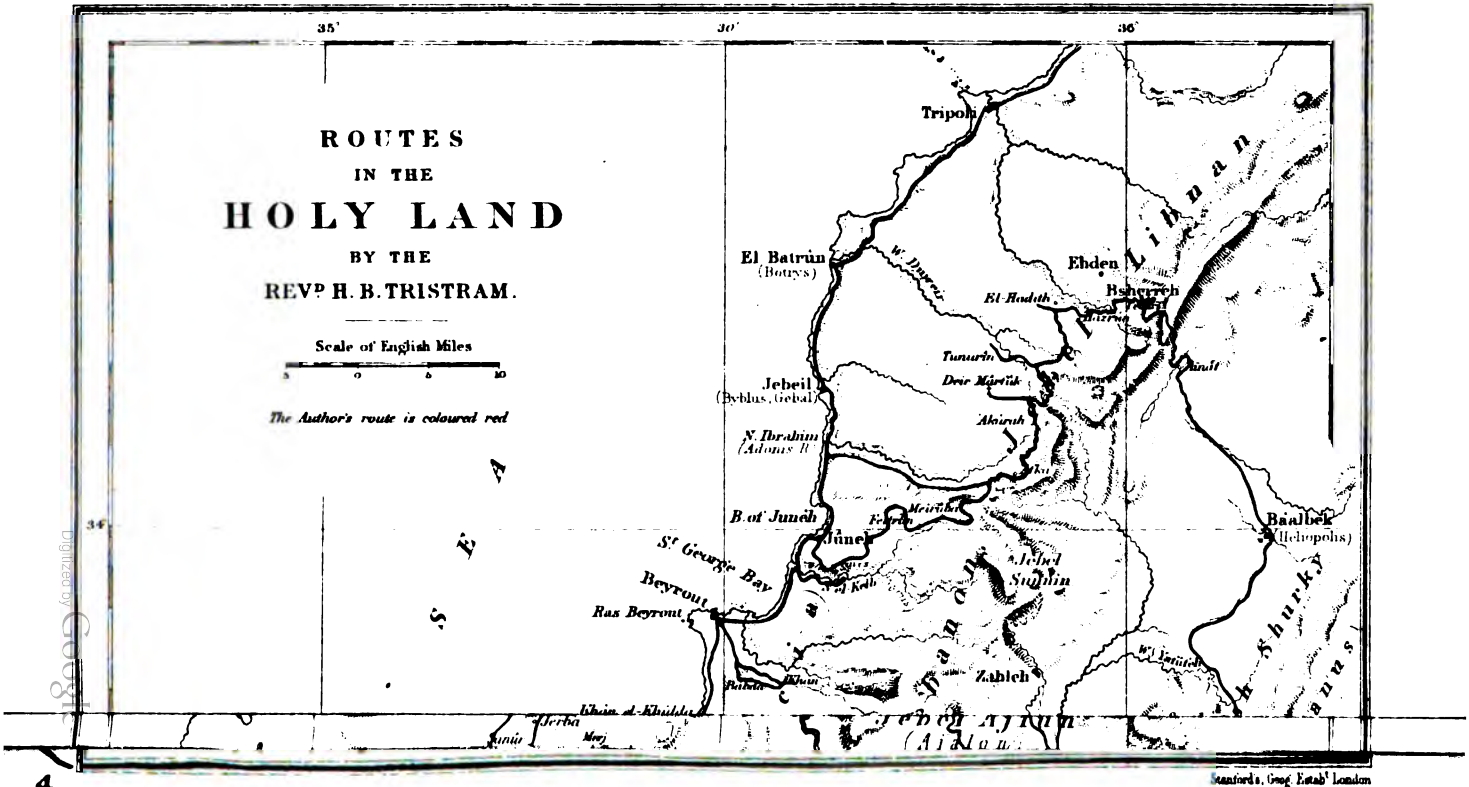

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ROUTES
IN THE
HOLY LAND
BY THE
REVd H. B. TRISTRAM.
Scale of English Miles
5 0 5 10
The Author's route is coloured red
35°
30°
36°
34°
Tripoli
El Batrûn
(Botrys)
Ehden
Besherreh
El Hadeth
Jebeil
(Byblus, Gebal)
N. Ibrahim
(Adonis R.)
B.at Juneh
Juneh
St. George Bay
Beyrout
Ras Beyrout
Jebel Sunnin
Zahleh
Baalbek
(Heliopolis)
Lebanon
Anti-Lebanon
Sea
Stanford's, Geog.l Estab.t London
London. Published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.

# THE LAND OF ISRAEL.

## CHAPTER I.

*Arrival off Beyrout—First Impressions—On the Borders of the Land of Promise—Disembarkation—Turkish Custom-House—Sultan's Firman and its Effects—Our Landlord's History—The Hotel—View from its Roof—Dragomans and Servants—Expedition to the Nahr-el-Kelb—Assyrian and Egyptian Rock-Tablets—Sennacherib—Bone breccia—Flints and Teeth—Red Deer and Elks—The Aurochs (Urus), the Unicorn of Scripture—Boat Expedition—Sea Fowl—Gorge of the Ancient Lycus—Its Birds and Plants—Cavern Pools—Fishes—Visit to Daoud Pasha—Scenery of the Lower Spurs of Lebanon—Olive-Trees—Reception by the Pasha—His Justice—Political Views—Druses and Maronites—Education among the Druses—Learned Researches of Daoud Pasha—Mrs. Thompson's Schools in Beyrout—American Mission—Dr. Thomson.*

ON a bright autumn morning we made the port of Beyrout, our boat having accomplished the run from Cyprus during the night. Though the best harbour in Syria, Beyrout is not much better than an open roadstead. Yet the skeleton of a huge iron steamer, bottom upwards and rent in twain on a rock in front of our bows, appeared strangely out of keeping with the calm beauty of all else around. Like the upturned and contorted strata which underlie the rich and peaceful glades of the Lebanon, it seemed at once an unheeded record of the past and prophecy of the future. Before us rose, tier above tier, in calm beauty, the dark-green heights of those mountains,



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well-wooded on this their seaward face, until the farthest retiring terraces could be perceived just tipped with the first snows of autumn.

Our hearts beat high with anticipation of long-cherished hope now on the eve of accomplishment, as we set foot on the quay, and felt we were treading more than classic—*sacred* ground. We were in the Land of Promise. If not actually occupied by Israel except in the palmy days of David and Solomon, Beyrout must at least be included within the boundaries assigned by prophecy. "And the border from the sea shall be Hazar-enan, the border of Damascus and the north northward and the border of Hamath" (Ezek. xlvii. 17). The line, then, from Damascus to the coast must have been intended to run just to the north of Beyrout, probably to the mouth of the Nahr-el-Kelb (Lycus fl.), where a spur of Lebanon pushes right to the sea, and forms the famous pass, so evidently looked upon by the conquerors of the ancient world as the gate of Southern Syria, and attested as such by the Assyrian and Egyptian tablets. It forms a natural boundary for the plain of Phœnicia, which, widest at its southern extremity near Tyre, runs up, gradually narrowed, and even interrupted by the encroaching hills, till it finally terminates in a point six miles north of Beyrout. The Phœnician lords of the coast, from whom Asher never fully arrested her allotted portion, must have possessed the whole of this plain, so entirely cut off from the kingdom of Syria.

The enthusiastic lovers of Beyrout endeavour to assign to it a place in sacred history in the unknown "Berothah," or "Berothai;" but the context, in which the name occurs as a dependency of Damascus, and is mentioned as between that city and Hamath, must, we fear, exclude Beyrout from the honour in question, especially as, when Berothai is mentioned in 2 Sam. viii. 8, David appears to have captured it and its stores of brass, *after* subduing Damascus, and on his way towards the Euphrates. If Beyrout did

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exist in Jewish times, certainly no memorials, whether monumental or written, have been handed down to us. The present city is wholly modern; Turkish in its houses, Turkish in its filth, Turkish in its very ruins. Of these there are abundance; for the earthquakes, the waning efforts of those subterraneous fires which have rent the Lebanon and poured their torrents over the Lejah to the eastward, have more than once overwhelmed the Roman and Saracen cities. Their history is written in the masses of broken columns and granite shafts which form the substructure of the mole on which we were landed.

At Beyrout the landing at the Custom-House quay was well-ordered. The exhibition of an enormous firman was acknowledged with due deference by the stockingless Custom-House officials. This firman or special passport it was evident that none could read or interpret, but the Sultan's sign-manual in the corner was recognised at once. It was certainly a portentous document. Six lines of Turkish, closely but boldly inscribed, wandered over a square yard of stiff cartridge paper, testifying at least to the liberal spirit of the Ottoman stationery office. Through the kind intervention of a friend, we had been fortified with this document, which authorised all officials to let our baggage pass unquestioned, as pertaining to a scientific expedition. Without such provision we might have trembled for the fate of mountain barometers, copper cylinders for preserving reptiles in spirits, photographic apparatus, and all the miscellaneous equipments with which our twenty-six packages were stored, and in which treason, heresy, or more probably magic, might at once have been detected.

Having left our boxes on the quay we proceeded to the British Consulate, for the purpose of securing a dragoman to enforce and expound our firman. On the way, Constantino (our Boniface) contrived, with the characteristic volubility of his race, to give us an epitome of his history, an



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illustration of the strange vicissitudes and romance with which every-day life in the East is crowded. A Greek by birth, he remembered well the massacre of Chio, his native isle, from which he escaped only to be sold as a slave boy into Egypt. There he had been employed by an Englishman, who had purchased for him his freedom. After serving in various positions he set up as a dragoman, first in Greece and then in Syria, and in this capacity he accompanied M. de Saulcy during his first expedition, and, probably from a combined sense of truth and self-interest, gives the enterprising French savant a far better character than *he* has bestowed on his attendant.

At length, having escaped from the din and turmoil of oriental streets, we can take a survey of Beyrout and its lovely environs from our pleasant quarters. The hotel is a thoroughly oriental house, and our suite of rooms is at the top, built upon three sides of a square, with the fourth side an open terrace; while a balcony runs round the inside, looking down into the court-yard of the hotel. Thus, while perfectly secluded ourselves, we can command a view of all that passes below in the interior. The arrival of five Englishmen, so early in the season, was an event of no ordinary importance to the various hangers-on of the establishment, and to the dragomans and travelling-servants with whom Beyrout abounds. These often met in the area, and we watched the wrangling of rival dragomans in the court below with such feelings as the doves gazed at the battle of the kites and the crows, which was to decide by which of the two they were to have the pleasure of being eaten.

We nevertheless delayed our decision for a fortnight, and spent the time most profitably.

It is one of the great recommendations of Beyrout as a point of departure for a tour in Palestine, that there alone can a choice of servants, horses, and tents, be found; while the direct trade with Europe, and the large population of

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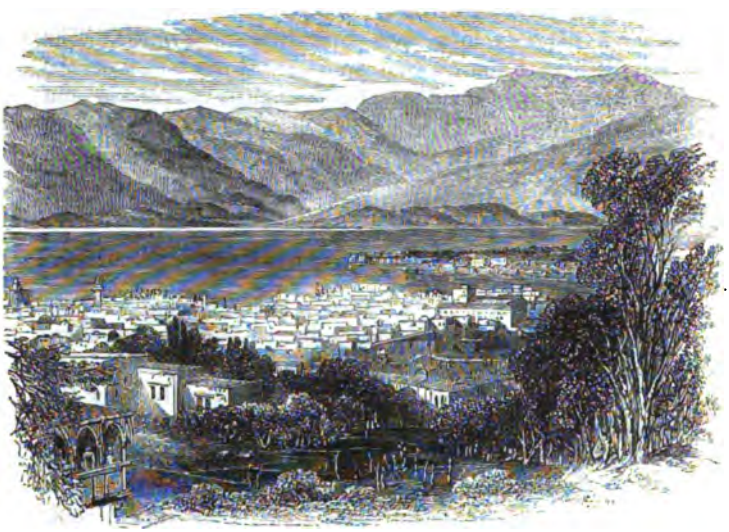
resident English and French merchants, have attracted tradesmen whose shops and stores are not much inferior to those of Smyrna or Alexandria, though their prices are higher. If the traveller enter Syria from the south, he must engage at Jaffa or Jerusalem any interpreter he is able to meet with, and must also pay the highest prices for miserable horses and most indifferent wares.

The roof of our hotel was the loftiest in the neighbourhood, and commanded a landscape to which we returned evening after evening with ever fresh enjoyment. The busy little port and Custom-House lay at our feet, with the roadstead to the left, where three English men-of-war and a French frigate rode lazily at anchor on the glassy sea. Since the massacres of Damascus and Hasbeiya, in 1860, the port has seldom been left without one or more of these substantial representatives of the great Western Powers. Beyond the centre town, which is enclosed with dilapidated and dismantled walls, a gently-sloping ridge rises to the southward, too low to be called a headland, but which is really the hill which terminates in the depressed promontory called Ras Beyrout. The ridge is at no point higher than 200 feet, but still is sufficiently elevated to show the slopes covered with a mass of gardens, which are irregularly spread out from the nucleus of the old city; each with its villa, built in all the fantastic shapes oriental imagination could devise, but invariably with a flat, whitewashed roof. Had some Titan hand flung broadcast his lapful of building stones on the hill-sides they might have fallen in some such order as reigns in these suburbs. A forest of orange, apricot, fig, and mulberry-trees, relieved occasionally by a tall palm or stately poplar rising from their midst, quite embosoms the houses. Here all the rich, the tradesmen, and many of the poorer class reside.

Cast your eyes across the bay to your left; there towers mighty Lebanon, with a rich belt of garden cultivation carpeting its base from the water's edge, surmounted by a

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broad fringe of olive groves. Higher up, amidst bare but carefully-terraced hills, where not an inch of ground is wasted, many a sharp cliff and pointed rock stand out from the mulberry-groves, justifying, even when there is no snow on its brow, the Hebrew name of *Lebanon*, "the white [mountain]," as the white reflections sparkle in the afternoon sunlight. Amidst these mounds and peaks, village



BEYROUT.

after village, Druse or Maronite, nestles on the mountain side; and over all, above a belt of chasm-rent, wrinkled, and water-worn rocks, the long, flat line of Jebel Sunnin, the highest part of Western Lebanon, glistens in the sunlight with its mantle of snow. It is indeed a lovely scene —not sublime, perhaps not majestic, without the grandeur of the Alps or the splendour of the Pyrenees, but winning and absorbing—recalling vividly to the imagination what

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all this goodly land must have been when, under the blessing of Jehovah, the sceptre of Solomon guided its destinies. If Lebanon, with its scanty soil and terraced sides, tilled and maintained by incessant toil, can support its teeming population, and produce such harvests of corn, fruit, oil, and silk, as it now does under Turkish misrule, who shall question the past capabilities of the maritime and central plains, or be startled at the results of the census of Joab?

We soon commenced in earnest our exploration of the natural history of the country, the especial object of our expedition, by several visits to the valley of the Nahr-el-Kelb, which for convenience we may assume as the boundary of Southern Syria. On one occasion we rode by the shore for six miles, skirting the Bay of St. George (the traditional site of the slaughter of the famous dragon), up to the point where a little headland pushes into the sea at the height of about 100 feet, on the very edge of which is hewn the ancient road, so often traversed for the last 3,000 years by the invaders of Syria—Egyptian, Assyrian, Roman, or Turkoman.

On the highest point of this promontory, facing the sea, and a few yards behind and above the road, and also a little lower down, where the path rapidly descends to the mouth of the river, are hewn those tablets which were first brought to the notice of modern times by Henry Maundrell, in A.D. 1697, and which have ever since been considered the most attractive monuments of antiquity in Northern Palestine. As every writer on the country has fully described them, it is needless to repeat their accounts, but it was not without a feeling of the deepest interest that we gazed on those rock-hewn figures and inscriptions, and remembered that those monuments which to the old traveller of 160 years ago were merely "perhaps the representation of some persons buried hereabout, whose sepulchres might probably also be discovered by the diligent observer," have been ascertained by the actual researches of Lepsius and Layard

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on the spot to be the records of the progress of the successive oppressors of Israel, both Egyptian and Assyrian. Here Sennacherib has left the verification of his proud boast, "By the multitude of my chariots am I come up to the height of the mountains, to the sides of Lebanon: and I will cut down the tall cedars thereof and the choice fir-trees thereof, and I will enter into the height of his border . . . I have digged and drunk water;" and, did the Hebrew text admit, one might feel disposed to add the gloss of the Septuagint, "I have made a bridge," and apply it to the noble structure which spans the stream below. Close by the tablet of Sennacherib is the Egyptian sculpture of Rameses, a monument of hoar antiquity, even in the days when the Assyrian chariots drove beneath it, and on which probably Herodotus (II. 107), more than 2,200 years ago, gazed with the same longing as ourselves to pick up the threads of broken tradition. And though but one of the Assyrian tablets still retains any legible cuneiform characters, may not the remaining sculptures, however closely the figures resemble each other, be the records of other invasions of Palestine, of which no less than five are recorded in Holy Writ? After these old figures, how strangely modern reads the inscription of Antonine at the foot of the pass. Yet the Roman had conquered and put his stamp on Syria, of which the very road we trod was an evidence. That road, as every traveller and his stumbling horse know full well, is but a wreck of upturned paving stones. Pity that those Gallic legions who in the year A.D. 1860 appropriated an Egyptian tablet to record the unresisted presence of the troops of Napoleon III. had not, like the Roman, employed the hammer of the engineer before they gave licence to the chisel of the engraver.

On the north side of the pass we could clearly trace the remains of an ancient road, rather higher and a little further back than the present one, which a Roman inscrip-

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tion tells us was constructed by Antoninus Pius. Here for a few minutes I lingered behind my companions, attracted by the number of small land shells (of the genus Clausilia) of species new to me, which adhered to the rocks, fed by the moisture that exuded from the fissures. While picking the shells out of a crevice, my attention was attracted by what appeared to be a fragment of bone embedded in the rock; and having secured the assistance of one of my zealous companions, by the unwearied use of our hammers, we soon discovered that the hard crystalline limestone was in this place a mass of bone breccia, with fragments of flint chips mingled in the stalagmite.

The position of this mass of bone was several feet above the height of the present roadway, but below the level of the more ancient Egyptian track. The remains extend perhaps for 120 feet, and it has probably formed the flooring of an ancient cavern, the roof of which must have been cut away by Rameses to form his road, or to obtain a surface for his tablet. From the position of the deposit it would seem as though the floor of the cave had been once extended to the sea-face of the cliff, and that the remaining portion was excavated by Antonine for his road, leaving only the small portion which we examined. We were induced, therefore, to descend to the shore, and search among the broken masses of rock at the water-line for fragments containing bone. Among the cliffs, lashed by the waves and covered with sea-weed, we discovered several large blocks corresponding with the stalagmite above, and containing both bones, teeth, and flints, which have perhaps lain there for 2,000 or 3,000 years.

With the kind assistance of the Rev. H. H. Jessup, the American Missionary at Beyrout, to whom we pointed out the locality, we were enabled afterwards to obtain a more extensive series of bones and flints. The latter consist almost entirely of elongated chips, with very sharp edges,

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and I may remark that I am not aware of any natural deposit of flint within three miles of this spot. One remarkable character of this mass of breccia is the extreme hardness of the crystalline limestone or stalagmite which forms it. Probably under the conditions of a Syrian climate it would crystallise more rapidly than in our northern regions; and the hard lime-water still oozing from all the fissures around tells how abundantly it must have streamed from the old cavern's roof. Yet, from the existence of the fragments in the sea below, we may conclude that when Rameses or his Roman successors constructed their military road, the stone was as compact and crystalline as it is to-day, and that many ages must have intervened between the time of the tablets and the days when some rude savage fabricated his weapons on the soft floor of that cavern.

The bones are all in fragments, the remains, in all probability, of the feasts of the makers of the rude implements. Four of the teeth have belonged to an ox, somewhat resembling the ox (*Bos primigenius*) of our peat-mosses,* and one of them, probably, to a bison.† Of the others, some may probably be assigned to the red-deer or reindeer, and another to an elk.‡ If, as Mr. Dawkins considers, these teeth are referable to those now exclusively northern quadrupeds, we have evidence of the reindeer and elk having been the food of man in the Lebanon, not long before the historic period; for there is no necessity to put back to any date of immeasurable antiquity the

* The Aurochs (*urus*) is with good reason supposed to be the *R'êm* (Unicorn) of our authorised version, and therefore known in Palestine as late as the time of Moses. See *Quarterly Review*, No. CCXXVII., p. 53.

† We may observe here, that the Bison is even now not uncommon in the Caucasus (see Nordmann in "Bull. de l'Acad. St. Petersburg," II., p. 305), a locality not very far removed from Northern Palestine.

‡ For the determination of the teeth of this cavern, I am indebted to the kindness of W. B. Dawkins, Esq., of the Geological Survey of England.

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deposition of these remains in a limestone cavern. Still, there is nothing more extraordinary in this occurrence than in the discovery of the bones of the tailless hare of Siberia in the breccias of Sardinia and Corsica; and though it brings the ancient range of these animals to a point more southerly than any previously ascertained, yet it throws light on the traditions of the bison, now almost as exclusively a northern form as the others.

These traditions remained to the days of the Psalmist,* and were familiar to Moses, when he blessed the sons of Joseph,† and still more so to the patriarch Job, when he is asked by the Lord, "Will the unicorn be willing to serve thee, or abide by thy crib? Canst thou bind the unicorn with his band in the furrow? or will he harrow the valleys after thee? Wilt thou trust him because his strength is great? or wilt thou leave thy labour to him? Wilt thou believe him, that he will bring home thy seed, and gather it into thy barn?" (chap. xxxix. 9—12.) The writer of the article in the *Quarterly Review*, alluded to above, after showing that the so-called unicorn of our English version is no unicorn at all, for that the Hebrew word *r'êm*, רְאֵם, denotes an animal with two horns, as proved by Deut. xxxiii. 17, "his horns are like the *horns* of an unicorn," as correctly translated in the margin, observes that the whole force of the passage depends upon the *r'êm* having two horns upon one head, one for Ephraim and the other for Manasseh. After referring to the discovery of bones of the lion in gravel near the Jordan, by Dr. Roth, he suggests that it was "some mighty species allied perhaps to the *Urus* which Cæsar saw in the Hercynian forest," and continues: "It is, therefore, quite probable that future investigations in Palestine may result in the discovery of the bones of *Bos primigenius*, or *Bison priscus*, or some other species of once formidable ox."‡

* Ps. xxix. 6; xxii. 21; xcii. 10. † Deut. xxxiii 17.

‡ See also an able paper by Rev. W. Houghton in "Ann. and Mag.

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We may now congratulate him on the speedy verification of his anticipation, and on the further elucidation of an obscure Scriptural reference.

It is necessary to bear in mind that the *Urus* of Cæsar was certainly not the bison, though the two have been perpetually confounded, and the name proper to the one misapplied to the other. *Urus* is of course *Auerochs*, corrupted into Aurochs, "the ox of yore." Cæsar's description (Bell. Gall. vi. 28) shows that it was remarkable for its long horns, and hence if we suppose that the *R'êm* was a beast of this kind, all the passages in Scripture in which it is mentioned are natural enough. On the other hand, the true bison, or *Bonasus*, has comparatively insignificant horns.

Probably the *Urus* of Cæsar and the *R'êm* of Scripture were, if not *Bos primigenius*, with its enormously developed horns, at least its near ally or direct descendant. There is no doubt that *Bos primigenius* was co-existent with the earlier races of man throughout Europe; and as it became exterminated, its name *Auerochs* seems to have been transferred to the bison, which still exists in Lithuania, but which within comparatively modern times was found in Pomerania and other parts of Germany.* Instances of the transference of names from dying species to existing ones are not uncommon. The crane has bequeathed its appellation to the heron, and the bustard to the stone curlew.

Our investigations of the bone remains detained us long, and rendered another and a third visit to the Nahr-el-Kelb necessary to investigate its natural history; for, in a thickly peopled district, it was only in the recesses of so deep a glen leading down to the sea, that we could hope to find specimens and illustrations of Nature's hand, undisturbed by man.

of Nat. Hist." for November, 1862 and A. Newton's "Zoology of Ancient Europe," p. 14.

* See Blasius' "Säugethiere Deutschlands."

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Many gulls and other sea-birds passed over us as we crossed the bay, several of which we obtained. Large flocks of the graceful gull-billed tern (*Sterna Anglica*, Mont.) swept past us—a bird of most universal range in warmer latitudes, though a very rare visitor to those English coasts from which it derives its scientific name. I had met with it in vast numbers in the lagoons near Smyrna, and also in the salt-marshes of Northern Africa. It loves calm and shallow water, and its occurrence here in an open roadstead we justly took as an omen of fine and settled weather. The common cormorant of our own coasts splashed along the surface of the sea, so low as almost to plough a track in the water in its rapid but slovenly flight. The herring-gull of the north screamed overhead, or dashed down on its prey in front of us; while some flocks of the Adriatic gull (*Larus melanocephalus*, Natt.), quietly riding on the scarcely-perceptible swell, were the only sea-fowl whose presence at once indicated our distance from the Northern seas.

It was still early morning when we hauled up our boat on the sand (untroubled here by fall or rise of tides), and, in heavy marching order, with guns, hammers, insect-nets, botany-boxes, and sketch-books—not forgetting, of course, the *commissariat*—started on our way up the gorge towards the caves from which the river is principally fed. The dew still hung to the twigs of brambles and clematis; and, screened from all but the mid-day sun, the glen, at first, recalled the North, rather than the warm South. But very soon the scenery changed. The sides of the valley were scarcely less steep, but were terraced up to the bare cliffs near the top in graceful sinuous lines; orange, lemon, and olive-trees occupying, for the most part, the lower tiers, and mulberry-trees, with corn beneath them, the upper. Along the edge of each terrace waved a double row of tall canes, nourished by the little water-courses, carefully conducted from he higher part of the valley in stone-built

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channels. These mountaineers know well how to apply what the Americans would term "a water privilege." It was channels such as these which could make the fruit of the land "to shake like Libanus." It was terraces and channels such as these which once made this land "a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills."

By the side of these little water-courses, sheltered and concealed by the reeds, many a little warbler, known to as in the summer, was pouring forth its blithe chirrup; the willow-wren and chiff-chaff were enjoying their pleasant winter quarters, in company with the robin and the hedge-accentor; and the little Egyptian fantail (*Drymœca gracilis*, Rüpp.) was running up the stems, and, with its loud, clear note, and long, white-tipped tail, told us that, however familiar might be the livery of his companions, he was there to remind us that both England and Europe had long been left behind. Occasionally we caught a glimpse of the true bulbul, the nightingale of Palestine (*Ixos xanthopygus*, H. & Ehr.), hopping among the orange-trees, and just showing his brilliant yellow patch, that we might identify him while, thrush-like, he stole away into the thickest of the foliage; and our European wagtails, white and yellow, were running on the moist ground beneath.

After a scramble of six miles, the terraces gave place to bare, scarped cliffs, with scanty but interesting mountain vegetation; and we reached the great caverns, from which issues the chief supply for the fertilisation of the valley below. To explore these caves was impossible, as they are dark and deep, and the water which washes their perpendicular sides leaves no margin for the adventurous climber; but a gun fired into one of them reverberated long and loud, as though there were ample space for a subterranean regatta. It is only by boats and torches that these reservoirs could be examined, and they might, perhaps, be found to be the home of some new species of

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Proteus. The water of the upper stream was icy cold; and among the boulders in its bed many little water-ouzels, or dippers, identical with the dipper of our own highland streams, hopped and darted from stone to stone, finding the temperature of the water as much to their taste as were the orange groves below to the tender bulbul.

Thus, in our first day's expedition, we had abundant illustration of what to the field naturalist is the most marked peculiarity of Palestine, the juxtaposition of northern and southern forms of life, animal and vegetable, within the narrowest limits. What has often been observed of its physical geography holds equally true of its fauna and flora, so that no spot on the earth's surface could have been selected which could better have supplied the writers of a book intended to instruct men of every latitude and climate with subjects of illustration familiar, one or other of them to the dwellers in every region of the world.

On our way down the valley we halted at a rustic café by a watermill, a simple shed of wattles supported by poles where mine host boiled coffee on a little brazier, set on what might have been a country blacksmith's forge, or dispensed stronger stimulants from the shelf over the ingle nook. We secured from the stream specimens of three kinds of fish, one of which afterwards proved to be the common fish of the Jordan, and not hitherto known elsewhere excepting in the Nile. The sun had long set when, laden with booty—fish, fowl, and vegetable, animal and mineral—we recrossed the Bay of St. George, and landed under the battered ruins of the fort of Beyrout.

A few days afterwards, by the invitation of Daoud Pasha, Governor of the Lebanon, kindly conveyed through Mr. Eldridge, H.B.M. Consul-General, I accompanied that gentleman to pay the Pasha a visit at one of his country seats, Babdà, in the Mountains. Soon after nine o'clock we started on horseback, preceded by the chief cavasse of the consul, in his picturesque costume of embroidered blue,

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with rich turban, scarlet saddle, and long scimitar dangling by his side. After winding for some time among the picturesque villas embowered in orange and mulberry groves, with which Beyrout is girdled, we toiled through a deep sandy lane, overshadowed by hedges of prickly pear, which were now edged with bright red knobs of fruit. Emerging from this we entered the pine groves, which arrest the invasion of the sand-hills on the Sidon road. The glossy pale green of the foliage is too cheerful to recall the gloom of a Scottish forest, and the trees (*Pinus halepensis*, L.) planted in large clumps of various ages, are too park-like to permit comparison with a Surrey heath. Every here and there a tall ancient pine towers in solitary grandeur over the dense plantation below; while at frequent intervals a gnarled carouba-tree (*Ceratonia siliqua*, L.) overhangs with its dark, dense foliage the flat-topped verandah of a Turkish café, and behind it a somewhat shabby palm-tree reminds us that we are in southern climes. Road there is none, and through the deep sand we plunge till we reach a lane, sunk deep in a soil of rich red loam, seeming to tell of exhaustless fertility.

As we gradually ascended the mountain by this lane, which serves the double use of roadway and occasional watercourse, the character of the vegetation rapidly changed. Orange groves with frequent palm-trees gave place to long plantations of white mulberry, where, the silkworm season being now over, little Arab boys, with short blue shirts for their only garments, were busily employed as they sat in the trees, shredding the leaves for the donkeys and goats which stood below. To the mulberries succeeded for several miles a series of oliveyards, purple with ripe fruit, and said to be the most extensive olive plantation in Syria.

Here, for the first time in Turkish territory, I saw *young* olive-trees. Indeed, young trees of any kind in the East are as rare as ruins in the West. The marvel is that there

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should be any at all, under a system of finance which ruthlessly extorts an annual tax of several piastres for every fruit-tree from the very year it is planted, even when, as in the case of the olive, it is forty years before it arrives at perfection. But what can be hoped from a government which, in a half-desert but fertile country like Syria, imposes its heaviest taxes on animals employed in agricultural labour? The absurdity is carried even further than this. By a sort of vegetable or botanical game-law, certain trees belong to the State, and thus the sycamore-fig, and all the space over which its shadow may extend, belongs at once to the Government, and is forfeited by the villein proprietor. But even were the weight of taxation more rationally adjusted than it is ever likely to be under Ottoman rule, it will be long ere proprietors or cultivators in Syria can be expected to plant. A rayah may sow seed of which he hopes to reap the fruit in a few months; but to plant a tree, which will probably bring him no return for many years, implies a sense of security in the possession of property, to which, during centuries of Moslem rule, the East has been wholly a stranger.

The gathering of the olives seemed to be the care of the women alone, and the cheerful groups under the trees, with their unveiled faces and bright black eyes pleasantly greeting us as we passed, proclaimed at once that we were in a Christian district. From the olive region we gradually ascended to the bare sides of the Lebanon, the path being no longer a track, but a series of ledges and steps worn in the rock, while the whole hill-side was terraced most carefully for corn cultivation, with long rows of dwarf mulberry-trees, and many fig-trees interspersed. Village after village crowned the heights, perched always on the tops of the ridges, but never compactly arranged like those of the plains. With their whitewashed walls, white flat roofs, and small windows, they looked at a distance like handfuls of dice thrown at random along the hill-sides.



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After two hours' riding, we suddenly turned up a rocky track, covered with Mediterranean heath, amaryllis, and cyclamen in full blossom, along which our little horses skipped about with the agility and sure-footedness of goats; and ten minutes' clambering brought us to Bábda.

A few Druses in their picturesque costume were lounging about, clean and polite; rough-looking Arabs were moodily smoking, as they leant by the gateway; quaintly-caparisoned horses were standing ready saddled, among groups of red-jacketed spahis. As we rode under the archway which admitted us to the palace of Bábda, a small guard in the shabby uniform of Turkish infantry turned out, and we found ourselves in an irregular square used as a barrack, hanging, rather than placed, on the side of a hill. Passing through another gateway, where a few irregular troopers and mounted attendants were assembled, we reached a long flight of steps cut out of the rock, up which our horses, to my astonishment, unhesitatingly walked, as though getting up stairs were a part of their daily exercise.

At the top was a narrow doorway, after riding through which we were in the inner court of the Pasha's residence, quite on the crest of the hill. Albanian-looking grooms seized our bridles and made their salaam; and dismounting, we met the Pasha just within the doorway of a hall on the first floor. The large room in which he received us had windows on all sides; and its only furniture was an ottoman extending across the further end, a small writing-table and arm-chair, and a few chairs placed round the walls. A rich Turkey carpet covered the greater part of the floor. A heavy shower had fallen as we were riding up the hill, and the Pasha insisted in the first instance on supplying us with a change of clothing. In a few minutes I found myself comfortably seated on the ottoman, clad in a pea-green satin gown, lined with squirrel fur, and before me a foaming tumbler of Bass's pale ale.

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Daoud Pasha is a man of scarcely middle age, with a prominent Roman nose, keen piercing eyes, and a remarkably mild and ingenuous expression of countenance; tall, and of spare figure, which is well set off by his dark Armenian costume, light embroidered trousers, gaiters, and velvet vest. He is an Armenian Christian by birth, and for several years served as *attaché* successively at the courts of Berlin and St. James. When, after the massacres of 1860, the great Powers stipulated that the Pasha of the Lebanon should be a Christian, but not a member of one of the dominant sects of the district, the choice of the Porte, under the wise suggestion of Lord Dufferin, happily fell on Daoud Oghli. So far as those best acquainted with the country are capable of judging, the scheme of subdivision proposed by Lord Dufferin and the Hon. Mr. Meade was the only plan by which populous Lebanon could with certainty have been protected at the same time from European intrigue and domestic anarchy. As the next alternative, the appointment of Daoud was certainly best; but who can guarantee the character of his successor, or feel sure that the British Embassy on the Bosphorus, now that the great Elchi has departed, will have as potent a voice in the Councils of the Porte?

Of Daoud's administration it is sufficient to say that neither he nor any of his subordinates had ever been accused of receiving a bribe, or of the slightest act of peculation. Even the Maronites, who are bitterly opposed to his government, say that it is not the man, but the system, to which they object. They demand either a Maronite governor, or, if that be impossible, they would prefer a Turkish Pasha to a Christian; as they know that a Turk would do nothing, and that they might indulge in their feuds and quarrels without interference. Though not so warlike, they are far more numerous than the Druses, mustering 220,000 against perhaps 75,000 of their hereditary foemen, and they long for the opportunity of revenge.



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While we were with him, the Pasha was incessantly interrupted by business. Secretary after secretary came in with papers to be approved; several cases were dismissed, and amongst others, a batch of prisoners were brought in, and lodged in the courtyard below. The daughter of a Druse had been betrothed to a neighbour; but her father, finding another suitor who could pay a greater dower, had broken off the match. The families of the rival claimants had consequently indulged in a faction fight, the results of which were indecisive: and finally, the two suitors and their friends were brought up as prisoners, and confined in one room; and the father with the daughter, the *causa teterrima belli*, in another, until it could be decided which should have the bride, and which should suffer the punishment due to the breach of the peace. One thing was plain, that to consult the wishes of the young lady in question, was the very last idea that would occur to any of the party.

To the English casual observer, there is, in spite of the unquestionable cruelties of which they have been from time to time guilty, much that is attractive in the Druses. In manners, their wild mountain air notwithstanding, they contrast most favourably with their rivals the Maronites. Instead of the ill-conditioned brusqueness with which the latter returns a stranger's greeting, there is a native politeness about the Druse, which never, even in the moments of his wildest excesses, entirely forsakes him. The story is well known of one who had entered a house by night, and cut the throat of a private enemy; but on discovering that an English Consul, on his travels, had been lodging in an adjoining chamber, was overcome with grief and shame, and sent the most profuse apologies in the morning for having unconsciously disturbed the night's rest of a stranger.

In spite of their strange inconsistencies and mysterious creed, their Pasha by no means despairs of the Druses,

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and his great hope is, that the steady progress of education may do much to allay the enmity of the rival races. He spoke with much warmth and interest of the American Mission-schools; and it was gratifying to hear his independent testimony to the importance and solid nature of the work they are carrying on, especially among the Maronites, with whom he considered they had met with greater success than with any other sect. But he explained with positive enthusiasm the efforts the Druses are, at length, making to support their own schools, and to establish a good college for their youth in the mountains. This he felt to be the most extraordinary sign of all, as the movement has originated entirely among themselves, and is unsupported by any extraneous aid. The college is already at work, and descriptions of the festival at its opening have already appeared in the English papers. For its maintenance, and for that of their other schools, the Druse villages have spontaneously taxed themselves to an amount, for them, by no means inconsiderable.

The Pasha confirmed what is, I believe, the impression of most Englishmen, that the Druses are the most noble, honourable, and industrious of the Lebanon races. Their word is their bond, and their vices are those of a wild highland tribe, accustomed to take the law into their own hands. In civilisation they are, probably, more advanced than were the Highland clans of Scotland before A.D. 1745; and, dim as are their religious notions, they have no prejudice against *Protestant* Christianity, and now freely permit their daughters to be educated in the British Syrian schools at Beyrout. Perhaps *we* were slightly biassed by their preference for Englishmen, and the Pasha by their submission to the tax-gatherer.

Our host soon turned the conversation to the objects of our tour in Palestine, and to literature in general, and amazed me by the extent of his knowledge of early English history. There may have been pashas before Daoud who

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did not sell justice, though history must have been unkind to their memories,—there certainly never was one who had studied the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle in the original.

We could have remained till night; but a long ride was before us, and we reluctantly followed our horses down-stairs. While riding homewards, we turned to admire the villages behind us, fringing every crest; and to our surprise we traced the long range of Lebanon, white with the snow which had been covering it during the rain we had encountered in our ascent.

The few remaining days of our sojourn in Beyrout—or at least such portion of them as could be economised from the important business of outfit and preparation—were devoted principally to the inspection of the different Mission-schools, of which there are several for both sexes, the British Syrian alone being connected with the Church of England. There is no English service or resident clergyman; but the American missionaries offered me the use of their pulpit in the morning, and our kind Consul collected a little congregation in his *salon* in the afternoon, on each Sunday during our stay.

In visiting the schools, it was most satisfactory to note that the prejudices of caste or sect have been, at least in the city itself, completely overcome. To those who best know the Oriental character, this is of itself sufficient proof of the success of the American Mission. In the various schools we found the children of Moslems, Druses, Maronites, Greeks, and Jews studying side by side, together with no inconsiderable number of native Protestants. We had here excellent opportunities of studying physiognomy, and could not but note the contrast between the Syrians and the Greeks. The former are more robust, and not so handsome, yet without the cunning and often ill-conditioned expression which spoils the fine features of the latter. The women are dressed in the voluminous trousers tied

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at the ankles, which the Moslems also wear, but with white stockings and patent leather boots or shoes. With their fair skins and dark gazelle eyes, though wanting in expression and somewhat heavy, they often possess a lustrous beauty, which realises our idea of the Syrian maiden of olden time.

We had a favourable opportunity of judging of these Syrian belles, as the photographic apparatus of my companion, Mr. Bowman, was in much request at the British Syrian schools, where were collected many, both married and single, Greek, Druse, Jewess, and Maronite. The most remarkable, though the least beautiful, were the wild, restless-looking little children made orphans by the massacres of Hasbeiya. If we criticised them, they very naturally took the same liberty with us, and our dress created some perplexity among them. My coat had leather shoulder caps, and one of them was overheard to remark that "I must be a very rich man to have come so far, and a great padre to wear so long a bear, but how could a great padre wear a patched coat, and then not have it pieced with the same colour!" One little fellow whom we met returning from school quite upset our gravity. He was a Turk, about four years old, very fat, in the complete dress of a man, and was waddling homewards with the solemnity of a pasha, and a large New Testament under his arm.

Doubtless a great work has been done and is doing in these schools. There is a harvest as well as a sowing in the very fact of women being educated at all in a land where Christian, Moslem, and Jew have agreed in one point at least, that woman was not worth educating. And this training in all the schools of Beyrout is on an uncompromising Christian basis. Not only have the Druses, as I mentioned above, learnt the lesson and begun to establish their college as well as their schools; but the Greeks of the Pashalic of the Lebanon, as distinguished from the Maronites, have petitioned the Government for a

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firman to erect a college for themselves, and for power to tax their own community for its maintenance. The Bedouins alone seem hopeless; and till missionaries and teachers can mount horses as fleet as theirs, and give them lessons on the gallop, I fear we must not look for the progress of education there. But as regards the rest, the experience of all those who have studied the question in the East seems to coincide with the testimony of our missionaries in India, that the natives neither fear nor dislike the inculcation of Christianity in our schools, and will as readily send their children to a religious as to a secular seminary, so long as they are not compelled to change their faith; and that the liberty-of-conscience objector is a mere phantom of Western politicians.

Before leaving Beyrout we obtained some valuable hints from Dr. Thomson, the well-known author of "The Land and the Book," and the oldest missionary in Syria. He, too, longed for an excursion across Jordan, where he had never yet been, and we arranged to meet if possible at the south end of the Dead Sea in February, on the Doctor's return from Sinai, whither he was just about to start, in search of materials for another volume. To our mutual disappointment, our subsequent letters miscarried, and we never met again until the end of our wanderings.

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## CHAPTER II.

*Departure from Beyrout—Sea-side Wells—Birds of the Shore—Fording a River in the Dark—The Tamyras—Companions and Guides—First Night under Canvas—A Sunday on the Phœnician Shore—Description of our Camp and Attendants—Hamoud the Muleteer—The Sycamore-tree of Scripture—Its Fruit—Biblical Allusions—Nebi Yunas—Geology of the Hills—Sidon—A Moslem Funeral—The Gardens of Sidon and their Birds—The Gourd of Jonah—Phœnician Tombs in the Hills—Limestone and Flint Deposits—Syrian Country Priest—Thunderstorm—Birds of the Bostrenus—American Mission—Ruins of Sidon—The old Quays—Night under Canvas in a Storm—Swollen Ford—Narrow Escape of Moussa.*

AT length we started from Beyrout on our southward journey; seven horsemen, ten baggage mules, five asses, and last, but not least, our good watch-dog Beirût,

M. and I, having seen the *cortége* depart, lingered behind, to pay a farewell visit to the Consulate, where in friendly keeping my valuable watch was prudently deposited; and then to the Post Office to receive our letters from the steamer which had that morning arrived.

It was two o'clock before we mounted. The first part of the road was dull enough, though through a lovely country, or rather on one side of a lovely country; but deep lanes without a stone, ankle-deep in sand, and hedged by tall prickly pear, are trying enough both to horses and riders. Nor did our case improve when, leaving the promontory of Beyrout, we emerged on the sea-shore, where heavy gravel took the place of sand.

A deep well, a few yards from the sea, with troughs placed irregularly round it, which women were filling for

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patient herds of thirsty cattle, reminded us of the scenes by the wells, so often alluded to in Scripture, especially when, as we halted, a Syrian maiden offered us water for ourselves and our horses. As we followed along the water's edge we met with several shore-birds, winter visitors from the far north, dunlins, little stints, redshanks, and a merganser; and I obtained a rare kind of wheatear, with which I had not hitherto met, *Saxicola finschii* of Heuglin, one of the birds peculiar, so far as we know, to the stony region of Palestine. There was no lack of khans, ruinous and picturesque, generally under a large carouba-tree. At one of them we found Wilhelm, our German cook, who had been left behind by the caravan, quietly ruminating over his pipe, with my mountain barometer on his back. I gave him a mount, and walked for an hour, when Wilhelm left my horse for me with M., who waited till I came up. But when a moonless night overtook us, as it soon did, we were inclined to regret the time we had spent over the empty sarcophagi, which strew the road and lie under the hill by the khan of Khulda, the ancient Helda, without an inscription and without a story. We rode on by the shore till we came to a river, the Nahr ed Damour, the ancient Tamyras, which we had to ford. It was swollen with the rains, and we could see no track. Attached as a man may be to his morning bath, yet an evening plunge from horseback is a very different matter, and I know of no sensation more intensely uncomfortable than that of trying an unknown stream in the dark. However, there was no help for it, and in spite of the reluctance of our horses we spurred them in, and found the water reached only to the saddle-girths.

But now we were completely bewildered. The rocks came down to the water's edge, and the road must needs lie somewhere up the shoulder of the hill. A halt, and at length we detected the glimmer of a tent a little way up, and our horses groped their way to it. In vain the Arab

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occupant whom we hailed endeavoured to make us understand the track up a rocky precipitous hill on a pitch-dark night. But soon some men with laden asses came up, told us they were going to Sidon, and volunteered their company, quite as glad of our escort as we of their guidance. In long single file we crawled for an hour and a half up and down, clambering up rocks where it seemed marvellous that horses could find a footing, while the sea murmured immediately beneath us. I could see nothing but the faint figure of M.'s white horse close in front, till we came down again upon the sands. A few minutes, and a light appeared on the left. We hailed, and found ourselves at our own camp, tents pitched, fire lit, soup ready, and all in beautiful order.

There is an exhilarating, almost a triumphant, sensation in the first night under canvas, so glowingly described in "Eöthen," when eager anticipation looks forward to months of pleasing toil; and, with thankful hearts, we joined in evening prayer, and turned in to our sheepskin bags for our first night on the ground.

The next day was Advent Sunday. We were up at dawn, and for the first time saw where we were camped. A wide sandy bay, with the waves gently murmuring up its sides, and a calm sea beyond, was surrounded on all sides by low rugged hills, rent by ancient water-courses, and with the tall ridge of Lebanon in the distant north. This bay fringed a sandy, level tract, whose rise was scarcely perceptible for about a mile from the sea. At its further end was the squalid village of Nebi Yunas ("the Prophet Jonas"), in front of which were masses of olive, fig, and mulberry groves—all cultivated with corn beneath their shade—and with groups of tall date-palms here and there. Between the groves and the shore is a narrow strip of sandy ground, with a few clumps of fine tamarisks, and very ancient sycamore fig-trees (*Ficus sycomorus*, L.; Arab. *Jourmàz*), the tree mentioned by St. Luke (chap. xix.) as

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that into which Zaccheus climbed, near Jericho, to see our Lord pass by. In the midst of a dark-foliaged clump of these gnarled old trees, whose appearance is far more like that of an old English oak than is that of the terebinth, so often compared to it, stood our camp; the three tents completely overshadowed by the branches. Over the chief tent —a round Marabout tent, with double roof, and lining besides, far the most convenient shape and construction for Eastern travel—floated the English ensign, which we always hoisted. On one side of it stood our second tent,



NEBI YUNAS.

of similar form; and on the other, the long oblong one for our servants, in front of which was planted our travelling grate and kitchen. It would be difficult to conceive a more picturesque spot for a camp. Just before us was a quaint khan, with a well, and a wely, or Mohammedan chapel, sacred to the memory of the prophet Jonah. The women, earlier risers than their lords, were already drawing water for the cattle standing in groups around them, when we turned out for coffee, and then, in our dressing gowns, ran down to the shore for a swim.

After Morning Service and a late breakfast, we had time

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to scrutinize and learn the features of our motley following, of most of whom we had already formed a good opinion, which, happily, we had never, during nine months' experience, occasion to alter. They were a pleasant contrast to the attendants who had afflicted me during former journeys in Africa. First in the list is our head-muleteer, Hamoud Razoûeh, who is the owner of all the horses, and who, having served in this capacity to Dr. Thomson, Lord Dufferin, and the Prince of Wales, considers himself as sheikh of Syrian muleteers. He is a short, stiffly-built, middle-aged man, with close-shaven head and face, of the Syrian, not the Bedouin or Turkish type. He sits with a brocaded handkerchief, which he always wears, round his fez, to mark his dignity, pensively watching the iron trough in which are ranged the cooking utensils over the scanty charcoal fire, and every now and then glances over his shoulders, to see that his muleteers are at work and his animals all right. His hubble-bubble, with its great cocoa-nut bowl, is rarely out of his hand; but if he spies a slackened tent-cord, down it goes, and, seizing a mallet, he hammers at the peg, exclaims "Taib" (good), and, with a bright smile, glides back upon his haunches. His sharp nose, keen, piercing, close-set eyes, and thin, compressed lips, bespeak at once his acuteness and firmness. He wears a long silk cassock of blue and white stripe (rather the worse for wear), large blue cotton bags, bare legs, and red slippers, shaped like a gondola. Over all, in cold weather, his blue cloth jacket is covered with black silk embroidery, and has long slashed sleeves, hanging loose, like pendants, from his elbows.

His brother, Hadj Khadour, is dressed in a similar style, but, being a bachelor instead of a widower, affects full dandy toilet, and is never without his sky-blue jacket. He dispenses, however, with the cassock, and wears a short waistcoat instead. He never walks, but bestrides his donkey, with his legs stretching out far on each side,

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and cleverly balances his huge red slippers on his toes, as he swings them. Night and day, riding or sitting, his hubble-bubble is held in one hand, like the lyre of Apollo. Hadj is the gossip, the newsmonger of the camp, with his large, round face beaming with good humour, and a perpetual twinkle in his deep-set, dark eyes—always ready to joke and banter, regardless of dignities, but as ready to lend a hand whenever it is wanted, and having, in Eastern phrase, the heart and the paw of the lion.

The two brothers brought five servants with them, of whom the head was Abou-an-Yuleh, irreverently corrupted into "Aunt Judy"—a stiff, elderly Moslem, of sixty summers, who held to us faithfully throughout the campaign, poorly dressed, with a long stocking on one leg only, large blue bags, cotton turban, and dilapidated Turkish jacket, with a packing-needle and a chibouk-stick always stuck in his turban. He proved himself afterwards an invaluable snake-catcher and shell-collector.

Elias, a Christian boy, from Diarbekir, a huge lad, whose strength was only equalled by his good-humour, had all the hard work, and was the only one who had not even a donkey to ride. Bare-legged and thread-bare, he sang merrily as he went, and lived upon hope and the thought of a backshish at some time or other. Isa, or Yahoo, our kitchen factotum, was another Christian lad, looking, in his mongrel costume, as if he had been kicked into stupor. We soon discovered, however, that his looks belied his sharpness, and that if he had been hardly used it was not for want either of honesty or fidelity.

Our dragoman was not quite so much to our mind, being a Syrian-Greek; but Giacomo served us well, and if all Greeks were like him, his nation would be in better repute. He spoke no English, but French and Italian well; and as he had the keeping of all our accounts, which had to be daily examined, and were made out in the Italian language, but in the Greek characters, we had a pleasing variety in

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our linguistic studies. Wilhelm Horn, our cook, was a hard-working, plodding German, who spoke no Arabic, but English well, and whose fidelity and courage we found throughout our tour most invaluable. Our watch-dog, Beirût, attached himself instinctively to Wilhelm, though his canine instinct soon taught him to recognise every one of our party of fourteen, and to cling to the tents, whether in motion or at rest, as his home. Poor Beirût! though the veriest pariah in appearance, thy plebeian form encased as noble a dog-heart as ever beat at the sound of a stealthy step!

We had been sitting under a sycomore fig-tree—the sycamore of the Bible—and were talking of its connection with the history of Zaccheus, when, looking up, we espied two little Arab girls hidden among the branches, gathering the wretched fruit which it bore in abundance. Poor indeed must those be who live by such labour, and deep must have been the poverty of the prophet Amos, when he told the priest Amaziah that he was but "a herdman and a *gatherer of sycamore fruit.*" Tasteless and woody, these sycomore figs must surely have been those in the prophet's vision, when he pronounced the figs in the second basket to be "very naughty figs, which could not be eaten, they were so bad" [Jer. xxiv. 2], and which were an apt emblem of the rejected Zedekiah and his people. Figs, however, they are, and the tree is a congener of the celebrated banyan-tree of India. It is one of the easiest of trees to climb, with its short stem and wide lateral branches forking out in all directions; and bearing, as it does, its little figs on small sprigs all round the trunk and principal limbs, the youngest children can safely climb and gather them. It bears abundantly, perhaps at all seasons, for I have certainly found its fruit from November to June. But it is a very tender tree, and does not thrive in the highlands; indeed, I cannot recall any instance in which we met with it excepting on the sea-coast, where frost is unknown, and

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in the still warmer Jordan valley. This fact illustrates the expression in 1 Chron. xxvii. 28, "Over the olive-trees and the sycamore-trees that were in *the low plains* was Baal-hanan the Gederite;" * and also that in Ps. lxxviii. 47, "He destroyed . . . their sycamore-trees with frost;" for in Egypt, where the sycomore-fig is abundant, frost is of course unknown. These allusions all sufficiently show that not the oriental plane, often taken for the sycamore, and common on the banks of Syrian streams, but the *Ficus sycomorus*, or sycomore fig-tree of the lowlands, is, as I have assumed it to be, the tree spoken of both in the Old and New Testaments.

The sun was hot and oppressive till evening, and we found the shade of the tree more agreeable than the tents, while overhead the little chiffchaff of our English hedge-rows had sought his winter-quarters, and, with a habit somewhat different from that which he exhibits in Britain, was hovering among the branches, and apparently catching insects on the wing. We felt that the Moslems, in selecting this spot as the traditional landing-place of Jonah when delivered from the fish, have chosen with less than their usual contempt for possibilities, since the beach is smooth and gently sloping; and as the place is between Joppa and Tarshish, the event may as well have occurred here as elsewhere. A late dinner after dark, followed by Evening Service, concluded our first day's tent-life in Syria.

Next morning we were ready for an early start, and before the sun had overtopped the hills of Galilee we were in the sea. The tents were soon struck, and by eight o'clock our camping-ground was deserted. In the hope of enriching our collections I resigned my horse, and shouldered my gun on foot. But the rocks were unfossiliferous, and birds were few. The only interesting capture I made was that of the solitary blue thrush, *Petrocincla cyanea*, among the rocks, a bird supposed by some to be alluded to

* See also 2 Chron. i. 15; ix. 27.

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by the Psalmist under the name of "the sparrow that sitteth alone on the house-tops." The stratification of the hills, so far as we could trace it, appeared to be perfectly regular and horizontal, consisting of crystalline limestone, in which we vainly searched for organic traces, though rewarded by finding numbers of a very beautiful and undescribed species of *Clausilia* (*Cl. Medlycotti*, Tristr. Proc. Zool. Soc. 1865), a genus of land-shells found in the northern portion only of Palestine. There appeared in places to be a deposit of a much softer limestone on the higher portion of the hills, but which was generally denuded. Time, however, was wanting for its examination; but in one spot where we reached it we obtained a single fossil, *Hippurites syriacus*, not very perfect, and noticed that the stratification was not conformable with that of the bed below. We did not meet with any of the patches of sandstone reported to be found in this district, though the formation of sandstone may be said to be proceeding in the mass of fine sand which is driven up in many of the bays. The road was much like that of our first day's march, now through plunging sands by the water side, now over rocky ledges and steps by the edge of hills and cliffs overhanging the sea.

About a mile from Sidon we forded the Nahr-el-Auwaly, the ancient Bostrenus, one of the streams of Lebanon, near which commence the extensive gardens of Sidon, and thence passed directly through the narrow crooked streets of the modern city to our camping-place on the edge of a Moslem cemetery to the south. Indeed, our camp itself was on the old graveyard, and we had to clear away bleached bones in abundance before we could spread our carpets. Boys soon came to display their knowledge of English, learnt in the American Mission-schools, and to sell us oranges at double the market-price, which is here about six a penny. We had scarcely pitched, when we observed a Moslem funeral coming out of the city towards the cemetery—a noisy,



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disorderly crowd rather than a procession. First came a large party of women, closely veiled, and howling, the hired mourners, doubtless, of the occasion. "Call for the mourning women, that they may come; and send for cunning women, that they may come: and let them make haste, and take up a wailing for us" (Jer. ix. 17, 18). Then was borne the bier, with the body stretched on it, dressed in its best clothes, followed by a motley straggling mob of men and boys in every sort of costume, talking and jostling in the most unconcerned manner till the grave was reached. The men then took up the wailing—"La Allah illa Allah, wa Mohammed russoul Allah"—(There is no God but God, and Mohammed is the prophet of God) repeated at the top of the voice with breathless rapidity, as if trying to drown the "lullulu" of the women, until the whole party seemed utterly exhausted, and paused for an instant, foaming at the mouth. The body was let down on a narrow plank into the shallow grave, which was rapidly filled in, a few stones were heaped over it to protect it from the jackals and hyænas, and the mourners dispersed.

It was not yet noon, and we set out on various expeditions. B. took a boat, and succeeded in obtaining two good photographs from the rocks which formed the entrance to the ancient harbour of Sidon. Fruit is the chief commercial product of Sidon (or Saida, as it is now called), and its gardens extend for some miles north and south and behind the city. I took my gun and went out alone among them, occasionally attacked by dogs, or unceremoniously turned back by the owners, as I deserved to be for my disregard of their hedges and gates, but more frequently watched with interest; my sport was spoiled by boys, who kept running before me and pelting every bird they could see. However, I succeeded in obtaining some interesting specimens—corncrakes, identical with our own, who had comfortably domiciled themselves for the winter by the little watercourses in the gardens; several bulbuls, who

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were still practising their rich music in concert from the tops of the orange-trees; and other more familiar songsters. Birds of prey were abundant, and the honey buzzard and marsh harrier were skimming over the groves, while several eagles hovered in mid-air, or wheeled in circles almost out of sight. I also shot, but lost among the hedges, a fine short-toed eagle (*Circäetos gallicus*, Gm.).

In one garden I met a negro at work, and asked for a drink of water. He called for his wife from the cottage by the garden well, and bade her fetch it for me, which she did with a simple natural grace. She was a young, pretty-looking white Syrian, with a mulatto baby in her arms. Here at least, thought I, the negro suffers under no social disadvantages.

The enclosures were generally neat, formed principally of bramble, myrtle, and various thorny shrubs, and innumerable little rills and ditches of water, fed for the most part by a shallow well sunk in each property. The water from the well is raised by jars on a wheel after the well-known Egyptian fashion, and poured into a trough, whence a neatly-cemented channel conveys it to the ditches and furrows which distribute the refreshing draught to every tree in the garden. The orange and lemon predominate, but there are also many pomegranates, trellised vines and apricots, and a few palms and fig-trees. Under all, the ground is carefully cultivated for green and root crops. At present turnips, carrots, and radishes had taken the place of the melons and cucumbers of summer, and would be succeeded, we were told, by barley. It was interesting to meet in nearly every garden with an arbour of gourds, like that under which Jonah sat; but the plants had all withered; and the large bottle-gourds, left here and there to dry on the tendrils which had lately afforded a leafy shade, were all that remained.

There has been much discussion among critics since the time of Jerome and Augustine, who used some rather



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strong language on the subject, as to what plant is really the gourd of Jonah. The identity of the Hebrew קִיקָיוֹן (*kikayon*), with the Arabic قرع (*kûrakh*) has been questioned on etymological grounds, and a wilderness of plants, from the ivy to the castor-oil tree, have been introduced to provide the prophet with shade. The favourite rendering with later commentators, including the writer in Smith's Biblical Dictionary, seems to be the *Ricinus communis*, L. or castor-oil plant. Niebuhr alone observes that both Jews and Christians at Mosul maintained it was not this tree, *el keroa*, but *el kerra*, the gourd. The names in Palestine are almost identical, "kurah" being the gourd, "khurwah" the castor-oil plant. No doubt both of these plants are common in Palestine, but it seems strange that none of the disputants should have thought of inquiring which would provide the best shade, or whether either was ever used for the purpose. To my own mind the claims of the familiar gourd are incontrovertible. It is used *universally* in the East on trellises for shading arbours and summer-houses—and a most effectual screen it is; while as to the *Ricinus*, large though its leaves may be, its straggling open growth renders it perfectly useless as a protection against the rays of the sun.

The sun set angrily, and threatened a change of weather, but notwithstanding the quarrels of the pariah dogs and the howling of the jackals round our tents, Beirût was the only unquiet member of our camp, and next morning, in spite of the clouds, we resolved to set off for the hills, with the triple purpose of shooting partridges for dinner, inspecting the ancient Phœnician tombs, and examining the stratification of the rocks. In the first object we were disappointed. Birds there were in places, but far too wary and wild to allow us to add a dish to our frugal table. The tombs have been ages ago rifled of all their contents, save some shattered sarcophagus lids; and the few inscriptions exhumed in modern times are now to be seen, not here, but in the

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Louvre. They are simply sepulchres hewn in the rocks, with entrances the size of an ordinary door, and they abound in all the hills. We could detect no difference whatever in construction or form between these and the tombs about Jerusalem and elsewhere in Judæa. In one, into which we crept, were ranged nine niches, each measuring six feet back into the rock, three on each side, and three facing the door, evidently for the reception of as many bodies, not of funeral urns; and there appeared besides to be an inner chamber, the entrance to which was choked with rubbish. The height of the cave had never been more than five feet.

Of fossils we found none, the mass of the hills being formed of the hard crystalline limestone on which we had travelled from Beyrout, but much dislocated and contorted. These inferior beds have once had enormous inequalities of surface, which have been subsequently corrected by the filling in of some sedimentary accumulations in the tertiary ocean, now a softer limestone. Here and there upon the top of this latter is a third denuded deposit of sandstone, very soft and friable, yellow and red, apparently containing much oxide of iron. Surmounting all, on the hills behind, is the band of calcareous limestone, interspersed with flinty bands and nodules, which may be traced from Beyrout right through Lebanon to Judæa, and which here, as elsewhere, is beautifully variegated with silicated calc, as if through some chemical action the soft limestone had been subjected to a siliceous metamorphosis, and as it were petrified by infiltration. Being now much decomposed on the surface, the layers of flint stand out most conspicuously.

While wandering over these hills, whose lower slopes were carefully terraced like long flights of stairs, we met a solitary Syrian priest, driving his ass laden with marketings from Sidon to some distant village. His appearance suggested to us exactly what we may picture a Levite of the olden time to have been, such as he of Bethlehem-

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Judah who came to the house of Micah. His style and dress were ecclesiastical (more so, I think, than those of the Greek priests, which recall rather the monastic than the secular habit). He had a long beard, the round, full black turban, exactly like the modern pictures of the Aaronic priests, a loose blue-black cassock, and loose, long blue-black trousers. His very melancholy cast of countenance became the priest of a race trampled upon by the Turkish oppressor, like Israel by the Midianites of old.

We were still some six miles from camp when the clouds began to gather, and rapidly the rain descended, accompanied by crashing thunder peals. Shelter there was none, and long ere we reached the tents we were drenched to the skin; nor did we succeed in keeping our powder, or at least our nipples, dry, a fact of which the birds seemed perfectly aware, to judge by their boldness and indifference. Our course lay down the banks of the Auwaly, and many an interesting sea-bird did we notice making up the stream from the shore. Here alone in Syria we met with the beautiful pigmy cormorant (*Graculus pygmæus*, Gr.), stealing quietly to shelter; many oceanic ducks were seeking food and refuge inland; and especially attractive were the brilliant kingfishers, our English species, and the large black-and-white kingfisher of Egypt, both of which we had noted on the previous day feeding on the shore, but which, driven by the inhospitable weather, were darting up the river in quick succession, under the screen of tamarisks which overhung the banks. As we turned from the river towards our tents the rain had washed the path, and laid bare in many places fragments of fine coloured mosaic *in situ*, telling us very plainly that this ruinous road was formed of the flooring of rich Roman mansions. Various broken but polished shafts of granite and porphyry lay strewn by the road and in the gardens.

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After a change of clothing at our tents, we went to call on the American missionaries, to one of whom we had been introduced at Beyrout. No description can do justice to the squalor and filth of the streets of Sidon on a wet day. All of them are more than half arched over, and very dark—so narrow, that two laden asses cannot pass,—with a gutter a foot deep running down the centre; and where not arched a rotten screen of sticks, overlaid here and there with pieces of ragged matting and wattles, adds to the deplorable appearance of the place. Coppersmiths seemed the most thriving as well as the noisiest of the artisans, while, like every one else, they sat in their open shops, hammering away on the ground. We turned up a blind entry, and then mounted a flight of steps in the corner; at the top of which a door ajar led to a court-yard, clean and tidy, on the roof of the dungeons below. Round this elevated court, and built over the street below were the various rooms of the mission-house. I rapped, when a little boy peeped out, and ran back, exclaiming "O papa, here is an Englishman!" It is impossible to describe the sudden contrast, when we found ourselves in a spacious, neatly-furnished drawing-room, looking out on the sea which dashed against its walls, and were received by a graceful lady. What a lonely banishment a missionary's wife must endure in such a place as Sidon! There are, however, three here; for the Americans never isolate their missionaries, as we too often do; so that they have some little society of their own. They did not speak hopefully of the progress of their mission in the city itself, but much more so of their success in the country districts. Among the Moslems they have, as yet, made no way.

We turned in with uncomfortable forebodings, soon to be realised, of the effects of a continuous tropical rain on the best of tents. We carefully arranged our mackintosh sheets under our carpets and sheepskin beds, and then

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turned them over; so that when the water burst through, as at length it did, we found ourselves lying dry in the pool. But I was aroused towards morning by the drip on my face. I was fain to sit up under the hood of my bernous, with my legs dry and warm in the woolly bag; while my companions to leeward escaped altogether.

It is needless for me to say much about the city of Sidon itself, which has been very accurately described by Robinson, whose account has been faithfully followed by Porter. There are several large khans within the walls, where European travellers frequently remain, and where our muleteers and animals were in comfort during the storm. The modern city occupies a little promontory, from the south of which a ridge of rocks runs out in a curve towards the north, forming the ancient harbour, the entrance to which is contracted by a fine half-ruined tower, connected with the north end of the city by a bridge of several arches. This old fortress has many broken shafts of polished granite and rich marble built into its walls, and its erection must therefore date subsequently to the period of Sidon's Roman greatness. But by far the most interesting portion of the remains are those on the outer ridge of rocks. These we went out in a boat to examine, and afterwards scrambled back on the reefs. The port, when compared with the harbours of classic Greece, must have been a spacious one, and was perhaps enlarged by an artificial mole, of which, though not noticed by any writer, we thought we could descry the traces. In many places the old reef has been quarried out, till the sea makes a clean breach into the harbour; but this has probably been the work of later times. The jagged, fretted rocks in the sea are full of carved door-ways, huge stones of old arches, with many of the holes still visible where the staunchions of gates have been fitted, and are strewn with masses of shapeless masonry. We were struck by the Cyclopean character of the work—immense

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stones let in to form the edges of the ancient quays, by the sides of which, among and on these rocks, must have been the warehouses of Sidon. The masses of broken columns on all sides form a breastwork against the action of the sea below; but these remains are so perforated and honeycombed by the water, and by the boring shells (*pholades*), that it is impossible to make out their style. Time, man, and, above all, the incessant dashing of the waves, have so honeycombed rocks, stonework, and columns alike, that no clear plan of the style of building can be ascertained. A little outlay might yet suffice to make this a serviceable port for small craft. Such is the harbour of Sidon, the cradle of the world's commerce, the mother of Tyre. Perhaps on the very spot where we stood on these rocks St. Paul was courteously landed. Perhaps on the very sands where we have been strolling in pursuit of kingfishers our Lord walked when He went to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon; the only road to Tyre being along these sands.*

We had intended to remain another day at Sidon, but the rains, dark and heavy, continued to pour down. The rats, too, and the moles had been working up from the graves beneath us, and we were not enamoured of our sepulchral camping-ground. While our muleteers declared the floods must be out, and that it would be dangerous to attempt the fords, our dripping dragoman, who had not, like them, been enjoying the comforts of the khan, assured us that the alarms were part of their practice, and that if we gave ear to them, we might remain here a month, as they were very comfortable in Sidon, with good quarters and abundance of coffee and gossip. We determined thereupon to force a march in the rain. A pitiable

* We have not, however, any proof from the Gospel history that our Lord visited the Gentile cities of Tyre and Sidon themselves. It is only stated that He went to their *coasts* (ὅρια, μεθόρια), or parts (μέρη), very possibly only to the eastern or inland frontiers or boundaries of the Phœnician territory. (Matt. xv. 22; Mark vii. 31.)

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business it is to dismantle a camp in a storm, but we carefully bestowed our beds and a dry change within our mackintosh sheets, to make *them* safe at all events. We clearly could not be worse off elsewhere than we were here. We gave up the idea of reaching Tyre, and arranged to make Surafend (Sarepta) our halting-place, a distance of four hours' ride, if we should be able to ford the streams, now swollen to torrents. We kept close along the shore, for the whole way, having on our left a narrow strip of rich fertile land, behind which the bare but terraced hills rose steep and rocky. The first ford, the Nahr-Senik, we crossed in safety, and quantities of birds of every kind hovered about us—eagles, ducks, Egyptian geese, falcons, and plovers, but very few could we obtain.

At the second river, the Nahr-ez-Zaherâny (flowery river), which was fringed with oleanders just coming into blossom, the "willows by the water-courses," the stream rose above our horses' girths. The ford was only 100 yards from the mouth of the stream, and just below were the ruins of an ancient bridge, apparently of Saracenic construction; for the Turks, though they may sometimes build, yet would scorn to repair a bridge. However, the whole *cortège* was got over in safety, except that one mule was carried down a few yards, and did not reach the bank before my portmanteau and all its contents were thoroughly saturated, and one of our servants had to be rescued, half drowned, from the current.

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## CHAPTER III.

*Sarepta — Its Traces and Modern Site — The River Leontes — Bridge — Oleander — Contrast of Tyre with Sidon — Desolation — Filth — Ruins in the Sea — The Old Cathedral — Massive Remains — Quarrying of Mines — Tyrian Purple — Shell-Fish — Ancient Sea-Wall — Literal fulfilment of Ezekiel's Prophecy — Hiram's Well — Excursion to Hiram's Tomb — Agriculture of the District — Description of the Tomb — Serpent catching — Local Traditions — Kanah — Winter Flowers — Phœnician Sculptures — Cisterns — Eagles — Coins of Philip and Alexander — Rarity of Jewish Coins — Absence of Phœnician Stone-Work — Wood Sculpture — Ras-el-Ain — Palæotyrus — The Ladder of Tyre — Interesting Landscape — Ruined City of Iskanderiyeh — View from Ras en Nakûra — Descent into the Plain of Acre.*

DECEMBER *2nd.*—We reached the traces, very scanty and insignificant, of ancient Zarephath, or Sarepta, soon after noon, and pitched our camp on the sands, a little to the south of the ruins, not more than 100 yards from the sea, with the spray falling upon our tents. But close by was a well, the traveller's first care. This was sunk only fifty yards from the water's edge, and the access was by a descent of stone steps to the little square-built reservoir, so contrived as to prevent its being immediately choked with sand, but yet requiring constant labour from the old keeper of the khan. We must not be ungrateful, for it enabled us to have soup and tea, salt though in truth it was. The weather cleared just as we arrived, and allowed us to wander about the spot where the desert prophet met the widow gathering sticks, and where he so long blessed her exhaustless cruse. Not a house now remains, and but few of its stones strew the ground. A little "wely," once a Christian chapel, marks the spot where tradition

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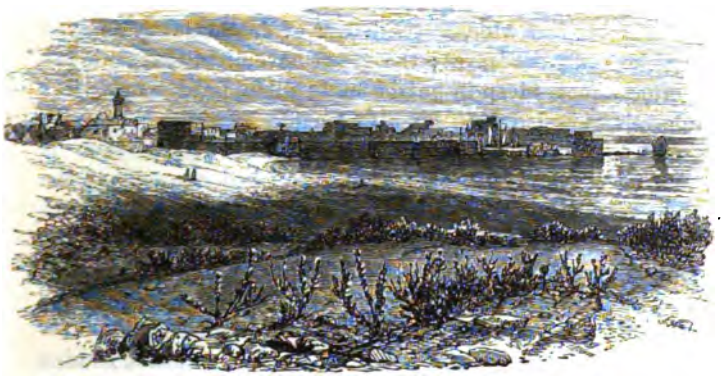
states our Lord to have rested when He visited these coasts. But, unlike most other hallowed sites in Syria, Sarepta has not perished, but migrated up the hill. There it is, only two miles back, set on a hill where it cannot be hid, and, moreover, where it cannot be harried by Bedouin horsemen. Its Hebrew appellation is distinctly preserved in the Arabic Surafend. How this migration illustrates the ages of insecurity which have passed over this down-trodden land! The strip of rich plain is deserted, the very stones of old Zarephath have been laboriously carried up the hill, and the peasant, when his toil is over below, creeps up at sunset to his rocky home, with his tools on his back or even his plough on his shoulder, while the herdsman and his flock spend half their time in journeying from security to pasture, and from pasture to security. While civilisation and commerce are bringing down our western cities to the rivers and the sea, lawlessness and barbarism have driven Phœnicia from the coast up the mountains. The hills were very bare, and the hard rocks sharply water-fretted, affording only support for straggling herds of goats. Their keepers we found civil and communicative, as we pursued the black wheatear or Tithys' redstart from ridge to ridge in their company. They told us of many ancient tombs higher up, but without sarcophagi.

We had a cheerless night of rain, but happily not much wind to draw our tent-pegs out of the soft sand, and I beguiled the time by going through our dragoman's accounts. The item "παξιστ πι. σει" somewhat puzzled me, till it was explained to be the translation of "Backshish, six piastres!"

The clouds lifted in the morning, and we had a fine ride to Tyre, along the fertile plain of Phœnicia, rapidly expanding to the eastward as we proceeded. The scene was desolate, dotted here and there by ghost-like heaps, ancient tombs, and in one spot a small Syrian Stonehenge, standing weird-like in the middle of the plain. Yet among the hills,

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a few miles beyond, we could see each crest surmounted by a village, and much terrace cultivation. The swollen Leontes, now the Nahr-el-Kâsimîyeh, we crossed by a dilapidated bridge, without parapet, the first unbroken arch we had seen. The bridge is modern, and necessity has compelled its erection on the site of an older structure, for the Leontes is quite unfordable in winter, and is perhaps the most considerable stream in Palestine after the Jordan. Another little stream we forded, hard by an old Roman bridge left to go to ruin. The banks were fringed by the lovely oleander, already putting forth its fruit-buds,



TYRE.

and we enjoyed a long ramble by its banks, drawn on by the lively but cautious black-and-white kingfishers. From the muddy Leontes we walked along the sands for four miles, with Tyre full in sight, projecting out into the sea, and somewhat imposing at a distance, with its ridge of weather-beaten rocks running out to the north, in form and position a close repetition of Sidon. But the illusion was soon to be dispelled. Instead of the rich gardens and orange-groves which extend behind Sidon, a desolate ridge of sand connects the modern Sûr, or Tyre, with the broad plain beyond, heaped by the sea-drift upon the causeway

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which Alexander made to connect the island of Tyre with the mainland during the siege.

We selected a pleasant spot for the camp just outside the north gate, and close to the principal fountain, a fine massively-built erection over capacious cisterns, divided within into different chambers for the men and for the women. This well is close to the shore, like other more humble springs we had already observed. The sands sloped gently down for fifty yards from our tents to the sea. Sidon in the rain is wretched enough, but what is it to Tyre in the dry? The filth and squalor of the little city surpass even that of a Tunisian town. Scanty bazaars, about five feet wide, wattled over at intervals by decayed sticks and palm-leaves; the street never less than ankle—often a foot—deep in putrid mud; dilapidated, windowless hovels, raised among huge fragments of polished granite and porphyry columns, prostrate in rubbish—such is modern Tyre. Through these we picked our steps to the shore, where a few fishing-boats from the navy of her "whose merchants were princes." We ascended to the higher part of the promontory, and from the ruined walls looked down on the wondrous fulfilment of prophecy. For half a mile the sea flows to the depth of a foot or two over flat rocks, covered by one mass of broken columns, leaning or prostrate in bewildering confusion, as if pitched pell-mell into the water. This is insular Tyre, "the waters have covered her." She is "a place for fishermen to spread their nets on." The nets, indeed, were not spread to-day, for the sea was too high and rough, but they were hanging about. The columns, blackened by the salt water, appeared all to have been smooth, and not fluted, but they are now fretted and perforated by ages of exposure to storm and tempest. They are still quite sufficient to attest the grandeur of the later or Roman Tyre, to which doubtless they belong.

We visited the skeleton of the old Cathedral of Tyre,

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once the finest church in Syria, but now an utter ruin, devoted to the filthiest purposes, and with miserable Moslem hovels plastered like swallows' nests in all its corners and transepts. The wall of the apse remains, and so do the massive buttresses at its corners, from which extended the transepts. A portion also of the west wall is still standing, so that the size of the church can be traced—about 200 feet long by nearly 140 in width. It seems to have been plain and massive, without external decoration, and, within, was in the earlier and simple Byzantine style. We clambered up the roof of a house in the chancel to the top of the wall of the apse. We were standing on a spot hallowed indeed in ecclesiastical history. Paulinus was its bishop in the palmy days of the Constantines. Eusebius wrote the consecration oration, still extant, for the opening of the church. The historian, William of Tyre, here held archiepiscopal rank. Here was performed almost the last religious service ever held by the Crusaders in the Holy Land. Here moulders the dust of the "great Emperor Frederick Barbarossa, and of a yet greater man than he—Origen."

Revived and rebuilt time after time, and age after age, it would be as vain to search here for the relics of the Tyre of Hiram and Solomon, as to seek for David's city beneath the heaps of Jerusalem, or for the Byrsa of Dido under the layers of Roman Carthage. The ruins that are exhumed to-day yield evidence that they were built from the fragments of the later imperial city.

Through a gap in the dilapidated wall, a very recent structure, we went on to the waste, the neck of the peninsula, which entombs the foundations of three successive cities, founded on the causeway of Alexander. A deplorable rubbish-heap it is, much like the ballast-hill of an English sea-port, covered with scanty bunches of shabby thistles and centaureas, and tufts of dusty *echium*. It is deeply furrowed in various directions by trenches, made to obtain the stones, which, being ready squared for use, are dug up

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and transported to Beyrout, as formerly they were to Acre. There is no system in these excavations, which are carried on from time to time at the caprice of the workmen, and then filled in, while others are run parallel or at various angles, and frequently over the same ground. It is small wonder if, after ages of such quarrying, the ground-plan of Tyre be difficult to trace. Yet the massive foundations which were being pitilessly uprooted were evidently of a date long subsequent to the glories of imperial Tyre, for we observed fragments of polished granite columns laid transversely as building-stones in the wall. One of these appeared to have been a portion of a sister shaft to the great double column of red Egyptian granite, consisting of two connected pillars of one piece, at which we had gazed in wonder, as it lay across a yard under the Cathedral. Probably that column likewise had served for some Roman structure prior to its introduction as one of the main supports of the Byzantine church.

There were traces, too, of the ancient trade and manufactures of Tyre. Among the rubbish thrown out in the excavations were numberless fragments of glass, and whole "kitchen middens" of shells, crushed and broken, the owners of which had once supplied the famed Tyrian purple dye. All these shells were of one species, and that one of the most plentiful on the coast, the *Murex brandaris*, L. It has frequently been stated that *Murex trunculus*, L. is the true original of the Tyrian dye, and it is very possible that it may have been also used for that purpose. But while we noticed only a few broken specimens of *M. trunculus* scattered about, the compact masses of broken shells, and which, therefore, had most probably been used in manufacture, and not merely for food, were exclusively of the former species.* The fragments of glass were shape-

* I have observed large beds or kitchen middens of *Murex brandaris* on the coast of Laconia also, where they seem to have been used for the same purpose.

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less, but variously coloured, and by their solidity suggested the idea that they were the "rejectamenta" of the ancient glass works.

We afterwards visited the supposed ancient sea-wall, at the northern end of the island. Whatever be the age of this wall, it cannot belong to the original Queen of Commerce, for it is composed of most irregular masonry, and stones and shafts taken from previous erections. One stone bore testimony to the megalithic propensities of its hewers. It was above sixteen feet long, and apparently six and a-half feet high (but its height we could not exactly measure), and was placed among some insignificant masonry. It bore the well-known Jewish bevel, exactly like the stones of the Wailing Place at Jerusalem, and of the Haram at Hebron, about six inches round the edge finely bevelled and ashlar-dressed, while the body of the stone is more roughly hewn, and left projecting above this carefully-squared border. Probably this stone was a portion of the older sea-wall of the original city, as it can scarcely have been moved far to be placed in its present position, by those who were content to use such very fragmentary material for the rest of their work.

We noticed here the general appearance of the reef and the shore, but could see no traces whatever of there having been any subsidence of the land in historic times, though the shattered masses of columns corroborate unmistakably the historical records of earthquakes. Had these earthquakes in any degree dislocated the stratification, it seems probable that the water-supply would have been materially affected. But the strata dip gently from the hills down to the shore, thereby affording, in the moisture which percolates through the the soft calcareous limestone, but is arrested by the hard crystalline layer below it, a steady supply for the shallow wells which are sunk along the whole coast. These wells we had noticed at Sarepta and elsewhere. One of them, close to the gate of Tyre,



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supplies the modern town. They seem to have existed in olden time on the island itself, and thereby to have enabled its defenders to bid defiance to many a besieger; and they pour forth a copious and magnificent supply at Ras-el-Ain, close to the vestiges of Palætyrus, the old continental city. Had there been any considerable subterranean disturbance, it is difficult to believe that this water-supply would not have been in some degree interrupted. That the north harbour of Tyre is now so small, and the south one completely obliterated, may be easily accounted for, by the simple action of the silt from the sea, and the rubbish from the land.

After another plunge through mud and filth inconceivable to Western imaginations, we returned to our camp, to find our entire wardrobes displayed to dry on the tent-ropes, and our servants sitting sentry to keep off the curious, and perhaps thievish crowd. After dinner we read the prophecies of Isaiah and Ezekiel, on the fate of Tyre. The story of Ezekiel sounds on the spot like a descriptive history of the present. There are those who have warned us not to be led astray by the imagination, and that "to narrow the scope of these sublime visions to the actual buildings and sites of the cities is as unwarranted by facts as it is mistaken in idea." It may, or it may not be, that Nebuchadnezzar was compelled to raise his siege after thirteen years, when "every head was made bald, and every shoulder was peeled; yet had he no wages, nor his army, for Tyrus" (Ezek. xxix. 18). If so, the fulfilment of the prophetic denunciation "tarried," but did not fail, grievously though the power of Tyre must have been crippled by her resistance; while the capture by Alexander the Great exhausted to the letter the inspired predictions. It is not when sitting by the wreck of her palaces, that the suggestion that the prophecies of Ezekiel were patriotic denunciations provoked by the kidnapping of some Israelites, and encouraged by the near approach

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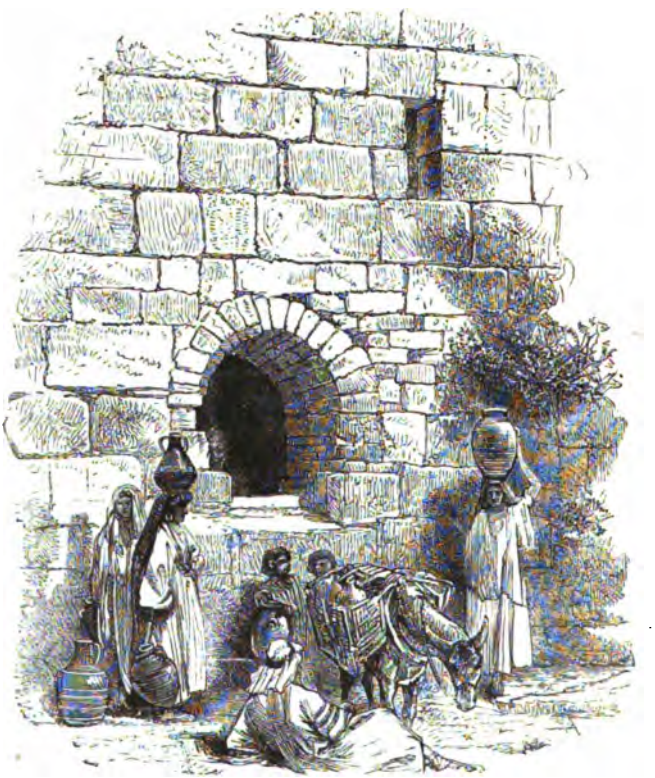
of the conquering Chaldæan army, will find acceptance. We have an elaborate and most minute account of the items which made up the wealth, the commerce, and the resources of Tyre, at a time when that wealth and power were at their highest, and a detailed description of the state to which it should be reduced. "I will make her like the top of a rock; it shall be a place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea, for I have spoken it" (Ezek. xxvi. 4, 5). "They shall lay thy stones, and thy timber, and thy dust, in the midst of the water;" "I will also scrape her dust from her" (*ib. vv.* 4, 12). The first fulfilment of the prediction may have been complete centuries ago; Tyre may have risen again and again from her ruins, and may yet rise a fifth time, without controverting the truth of the utterances of the seer. But its present state is at least a vivid illustration of the prophetic declaration, and we have a right to indulge an instinctive response within us, to the strain in which Isaiah and Ezekiel foretold its desolation. The Phœnician power which the prophets denounced is long since obliterated, and though the subsequent Tyres had no connexion with it save a geographical one, yet their successive doom, and the wretched present, at least add force and power to the Scriptural warning; no less than the present Jerusalem, "trodden down of the Gentiles," illustrates the woe denounced on the city of the Jews.

The next morning we were up at dawn. The sun rose gloriously, but before he had gilded the snowy range of Lebanon, or the death-like pallor of the white peaks had melted into a metallic lustre, we had our morning plunge and swim in the Tyrian sea. Imagine in an English December the luxury of sea-bathing at seven A.M.! and then a breakfast in the open air, under a bright sun, off cold mutton and delicious fresh mullet! The view as we sat at our meal was lovely. The wind had gone down, the sea sparkled and rippled calmly at our feet, beyond lay



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the rich but desolate plain of Phœnicia, and over the nearer hills the long snowy range of Jebel Sunnin and the dome of Jebel Sheikh glistened in the morning rays. Just behind us, from the massive square building over the



HIRAM'S WELL.

fountain of Hiram's Well, as it is called, long files of women were passing, with their tall water-jars gracefully poised on their heads, while they gave a good stare at the Howadji's breakfast table.

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B. and I made an early start for Hiram's Tomb, a fine sarcophagus, some six miles off among the hills. We passed through several isolated enclosures on the plain, where orange, lemon, and pomegranate-trees flourished luxuriantly, while all was deserted around them. The rising ground beyond was carefully terraced, and studded with fig and olive groves, while every eminence was crowned by a little walled village, recalling the frequent scriptural expression, "Bethshean and *her towns*," &c. The timberless country made the buildings still more conspicuous. From one spot, as we walked on, we counted sixteen of these villages in sight at once. Many an expression in scriptural phraseology was illustrated in our ramble. "The inhabitants of the villages have ceased in Israel." The plains, exuberantly rich and fertile, were desolate, choked with thistles and centaureas; there is "the noise of archers in the places of drawing water." The wells are from time to time the resort of prowling Bedouin; the fellahin, or settled inhabitants, shelter themselves in the little walled towns, and rely for their principal crops on the scanty returns of the rocky terraces on the hill sides, while they snatch a precarious corn-harvest from the plains below. As we passed over these stony and thorny patches, unfenced and traversed by foot-paths, the husbandmen were busily engaged in sowing their barley for the spring crop, casting the seed many times on the trodden way, or among the thistles and stone heaps, while larks and buntings hovered around to pick it up,—all recalling the parable of the sower.

B. obtained a good photograph of the so-called Hiram's Tomb. It is impossible to disprove, still more to prove the local tradition which assigns this tomb to the great Tyrian king. It is a grand massive sarcophagus, erected on a solid pedestal of very large squared limestone, by the wayside, and with a deep arched well, or large cistern, behind it, to which we descended by steps. The great

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coffin of stone is 12 feet by 8 feet, and 6 feet high, surmounted by a lid, slightly pyramidal and 5 feet high. The east end has been broken at the corner, and rifled ages agone. There it stands, in solitary desolation, commanding the sea and that city of Tyre over which Hiram



HIRAM'S TOMB.

ruled. It is a noble site for the noble sepulchre of a Phœnician monarch. The monument, though weather-beaten, is not otherwise injured, and there is no trace of the so-called Jewish bevel in the dressing of the stones. It is singular that so isolated and remarkable a structure is

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never mentioned in history, and that it was only in the present generation that it was first brought to the notice of antiquarians by an English traveller.

A party of Arabs came up during the photographic operations, and watched us without expressing either wonder or suspicion. We afterwards espied in a chink of the tomb a large snake, comfortably coiled between the two stones. B. retiring a few yards fired at him. He seemed stunned, and as he crept further in, left his tail within reach. A sudden jerk and a swing brought him out and threw him to the ground, when I succeeded in breaking his neck with a smart stroke of my ramrod. The creature was two and a-half feet long, and proved to be the *Daboia xanthina*, Gray, one of the largest and most dangerous of the venomous vipers. When I saw his ugly flat head, I felt somewhat inclined to repent of my rashness, but we succeeded in safely housing him in a tin box and lodging him in the game bag. The apathetic Arabs, who have a childish horror of the whole serpent tribe, venomous or harmless, were roused to admiration, and having at first more than half suspected us of magical art, now changed their minds, and seemed disposed to look on us as the barbarians of Melita did on St. Paul; then fumbling in the recesses of their 'abaiyehs, or large cloaks, they produced a couple of oranges, of which they begged our acceptance, and sociably sat down by our side. We catechized them on the ruins in the neighbourhood, but they disclaimed all knowledge of "hadjera mactouba," written stones within reach, though there were many old cities, they said, built by the "Roumi," or Christian Greeks. Throughout the country most of the ruins are ascribed by the country people to the "Roumi," and but few to the "Yehudi," or Jews—local traditions being, in this instance, probably more correct than the traveller generally finds them.

After a short rest, we left our man with the camera,

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and wandered on, visiting several desolate heaps of ruins, of which we could not make out any details. The country was bare, rocky, and dreary, wild without grandeur, and barren without desolation. Flowers, however, chiefly bulbs of various species, carpeted the hills—very beautiful, but all of them very small, cropping out everywhere from the fissures in the rocks. We noticed four kinds of crocus (white, blue, and yellow), and several hyacinths, particularly the little grape hyacinth of our gardens (*Muscari racemosum*), or some closely-allied species (*moschatum ?*). We followed for some way up the course of a deep and rugged, but monotonous ravine, which leads to the town of Kanah, mentioned in Joshua (xix. 28), under exactly the same name, if we accept Robinson's identification. Mr. Grover has however remarked, in opposition to this generally-received suggestion, that the Kanah of the Old Testament, to answer the requirements of the text of Joshua, must have been near Sidon instead of Tyre, and that there is an Ain-Kana eight miles south-east of Sidon. Be this as it may, our Kanah bears marks of antiquity, especially in some weather-beaten and coarsely-hewn figures of men on the face of the cliff below it. These figures stand out in bold relief from the rock, but are unaccompanied by any traces of inscription. Phœnician they must surely be—so unlike any remains, Greek or Roman—and more ancient, apparently, than Hiram's tomb. On the hill-side we found various traces of ancient olive-presses (not unlike the cider-mills of the West of England), yet but one small clump of olive-trees could be seen in the district. Water appears to have been always scarce here; for there were many old square cisterns for rain, now choked with rubbish, bearing testimony to the numbers and the industry of the inhabitants in the olden time.

The beautiful black-shouldered kite (*Elanus melanopterus*) flew over us, and received a passing shot; this was the only specimen of this lovely bird we met with during

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our expedition. Common in Egypt, and a summer visitor to Algeria, its presence in Phœnicia in December was an interesting illustration of the mildness of the climate near the coast. We expended much powder and shot, to little purpose, over several eagles; and, after a nine hours' tramp, returned to camp happy, hungry, and weary, our bags laden with a miscellaneous assortment of small birds, new snails, slugs, lizards, beetles, and crocus roots,—not omitting Hiram's serpent.

We determined to continue our southward progress while the weather, never to be depended on at this season (the beginning of December), continued so favourable. Before we left, the Tyrian Jews made their last unsuccessful attempt at trading, with some very fine gold coins of Philip of Macedon and Alexander. Three or four years ago there was an immense find of gold coins in a garden near Tyre. The secret could not long be kept, and the governor, hearing the report, and claiming the treasure-trove as a droit of the Sultan, succeeded by a liberal application of the bastinado in obtaining the production of some eight hundred new pieces, almost all of Alexander, with a very few of Philip. These were, doubtless, but a portion of the exhumed treasure, and ever since a few coins are judiciously and mysteriously offered to all Frank travellers. They have been conjectured, from their condition, to have been a portion of the newly-coined Macedonian currency, hidden by Alexander's general when compelled to retire from the city. I may observe that, among all the coins and curiosities offered to us during our travels, we never met with anything unmistakably Phœnician or Jewish, unless coins of the Herodian family may be counted as the latter. In fact, all traces of art of any kind previously to the Greek conquest are excessively rare. In the neighbourhood of Carthage, I have frequently obtained Punic and Numidian coins, though there are no satisfactory traces of the Punic city. No-

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wonder, then, if traces of Phœnician art be here so scarce. This may be due, not only to the utter destruction of the city by Alexander, but to the fact that the Tyrians preferred wood for all their more elaborate works. They had no such material at hand as the granite of Egypt, or the marble of Greece. The limestone of the country, though well adapted for ordinary masonry, is too coarse and friable for the sculptor's art; and, as we may see from the detailed description of the building of Solomon's Temple, they used the tall pine and the cedar for architectural supports, instead of the columns of the Greeks. They were cunning men to hew great stones and costly stones, but, above all, to carve timber—an art in which, to this day, their successors in Sidon retain their pre-eminence, and for which they are employed, both at Damascus and throughout Syria. Thus, when the fire was laid to the beams of Tyre, all vestiges of their skill were destroyed for ever. Perhaps, if the architects on the banks of the Nile, or among the hills of Greece, had had to their hand material so abundant, and so easily employed, as the forests of Lebanon and Galilee, the evidences of their art might have perished as utterly.

By seven o'clock we were in the saddle, and our long *cortége* filed off across the sandy isthmus. Our course was by the water's edge for about three miles, till we reached Ras-el-Ain ("The Fountain-head"), the reservoir or fountain whence Tyre was supplied by an aqueduct, now a ruin, but a fine one, with a gushing stream of water running useless to the sea. All is decay; but nature is as beautiful as ever, and climbers, evergreens, and maiden-hair fern, decked with the pearly drops, hang gracefully over the mouldering stones. Between Ras-el-Ain and the shore to the south is supposed to have stood the city of Palætyrus, destroyed by Alexander, who removed its very stones—so completely, indeed, that we could not perceive the vestige of a ruin.

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Gradually, the sun, which had long since lit up Lebanon, lifted the shadows from the nearer hills. For about six miles we rode along the sands, often in the sea itself, till we mounted the chalky headland, Ras-el-Abiad ("White Head"), the ancient "Ladder of Tyre," and had left the plain of Phœnicia. A ladder of rock, it may truly be called, though many of its rungs are wanting; and the ride up is somewhat perilous, the path being worn in the side of a cliff, without the slightest ledge in places, and the sea dashing 200 or 300 feet below. When at the top we turned to cast a last glance at the scenes we had left. A broad belt of sand, fringing a rich though desolate plain, stretching away to the north, and then curving in to the east, ran out into the sea for a mile, forming the low point on which Tyre is built. North of Tyre, we could trace this belt curving again towards Sidon, till its silver thread was lost to sight. Within this sandy girdle, the plain of Phœnicia stretched for a width of from two to three miles, including the lower rise of the hills, which appeared, from our elevation, to be part of the plain itself. This richly-coloured zone we could follow, till far into the distance near Sarepta. The ridges of the limestone hills behind varied in colour, through blending shades of purples, reds, and yellows, till the headland on which we stood shone out white and glittering, studded with masses of fossil echinoderms. Beyond all towered the snowy ranges of Jebel Sunnin and Jebel Sheikh (Hermon), from forty to sixty miles distant. The pass shut out all view to the south and east. The landscape was not one soon to be forgotten; and fine as was the pictorial impression, the geographical one was yet clearer. The cliffs overhead were hung with myrtles, arbutus, bay, and many oriental shrubs, with beautiful tufts of maiden-hair fern; among which the Greek partridge (*Caccabis chukar*) was nimbly running, and chuckling as he leapt from rock to rock; while the large kingfishers were hovering, kestrel-like,

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beneath us, and making swoops at their tiny quarry. The *shaphan*, or coney (*Hyrax syriacus*) is said, but on somewhat doubtful authority, to inhabit these cliffs.

We soon descended into a stony, crescent-shaped plain, bounded by the Jebel Mushakka, and which reaches about six miles to Ras-en-Nakûra, a similar mountain pass. As we rode along the shore, our attention was arrested by a solitary column, rising in the wilderness half a mile inland. We turned aside to examine it, and after scrambling among stones and bushes, where we had to leave our horses secured to trees, found a considerable extent of ruins, evidently of an ancient Phœnician or Jewish city of the Roman epoch, of which not a record, not even a tradition, remains, beyond the local name of Iskanderîyeh, derived perhaps from the Macedonian period. No human habitation was in sight; the whole district was a wilderness, where once luxury and magnificence had reigned. The city had stood upon a gentle slope, where many gnarled carouba-trees concealed its traces, till, forcing our way through the tangle, we reached the column which had attracted our attention. It was of the Doric order, quite perfect, and by its side were several others, broken, but their lower portion upright, and many more prostrate from their base. We were able clearly to trace out the plan of some large colonnaded building. On one side stood seven broken shafts at equal distances in a row. The next ruin worthy of remark appeared to have been a mansion of importance, with the marble fountain still remaining in the centre of its courtyard. Further on we came upon a piece of Roman tesselated pavement, twenty-two feet long, and very nearly perfect, of an elaborate pattern with floral devices. Near this remained *in situ* the marble vase of a large fountain, marking the courtyard of another wealthy residence. Climbing over heaps of ruins for 400 yards further again, we found the massive stone square pillars of a gateway still standing, with the very sockets in which

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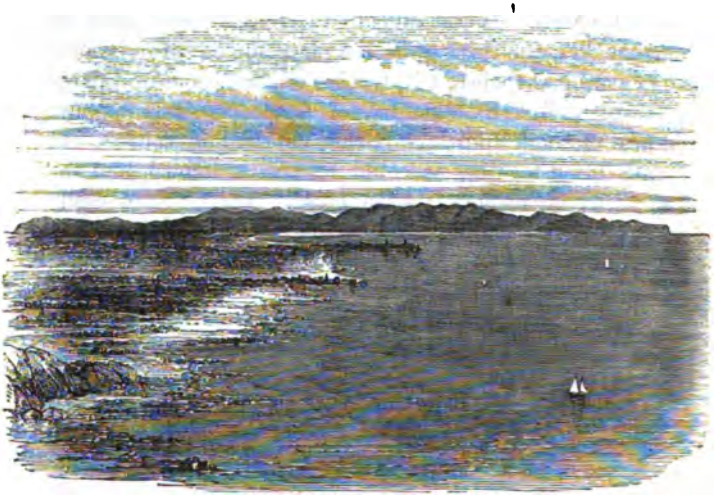
the hinges or bolts of the gates had been fastened, and near them was lying a monolith, the stone capital of the gateway, of an architecture differing from the ordinary Roman character. The ornamentation was plain, rather of the Egyptian type, and in the centre of the lintel an entablature, apparantly representing the moon supported on each side by a fish, perhaps an emblem of Ashtaroth or Astarte. From this gateway a paved road ran for some distance to the eastward, deeply indented by the ruts of chariot-wheels. It was difficult to conceive how, even by earthquakes, the ruins of such a place should have become so generally shapeless, till, further on, we came on a large piece of wall, still standing, of Cyclopean architecture, formed of hugh undressed stones, not laid in courses, but simply fitted together as could be best contrived, like the pavement of modern Italian cities. These stones easily became dislodged, and when fallen in heaps, present no traces of having ever been employed in masonry. Such, probably, had been the style of all its edifices, relieved by the pillars and colonnades we had observed. What a commentary on the mutability of human things is this ruined city, nameless, traditionless, and desolate! It "knew not the time of its visitation," and now a stranger from far gropes his way among its fallen columns and halls, the home of the jackal and the hyæna.

Our servants and mules were two or three hours in advance, and we rode sharply across some stony fields, till we reached the second ladder, Ras-en-Nakûra, difficult and dangerous for horses. We led our animals on till we came to the old fort, the key of the pass, now a ruinous khan, where a ragged Arab presents the thirsty wayfarer with a draught from the spout of an earthen pitcher, and expects a backshîsh or a farthing.

Here a glorious view burst upon us in a moment. We stood on a rocky platform, overhanging the sea, the rear closed in by the Jebel Mushakka, and tall cliffs beetling just

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behind us, while in front the wide expanse of the plain of Acre stretched in its whole extent. Then, as the eye following the fringe of sand, we could see a brown knob on the coast line, the town of Zib, the ancient Achzib, the frontier town of Asher; twelve miles off we could plainly perceive Acre, the ancient Ptolemais, lighted up by the sunshine; and eight miles farther we could just distinguish Caiffa, nestled under the shelter of Carmel. Grandly



MOUNT CARMEL AND THE PLAIN OF ACRE.

old Carmel stretched forth its neck, a long ridge or "hog's-back" (χοιράς), rising boldy from the plain in the east, and dropping gently to seaward. Though the effect of a bold headland pushing to the sea is absent from this view, and the very long and gradual diminution of Carmel's elevation to the westward reduces the outline almost to tameness, yet the great length of the ridge, fifteen miles from the place of Elijah's sacrifice to the Convent, and its

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definiteness of profile, render this one of the most effective views in Palestine. At our feet lay a smooth, green plain, well cultivated, a striking contrast to that we had just left, and dotted here and there by groups of carouba-trees and olive-groves. Then, as the eye turned eastward to Galilee, and noted the dark green and black hills of Issachar and Zebulon, what a history rose in vision at the glance! Behind them stretched the plain of Esdraelon. For the first time we were looking upon Galilee. Cana lay on that slope. Just behind that hill was Sepphoris, and then Nazareth. Down that spur, far away to the left and south, lay Megiddo, and beyond it Jehu pursued Ahaziah and smote him at Engannim. The silver thread far away in the plain marks the now swollen Kishon; and then the eye returns to Carmel. We could only join in shaking hands, as we gazed together on these Bible scenes, and in wishing those at home could have shared the prospect. It may be that associations lend enchantment to the view, but it is far beyond the power of words to describe it. It is (if I may use the word) one of those *emotional* scenes not easily to be forgotten.

Rapidly descending the pass, we left the shore-road at our right at the ruins and well, called Ain Mescherfi (identified by Dr. Thompson with the Misrephoth-maim of Joshua xi. 8, though it perhaps scarcely fulfils the conditions of the history, being too far from Sidon), where, on the damp turf under the shade of some fine trees, travellers usually camp on their way to Acre. We turned eastward across the plain for a couple of miles or more, through olive-groves and tillage-plots to the village of El-Bussah, where we had determined to spend our Sunday. It is a Christian village of some 1,200 souls, not mentioned by any traveller except Van de Velde, but conveniently situated within an easy ride of the opening of the Wady Kurn on the plain, for those who wish to explore either the natural history of the district, or the noble ruins of the Castle

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Kulat Kurn and Malia. We cantered up on the fine turf through an open grove of gnarled old olive and locust-trees, the former of which look ancient enough to have afforded shade in their youth to our Lord when He probably passed through this region on His way from Galilee to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. Riding straight through the clean and rather neatly-built unwalled town, we found our camp ready pitched, and the English ensign floating over a small field close to the other side of the village. Fig-trees, now nearly bereft of leaves, overhung our tents. A motley crowd of all ages and sizes had to be pushed aside to reach them. Howadjis are rare here, and the European dress had never before been seen by half the village.

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## CHAPTER IV.

*El Bussah—Birds—The Owl of Scripture—Syrian Christians—Costume of the Women—The Semadi—Syrian Church and Service—Visit to the Sheikh—Description of his House—The Manger—Nativity of our Lord—Proposal of Marriage—Excursion to Wady Kurn—Fish—Shells—Eagles—Castle of Kulat-el-Kurn—Description—Chronology of the different Bevels on the Stones—Kurn probably a Crusading Fortress—Shrubs and Flowers—Solitary Column—Partridge of Scripture—Superiority of Christian over Moslem Women—An El Bussah Interior—Baths—Feast of Tabernacles—Bees and Hives—Scriptural Allusions—Discovery of an Indian Owl—New Bats—Geology.*

DINNER was not yet ready, nor had the sun set, when we reached our camp at El Bussah; so, loth to lose time and opportunity, I sallied forth with my gun, but not alone, to survey the neighbourhood. At least fifty small boys crowded round me as volunteer beaters, notwithstanding whose aid I succeeded in shooting three small owls, and the great grey shrike (*Lanius lahtora*), which we had not hitherto met with. The owls—appropriately called "boomah" by the natives—were the variety of the little owl of France and Italy, distinguished as *Athene meridionalis*, Riss., and very characteristic of all the hilly and rocky portions of Syria. Hidden in the rocks or hollow olive-trees during the day, they emerge from their roosts before dark, and commence their monotonous "Boomah, boomah," before any of the large owls deem it prudent to put in their appearance. Their food consists almost entirely of large crepuscular beetles; and, in spite of their droning chant, sometimes prolonged too far into night for the nerves of light sleepers, they well merit



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the protection which superstition has accorded to them throughout the East. It is certainly this little species which stands out on the coins of old Athens, the emblem of Minerva, dignified, yet occasionally grotesque in its motions, with all the gravity, yet without the heaviness, of the owls of our own woods and towers; and it is the only kind universally distributed and everywhere common and familiar in Syria, Greece, and the Levant. There are no less than five different Hebrew words rendered by "owl" in our Bible. Some of these are, certainly, incorrectly translated; but there can be no doubt that, unobservant as Orientals generally are in matters of natural history, and poor as is the ornithological vocabulary both of Hebrew and Arabic, yet at least three of the owls are specifically recognised in both languages. These I have no hesitation in identifying as the great horned owl of Egypt and Syria (*Bubo ascalaphus*, Sav.), the scops-eared owl (*Scops giu.*, Scop.) and the little owl in question (*Athene meridionalis*), the כּוֹס (*kôs*) of the Hebrew, and the كوس (*mouka*) of Arab authors.

On my return to the camp, I found it surrounded by an inquisitive crowd. The women were far more determined in their curiosity than either the men or the boys, though none of them ventured, without leave, to peep inside, even after they had seen us indignantly chide one of our lads for ungallantly threatening them with the stick. They were pleasant-looking, some of them even pretty, and had not the degraded and abject look of the Bedouin women. Their dress was unlike any costume we had yet seen; consisting of rather tight blue cotton trousers tied at the ankle, slippers without stockings, a chemise of cotton, blue or white, rather open in front, and over this a long dress, like a cassock, open in front, with a girdle and short sleeves. This robe was plain, patched, or embroidered in most fantastic and grotesque shapes, the triumph of El Bussah milliners being evidently to bring together

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in contrast as many colours as possible. The head-dress, no doubt in strict accordance with the Syrian "Magasin des Modes," baffles my powers of description, but is very interesting, as probably identical with that of the women of Galilee of old. Such may Mary have worn, as she daily went to the well of Nazareth. It is called the semadi, and consists of a cloth skull-cap, with a flap behind, all covered with coins—silver, but sometimes gold—and a fringe of coins suspended from it on the forehead. Round the face, from chin to crown, are two stout pads, by way of bonnet-cap, fastened together at the top. But outside of these pads is attached a string of silver coins, not lengthwise, but solidly piled one on another, and hammered severally into a saucer-shape, with a hole drilled through the middle. They usually commence with some half-dozen Spanish dollars at the chin, gradually tapering up to small Turkish silver-pieces of the size of sixpences at the forehead. The weight is no trifle, and one little girl, whose head-gear was handed to me for examination in return for a present of needles, had £30 worth of silver round her cheeks. Many had frontlets of gold coins, and I saw one centre-piece on the forehead of a sheikh's wife consisting of a Turkish £5 gold piece. All the young ladies thus carry their fortunes on their heads; and this jewelry is the *peculium* of the wife, and cannot be touched by her husband. An instance in which a Greek priest had insisted on the payment of his fees out of the head-dress of a widow has been recited to me as a case of grievous extortion. It is certainly not a becoming *coiffure*, nor is it improved by the universal exemption of the hair from the touch of either brush or comb. At length we got rid of our visitors, and went to sleep to the music of jackals and of dogs returning their challenge, varied by an occasional dropping shot from shepherds to keep off the wolves.

Next day, a lovely Sunday morning, I was roused, soon



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after dawn, by the tinkling of the little church-bell, the first home-like sound I had heard in Syria, and, leaving my companions undisturbed, hurried out, anxious to see the service in a Syrian village, and to learn something of the rites. Our tents were already surrounded by spectators, from among whom I selected a boy as my *cicerone* for the day. The church itself was a square, flat-roofed, lofty building, with two rows of arches from east to west, four in each row, and the whole surmounted by a very small dome and a little Maltese cross. To the north-east corner the priest's house was attached, and over the west end were two chambers, for what purpose intended I did not ascertain. The church had three doors, all on the south side; one from the priest's house, a centre one for the congregation, and a third at the south-west end for the women. The windows were small and square; but there was an upper tier of lattices rather larger—all, of course, unglazed. There were only two pictures, both of the conventional Greek type; one of the Crucifixion, over the altar, and another of the Virgin and Child, in the body of the church, hung against a pillar. Over the door was a simple Greek cross, with an hour-glass on each side, and above it a piece of carved marble—some antique fragment, which had been found on the spot. The interior of the church was divided into three parts, the east section by an iconostasis answering the purpose of a rood-screen with three open doorways, and the western by an open lattice with wide centre doorway. There were no seats, but three open railed stalls on each side the nave, near the screen.

When I entered, a little boy, in front of the rood-screen, was reading the Lesson, in the tone and twang of a second-class National School-boy. The church was very full, and many of the girls had swarmed out into the male compartment. I remained in a corner, but was sent for several times, and compelled at length to take my stand in one of

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the cages, close behind an old man, who must have been the typical parish-clerk. In front, on the other side, was the village sheikh, and in the stall behind him a young Greek, evidently a rich stranger. The rest of the congregation betokened by their dress the squalid poverty of Syrian peasantry, somewhat in contrast with the well-to-do appearance of the village outside. The priest stood in front, in the centre arch of the rood-screen, dressed in a cassock, and a stole over it, fastened by a broad girdle round the waist. Over this he wore a square piece of silk, of striped pattern, coming down to the heels, by way of a cope, looking very much like a portion of some lady's dress. Before he proceeded to consecrate the elements, he placed a square green silk handkerchief, with a small cross embroidered in the centre, over his shoulders. The service—which was conducted partly in old Greek, and partly in Arabic, and, I believe, also in the old Syriac—was read in a manner and with a rapidity which rendered it utterly unintelligible, though an old Service-book, with Greek and Arabic in parallel columns, had been politely handed to me, and my neighbour found my places. There were many responses, but scarcely any one except a few little boys accompanied the clerk, who grunted them forth in a nasal sonorous twang; while for all his chants he had but three semitones, in a dreary minor key. The whole scene might have been taken for an oriental version of Hogarth's picture of the sleeping congregation. When the Lessons had been read, the boy retired; and he and another waved a censor of incense while the Communion-service commenced in Greek. This I could partially follow, even without my book, in spite of the peculiar and rapid drone in which the Greek priests always recite. Several portions are, of course, identical with those which have come down to us in our own Prayer-book. Contrary to the usual oriental custom, the people were mostly uncovered, though some few, in Bedouin dress, had retained their tarbooshes, and

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dropped their shoes. At the prayer of consecration, all knelt down, uncovered; and then the priest came forth from the side-door, and walked round the church with cup and paten. Very few communicated; those who did so, kneeling bareheaded and barefooted, in front of the altar. The priest dropped a sop into the cup; then, taking it out with a gilt spoon, put it into the mouth of each recipient. Seeing preparations for an offertory collection, I sent my boy down to the tents with a slip of paper for a couple of shillings, which he faithfully and quickly brought, in time to prevent the danger of animadversions on the liberality of the Inglez, which I should certainly have otherwise incurred (or deserved), in the valedictory address of the priest, who looked piteously into the plate, as he held it forth and counted its contents with his eye. After service, I waited and introduced myself to the poor old man, who showed me his Service-books, some of which seemed very ancient, and had been printed at Damascus, the later ones at Venice. He explained to me the poverty of his people, yet how the church was a new edifice, lately built entirely by themselves, without extraneous aid, in consequence of the old one being too small, but after having had to wait for ten years before the pasha would allow the erection of a new Christian church, even though they had bribed him largely for his good offices.

I found the old sheikh waiting for me at the church-door. He invited me to accompany him to his house, which consisted of a large lofty barn, the lower part of which was half granary, half stable, the granary open to the top, and a few steps leading up to the dwelling portion, these steps forming in part the manger and hay-rack of the camel and two cows which were feeding there. It has sometimes occurred to me that a house of this form and arrangement illustrates more forcibly than any other the circumstances and the humiliation of our Lord's birth at Bethlehem. Shut out from the already crowded khan, His

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earthly parents were compelled to take refuge in some poor cottage close by (for it is only in houses of the *poorer* sort that this community of shelter for man and beast exists). There, either from their poverty or humble appearance, they were not received on the upper platform, where every guest, bidden or unbidden, ought to be constrained to rest, but were left below, in the portion usually allotted to the cattle, where the infant, when born, was naturally laid at once in the long earthen trough which serves for manger, and into which the fodder is pushed from the floor; no other place of safety could have been found, supposing the family to have been refused the ordinary courtesy of accommodation above.

Afterwards M. and I set out to walk and read among the ruins of Mâssûb, a little higher up the valley. This is another extensive town, of which the old name is unknown, but which must probably have been one of the towns of Asher, and from the remains of which El Bussah is principally built. There is nothing of interest in these continually-recurring ruins, save the evidence they afford of the former population, and the illustration of the phrase "her towns" following the mention of the principal city of even a small district. On our return we found our merry-eyed sheikh again, and this time on very serious business. Armed with a present of a couple of fowls and a basket of eggs, he had come on a grave matrimonial speculation on behalf of his daughter, a rather pretty dark-eyed maiden of eighteen; and as he was willing liberally to forego a dower for the young lady and her facial disc of coins in consideration of the English alliance, it was not easy, without offending his dignity, for the bachelors of the party to decline his proposals. However, more coffee and tobacco consoled the father, who soon sent a fresh token of amity in the shape of a hamper of charcoal, for which, of course, we were expected to return a present of double its value.

Early next morning our guides arrived to conduct us to

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the ruins of Kulat-el-Kurn, said by Dr. Thomson, and I think with reason, to be the very finest in Palestine.

For three miles we rode through olive-groves and stony fields, till in front of a low, rocky, ruin-crowned hill we turned to the left up the Wady Kurn, through which a bright mountain stream rushes towards the sea, which it enters near the town of Zib. At the entrance of the valley we saw two fine tawny eagles (*Aquila clanga*, Pall.) alight on some rocks not far from us. We dismounted, and got within easy shot by stalking, but disgracefully lost our game. By-and-by we came to an ancient water-mill, nestled in a luxuriant but wild and unfenced orange-grove, and a mile further on to another corn-mill, similarly situated where we forded the river, which was swarming with fish. Having no other means of capturing them, we contrived to shoot several in shallow water. They proved to be the same species which we obtained in the Nahr-el-Kelb, and afterwards in the Jordan and the Jabbok (*Scaphiodon capoëta*, Güld.), mistaken by Burckhardt for a species of trout. We also collected a handful or two of fluviatile shell-fish (*Melanopsis prærosa*, Lam. and *Neritina Jordani*, Mich.), which in places covered every stone. The wady now became rapidly narrower, and at this time of the year the sun's rays never penetrated its cool and tangled depths, where maiden-hair fern mingled in fresh luxuriance with many a tender shrub, and the bright red berries of the arbutus still hung from its green boughs. Every now and then any little open was carefully ploughed, and Bedouin with their goats occasionally appeared among the overhanging cliffs. We disturbed a pair of Bonelli's eagles, who shook their wings contemptuously at the assault of our small shot.

Our ride occupied three and a half hours at a very slow pace, to the end of the path, and three miles more brought us in sight of the castle, on a spur of the hills which projects into the ravine, above which, according to Dr.

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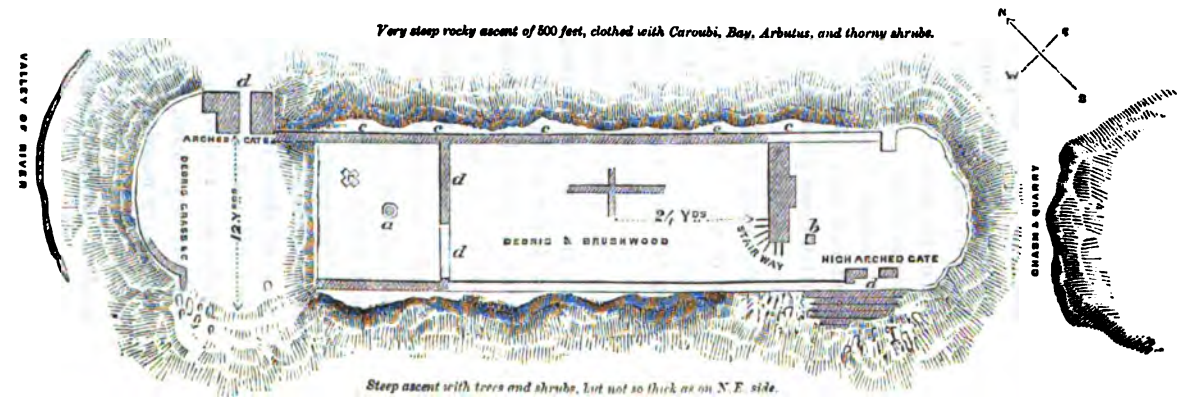
Thomson, its only describer, it stands at an elevation of 610 feet. The path was most difficult, from tangled bush and prickly asparagus, as well as from the boulders of the stream, which we had repeatedly to cross. The gorge however, in its deep, winding recesses, was deliciously cool, and the water limpid and refreshing. We ate our eggs and oranges under the cliff, and leaving our horses, began the ascent. Amidst the thickets we soon lost each other and our guides, but contrived to reach the top at last, though one emerged in tatters, and the other well scratched and bleeding. It is very difficult to give a written description of this almost unknown ruin—a sort of miniature Gibraltar of the olden time; but though isolated as the rock of Calpe, yet it still more strongly reminds one of the situation of Constantine in Algeria, but on a much smaller scale. Imagine a tongue of rock standing out between two ravines, upwards of 600 feet high, its sides almost perpendicular and scarped to the water's edge, its platform about 200 yards long, and not more than from twelve to twenty yards wide, whilst behind its neck is cut off by a deep artificial chasm, whence all the stone employed in building it has been quarried. In many places the rock is faced by buttresses and a revetment of very large stones, smoothly dressed, with the well-known Jewish or Phœnician bevel, each tier of masonry sloping with a slight inclination inwards, but the next course projecting about three inches beyond it, so as to render scaling impossible. By these means the base of the building is somewhat extended on the west side. Some of these reveting stones are ten feet long, and the tiers are each a yard high. Above the buttressing the whole was vaulted in a very different style of masonry, without any bevel, and the long castle had stood upon crypts very massive and solidly arched. In the southern portion was a square trap-door, giving access to a long vaulted chamber, which was quite perfect. We had no

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ELEVATION OF RUINS, KULAT-EL-KURN.

(*a*) Pillar supporting centre arches of chapel.
(*b*) Entrance to perfect crypt (cistern?)
(*c*) Vaulted crypt with sides exposed, and now nearly choked with rubbish.
(*d*) Early English pointed arches.




PLAN OF RUINED CASTLE, KULAT-EL-KURN.

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means of descending into this, which appears to have been a huge reservoir or cistern. Three other crypts further to the north are quite exposed on the east side, and every here and there a fragment of wall stands on the platform of hugh stones, enough remaining to indicate the familiar use of the pointed arch. The ruins of the superstructure still retain their freshness of colour, while the bevelled buttressing below is weathered by longer ages of exposure, and its sombre grey strikingly contrasts with the yellow tinge of the later works. The castle platform, though highest at its southern extremity, is yet constructed like a succession of fortresses, each of which seems to have been separately defensible. In each of the four compartments were distinct water-tanks, and the garrison might have fallen back to the keep at the north end, offering a desperate resistance at each line of works.

In the centre of the upper building at the north end stands an octagonal pillar of six feet in diameter, from which sprang eight arches to the four corners and faces of the building. This seems to have been the hall, or, more probably, the chapel of the castle. The moulding of the capitals of the pillars is plain and simple, of the Early Pointed type, and the same pattern occurs in many fragments of the upper works. On one side two upper storied chambers remain entire, with only their west wall destroyed. The lower chamber was loopholed; the upper one had only a narrow postern doorway. The northernmost keep, beyond the chapel, is forty feet lower than the others, but the southernmost next the fosse must have been the key of the position, with its massive walls twelve feet thick. Such a place, with but a handful of defenders, must have been before the introduction of cannon, absolutely impregnable.

It is strange that history affords not the slightest clue to the origin or builders of this fortress. Its modern name tells nothing, being merely the Castle of Kurn, or "the

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Horn," the name of the wady. And yet it must once have been the key of the passes from northern Galilee to the Plain of Acre, and the variety in its architecture proves that it was valued and occupied through a long series of ages. I do not venture any opinion on the question of its antiquity, but the bevelling of the stones below the platform proves at least its existence as a fortress long before the later Roman period. According to the views of Dr. Rosen, the learned Consul of Prussia at Jerusalem, and by far the first local antiquary in Syria, there are three epochs of the megalithic bevelled architecture. First the bevelled edge rather wide and shallow, while the whole face of the stone is finely dressed, as is seen in the Harem at Hebron, the Wailing Place at Jerusalem, and the ruins of Arak-el-Emir in Gilead. Knowing as we do the exact date of the erection of this latter, which was built by Hyrcanus, son of Josephus Tobias, a Hasmonean prince, about 290 B.C., we have a clue to the architectural chronology, fixing this style to the præ-Herodian period. Secondly comes the deeply-bevelled edge, with the face of the stone projecting more boldly, and only roughly dressed. This Dr. Rosen ascribes to the Herodian and early Roman era, and as we might expect from the architectural tastes of the Herodian family, by far the greatest number of the præ-Crusading ruins of Palestine are of this character. Thirdly, we have the roughly-bevelled edge, with the whole of the face of the stone boldly standing out, but only hammer-dressed, or left as it was hewn from the quarry. This is assigned to the later Roman period, and we shall find this theory frequently corroborated by the chronology of many well-ascertained remains in the course of our travels. Mr. Fergusson would assign a later date to the first style, but it seems to me that the existence of Arak-el-Emir is an insurmountable objection to his theory, so far at least as regards many of the ruins in question. If their style and

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their megalithic architecture be identical, as they certainly are, with that of the Castle of Hyrcanus, we can have no proof, apart from the independent testimony of history, that they are not of a date long antecedent to the Herodian epoch.

While rejecting at once the suggestion of Dr. Thomson that the fortress may have been Jewish, yet probably the buttresses below the basement tell of an earlier structure than the present ruins above, perhaps of the time of the Seleucidæ, if not earlier, while the pointed arches and the mouldings of the pillars seem unmistakably Crusading. For the determination of the ruins which cover Palestine, nothing is more needed than some systematic exploration and history of the Crusading and earlier Saracenic epochs. While our Biblical and geographical researches are comparatively exhaustive, and the Roman and Byzantine periods have not been overlooked, no geographical explorer, so far as I am aware, has yet devoted himself specially to trace out the remains left by our Norman ancestors of their long and hardly-won dominion, and to elucidate their contemporary history by an examination of their existing monuments.

During our subsequent journeys, I became strongly impressed with the belief that Kulat-el-Kurn must have been one of the last posts held by the Crusaders, that it was destroyed by the Moslems at the time of the capture of Acre, and that they never afterwards repaired or used it. It seems to have been one of a chain of fortresses which intersected northern Palestine, and kept open the communications between the country south of Damascus, and the sea at Acre; the other castles being those of Tibnin, Kulat-es-Shukif, and Banias, These will be described as they occur; but there is a remarkable identity in the architecture and plan of the superstructure of all four, which can scarcely be overlooked by the most casual visitor. They form as it were a chain of telegraph-stations,

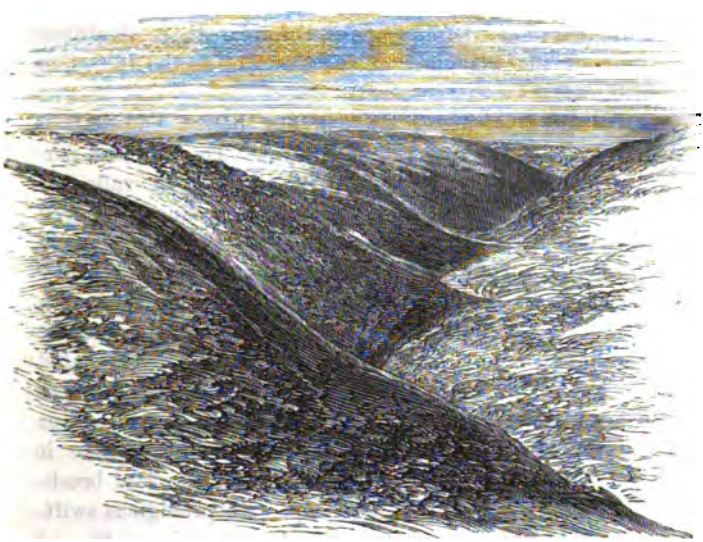
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each being visible from the one on either side of it. Of the other three we have copious and exact histories to the present day, especially of Kulat-es-Shukif, the famed Belfort of the Crusaders. In most of them there are traces of earlier substructures, and in the interior of the three castles the Saracenic additions to the Crusading defences are clearly visible. There are none such at Kulat Kurn, which became comparatively valueless when both the coast and the interior were held by the Saracens. The old bevelled platform may be accounted for with reasonable probability by referring it to the dynasty of the Seleucidæ, who by this chain of strongholds would rivet their hold on Galilee, and keep open their communications with the coast. The lower masonry, on Dr. Rosen's theory, would refer the erection exactly to this epoch. On the old base, Roman, Greek, Crusader, and Caliph, each as they held possession, applied the modifications or improvements of their own period, till, last of all, Turkish apathy has completed the work of the besieger. Time, however, has had little to do with the ruins of Kulat-el-Kurn, for the chiselling of the stone-work is fresh and sharp, as when the walls were first undermined and thrown down.

The view from the top was very fine. Away to the north meandered the small stream of the Nahr Herdawil, a feeder of the Kurn, enclosed in fine wooded hills, broken by frequent precipices and occasional caverns. Eastward we could descry a small triangle of the plain of Acre, and over all the blue line of the "Great Sea" of the ancients, the horizon of which must have been distant forty or fifty miles. The day, the atmosphere, the scene, were all in harmony. The grandeur of the desolation, the fulfilment of prophecy, the loveliness of nature, combined to form a magnificent mind-picture. After a long rest, during which we watched the gyrations of six noble griffons, who, after swooping near enough to ascertain to their disappointment that our prostrate forms were not yet carrion, had

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soared in wheeling circles till we could only by our glasses trace their flight, we scrambled down. We had to make our way through a tangle of arbutus, laden with bright red fruit (not our species, but the far lighter and more ornamental *Arbutus andrachne*), bay, pistachia, lentisk, carouba-trees, and every thorn-shrub imaginable, with an undergrowth of sage, rosemary, rue, wormwood, lavender, and many a fragrant weed. Most beautiful of all was the



VIEW FROM KULAT-EL-KURN.

delicate cyclamen, nestling itself under every stone, and lavish of its loveliness, with its graceful tufts of blossoms varying in hue from purest white to deepest purple pink. Sending on our horses, we walked down to the mill, intent upon the ornithological rarities of the ravine.

On emerging from the wady we galloped across the little plain to a low hill on the south of it, on whose further slope towered a solitary column, El Hamsin. It overlooks the

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plain of Acre, standing about 150 feet above it, and is a much-weathered pillar of round stones on a massive square pedestal. No ruins are near it, and it must have stood alone. The height of the pedestal is ten feet, that of the shaft thirty-three, and that of the capital, now dislodged and lying on the ground, three more, making forty-six feet in all. The shaft consists of eleven stones, or, with the capital, twelve. There is another similar column in the centre of the plain of El Bukaa (Cœle Syria). What might this lonely pillar have been? It is doubtless a relic of the Phœnicia, of the Grecian, or the Herodian period.

From El Hamsin we sent on our horses and walked homewards, finding partridge plentiful. The common partridge of Palestine, excepting in the Jordan valley, is the Greek partridge (*Caccabis chukar*), a fine red-legged bird, much larger than our red-legged partridge, and very much better eating, with white flesh, and nearly as heavy as a pheasant. It is, I believe, specifically identical with the chukar of India, though the differences in hue are sufficient to enable the specimens to be discriminated at sight. This bird differs much in its habits from our grey partridge, being never found on the plains or in corn-fields, but only on the rocky hills, where it is extraordinarily abundant, loving most the low brush-wood, among which it runs and leaps with prodigious swiftness. We also came across hares (*Lepus syriacus*, H. and Ehrenb.) and jackals, and put up a golden eagle. With heavy bags we reached the camp after nightfall, and enjoyed a hearty dinner off boiled woodcock and partridge.

As the weather still continued lovely, we determined to prolong our stay at El Bussah, certain that the natural history would amply repay our researches. Having heard reports of conies—or, as the natives term them, *tubsûn*—in the hills to the north, and as I had myself espied one dart into a hole among the ruins of Kulat

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Kurn, while I was clinging with both hands to a rock, and my gun safely slung behind my back, we despatched Giacomo in quest at daybreak. The others started for the wady; B—t was busy in pickling fish and soldering tins; while I remained for an hour or two, to continue my examination of the village.

First I paid a visit of compliment to our second sheikh. He was not at home; but I was pleasantly received by his mother, his pretty wife, and his bright-looking daughter, the would-be bride, who were busily employed in smearing and patting down fresh mud on the clay floor. The thrifty housewives of several other village mansions afterwards invited a visit from the stranger, as he passed their doors, and took a pride in exhibiting their cleanly interiors. One could not but be struck by the amazing difference between the social position, manners, and appearance of the women in a Christian village, however ignorant and neglected, and of the degraded wives and daughters of the Arabs and Metâwileh of the rest of the country. If the Gospel had done nothing more—if, in measuring its blessings, we were to reduce it to the standard of a mere humanising agency—the position of woman under the lowest and most corrupt form of Christianity, as compared with her treatment under the most refined development of Mohammedan monotheism, would be sufficient to decide the question. One sees in Syria the Christian worship degraded by childish and ridiculous ceremonies, the spirit has long left the empty and distorted form, the ignorance of the priesthood has become a by-word and a proverb. On the other hand, the worship of Islam is simple and noble in idea and in form—learning of a certain kind yet lingers among its professors: yet among the former, woman is free and trusted—among the latter, she is below a slave; among the one, social virtue is believed in—the others "have given themselves over to work all uncleanness with greediness."



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The houses, excepting the very poorest, seem all alike. Each has a courtyard, with a high wall, for the goats, camels, firewood, and bees. At the end of the yard stands the mud-built house, with a single door opening into its one room. A pillar and two arches run across it, and support the flat roof. The door opens into the stable portion, of which I have spoken before, where horses and camels are standing before the manger of dried mud. Stepping up from this, the visitor finds himself at once in the simple dwelling-room of the family. A large matting of flattened rush generally covers one half, and a few cushions are spread in the corner, near the unglazed window. At the further end are the mud stairs leading up to the roof, the summer bedchamber of the family. Furniture there is none, except the few cooking utensils hanging on wooden pegs, a hole in the centre of the floor for holding the fire, with a few loose iron rods across the top, and the quaint wooden cradles of the babies, apparently hereditary heirlooms. In the better houses, there is a mat screen across the platform, behind which sleep the single women and girls.

There is an interesting illustration of the observance of the Feast of Tabernacles in the village architecture here. On the top of every house is a wattled booth of oleander boughs, sometimes of two stories, with a wicker-work floor, in which the inhabitants sleep during the hot weather, and thus continue to observe the Jewish feast. The tough and tenacious leaves of the oleander never shrivel or fall off, and form an effectual shade for many weeks.

Olive-oil, goat's hair, and tobacco, seem to be the principal produce of the district; the latter being exported in some quantities, by way of Acre, to Egypt. Bee-keeping, also, is not an unimportant item of industry, and every house possesses a pile of bee-hives in its yard. Though similiar in its habits, the hive-bee of Palestine is a different

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species from our own. We never found *Apis mellifica*, L., our domestic species, in the country, though it very possibly occurs in the north; but the common Holy Land insect, *Apis fasciata*, is amazingly abundant, both in hives, in rocks, and in old hollow trees. It is smaller than our bee, with brighter yellow bands on the thorax and abdomen. In its habits it resembles the other species. Its sting also is quite as sharp. The hives are very simple, consisting of large tubes of sun-dried mud, like gas-pipes, about four feet long, and closed with mud at each end, leaving only an aperture in the centre, large enough for two or three bees to pass at a time. The insects appear to frequent both doors equally. The tubes are laid in rows horizontally, and piled in a pyramid. I counted one of these colonies, consisting of seventy-eight tubes, each a distinct hive. Coolness being the great object, the whole is thickly plastered over with mud and covered with boughs, while a branch is stuck in the ground at each end, to assist the bees in alighting. At first we took these singular structures for ovens or hen-houses. The barbarous practice of destroying the swarms for their honey is unknown. When the hives are full, the clay is removed from the ends of the pipes and the honey extracted with an iron hook; those pieces of comb which contain young bees being carefully replaced, and the hives then closed up again. Everywhere during our journey we found honey was always to be purchased, and it is used by the natives for many culinary purposes, and especially for the preparation of sweet cakes. It has the delicate aromatic flavour of the thyme-scented honey of Hybla or Hymettus.

But however extensive are the bee colonies of the villages, the number of wild bees of the same species is far greater. The innumerable fissures and clefts of the limestone rocks, which everywhere flank the valleys, afford in their recesses secure shelter for any number of swarms;



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and many of the Bedouin, particularly in the wilderness of Judæa, obtain their subsistence by bee-hunting, bringing into Jerusalem jars of that wild honey on which John the Baptist fed in the wilderness; and which Jonathan had long before unwittingly tasted, when the comb had dropped on the ground from the hollow tree in which it was suspended. The visitor to the Wady Kurn, when he sees the busy multitudes of bees about its cliffs, cannot but recall to mind the promise, "With honey out of the stony rock would I have satisfied thee." There is no epithet of the land of promise more true to the letter, even to the present day, than this, that it was "a land flowing with milk and honey."

Having explored the village itself, B—t and I mounted and rode sharply after our companions, to examine further the riches of the Wady Kurn. Leaving our horses in charge of an Arab at the mill, who took care to be paid his backshîsh in advance, we set off on foot and soon flushed a very fine owl, of the same species as one we had disturbed the day before, and nearly as large as the great eagle owl of Central Europe. He was concealed in the dense foliage of a carob-tree (*Ceratonia siliqua*, L.) overhanging the stream, and under which we had stood a few minutes before he stole away, when we followed him with our glasses till he lighted under a cliff. Keeping the spot steadily in view, we scrambled up to it, when I had the delight of bringing down a noble specimen of the great fish-eating owl of India (*Ketupa ceylonensis*, Gm.). This owl, equal in size to the *Bubo ascalaphus*, Sav., the eagle owl of Egypt and Syria, has the long bare tarsi or legs, and the huge claws of the osprey, admirably adapted for seizing and holding its slippery prey. But the great interest of this capture lay in the fact of our thus discovering on the very shores of the Mediterranean, a bird which has never hitherto been found west of Southern India, although its eastward range extends to China. It

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was the first and the most remarkable instance which came under our notice of the extension of the Indian fauna to Syria; and to an enthusiastic ornithologist one such discovery was a rich reward for many days' toil. How so marked and peculiar a species has extended its range to such a distance from its known locality is difficult to explain, but possibly it may yet be traced in the wooded portions of the Euphrates and Tigris, though it certainly does not inhabit Egypt. It could not easily have selected a better-stocked fish-pond than the Wady Kurn, however far it had wandered.

In climbing the rocks soon afterwards, to examine a cave, I heard a singular whining chatter within, and on creeping into its recesses, a stone thrown up roused from their roosting places a colony of large bats, the soft wavy flap of whose wings I could hear in the darkness. How to obtain one I knew not, but on vigorously plying my signal whistle, all the party soon gathered to my help. B. suggested smoking them; so a fire of brushwood was kindled, and soon two or three rushed out. Two fell to our shot, and I was delighted to find myself the possessor of a couple of large fox-headed bats, of the genus Pteropus (*Cynonycteris ægyptiaca*), and extending 20½ inches from wing to wing. As none of the bats of Palestine are yet known, this was a great prize, and another instance of the extension northward of the subtropical fauna. The owl and the bat were no ill-omened creatures to-day, but made it deservedly *cretâ notanda*, the red-letter day of El Bussah.

The geology of this district varied slightly from what we had previously examined. From Ras-el-Abiad we appeared to have got on an upper stratum of calcareous limestone, overlying the crystalline, and which had probably been denuded further north; but all the way up the Wady Kurn there was no sign of any irregular disturbance of the deposits, all being perfectly horizontal. In the cretaceous superficial limestone we found a few

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fossils of the epoch of the Norfolk chalk. Outside the wady, the stratification dipped in places to the south and west but very slightly. The upper limestone was generally yellow, but overlaid from time to time with a whitish variety in horizontal beds, varying from a few inches to two feet in thickness. The lower beds may be referred to the Jurassic period; and after these had been partly water-worn and denuded, the chalky limestones have filled in their inequalities, affording sufficient indications of their geological age by the fossils mentioned above, and which we afterwards found in great plenty on the higher parts of Carmel.

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## CHAPTER V.

*Plain of Acre—Ichneumon—Francolin—Birds and Flowers—City of Acre—River Belus—Discovery of Glass—Shells—Wrecks—The Kishon—Currents—Caiffa Sycaminum—Visit to the Consul—Dilapidated Fortifications—Camping in a Canal—Washed out—The Convent—Its value to Travellers—A Consul's Funeral—Shooting by the Kishon—The Flamingo—Mandrakes—The Wady Zerka—The Crocodile—The Leviathan of Scripture—Swallows in Winter—Panorama from the Convent Roof—Ancient Wine-Presses—Cistern—Underground Granaries—Scriptural Allusions—The Sect of the Metâwileh—Freebooters—A useful Example.*

THE falling barometer warned us not to expect a long continuance of fine weather; we therefore hastened our departure, and were off soon after sunrise, intending to spend a few hours at Acre, and reach Caiffa at the foot of Carmel for the night. As we walked on through the olive-groves, we were startled by a large ichneumon, which scudded across our path with the gait of a polecat, on its return from its nocturnal rambles. It was almost as large as a badger, which it resembled in colour. We pursued it to its hole, and set a trap, which a servant was to return next day to visit. Seeing a native watching our operations, as he thought unseen, we took the precaution of afterwards saluting him, and discovering his name.

Through a rich but neglected plain of alluvial soil, with many decaying remains of old vineyards, and a few straggling palm-trees here and there, we rode on for five hours, leisurely collecting by the way, till we reached the famous Acre. The plain was abundantly stocked with

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game of every kind. In the lower and swampy portions we heard, though we could not see, the Francolin, once the dainty of Italian epicures, but now utterly extinct in Europe. It is still frequent in Cyprus, and in all the low-lands of Syria, and is well-known to Anglo-Indians by the name of the black partridge. Of plovers we found and obtained abundance of many sorts, golden, green and Kentish, winter visitants from Europe, and the red-throated and Asiatic dottrels from Eastern Russia. The pretty and lively little cisticole, well known in Sicily and Algeria, a warbler smaller than our wren, frequently rose lark-like from the tufts of rushes, and was added to our collection; and the whole plain was stocked with birds of prey of every kind, from eagles and falcons to harriers and sparrow-hawks. As there was no cover, these were very difficult of approach, but M. secured a fine specimen of the common buzzard (*Buteo vulgaris*, L.), by the judicious use of an ass as his stalking-horse. Of plants there were very few in blossom, fewer than on the plain of Phœnicia, and far fewer than in the sheltered valley of the Kurn. Still some straggling antirrhinums, and large bunches of bright yellow chrysanthemum were not to be despised in the month of December. Very different must have been this fertile expanse in the days when it was the rich heritage of Asher, who, content to continue on the sea-shore and to abide in his creeks, left Accho and Achzib in the hands of the Phœnicians, but peacefully "dipped his foot in oil," for here "his bread was fat, and he yielded royal dainties." (Deut. xxxiii. 2; Gen. xlix. 20.)

There is but a single gate on the land side into Acre, and this is close to the water's edge. Here we halted, and then, riding into the town, left our horses in the bazaar, and walked round the fortifications, after obtaining a pass from the commandant. It has been strongly fortified, and its shattered ramparts bristle with old and badly-mounted guns. The place is squalid and miserable, with a ruined

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mosque battered to pieces by Admiral Stopford's cannon-balls, many of which are still lying about. Very few traces of the Crusaders' stronghold can be seen. They are chiefly in the lower parts of the houses and walls, in the vaulted cellars, the feature of the place, and in a few arches here and there. Every wall and house facing the sea is spotted and punched by artillery, and, though twenty-three years have passed since the last bombardment, little has been done to repair the damage. In one filthy corner we came upon the battered and neglected tombs of two English officers, Major Oldfield, killed in a sortie when Sir Sydney Smith repulsed Napoleon, and another, who fell under Stopford. Little as it suggests of Scriptural association, Acre must always be a deeply interesting spot, the last foothold of the Crusaders in Palestine, where the remnant of the knights of St. John were so horribly butchered, and also as the place where Sir Sydney Smith "marred the destiny" of Napoleon. Once only mentioned in the Old Testament, and once again in the New, as the Ptolemais at which St. Paul touched on his way to Jerusalem, we seem at Acre to be transported to the West, and to the wars of Europe, and are brought down to the day when the unhappy intrigues of modern politics compelled us to aid in expelling from Syria the Egyptian Pasha, the only governor under whom the country ever knew security for life or property.

Leaving Acre, a ride of four hours along the sands by the water's edge, with the long sloping ridge of Carmel in front, brought us to Caiffa. Our horses were somewhat fatigued, poor "Beirût" lingered far in the rear. He had been very loth to leave Acre, and had anxiously scanned the outskirts of the walls, scratching and whining whenever his canine fancy suggested a spot suitable for camping, on which he would sit and howl in vain, endeavouring to recall us to a halt. But the traveller must be wearied indeed who is not interested by the ride. The

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little Nahr Namân, the ancient Belus, was soon crossed—so shallow as it soaked through the sand on its way to the sea, that it wetted little more than the fetlocks of our horses. Higher up it is deeper, and its banks are swampy and treacherous in places. We could not but call to mind the story of the Greeks, that from the chance discovery of some sailors on this spot, our crystal palaces and all the other marvellous fabrics of glass in modern times date their origin. Some travellers have imagined they could trace a foundation for the tradition in the vitreous and smelted appearance of the rocks on the banks of this stream, but we were unable to detect anything beyond an abundance of bright clear flints in any part of its course, though we often afterwards traversed the district. Not that we need, therefore, reject the tradition, for the presence of sand, silica, and seed-weed in juxtaposition may easily have led to their fortuitous combination; and the discovery would not be lost on the observant Phœnicians. As Acre was in the lot of Issachar, perhaps the "treasures hid in the sands," promised as well as the "abundance of the seas," in the blessing of Moses (Deut. xxxiii), may be explained by the glassy treasures of the sand of the Belus.

The late storms had strewn the wide shore with shells, and many times we dismounted, till bags and pockets were stored with souvenirs of the neighbourhood of the Kishon. The shells were chiefly of the common Mediterranean sorts, *Donax trunculus*, *Pectunculus glycimeris*, *Tellina costæ* and *planata*, *Cerithium mediterraneum*, but especially the delicate purple sea-snails, *Janthina fragilis*, and *Janthina globosa*, seldom found in any quantity, except after a storm, and erroneously supposed by many to be the source of the Tyrian dye. The mistake is a natural one, from the unique purple colour of the shells, and from its peculiar abundance on these shores. Many of these little shells contained the inhabitants alive, and had the curious rafts

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and floats attached to them, in which the animal carries its eggs and young on the surface of the ocean. Widely differing in their habits from most other molluscs, these little creatures live in mid-ocean, and far from shores or sands, having no power to sink nautilus-like below the surface. From the uncertainty of their appearance on the coasts, and the small number of the stranded shells which contain the fish, it is most improbable they could be used to any extent in dying, though they do exude a purple juice in very small quantities.

Other evidences of storms strewed the sands, the grim skeletons of many a coaster, driven high on shore, stripped of all but the main timbers, which still stood erect, in black groups here and there, the favourite perches of the osprey and the cormorant. In a westerly or north-westerly gale, the whole of the bay is completely open, and even with a south-west gale the wind sweeps round the base of Carmel with such violence as to drive on shore any vessel which cannot work out to sea. There is also a ground current which sets strongly against the mouth of the Kishon. This we had an opportunity of observing when we forded, two hours from the Belus, the Mukatta or Kishon. Riding out into the sea, we crossed on the top of the sandy bar, where the waters scarcely reached to our horses' knees, and felt almost disappointed to find that ancient river had become so scanty a rill. Yet for several miles above the bar it varies from six to fourteen feet in depth, and three months later we were compelled at this spot to swim our horses.

So rapidly does the drift choke the mouth of the river, that sometimes during the dry season its channel is completely obliterated, and its waters merely percolate through the sands underneath. Then comes a flood, and the swollen torrent, violent as when it swept away the hosts of Sisera, dashes through the sandbanks, hollowing a new course for itself, which remains till the coming season.

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Owing to the steady silting of the sand from the south-west, the mouth of the river is gradually working its way to the northwards, and forming a sandy but not barren delta on its left bank, which, within the memory of living man, has been advanced for more than a mile. We lingered a short time near the Kishon's mouth, allured by the many buzzards, sea-gulls, and plovers of various species which swarmed on the sands or in the marshes; and thence a short half-hour by the side of sandy but fertile gardens, filled with fine date-palms and orange-groves, brought us to Caiffa, with its crumbling shattered walls, and an English frigate, the only vessel in its roadstead. A Turkish sentry leaned against the back of a rock, from the top of which M. brought down a too-confiding kingfisher as we entered. We had seen a few miserable places in Syria, but the filth and squalor of the streets, or rather gutters of Caiffa, outdid all the collections of sewerage through which we had ever had to wade, always excepting Tyre.

Caiffa is generally stated to occupy the site of the ancient Sycaminum, a Greek and Roman town, not mentioned in the sacred writings. Though the prince of Palestine geographers, Dr. Robinson, unhesitatingly adopts this conjecture, careful investigation of the city and the neighbourhood have led me to believe that Caiffa is exclusively mediæval and modern, and that we must fix the site of Sycaminum at the point of land a mile and a-half to the westward. That site is marked by a few aged palms, and by gardens enclosed by clumps of ungainly, prickly pear, but the whole area is constantly quarried for building stone, being one mass of foundations, fragments of columns, and sculptured marble. The extent of these ruins is considerable, the importance of the buildings being evident from the size of the substructures. It could have been no mere village or suburb of a city, for in one place a long portion of wall has recently been exposed. In Caiffa itself there is not a vestige of antiquity,

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save the fragments brought from these ancient ruins. Probably Sycaminum was destroyed when Syria was first lost to the Byzantine empire, and very soon after Caiffa * rose, in a more convenient and defensible situation close to the rise of Carmel, occupying the only point where the hill rises from the shore without the intervention of even a narrow strip of beach, and less accessible to cavalry raids than the old site, which was open to marauders from the plains both of Acre and Sharon.

After riding through the town we found our camp pitched in a dilapidated garden, with a few stunted palms and hedges of prickly pear, adjoining the western gate, and about 100 yards from the sea. The English Consul's house on the city wall overlooked the spot; the herbage was almost a fine turf, and our situation on it seemed delightful. But we were soon to discover our mistake. The thunder-clouds which had been threatening in the horizon all day burst upon us in torrents half an hour after our arrival. However, M. and I set out after dinner, with a lantern, to call on the Consul. The city gate was locked, but we were told of a hole in the wall near the sea by which we could reach his house, though the guard could not possibly admit us *through the gate* after dark. Heartily amused at the wisdom of this military regulation, which locked the gates for safety at night, but directed invaders to the unscrutinised breach in the fortifications, we groped our way through the rain to the shore, and found a lofty wall running into the sea. Like everything Turkish, it was in decay, and a few yards beyond the water's edge we perceived a hole up to which we could scramble dry-shod on the rocks. Sitting down here, and reconnoitring the gap with our light, we found the sea knee-deep on the other side. There was nothing for it but to sit down in our hole and off with our lower

* It was visited by Sæwulf, and mentioned under this name in A.D. 1102.

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garments before wading. This accomplished, we sat down and dressed on the shore, an Arab guard scrutinising us meanwhile very suspiciously with his lantern (not a bull's-eye). After this fashion, at nine P.M. we introduced ourselves to Mr. Sandwith, H.B.M. Vice-Consul, to whom I am most deeply indebted for kindnesses, assistance, and information freely offered for many consecutive months. With the exception of two vice-consuls, members of foreign mercantile firms, Mr. Sandwith was the solitary European resident in Caiffa, where there was then neither English Missionary nor merchant; but happily his literary and scientific tastes render his isolation more endurable than it could be to most men. Over English tea we chatted, till long past midnight, of the country and its topics. As the rain continued to descend, he warned us that we had pitched upon a dangerous spot, and hoped we should not be washed out of our beds before the morning.

I was roused about five A.M. by finding a stream of water running into my bed, and on feeling for my slippers was horrified to find them afloat. Sad lamentations were wafted from the other tents, and soon a servant appeared with a lantern, and the extent of the disaster was revealed. Just above the garden was a little canal, which had overflowed, and we were absolutely camped in the middle of a stream; but our mackintosh sheets, which we had taken the precaution to turn over our sheepskin beds, had in a great measure saved *them*. A sloping trench was soon dug above our tents to divert the stream, and another below them to drain it partially, but not before the whole of our baggage and our boxes were saturated at the bottom. There was nothing to be done but to sit up on a camp-stool in our dressing-gowns, rubbing our feet, and keeping up the circulation with a little brandy and cold tea till dawn, when coffee could be got from the town.

Soon after the gates were opened Mr. Sandwith appeared

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over the top of a pair of huge boots, to condole with us. As he had only bachelor quarters himself, he advised us at once to go up to the convent, where we would be comfortably lodged till our stores were dried and the bad weather had passed. He encouraged us by the promise that he would himself join us for a couple of days. At once we proceeded to load, and started up Mount Carmel. It was the fruitful field or the vineyard of God; but, alas! the excellency of Carmel is gone; there is not a vine on its bare and rocky slopes, though its foot is well clad with ancient olive-trees. We all walked up the hill in a torrent of rain, preceding our baggage, and received a kindly welcome from the friars, who are of the Carmelite order, "discalceatorum," and nearly all Italians. After a hearty breakfast on eggs, coffee, brown bread and honey, B. and I started to decend the south side of the hill in the rain, thinking it safer to do so than to sit in wet clothes till another suit could be dried. The mist and rain were too dense to permit any view of the plain of Sharon as we descended the zigzag path to its commencement; but we prolonged our walk by the shore, and procured a few birds, among them the redshank of our English marshes, and the Manx shearwater, the mysterious ghost-bird of the Bosphorus, so common likewise in our northern seas.

We returned at dark, and found all dry and comfortable within the walls. None of us suffered from our night's soaking and exposure; and, doubtless, our plain fare, hard work, with sponge-baths and quassia, were admirable preventives against the rheums and agues of the country.

The brother in waiting, a good-natured looking young friar, from Turin, was always moving about, taking a lively interest in our welfare, and seeking to promote our comfort so far as the rules of his order and the capabilities of the house would permit. In this land, where hotels are unknown, and in situations like this, where, if there were any, they could not be maintained, one does

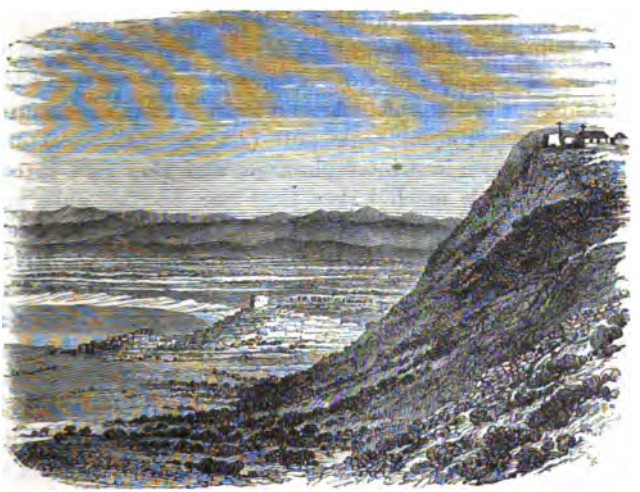
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not feel disposed to criticise monastic orders, and one can realise the uses and value of religious houses to the traveller in the middle ages. In such a state of society as exists here, and as existed once in England, monastic houses are practically a great public boon, and there is no substitute to take their place. The wayfarer finds himself at once at home, where the rule is that of universal hospitality to all comers. It is to be regretted that our countrymen who travel under the charge of a dragoman frequently, though unconsciously, take unfair advantage of this hospitality, as their purveyor feeds and lodges them at the expense of the convent, without leaving the customary acknowledgment in the box, which their rules forbid the fathers to demand.

Next morning, after a sound and refreshing rest in dry beds, B. and I started off with our mail-bag for Caiffa, intending to explore the marshes of the Kishon. We first visited the cave, where tradition has misplaced the scenes of Elijah's life, and in which an altar has been erected for this crypt-chapel, with the figure of the old prophet blessing a Madonna. The atmosphere was somewhat clearer than before, and we were able to enjoy a portion at least of the fine panorama. Carmel here runs out a long, round promontory into the sea, with the whole plain of Acre stretched on the right, and a peep of the plain of Sharon to the south. But below the foot of the hill a narrow belt of low, rich plain pushes forward—a fertile fringe round the bottom of Carmel's mantle, with a hem of sand and a lace-edging of spray. Round its base on this plain winds the highway from Phœnicia and Galilee to Egypt. We looked down from the giddy height, and watched a long caravan of several hundred camels on their way thither, with the attendant crowd of Bedouin and many wild horsemen cantering about them. What pictures of the past rose to the mind's eye! What a gush of historic fancies filled the imagination as we

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gazed on the strange scene! On that path we might imagine the Midianites, with their captive boy just bought from his brethren, and weeping on his camel, taken down to be sold in an Egyptian slave-market. Probably by that route Joseph brought the child Jesus and His mother to Nazareth, when they heard that Archelaus was king in Jerusalem, and "turned aside" to the parts of Galilee. Round the hill Sennacherib's host may have marched,



VIEW FROM CARMEL.

from the passes of the Lebanon to the siege of Lachish; and Pharaoh Necho to Megiddo; to say nothing of crusading armies, and the hosts of Saladin, and finally of Napoleon advancing to the siege of Acre.

As we turned down the winding path we saw the French flag half-mast on the convent-top, and the great bell slowly boomed forth its solemn toll. The funeral *cortège* of the French Consul was on its way to his earthly resting-place under the convent walls. He had died yesterday of



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fever, at Caiffa. We stood aside, uncovered, to let the procession pass as it toiled up the hill. Surpliced priests, choristers, monks, and Greek priests in full canonicals, were all on horseback,—for the Greeks were admitted to take a share at least in this part of the ceremony,—preceding the bier, on which were the uniform and military decorations of an old soldier of the first empire; and all the consular agents and their cavasses, mounted, followed behind with a motley crowd of Greeks and Moslems. It was a touching sight in this far-off land.

Leaving our letters at Caiffa for the steamer, we went on to the Kishon, to find water-fowl, and made several additions to our collections. Among these were the merganser and the magnificent eagle gull (*Larus ichthyaëtos*), not hitherto known in winter plumage, and very rare in collections. It is much larger than our herring gull, and is the largest known species of the genus, with a deep-black head when in full plumage. While wandering among the swamps, we saw the back of what we took to be a swan, feeding in a pool, and slipping bullets into our guns, contrived to creep within shot. As it rose, the long neck, and lovely pink of the wings, with their black tips, showed a fine flamingo. We fired, and wounded it slightly. For two hours we pursued it several miles, with indifferent success, till at length B. struck it in the neck as it passed overhead, and down fell the magnificent bird dead into the middle of the Kishon. We had long to wait till it floated into shallow water, and we returned home laden with spoil which we could scarcely carry up the hill. The Flamingo is known to the natives under the name of "*nehaf*," نحاف, but is rare in Palestine, where it has but one breeding-place in the marshes of Huleh, the ancient Merom. It does not appear to be mentioned specially in Scripture. This was the only occasion on which I ever met with a solitary specimen, it being generally found in vast flocks about shallow lagoons, as in

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the salt lakes of the Sahara, or at Tunis; but on the next day we noticed a small band of about half-a-dozen, from which our prize had probably been accidentally separated.

The following day we renewed our exploration of the banks of the Kishon, but not with so much success, as the weather was improving and the sea-birds had retired to their accustomed element. The heron and the osprey alone hung about us, wild and wary. There was some of the large red antirrhinum of our gardens in blossom, and we gathered some fine stems of a tall, blue campanula, and also several specimens of the mandrake (*Mandragora officinalis*, L.), the first we had seen, and one of the most striking plants of the country, with its flat disc of very broad primrose-like leaves, and its central bunch of dark blue bell-shaped blossom. The perfume of the flower we found by no means disagreeable, though it is said by some to be fetid. It has a certain pungency, which is peculiar; yet there seems little doubt but that this is the plant alluded to in Gen. xxx. 14. and Cant. vii. 13. We found it not uncommon in every part of Palestine, but chiefly in marshy plains. The day's botanizing afforded altogether eleven additional species in flower, a number with which we might be well satisfied in midwinter. We added also a few shells to our list, as *Conovulus firminii*, and *C. bidentatus*, and filled our bags with a splendid dish of mushrooms for dinner. The Kishon yielded likewise a fine fresh-water mussel or unio, distinct from the species of the Jordan and the Zerka, and several sorts of fish, similar to those of the Nahr-el-Kelb and the Kurn, viz., *Blennius lupulus*, Bp., *Seaphiodon capoëta*, Güld., and *Anguilla microptera*, Kaup.

In the evening two travelling companions, a French nobleman and a Spaniard, who had been with us in Rhodes and Cyprus, appeared at the convent, having accomplished Nazareth, Tabor, and Tiberias, during a two days' ride in the rain. They left at day-break next



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morning to hurry by Acre to the Ladder of Tyre. Such is the mode of "doing" Palestine with economy of time!

We heard to-day various reports of the existence of the crocodile in the Wady-Zerka, or "blue river," on the plain of Sharon, a little to the south of Carmel, where some few specimens of this monster reptile, known to the natives under the name of تمساح *timsahh*, still linger among the marshes of the Zerka. This is undoubtedly the Crocodile River of the ancients, which acquired the name from the existence of the animal in its marshes. The swamps at the head of the plain of Sharon afford ample cover, and the Crusading historians mention the existence of the crocodile in their day in this very river. Like the hippopotamus, the bison, the lion, and most other larger quadrupeds, the great reptile has gradually waned before the presence of man, and the advance of population. In earlier times not only the Zerka, but the Jordan, the marshes of Merom, and the lower portions of Esdraelon must have afforded suitable cover, and the lingering of the crocodile in the Zerka is only another instance of the strong affinity between the herpetological and ichthyological fauna of Egypt and Palestine. It is most clearly the animal denoted by the word לִוְיָתָן *liv'yathan*, in the book of Job, and force is added to the rendering if we remember that the creature was most probably familiar, not only in Egypt to the inspired writer of the book, but to Job himself and to his contemporaries, whether dwelling on the banks of the Euphrates or near the streams and swamps of Canaan. We searched in vain for the crocodile ourselves, though very shortly before our arrival a carcase had been brought into Caiffa; but our efforts were presently rewarded. Some of the Arabs whom we had with us, and whom we had charged to look out for a "*timsahh*," succeeded in capturing one twelve feet long, which they brought to Nazareth for us,



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and the head of which I still possess. It is a specimen of no little interest, being the only crocodile taken in Asia existing in any collection. It is of course the Egyptian species.

Mr. Macgregor believes he came upon a crocodile in his canoe on the Kishon. Ours certainly was obtained south of Carmel, but it would be very easy for the creature to make its way for a short distance by the shore, and up the stream, though it can scarcely find permanent cover there.

We much enjoyed a quiet Sunday in the convent—a day of rest for us all. After breakfast one of the monks called and invited us to go over the monastery. It is a large massive square building, constructed since the destruction of the old convent by the Turks, subsequent to the retreat of Napoleon. The chapel and its dome form the centre. We were lodged on the first floor, and the cells of the monks with long corridors occupy the second. On the roofs of the corridors we observed many nests of that rare and interesting swallow, *Hirundo rufula*, Temm., which is here only a migrant, and had long since retired from its summer quarters, unlike the oriental chimney-swallow (*Hirundo cahirica*, Licht.), which we daily watched skimming in great numbers round the walls of Caiffa.

From the roof of the dome we had a fine panorama. The day was clear, and this was our first gaze into Galilee. At our feet lay extended the broad bay of Acre, and the dark green plain beyond, with the bright cluster of buildings, the city itself forming the further horn of the crescent. Beyond it we looked on the white headland of Ras-en-Nakûra, the Ladder of Tyre, bounding the sea-view northwards. Above this rose the distant snow-clad Lebanon, almost lost in the clouds. The dark hills of Galilee rose one after another to the east. The monk pointed out to us a little tower, just visible, which marked

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the site of Nazareth below it; and green Tabor, with snowy Hermon, seemed to rise behind into the sky. In the gap between these two the green hills of Bashan, beyond Jordan, were plainly visible, bright and pale by the contrast with the dark foreground. Carmel here intersects the view, but turning round to the south we could look into the plain of Sharon. The headland nearest to us, with its ruined castle and a tall fragment of ruin, looking almost like a solitary column, but in reality part of an ancient church, is Athlît, the "castellum peregrinorum" of the Crusaders, the old landing-place of pilgrims for Jerusalem. Beyond it again another low mound projects into the sea, marked likewise by a slender fragment of an old tower, still more like a distant column. This is Tantûra, the ancient *Dor*, a city allied with Jabin, king of Hazor, and allotted by Joshua to Manasseh, who here came down to the coast. Further still, the dislocated ruins of Cæsarea are plainly visible, as they stand out against the sea. We lingered long to gaze, till the shivering figure of our friar reminded us that it was time to descend.

After our service we walked along the northern slope of the hill for a few miles, and visited some interesting relics of ancient times, when Carmel was indeed the "plaisaunce" or cultivated park; when its excellency was more than a name, and when oliveyards and terraced vineyards took the place of the bare rocks and the prickly shrubs (chiefly *Poterium spinosum*, L.), which now afford cover to the gazelle, the fox, and the ichneumon. On the whole ridge not a vine now exists save at one village, and in a little enclosed garden of the convent.

We examined several wine-presses, to which our attention was directed by Mr. Sandwith, their discoverer, and which exactly resemble those pointed out to Dean Stanley, by Dr. Rosen, in the south of Judæa. We examined four of them on Carmel, and as they are so intimately connected

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with the name of the mount, and have not, I believe, been yet noticed by preceding observers, it may be interesting to describe them minutely. In all cases, both on Carmel and elsewhere, a flat or gently sloping rock is made use of for their construction. At the upper end a trough is cut about three feet deep, and four and a-half by three and a-half feet in length and breadth. Just below this, in the same rock, is hewn out a second trough, fourteen inches deep and four feet by three in size. The two are connected by two or three small holes bored through the rock close to the bottom of the upper trough, so that on the grapes being put in and pressed down, the juice streamed into the lower vat. Every vineyard seems to have had one of these presses. What a record is here graven in the rock of the old fitness of that name Carmel! Dr. Robinson mentions a press much longer and more shallow. In such an one Gideon thrashed his wheat in some obscure corner of the vineyard, where he would cover it over with boughs or leaves and conceal it from the Midianites. How well this simple wine-vat in the stone illustrates the expression, "treading the wine-press alone!" Hard by one of these we found a large deep cistern hewn in the rock, and little converging channels about four inches wide, cut above it to drain the water from the upper part of the vineyard. The cistern had been wrought with a natural roof, and a square opening in the centre. A few yards below this was a circular opening in the ground, about a yard in diameter, like the mouth of a well, but really the mouth of an ancient granary, or "silo," for keeping and concealing corn. It swelled into a round chamber below, about eight feet deep and more than nine in diameter, carefully plastered wherever it was not hewn out of the native rock, and having very much the shape of a large flask or demijohn. Such "silos" are still universally used by the nomad Bedouin for storing their grain, and exist in great numbers in and around their

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favourite camping grounds. More than once I have had a fall, through my horse, when galloping over a plain, setting his foot on the treacherous roof of one of these empty granaries. It was to such hidden stores as these that the ten men referred, who appealed to the treacherous Ishmael, "Slay us not, for we have treasures in the field of wheat, and of barley, and of oil, and of honey." (Jer. xli. 8.)

Doubtless we were here standing where some wealthy son of Asher or of Zebulon once "dipped his foot in oil," and cultivated the inheritance of his fathers. It may seem strange at first how the long range of Carmel should have become thus desolate, while the less kindly Lebanon is so carefully tilled, and even the neighbouring hills of Galilee are in some degree utilized for cultivation. But its vicinity to the plains of Acre and Sharon has been the cause of its decline. Most of the country here is overrun by the Metâwileh, a sort of heretical (so called) Moslems, of the sect of Ali, whose faith is kindred to that of the Shîah, or Mohammedans of Persia. They are said to have emigrated from that country several centuries ago, and now form many distinct villages both here and in Northern Galilee. They also comprise the greater part of the population of Tyre. In their habits they too much resemble the Bedouin of the plain of Acre, and the Kurds who occupy the northern portion of the plain of Sharon, and they have no scruples in robbing and cattle-lifting. Between such neighbours the unfortunate fellahin (or cultivators) of Carmel have been nearly exterminated, being driven from village to village till they have succumbed to starvation. The Metâwileh bear no good-will to the Turks, but have a traditional veneration for the Shah of Persia, a representation of whose turban may generally be seen in their houses. Of Christians they are perhaps more tolerant than others. They are not generally given to murder, although last week the bodies of two Arabs, who had

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come from Gaza to purchase horses, were found with their throats cut under an olive-tree on the path from Caiffa to the convent, and the perpetrators were pretty generally suspected to have been the people of a neighbouring Metâwileh village.

We closed the day as usual, and our vespers synchronised with those chanted in our hearing by the monks; and we noticed the appropriateness to ourselves of the lines in the hymn for the day in the "Christian Year":—

". . . Seek the holy land.
From robes of Tyrian dye
Turn with undazzled eye
To Bethlehem's glade or Carmel's haunted strand."



MONASTERY OF CARMEL.

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## CHAPTER VI.

*Tombs in Carmel—Character of the Scenery—Smallness of the Trees—Fossils—Ride along the Top to Esfia—Reception—Visit to a Christian Family—Domestic Arrangements—Ride to Mohrakah—Place of Elijah's Sacrifice—Elisha's Altar—View from the Top—Plain of Esdraelon—Historical Associations—Place of Sacrifice—Well and Tree—Swamps—Fording the Kishon—Hills of Galilee—Birds—Arrival at Nazareth—Extension of Nazareth—Precipice—The Well of Nazareth—Bareness of the Hills—Mount of the Precipitation—Iksal, Chisloth—Tabor—Interesting Remains—Raids of the Bedouin—Sufferings of the Peasantry—Tabor and Hermon—Endor—Cave-dwellings—Nain—Burial Ground—Well—An Arab Girl—Geological Phenomena—Basalt—Shunemor Sulem—Zerin, Jezreel—Jenin or Engannim—Palm-trees—Olive-trees—Gardens—Crows—Dothan—Eagles—Passes of Manasseh—Sebustiyeh or Samaria—Church—Long Colonnades—Fulfilment of Prophecy—Heaps of the Field and Vineyards—Stony Hills—Vale of Shechem—Its Beauty—Arrival at Nablous.*

ANOTHER day was given to the exploration of the southern side of Carmel, and of the many old tombs hollowed among the rocks. They were all of the same shape and plan as those we had examined near Sidon, and had long since been thoroughly rifled. Now they are sometimes used as sheepfolds, and their dusty floors afford a refuge to myriads of fleas, which rise in swarms, like sand-flies, to feast on the legs of any luckless intruder. At length we finally left the hospitable convent for the village of Esfia, at the eastern end of the ridge, fifteen miles, or four and a half hours distant. Threatening as was the day, the wind kept the clouds so high, that we were not robbed of the prospect on either side, as we followed throughout the highest crest of the hill.

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Writers have continually cautioned us against expecting fine scenery in this country, and, especially, "the forest of his Carmel" has been spoken of as very insignificant to those familiar with western landscapes. Certainly, the top of Carmel is not the place on which to recall the sublimity of the Alps, or the Pyrenees; but for ordinary hill scenery, it is undoubtedly fine—almost grand. The part that fails is *forest* scenery. That is small; but the plains are truly vast, and the tiers of distant hills are so numerous and varied in outline, that "tame" is the very last epithet that suggests itself as appropriate. Dean Stanley, who, with many of the best authorities, interprets Carmel, "a park," remarks that "though to European eyes it presents a forest-beauty only of an inferior order, there is no wonder that to an Israelite it seemed 'the Park' of his country; that the tresses of the bride's head should be compared to its woods; that its 'ornaments' should be regarded as the type of natural beauty; that the withering of its fruits should be considered as the type of national desolation." *

During our ride, we ascended 1,200 feet, to the elevation of Esfia, which is 1,750 feet above the sea. Path there is none. As it is not an ordinary traveller's route, we hired a native guide, who took care to be paid in advance. Mr. Sandwith accompanied us, and pointed out the objects of interest on the way. The view was such as we had been enjoying from the convent, with the addition of the Kishon, the course of which we could clearly trace. An hour's walk, in advance of our horses, brought us to the pine-forest, the trees of which are scattered, and of no great size, but harmonising well with the piercing cold of the day. Birds were few: I searched in vain for the crossbill, which is common in similar situations all along the Atlas range, but which I never could meet with in Palestine. Now and then we flushed a woodcock, and

* Sinai and Palestine, p. 352.

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partridge (Greek) in abundance. A noble osprey sailed close overhead, as he descended to fish in the Kishon.

We were enriched, however, by a harvest of fossils, which the rains, by washing clean the rocks, had left conspicuous, and which occurred, in several places, in solid beds of considerable thickness. The predominating species was a gryphæa (*Gr. capuloïdes*), mixed with seven or eight other species of the lower chalk, among them a pretty little corbula (*C. Syriaca*). The fossils were sufficiently numerous to enable M. Hebert, to whom they were shown, to decide at once on the age of the formation as synchronous with our Norfolk or lower chalk. The whole of the upper stratum of Carmel appears the same—an undisturbed deposit of chalky limestone, very soft, with great quantities of silex interspersed, sometimes in large nodules, or irregularly-shaped masses, filling interstices in the stone, but very often regularly and evenly interstratified in layers of from one to six inches thick. In the depth of a yard in the face of one cliff we counted five even layers of this flint at irregular intervals.

We had a letter to the Christian sheikh of Esfia, and, in this stormy weather, determined to take advantage of his hospitality, in preference to the exposure of our tents. A large stable-like building was placed at our disposal, the state bedroom of our host, with an ancient rickety bedframe in one corner. The store of olives which covered the floor was hastily shovelled into a pile by the ladies of the establishment, and one side cleared, along which our beds, six in a row, were packed as tightly as in the camp-tent of a French regiment. Esfia is one of the two remaining villages of Mount Carmel; seventeen, which are marked in many maps, having disappeared during the lawless epoch which succeeded the expulsion of Ibrahim Pasha. The ruins of many of these we had passed in the morning. Esfia owes its escape from destruction, partly to the exceptional valour of its inhabitants, and partly to

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their prudence in paying an annual sum to the great loyal chief, Aghyle Agha, for protection, though far beyond the limits assigned to his district; but in no degree does it owe its security to the exertions of the Government. The population is entirely Druse and Christian, principally the former; and this is the most southerly point to which those noble though wild mountaineers have penetrated. The people fully bear out the common remark on the superior *physique* of mountain tribes; for they are a handsome, well-shaped race, and the women, especially, far surpass in figure and beauty the inhabitants of the cities and plains in the neighbourhood. Oil-olive and honey form the trade and support of Esfia; but there are also many vineyards on the terraces which line the slopes below the village.

We had an opportunity of enlarging the circle of our acquaintance, when, in the afternoon, we went out with our hammers to look for fossils, but being caught in a heavy shower, were glad to take refuge in a house outside the village. We were hospitably welcomed by the owner and his family. The pot was boiling on a little fire of sticks in the centre of the dwelling; but the girls who were tending it at once got up and ran for cushions, on which they insisted on our reclining round the hearth, whence they removed the pot, which we had to replace by the exercise of a little friendly force. "Alas!" exclaimed the good man, "it is a fast day, and there is no flesh in the pot." They were Christians, and welcomed us as fellow-Christians, rubbing the two fore-fingers together, and exclaiming, "Soua, soua" (together). As soon as we were seated, we were introduced in due form to the whole family, and each kissed our hands on presentation. The father was a tall, fine-looking man, with a very Jewish type of countenance, as have many of the Druses here, leading one to suspect a Jewish or Samaritan origin. His mother was a stout old lady, and his wife a buxom

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matron. The eldest daughter was a handsome girl of eighteen or twenty, with a fine figure, and large, sleepy black eyes. Her next sister was perhaps fifteen, a sweet-looking, dark girl; and three healthy round-faced children succeeded her. The father lamented that he had but one boy to his six girls, and was much amused on my telling him I could not condole with him, being in the same happy position myself. "Then, indeed, we must be brothers!" he exclaimed. The two elder women were employed in needlework, and a packet of English needles, which M. had handy in his pocket, soon made us very popular with all the young ladies. A pair of scissors which I produced as a present to the lady of the house, she was most anxious to repay by a couple of pigeons for dinner, and most reluctantly yielded to my refusal. They were all dressed like the women of El Bussah, but with the semadi and roll of coins on the head somewhat smaller, the trousers tied at the ankles, and bare feet. Smaller or more aristocratic hands are rarely seen; and all the women have very small, neat feet, narrow hands, long taper fingers, and filbert nails. We observed the same of both sexes here. Indeed, they have been termed the Circassians of Palestine.

Though not rich, all the women here wear gold bracelets, sometimes three on a wrist, of solid metal, twisted in the pattern of a rope, and the ends not meeting, so that the ornament can be easily taken off. The house was much in the same style as those of El Bussah, but larger and beautifully clean. The lower part of the room was, as usual, shared by the cows and donkeys, and numbers of pigeons in cotes above them; but on the dwelling-floor there was not a speck of dirt, while the further end was ornamented by a long row of terra cotta niches fastened on to the walls, with a prettily stamped pattern of a somewhat Gothic design. These pigeon-holes contained wooden combs, spoons, knives, and other small articles of domestic

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use and ornament. A few wretched Greek coloured prints of saints shared the walls along with labels carefully preserved from Manchester bales, and old needle-papers.

In the evening we called upon the family of our host the sheikh, who were lodged next door to our room, and noticed the same type of face and graceful figures as we had seen elsewhere. Poultry abounded, and were by no means retiring in their habits. In every yard the bees were hutted in their pyramids of tiles,* but more carefully sheltered than in the warmer villages below. The rest of the party returned with little in their bags, and the only additions to our natural history stores were a species of sand-rat (*Gerbillus*, sp.?) caught in a trap below, the English chaffinch, and the pretty meadow bunting of Southern Europe (*Emberiza cia*, L.), certainly a rare bird in Central Palestine.

Next day the clouds broke at dawn after a night of heavy showers, and held out hope that we might escape the drenchings which latterly had been our lot. The sheikh not only supplied us with a guide to *El-Mohrakah*, the place of Elijah's sacrifice, but proposed to accompany us himself, in the hope, as he said, of hunting by the way. They are early risers, those mountaineers of Esfia. On looking out to scan the clouds at grey dawn, behold a bevy of the young ladies whom we had so much admired, with shovel in hand and trousers tucked up to the knee, doing the work of scavengers after the rain, as naturally as an English housemaid might scour the door-step. Large parties of women and children were hurrying down to the olive-yards with wide wicker-baskets on their heads, the gathering of the olives not being yet finished. On returning to our chamber, we detected one of our muleteer's boys rewarding our host's hospitality, by filling a sack with his olives in the corner, when, to the gratifi-

* See pp. 83, 84.

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cation of all except the culprit, a summary chastisement and disgorgement of the spoils was inflicted; which the lad endeavoured to avert by assuring us of his intention equitably to have shared the plunder.

By eight o'clock the mules were laden, and we rode on accompanied by the Sheikh and all the dogs of high and low degree the village could produce; their joyous yelps when they saw the guns evincing their opinion that if *they* started the game to-day, it ought to be brought down by some one. Wild boar, however, we saw not, though the



EL MOHRAKAH, ELIJAH'S SACRIFICE.

glades were full of his tracks, as well as of those of hyæna and jackal, which all abound in the thick cover of oak and brushwood that here clothe Carmel. We afterwards received from this place the two largest hyænas I ever saw, and were offered for a large sum the skin of an adult leopard. The path was rough and rocky along the crest of the ridge, till just above the Mohrakah, where the mules left us to take the direct road to Nazareth. We scrambled on for a little way in the saddle over rocks and through thickets, till close to a ruined cistern of some

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size, we came upon heaps of old dressed stones; and on turning a corner, the whole view burst grandly upon us in a moment. We were standing on the edge of a cliff, from the base of which the mountain sank steeply down 1,000 feet into the plain of Esdraelon, the battle-field of Israel.

We looked down on a map of Central Palestine. The hewn stones among which we stood mark the site of the altar of the Lord which Jezebel overthrew and Elijah repaired. To this spot came Elijah's servant to look for the little cloud, which at length rose to the Prophet's prayer, and portended the coming rain, exactly as it does now. No site in Palestine is more indisputable than that of the little hollow in the knoll 300 feet below us, where the Lord God of Elijah manifested His divinity before Ahab and assembled Israel. The lower slopes rose abruptly beneath us from the plain. This, though slightly inclining westward, appeared a dead flat, bounded on the north by the hills of Galilee, generally bare and woodless, and on the south by those of Samaria; with Mount Tabor rising proudly behind on the east, and seeming almost to span the distance across from Galilee to Gilboa. We were overlooking the sites of the old cities of Jezreel, Megiddo, Shunem, Nain, and many others. The day was clear enough to discern all the positions more or less distinctly, and we had a panorama of three quarters of a circle. Immediately below, on the banks of the Kishon, was a small flat-topped green knoll, "Tell Cassis," "the mound of the priests," marking in its name the very spot where Elijah slew the prophets of Baal, when he had brought them down to the "brook Kishon." For twenty miles the eye could follow the vast expanse, with not a tree and scarcely a village in its whole extent, now a desolate flat, swampy and brown, though said in spring to be a many-coloured carpet with flowers of every hue. Behind us, on the one side of Carmel, stretched the sea, whence rose the little cloud like a man's hand; and a long strip



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of Sharon; on the other side we had a peep of the plain of Acre and the sea washing its edge. Down that distant Tabor once poured the hosts of Barak; on the edge of that Gilboa the shouts and the sudden gleaming lights of Gideon's trusty 300 startled the sleeping Midianites; and in the unbroken darkness of another night, Saul crept up that same Gilboa's side to seek the witch's cave, which he quitted but to lose kingdom, life, and army on its top, "for *there* the shield of the mighty was vilely cast away."

Across that plain fled in broken disorder the hosts of Sisera, to be engulphed in the mud and swamps, and overwhelmed in the Kishon, then, as to-day, swollen and treacherous, with hardly a bush or a tree to mark its sluggish course. At the further end of Esdraelon was scattered the routed army of Saul; across it marched the Assyrian hordes of Shalmanezer to the final destruction of Israel; and nearer still to Carmel fell Josiah at the battle of Megiddo.

We remained here for an hour, drinking in the features and the associations of the wondrous landscape, and then, leaving our horses, descended by a slippery path to the Mohrakah, or place of sacrifice. It is a glade overlooking the plain, somewhat in the shape of an amphitheatre, and completely shut in on the north by the well-wooded cliffs down which we had come. No place could be conceived more adapted by nature to be that wondrous battle-field of truth. In front of the principal actors in the scene, with the king and his courtiers by their side, the thousands of Israel might have been gathered on the lower slopes, witnesses of the whole struggle to its stupendous result.

In the upper part of the amphitheatre to the left is an ancient fountain, overhung by a few magnificent trees, among them a noble specimen of the Turkey oak. The reservoir of the spring is stone-built and square, about eight feet deep, and the old steps which once descended to

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it may yet be traced. The roof partially remains. The water is of some depth, and is perennial. This was corroborated by the existence of molluscs (*Neritina michonii*) attached to the stones within the cistern. It is well-known that the shell fish of this genus *Neritina*, unlike most of the other families of fresh water molluscs in Palestine, never bury themselves in mud, and are very sensitive to removal from water, existing only in permanent streams and pools. They are found in all the perennial rivers of the country, and in such fountains as those of Engedi and Jericho, but never in the streams or wells which are occasionally dry. We examined all the fountains of the neighbourhood, but in this one, and this alone, did we find this little neritina, plainly showing that this spring continues to flow, when all the others are dry. In that three years' drought, when all the wells were dry, and the Kishon had first sunk to a string of pools, and then finally was lost altogether, this deep and shaded spring, fed from the roots of Carmel remained. After we had drunk of this fountain, whence Elijah drew for the trench round his altar, while Ahab sat under the rock, probably just where the oak-tree now grows, we toiled up again to our horses, alarming the jays, and many a flight of wood-pigeons (*Columba palumbus*, L.), rarely here disturbed.

The descent to the plain of Esdraelon was by a winding, slippery path, and owing to the late rains we were compelled to make a detour to the south, till we came upon a large mound, apparently too regular to be natural, Tell Kaimûn, the ancient Jokneam, of which no trace remains save the name and what may lie buried in the mound, which recalls the sites of the villages of lower Egypt.

The Kishon was not fordable here, and we followed its course for an hour, till we found the spot where our mules had succeeded in passing. The water, though above the girths, was shallow enough to admit of fording without swimming, and not above twenty yards in width. Water



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hens, coots, and little grebes were in their element, and large numbers of swallows (*H. cahirica*) were skimming over the plain, which, in spite of the season, afforded them a plentiful meal of mosquitoes. After labouring through swampy mud till we reached the edge of the Galilæan hills, we were compelled to turn to the left, and kept close along their lower slopes. The scenery was park-like, though man was wanting everywhere, and we often cantered through open glades, under noble oaks and wild olives, or over shelving rocks of limestone. This was the first time we had met with any natural forest of old timber, and accordingly the black-headed jay (*Garrulus melanocephalus*, Bp.), and the pretty spotted woodpecker (*Picus syriacus*, H. and Ehrenb.) were added to our list. Perhaps nothing could give the naturalist a clearer idea of the scarcity of large timber in Syria than the fact that this is the only species of that cosmopolitan genus, the woodpecker, which has been discovered in the country.

We passed the wretched village of Ta'baûn, of evil repute for raids, the inhabitants of which, though robbers by profession, did not look the richer for their trade. At the next village we came up with our muleteers, who had had a heavy day between rocks and quagmires. After assisting them across some muddy ground, where the weary mules had many a fall, and had again and again to be unloaded before they could extricate themselves, we got a second time up on the spurs of the hills, and, aided by the moon, pushed on ahead with our dragoman to Nazareth. But not without a sad loss. Poor Beirût was not to be found. We had fondly hoped he had accompanied the mules, but the love of the chase had been too strong for him, and he had been left on Carmel, to become the prey of jackals, or to drag on a degraded existence among the pariah dogs of Esfia. We felt we could well have spared a better friend!

Our track lay for the most part up rocky wadys, and

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sometimes across a bare hill, where the ghost-like moan of a little owl and the distant howl of the jackals alone broke the silence, till, an hour after dark, we got through a gap in a prickly-pear hedge, and found ourselves descending into the town of Nazareth. We led our horses down its more than steep streets, mere ditches of semi-fluid mud—on one occasion pulling up on the roof of a house—and after escaping many a hole and pitfall, in ten minutes more reached the door of the Franciscan convent. The brethren received us kindly, provided us with two comfortable rooms, and, in an hour, with a good dinner; our mules arrived before midnight, and soundly we slept after the heaviest day's work we had had.

We went next morning before breakfast to call on Mr. Zeller, the Church Missionary Society's clergyman at Nazareth, whose knowledge of Northern and Eastern Palestine is most extensive, and whose influence among the Bedouin sheikhs is greater than that of any other European, while his success in gathering in a congregation where he found not one Protestant Christian on commencing this mission, has been such as few are privileged to attain. At length he has had the satisfaction of seeing a substantial English Church erected on a commanding site on the hill-side, crowned with a spire, the gift of a German prince, and filled with devout worshippers, the first English Church erected in Galilee.

We talked over our plans, and Mr. Zeller traced out for us the routes which, with little variation, we followed during the whole of our subsequent wanderings.

The objects of interest in Nazareth are few, apart from the very apocryphal localities of the monks, for Nazareth is the most modern town in Palestine, and has only within the last few years risen to any importance. Its rise is due partly to its being a Christian and not a Moslem place, and partly to its being the centre for the commerce of the districts east of Jordan, which has attracted many active

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Greek merchants, who carry on an export trade with Acre and Caiffa. Many Christian families, driven by the raids of the Bedouin from the unprotected villages of Esdraelon, have settled here. It is rapidly increasing in population, and well-built stone houses are rising in all directions. It is, however, scarcely on the site of old Nazareth, which was on the brow of the hill, but occupies most inconveniently the very steep slope. Some of the streets are interrupted by the perpendicular cliffs, which have no room for houses at their upper side, and which are being quarried for the buildings below. The present town forms a sort of amphitheatre, and its extension is altogether on the lower side. Mr. Zeller pointed out to us many traces of the older city just above, and it was doubtless to the brow of the hill, on the side of which the modern town is built, that our Lord was led forth. There are still places where a fall from above would be certain death, and where the little kestrel (*Tinnunculus cenchris*) nestles in communities, far out of reach of the boys of the place.

We visited the richly decorated Roman church, with the so-called Virgin's grotto beneath it, and then went outside to the fountain, a gushing spring, five minutes' walk from the town, and doubtless the original fountain of the city. The water is conducted to it from the hills by a conduit which bears traces of antiquity, though the present is a modern building erected a very few years ago on the site of an older one. It has six or seven constantly running taps over a trough-like platform, where the children as well as the clothes of the place are washed, while other spouts at the side supply the men and horses, the front being reserved for the use of the women exclusively. Hither, doubtless, went Mary daily for water, accompanied by her Son; just as we saw mothers of Nazareth to-day. A long string of Nazarene matrons and maids were filling their pitchers in turn, or washing their clothes in the marble trough beneath; while the men were watering their horses

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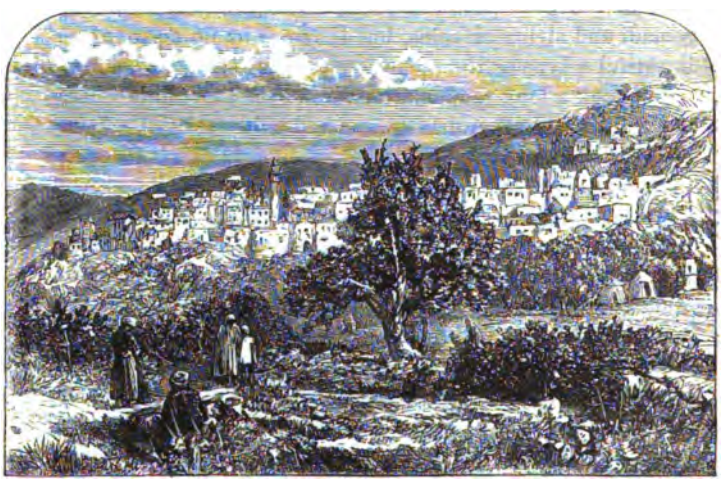
and cattle at the other face of the building, and meanwhile laughing and flirting with their acquaintances; for, being a Christian town, courtship is the custom, and the women have a voice in the selection of their husbands. From the open association of the sexes in public the Moslems accuse the Nazarenes of profligacy, but those who have the best means of knowing, maintain that their morality is high, and that they are infinitely superior in social manners to their neighbours. The costume of the women is like that of the Christian villages we had visited, with the semadi and string of coins, but they are by no means of so beautiful a type as the mountaineers of Esfia.

We took a long ramble afterwards over those hills where our Lord must often have wandered when a child. Bare and featureless, singularly unattractive in its landscape, with scarcely a tree to relieve the monotony of its brown and dreary hills (I speak, of course, of their *winter* character) without ruins or remains, without one precisely-identified locality, there is yet a reality in the associations of Nazareth which stirs the soul of the Christian to its very depths. It was not the place where the sublimity of the scenery, the depth of the gorges, or the solitude of the forest, could have filled a boyish mind with wild dreams or enthusiastic visions—there was nothing here to suggest deeds of heroism or feed the reveries of romance; it was the nursery of One whose mission was to meet man, and man's deepest needs, on the platform of common-place daily life. "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" might naturally be asked, not only by the proud Jew of the South, but by the dweller among the hills of Galilee, or by the fair lake of Gennesaret. Our evening was spent in pleasant conversation with Mr. Zeller about his work and the people, and in examining a beautifully-painted series of the plants of the country.

It would be difficult to select a day's ride so full of objects and reminiscences of all-absorbing interest as our

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journey from Nazareth to Jenín. It was one of those glorious days which so frequently break the dreariness of the rainy season, and with a keen wind from the south-east, the weather had become settled and clear. The friars had taken care to have our breakfast ready before dawn, and two of them were in attendance to see to our comforts. They are a kindly set of men, and without the bigoted, unscrupulous activity which renders the Jesuits in Palestine



NAZARETH.

so constant a thorn to our Mission. In fact, so little are Franciscans trusted at Rome, that a small band of Jesuits have recently been planted in Nazareth to supply their deficiencies, and these seem scarcely less friendly to the monks than to Protestants. Having received the post-bag of the fathers for the convent at Jerusalem, and that of Mr. Zeller for the Bishop, we were in the saddle soon after seven. We descended from the fountain where the valley

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spreads into a small plain, and from the opposite side of the slope had the best view of Nazareth, facing eastward, with the brow of the hill overhanging it. Fair at a distance, mean when near, it is only its intimate connection with the centre of all our hopes and blessings that renders it so precious. Every path and rugged track must have often been trodden by Him in childhood, and for what else would we exchange the mystic charm of those bare and stony hills?

In half an hour we ascended the so-called Mount of the Precipitation, and from its crest obtained a fine view of the plain of Esdraelon, to which we descended by a disused track, leading our horses down cliffs fit only for goats to climb, and from the difficulty of which might be found a very good reason for the monkish name of the hill. Tabor now stood out on the plain in all its isolated grandeur. Indeed, but for its isolation and its peculiar symmetry of shape, it would not be very remarkable. Its elevation above the plain is not more than 1,400 feet, and its platform may be about 500 feet above the sea. It is no peaked height or bold mountain, but a dome-shaped mamelon, connected only with the Galilæan hills by a depressed ridge at the north-east; but from our point of view standing forth perfectly alone with an even and graceful outline. Its northern side is well clad with forest; its southern is only sparsely dotted with shrubby trees, nowhere crowded, generally the dwarf oak (*Quercus ægilops*, L. var.), with a few evergreen ilices interspersed.

As we were descending the Mount of Precipitation, we overtook a native Christian pedlar, with his donkey; and on catechising him about the neighbourhood, he told us there were some curious ruins at Iksâl, a village below (of which we could find no mention). Accordingly, leaving Deburieh (the ancient Dabareth) for a future opportunity, we turned down to Iksâl, which Dr. Robinson has identified with the Chesulloth of Josh. xix. 18. To this Mr. Grove

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has objected, as, from the position of the word in the context, Chesulloth ought to have been between Shunem and Jezreel. Unless, however, we were to make an eastern circuit, it would be difficult to place Chesulloth on the line between these two, where there is not the slightest trace of ancient remains. But the Chisloth Tabor mentioned in Josh. xix. 12, as in the border of Zebulon, appears from its connection with Daberath, as well as from its name, exactly to meet all the requirements of the text. On entering the village, our pedlar guide led us down to what seemed to be the remains of an old square fortress, with a strong roomy tower at each corner. Asking permission of the occupants, we entered one of these towers. We had to creep in through an old pointed arch, which had been a gateway, now choked with rubbish up to the spring of the arch, and found ourselves at once in a large vaulted hall, with many traces which pointed to its having been a crusading fortress. The frequency of the early English arch, repaired in places after the Saracenic fashion decided this to our minds. There was no trace of Roman work, though the people on the spot stoutly maintained its architects were the Yehudi (or Jews). From this hall another archway, nearly filled in with débris and rubbish, opened into a second vaulted hall. Here were traces of yet more ancient remains; for a fine old sculptured sarcophagus of marble was built into the wall, upside down, at a height of about ten feet; and in another place a singular old vase or altar, of black basalt—a material we had not previously met with—was inserted in the wall. The vessel was circular, with a diameter of a yard, had a broad rim of about a foot in thickness, was slightly hollowed, and had a drainage hole perforated just beneath the rim. Had it been found in the West, it would naturally have been set down as an abnormal piscina, or diminutive font. The other towers we were not able to examine; but they bore traces of having been built out of fragments of earlier and finer edifices.

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From Iksâl, leaving Tabor on the right, we struck straight across the great plain of Esdraelon, to the village of Endor, perched on the northern slope at the foot of Jebel Dûhy, or Little Hermon. Dreary and desolate looked the plain, though of exuberant fertility. Here and there might be seen a small flock of sheep, or herd of cattle, tended by three or four mounted villagers, armed with their long firelocks, pistols, and swords, on the watch against any small party of marauding cattle-lifters. Griffon vultures were wheeling in circles far over the rounded top of Tabor; and here and there an eagle was soaring beneath them, in search of food, but at a most inconvenient distance from our guns. Harriers were sweeping more rapidly and closely over the ground, where larks appeared to be their only prey; and a noble peregrine falcon, which in Central Palestine does not yet give place to the more Eastern lanner, was perched on an isolated rock, calmly surveying the scene, and permitting us to approach and scrutinize him at our leisure.

The corn of this year's harvest had never been reaped, owing to the war, and we rode on through the stubble of down-trodden wheat-fields. Only a few weeks ago, the Sakk'r Bedouin, the strongest tribe on the western side of the Jordan, made a raid, and swept off the whole of the cattle on the plain. The villagers naturally live in perpetual terror of these freebooters, and every man guides the plough with one hand, and holds his weapon in the other. (Neh. iv. 17.) The protection of the Government has proved worse than none. The Turkish troops, who took care not to arrive till after the retirement of the Bedouin, taught the unhappy fellahin to pray, "Save me from my friends," judiciously selecting the finest plots of standing corn for their camping-ground, in order to save themselves the trouble of having to forage from a distance; which they followed up, in many instances, by levying heavy fines on the luckless villagers for the crime of non-resistance to the

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Sakk'r. When they appealed against this on the ground of their helplessness, they were told that their males ought to have fled in, and reinforced the Turkish troops. Finally, after the Turkish locusts had eaten everything the Arabian hailstorm had left, the Pasha of Acca published a despatch, announcing the retreat of the invaders before his triumphant legions (who always kept two days between themselves and the fugitives), and the campaign closed for the year.

We soon came upon the division of the watersheds of the Mediterranean and the Dead Sea; one stream feeding the Kishon, and a rill a few yards off from the same little marsh, finding its way to the Wady Bireh and the Jordan. Between a gap in the hills of Galilee, just behind us, the snowy crest of Great Hermon glittered in the sunlight athwart the bright green of Tabor. The contrast was startling. A sparkling diamond, set half in the clear blue turquoise, and half in emerald, seemed the crest of that noble mountain. To our left ran the long and even, but furrowed, range of Bashan, across the Jordan, with a faint capping of cloud; and further on, the taller crest of Ajalon, with the white moon even now hanging over it; while, on the right, the dark hump of Carmel ran into the hills of Samaria, and the corner of Gilboa stretched beyond Little Hermon (Jebel Dûhy) in front. It was one of the geographical lessons of which the country is so full, and which no description can adequately set forth.

As we approached Endor, we could fancy the very walk which Saul took over the eastern shoulder of the hill to reach the witch's abode, skirting Little Hermon, on the front slopes of which the Philistines were encamped, in order to reach the village behind them, a long and weary distance from his own army, by the fountain of Jezreel, on the side of Gilboa. It might be fancy, but the place has a strange, weird-like aspect—a miserable village on the north side of the hill, without a tree or a shrub to relieve the squalor of its decaying heaps. It is full of caves, and the

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MOUNT TABOR, FROM ENDOR.

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mud-built hovels are stuck on to the sides of the rocks in clusters, and are, for the most part, a mere continuation and enlargement of the cavern behind, which forms the larger portion of this human den. The inhabitants were the most filthy and ragged we had seen, and as the old crones, startled at the rare apparition of strangers, strolling near their holes, came forth and cursed us, a Holman Hunt might have immortalised on canvas the very features of the necromancer of Israel. Endor has shrunk from its former extent; and there are many caves around, with crumbling heaps at their mouths, the remains, probably, of what once were other habitations. Subsequently, in our journey in Southern Judæa, we saw many more, and more perfect, illustrations of these ancient cave dwellings.

We were now on the highway from Tiberias to Nain, and, following the path along the northern edge of Jebel Dûhy, in about an hour or more we reached that spot of hallowed memory. The foreground was singularly uninteresting, but the distant landscape on the way was of striking beauty. Hermon, clad in spotless snow, was now clear of Tabor, and the two thus stood forth side by side; Tabor, with its bright green foreground, dotted all over with grey trees, contrasted finely with the dazzling white of the former. Somewhere near this the sacred poet may have passed when he exclaimed, "Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice in Thy Name." They are eminently the two mountain features of Galilee.

To the east of Nain, by the roadside, about ten minutes' walk from the village, lies the ancient burying-ground, still used by the Moslems; and probably on this very path our Lord met that sorrowing procession. A few oblong piles of stones, and one or two small built graves with whitened plaster, are all that mark the unfenced spot. Nain must have been a "city"—the ruined heaps and traces of walls prove that it was of considerable extent, and that it was a *walled* town, and therefore with gates, according to the

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Gospel narrative; but it has now shrunk into a miserable Moslem village, *i.e.*, a few houses of mud and stone, with flat earth roofs, and doors three feet high, sprinkled here and there, without order or system, among the débris of former and better days. An old Mussulman rose up from his prayers to point out to us what he said were the ruins of the widow's house, a mere heap of stones, like the rest. It struck us as curious that a Mohammedan should thus, unasked, have had a locality to point out for a Christian miracle: it can scarcely have arisen from the number of inquiries after it, since Nain lies somewhat out of the beaten track; and though all the great events of the Old Testament are handed down among the Moslems in a more or less distorted form, their traditions very rarely extend to the New Testament. This and the site of the house of Simon the tanner, at Jaffa, are among the few which occurred to us.

There is a painful sense of desolation about Nain. All round is bare and forbidding, as though it had known not the time of its visitation, and therefore its houses had been left to it desolate. Still, there is a more hallowing influence, and the story of the past rises up more vividly, in a dreary, lonely spot such as this, than among the chapels and shrines which encumber and disfigure so many so-called "holy places." Though the buildings, the gardens, and the trees have all gone, the features of the landscape remain, and they are what we want. To the west of the village, just outside the traces of the wall, is an ancient well or fountain. Fountains never change, and the existence of this one is, doubtless, the cause of the place remaining partially inhabited. The square cistern, arched over with massive masonry, is very ancient, and the water is conducted to it from the hills by a small, subterranean square-built aqueduct. We halted to examine it. A young Arab girl had just been filling her pitcher, and we asked her for a drink. She set down her tall water-jar, and readily gave it.

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On our offering her a small present, she declined it; tears filled her eyes, and she said she did not give it for money—she would take no backshîsh, but she gave it to the strangers for the memory of her mother who was lately dead, for charity, and for the love of God. In vain we pressed it—who could not but feel a touch of sympathy?—the poor, single-hearted girl kissed our hands, and we passed on.

A rather quick ride of about an hour round the base of Little Hermon, into the plain to the south, brought us from Nain to the village of Shunem. A new geological feature here presented itself to our notice. We had observed at Nain many fragments and large rounded boulders of trap, and sometimes pieces of columnar basalt; and we now found that the south-west corner of Little Hermon is raised up on a basaltic or trap dyke, and that the whole of the lower portion of the shoulder here is basalt, which rises to no great height, but presses forward, bulging in low rounded mamelons into the plain of Esdraelon, while all the hills above it consist of limestone in horizontal stratification. The limestone adjoining the dyke was metamorphic several yards thick, and of a rich umber colour. It would appear, then, that Little Hermon owes its elevation to the period of the basaltic currents north-west of Gennesaret, and not to the denudation which has moulded most of the Galilæan hills.

Shunem, now Sulem, a wretched mud-built village, lies low in the plain, full in sight of Carmel, which bounds the other side of Esdraelon, fifteen or twenty miles off. It gives no trace, in its present state, of having ever had either a fair Shunamite or a great woman among its inhabitants. There was but one stone-built house, over the door of which we observed a fragment of ancient carved marble built in. The place is surrounded by ungainly hedges of prickly-pear, and we waded knee-deep in mud through its lanes. We could see the bluff in the far distance, where the prophet stood and recognised the figure

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of his hostess, as she hastened to unfold to him the tidings of her bereavement.

After half an hour more we began to ascend a low spur of Mount Gilboa, or rather a projecting knob of rising ground, covered with a few flat-topped huts, and with fresh verdure, in pleasant contrast to the fallow plain below, but not relieved by a tree or shrub. This was Zerîn, the ancient Jezreel. A lovely position for a capital city, but not a vestige of it remains. The very ruins have crumbled from desolate heaps to flat turf-clad hillocks. On the crest a number of Arab boys were playing at hockey, near a marble sarcophagus, now converted into a horse-trough. One other perfect and several broken sarcophagi were strewn about, sculptured with the figure of the crescent moon, the symbol of Ashtaroth, the goddess of the Zidonians; but these were the only relics of the ancient beauty, no greater helps to the identification of Jezreel than "the skull, and the feet, and the palms of the hands" of the accursed queen, were the signs by which men were able to say, "This is Jezebel." On that rocky slope must have been Naboth's vineyard; but not a shrub now clothes the bare hill-side: here must have been the watch-tower, where for miles we could trace the route from the Jordan, by which, after dashing up round the knoll of Bethshean, Jehu urged on his horses over that smooth plain, as he drove from Ramoth Gilead. Down that other side of the hill, and across the plain to Engannim, "the garden-house" (2 Kings ix. 27), now Jenîn, he pursued the flying Ahaziah. With all these points, so clear and unmistakable, no destruction has been more complete and utter, even in this land of ruins, than that of Jezreel.

After a short halt, we followed the track of Jehu, but not at his pace, till we came to Jenîn, our resting-place for the night. Our mules had taken a short cut across the plain, and had long preceded us. We found that, under

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pretext of the country being too unsafe to admit of camping, our servants had stored our baggage in the house of a Moslem, who lets a room to strangers. Here, as soon as the dinner-table was removed, there was just space for five of us to lie down in the chamber, packed like herrings in a barrel. Let no traveller without a passion for practical entomology follow our example if he can do otherwise. Jenîn is, for Syria, a tolerably flourishing town, but of bad repute for robberies and Mussulman fanaticism. The dress of the inhabitants is peculiar and distinct. They wear no trousers, but a long blue and white striped cassock, reaching to the ankles, and bound round the waist by a broad red-leather girdle. It may be remembered that this is the dress which Holman Hunt has selected for our Saviour, in his picture of the Finding of Christ in the Temple. The place is surrounded by rich gardens well watered, and orange-groves, now laden with fruit; and many a palm-tree towers above the orchards.

There is a general impression that the date palm is now scarce in Palestine. This cannot be said of the maritime region, or of any of the more sheltered cultivated districts. It does not exist in the hill country, where the climate must always have forbidden its growth; but, as we have seen, it abounds near Sidon, Acre, Caiffa, and many other villages. Even about Nazareth there are many trees laden with dates in the hollows; and here, at Jenîn, they are the feature of the scenery. The olive now becomes more plentiful, for we are approaching Mount Ephraim, where we have many a mile to ride under its sombre but pleasant shade, and where it continues to be more extensively cultivated than in most other parts of the country. We had time, before darkness called us in to dinner, to take a ramble among the gardens; but beyond the large Egyptian owl (*Bubo ascalaphus*), we saw no bird of interest; and nothing more valuable than the hooded crow, the ordinary bird of the country, rewarded



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our exertions. The carrion crow of England has not been found in Syria, but the hooded crow takes its place, and, contrary to its habit here, remains throughout the year, as it likewise does in Egypt.

By the aid of the fleas, we were up long before dawn, and got the mules off before daybreak. The day's journey was to be a long one, as far as Nablous, the ancient Shechem, or Sychar, where we wished to spend the Sunday, making a detour to visit Sebustiyeh, or Samaria, and Dothan, the scene of Joseph's sale by his brethren. Our course lay south-west; and we rapidly left the great plain, bidding farewell, for the present, in succession, to the brow of Gilboa, the death-field of Josiah, and the rendezvous of Barak. Our road was generally up the olive-clad narrow valleys which lead from Manasseh's lot, the south-east portion of Galilee, to the bolder hills of Ephraim, with an occasional little plain, or upland enclosed basin, such as that of Dothan, the most interesting portion of our ride to Samaria. Just beneath Tell Dothan, which still preserves its name, is the little oblong plain, containing the best pasturage in the country, and well chosen by Jacob's sons, when they had exhausted for a time the wider plain of Shechem (Gen. xxxvii.). There is an ancient well, near a deserted village, round which possibly they sat, as we did for breakfast, talking over their bargain with the Midianites.

We kept, from Dothan, a route to the westward of the ordinary road, by Kubatiyeh and Jeba, and had a lovely ride of six hours among olive-groves, through gently sloping valleys, with occasionally a brisk gallop in the open bottom. In one of these was a sheet of water, merely the accumulation of rain which could find no exit; and in the shallows, small flocks of the beautiful stilted plover (*Himantopus melanopterus*, Gm.) were daintily wading, gracefully lifting their long pink legs, and half folding them under their white bellies, as they stopped, nodding and jerking forward

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their long necks in search of their insect food. Among the olive-trees we obtained again the black-headed jay, and several specimens of the woodpecker, with its bright red collar behind its neck. A splendid imperial eagle (*Aquila heliaca*, Gm.) came and hovered for some minutes over our path, but no gun was loaded for him at the moment. He was a sight such as the naturalist rarely sees so closely—jet black, with pure white shoulders, and white under the tail—he well deserved his imperial title. I have never, in any museum, seen so magnificent a spectacle.

We had just bid adieu to Hermon, of which we had our last peep towering over the hills of Manasseh. As we passed the defiles, furrowed by deep gorges to our left, the east wind came down in violent gusts through these funnels, with such sudden violence as to make our horses swerve. These were the passes so often and so valiantly held by Ephraim and Manasseh in their wars, and through one of these the Syrian king must have marched when he attempted to capture the prophet in Dothan. We only passed through one village, Sileh, on the side of a hill, with a fountain above it, after leaving Arrabeh, close to Dothan, on our right. We found afterwards, on searching for these names, that we had been preceded by Maundrell in this route more than a century and a half ago; but could not find them identified or alluded to by later travellers. At Sileh we were well cursed and abused for dogs as we rode through, sorry that so pleasantly situated a village was not better inhabited. We were here an hour from Sebustiyeh (Samaria), and from the brow of a hill soon after we obtained our first view of a part of the ancient metropolis. A few tall columns stood in rows, marking the site, on the slope of a sort of amphitheatre of low hills. The hills had been industriously terraced, and the terraces were still in some measure preserved. These, when viewed from the height, presented somewhat the appearance of a carefully



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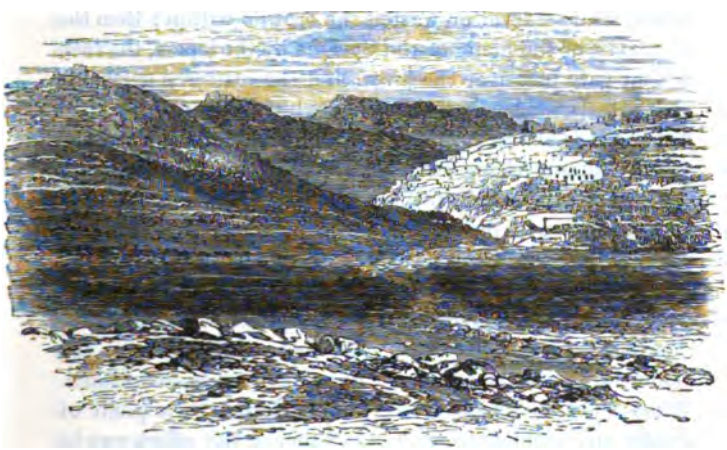
and trimly-cut flower-garden, with beds of all shapes, the ever-varying sizes and heights of the terrace-sides forming the earthen beds. The walls were all of limestone, very chalky, and we met with no more traces of basalt south of Shunem.

Before proceeding to the Moslem village of Sebustiyeh, we examined the lonely columns in this nook on the north side, now completely isolated from the other remains. They seem to be the remains of a colonnade, erected at the Herodian period, which ran round this natural amphi-theatre—if I may so call it. There are but sixteen left standing, some not more than ten feet apart; but none of the capitals remain, and it is difficult to make out whether they belonged to the *façade* of a building or were merely the ornaments of a street, like those of Gerash. They are all partially buried in the soil, and not above fourteen feet remain above ground, in their present position. Thence we went to the village, which occupies, perhaps, the centre of the ancient city. It is not large, and is built entirely of stones from the ancient edifices. Its inhabitants are all Moslem, and bear no good reputation; but, both on this and on a subsequent occasion, we found them civil and obliging, and ready to point out whatever they fancied might be of interest to us; though, until they saw the prospect of backshîsh, they scowled and muttered innocuous curses. The track down the village was so difficult, that, as at Nazareth, I found myself once on the top of a house, looking into the yard; but, happily, the roof was so strong that my horse did not intrude on the domestic privacy of the inhabitants.

We visited the noble church of St. John, round which the modern village clusters, one of the finest Christian ruins in Palestine, now perverted into a mosque, which, however, we were allowed to enter, under the guidance of the mollah. The nave is roofless, with the apse and traces of the altar at the end; but the transepts have been covered in. There

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are many broken tablets marked with the mutilated cross of the knights of St. John ; and a little modern wely built inside covers what is shown as the tomb of John the Baptist, and reverenced as a Mussulman shrine. We descended by some steps to a little vault, where it is pretended he was beheaded. But, apart from these apocryphal traditions, the pillars, pointed arches, and round-topped windows are very fine, though not in any pure style of Gothic architecture.



SEBUSTIYEH (SAMARIA).

We mounted, and rode from the church to the top of the flat hill behind, where are the finest remains of the Roman Samaria, in a long street of columns like those in the amphitheatre below, the numbers of which we did not attempt to count. There must be more than eighty standing, and the bases of many more still remain, forming the groundwork of a long double colonnade, about fifty feet in width, leading to a ruined triumphal arch, or city gate, at the western extremity. From this we had a noble view of

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the plain of Sharon, of the proximity of which we had no previous idea, and of the Mediterranean beyond. Looking round, there was many a peep over rich valleys, studded with olives, and small fertile plains; but the platform on which Samaria stood is in one remarkable particular somewhat like that of Jerusalem, in being enclosed on all sides by other hills, which more or less command it. How often from this spot must the besieged Israelites have gazed upon the Syrian hosts investing their city on all sides! One could picture, in fancy, the camp of Benhadad in that valley below, while starvation wasted the crowds within; then the discovery of the panic of the Syrians by the lepers, the rush at that gate just over the brow, and the scattered garments and vessels along that valley by which the invaders had fled towards the east. When, again, we looked down at the gaunt columns rising out of the little terraced fields, and the vines clambering up the sides of the hill once covered by the palaces of proud Samaria, who could help recalling the prophecy of Micah: "I will make Samaria as an heap of the field, and as plantings of a vineyard; and I will pour down the stones thereof into the valley, and I will discover the foundations thereof"? Not more literally have the denunciations on Tyre or on Babylon been accomplished. What though Sebaste rose, under Herod, to a pitch of greater splendour than even old Samaria, the effort was in vain, and the curse has been fully accomplished. In the whole range of prophetic history, I know of no fulfilment more startling to the eye-witness in its accuracy than this.

We rode down into the little valley which leads up to Nablous, watered by a bright rill which supplies the place; but on asking drink from a woman who was filling her pitcher, we were angrily and churlishly refused—"The Christian dogs might get it for themselves"—"How is it that thou, being a Christian, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria?" Thence, taking a shorter cut than

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the winding gulley, we crossed some rugged hills, heaps of stones, and rocks with scarce a vestige of soil, like cart-loads of building-stones tumbled about, at once suggesting that stoning must have been the ready and natural mode of punishment in such a country. Stones, stones everywhere form the feature of hill and valley alike, equally in the fertile and the barren portions of the Holy Land. But the peculiar feature of these hills was that they were a mass of rock, not bare, as in many cases, nor covered with scanty mould, as in most, but simply with sharply broken and angular fragments, detached, probably, by the combined action of heat and moisture through long ages of exposure.

Having crossed the hill, we entered the rich vale of Shechem, or Nablous, clad with olives, full of gardens and orange groves with palm-trees, and watered by plenteous rills. It was the brightest and most civilized scene we had met with. Passengers on horse and foot, many of them unarmed, were travelling to and fro; camels, in long file, laden with cotton-bales, were mingled with asses bearing firewood and baskets of cotton-husks to the city; and wild horsemen were galloping in and out as they skilfully threaded their way among the laden beasts. Jays and woodpeckers laughed among the olive-trees, and a fox slunk past us to his hole; while the home-like caw of the jackdaw, whose acquaintance we had not before made in the country, was re-echoed from the poplar-trees and the minarets.

Arrived at the gate of the town, no tents were to be seen; and we found that our muleteers, in defiance of our orders, had taken our baggage to the Protestant School-house, telling the master they had directions to that effect from Mr. Zeller. We were provoked at the liberty taken, and still more at the falsehood; but our Arabs evidently thought us most ungrateful for the good turn they had done us in obtaining comfortable quarters. It was too

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late to make any change, for the sun had set. We submitted to our servants' arrangements with what grace we might, and found ourselves comfortably installed in the Chapel-school of the Church Missionary Society—a neat little upper chamber, fitted up for a church on Sundays, and a school through the week. The catechist was an intelligent young native, who spoke a little English, having been educated at the Bishop's Diocesan School in Jerusalem. We explained the mistake to him; but he was eager to receive us, and assured us the room had frequently before been devoted to hospitality.

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## CHAPTER VII.

*Nablous – Its Trade — Cotton—Sunday in the Mission School — Bishop Bowen— Arabic Service—A Protestant from Gilead—Shalem—Jacob's Well—Associations of the Scene—Value of Wells—Joseph's Tomb—Moisture of Shechem—Gerizim and Ebal—Fruit-trees—Joshua's Assembling of Israel — Distance to which Sound Travels — Samaritan Temple — Altar Platform — Landscapes — The Moriah of Abraham — Samaritan Synagogue—Rolls and Manuscripts—The Priest Amram—Commissions for Jerusalem.*

NABLOUS is by far the best town we had seen since we left Beyrout, and its houses are, as a rule, superior to those of Jerusalem. The streets are cleaner, and often a little mill-stream of purest water ripples down the centre; for Shechem was pre-eminently "a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills." The side-streets are often like low cellars, quite dark, vaulted and narrow: and so low, that the passengers can scarcely stand upright, except in the centre of them. No windows can be seen, only the little low doors, all carefully fastened. Yet there is an incongruous but valuable importation here from the West. Among the low Oriental domes and the tall palms which here and there wave over the courtyards of Nablous, rises a large modern structure of yesterday—neither more nor less than a cotton-mill! The chimney is absent, for it is merely a great warehouse and place for cleaning the cotton for exportation; but even without that adjunct, the cotton factory in Shechem was as grotesque in appearance as in idea. The busy hum of the cotton-gins greeted us on all sides, and heaps of cotton-husks lay about the streets

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Cotton, in consequence of the war in America, had at this time become the staple of the place; and though we had seen everywhere the signs of a nascent cotton-trade, yet in no place was it so developed as here. It is one of the few towns where the Moslems seem not indifferent to trade, and the only one in the country, so far as I know, where the commerce is in their sole hands. Indeed, the population of Nablous is chiefly Mussulman. Out of 9,000 souls, for it has recently much increased, there are not more than 650 Christians, not 200 Samaritans, and still fewer Jews. The Protestant congregation numbers 26 heads of families, chiefly, but not exclusively, gathered from among the Greeks, and is now an organized community, with its civil chief, or headman, recognized by the Government.

Soon after dawn the desks and forms, which had been heaped on the covered terrace outside our lodging, to make way for our baggage, changed places with it; for we were up early, and breakfasted outside, that the room might be ready for the Morning Service, conducted by the catechist, at eight o'clock—or the second hour, as he called it. We were much interested in the prospect of witnessing for the first time a native Arabic service—held, too, without European supervision. Our interest was deepened by the recollection that Nablous was for several years the chosen field of labour of the devoted missionary, John Bowen, who consecrated his life and ample fortune to this work, until he was called upon to occupy that foremost post of honour and of danger, the Missionary Bishopric of Sierra Leone, where, too soon for the Church, he succumbed to the deadly climate. Since his departure, the post at Nablous has been relinquished as affording but small encouragement; but the Bishop of Jerusalem has been enabled to maintain there the school and native catechist, by means of his Diocesan Fund. Still, the name of John Bowen, the "priest of the black beard," lingers in the loving memory of many, both

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Christian and Mohammedan, about Nablous. His works do follow him, and he is mourned as a father, not only by the little flock he gathered round the cross, but by those whom his large-hearted benevolence and kindness won to revere and love even "a Christian dog." For bigotry and fanaticism are considered to be more strongly marked in the inhabitants of this district than in any other, and many travellers have complained of the insults, and even violence, to which they have been exposed. There had also been an outbreak, and a massacre of the Christians, before the rising of 1860. Whether it be that the presence of a Turkish garrison (whose tattoo and reveille, performed by French-taught drummers, morning and evening, awake the echoes of Ebal and Gerizim) has repressed their antipathies, I cannot say, but beyond the harmless muttered curses on "the dogs," a few innocuous scowls, and the boys occasionally spitting on our boots as we rode through the streets, we were never molested during three visits which we paid to Nablous. I have wandered alone, and sometimes unarmed, over the hills and through the groves, and trespassed in many a garden round Nablous, as I should not have ventured to do in some other places of better repute.

As the congregation assembled, they turned into the schoolmaster's house, which occupied the opposite face of the terrace, and sat down on mats in a circle round the wall. As soon as a catechist and several natives from an outlaying village had arrived, they entered the chapel; some sitting on the school-forms, but the countryfolks evidently preferring a mat on the ground. They were twenty-six, all men; for Oriental prejudice is, as yet, far too strong among them to permit of the mingling of the sexes, even for worship, except on very rare occasions, We were told, however, that on the great festivals the women do attend, and that they would all be there on Christmas-day, when the back part of the room would be screened off for their accommodation. In rank and costume,

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there was as striking a variety here as in the streets without. The front seats were occupied by young men in their "Sunday best," red or purple fez, bright slashed jackets, and trousers of gaudy hue, with the patent leather shoes and white stockings so affected by all young Greeks and Turks of fashion. The villagers squatted in their brown abeyahs and cotton under-garments; but among them were two or three noble-looking Bedouin, tall and sinewy, with their striped abeyahs, or cloaks,—their striped yellow kafiehs bound round their heads with the agyle, or worsted rope, and hanging with a straggling fringe over their shoulders. Almost all had Prayer-books, and knew how to use them. We, too, were able to follow the service, in some degree, by the aid of our English Prayer-books, and felt the value of our common form, though in a strange tongue. The responses were raised with hearty and sonorous voices, although without singing or chanting, which are a characteristic and striking part of most of the Arabic services I have elsewhere attended. The catechist concluded with a short sermon, read from a printed Arabic book, interspersed with animated comments of his own; after which, I took my place within the rails, and addressed my fellow-Christians in English, while the catechist of the neighbouring village, who had a good knowledge of our language, interpreted fluently, sentence by sentence. The place and the Advent season naturally suggested the text and the subject—"Messias cometh, which is called Christ; when He is come, He will tell us all things;" and our worship was concluded with the blessing.

The service over, we were requested to follow the congregation into the schoolmaster's house, to be introduced, in due form, to our newly-found brethren. Seated on carpets which were reserved for us on the daïs at the further end of the chamber, our hands were kissed, and all due compliments passed, between the whiffs of the long chibouks which all of them had resumed on leaving the

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chapel. Regrets were expressed that our coming had not been announced, as there were children awaiting an opportunity of baptism, and a marriage was impending. The chief of the community entrusted me with letters for the Bishop, and gave many details on the numbers, progress, welfare, and many difficulties of the congregation. Among the latter was the common one of false brethren, who had joined them for a time, out of pique with their own priest, and had soon fallen back.

I had been struck with the noble bearing of one of the Bedouin of whom I spoke, whose long gun stood against the door, and asked for a special introduction to him. He told me he was a native of the Haurân, and an inhabitant of Es Salt, on the other side of Jordan, the ancient Ramoth Gilead. He had had few opportunities of personal intercourse with Protestants, but had been led to our Church by the purchase of an Arabic Prayer-book, during his travels on business. There had been an attempt made to establish a school at Es Salt; but the combined opposition of Turks and Greeks (of whom there are several there) was too strong, and he remarked, Bishop Gobat's arm was not long enough to reach across Jordan. His family, my new acquaintance told me, were almost the only Protestants on the other side, and, excepting when at Nablous occasionally on business (he was a wool merchant), "I must pray alone," said he; but added, after a pause, "God can hear on the other side Jordan." He told us he had never seen but one European there, and expressed a hope, that when we should carry out our intention of visiting Gilead, we would come and see him, as he could point out many ruins which, he declared, were perfectly unknown to travellers. He inscribed his name in my note-book, and I gave him my card. Months afterwards, when the circumstance of meeting him had quite escaped my memory, it was recalled by his slipping my own card into my hand in the bazaar at Es Salt.

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One Sunday afternoon was devoted to visiting the most hallowed spot near Shechem, the place in which our Lord sat and rested on His journey—Jacob's Well. The distance is nearly half an hour from the modern city, but it is evident that the ancient town lay more to the east, among the rough rocks and stone that strew the unenclosed and scattered olive-yards for a mile and a half. As we passed through these, Ebal's green side sloped away more gently to the north, and the bold face of Gerizim stood out more steeply, pierced with caves and moistened by springs on our left. The narrow valley almost suddenly opens on the rich plain of Shechem. A wretched hamlet of a few hovels surrounded by low-walled gardens fills the mouth of the valley. To the north a road through the open bean-fields leads to the village of Askar, or Azmut, about 500 yards distant, with a few old trees just at the eastern foot of Mount Ebal; then turning east it proceeds to Salim, an open village in the plain, identified by Dr. Robinson with the Shalem, in front of which Jacob encamped after his passage of the Jabbok and his meeting with his brother Esau. From the Jabbok he crossed the fords of the Jordan, not surely at the northern ford by the Wady Yâbis, where Dr. Robinson has placed Succoth, but much lower down, opposite that valley which we can see opening out just in front of us across the plain, and down which the little stream from Shechem drains into the Jordan. Up that wady he leisurely drove his flocks when he had left his "booths" in the scorched Ghor, and so he may naturally have been led to halt and pitch in front of the village on the plain, which still retains the name of Salim. Conversing as we walked, on the precious associations which crowd into that narrow space between Ebal and Gerizim, we wandered on, regardless of the distance, and had reached the village of Salim before we thought of looking for Jacob's Well. A few flowers had anticipated spring, and beguiled the way—our first scarlet anemones,

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the lilies of the field, were gathered to-day on the plain of Shechem. The village seemed modern and insignificant; we took a hasty glance at it, with its springs or fountains, and not observing any vestiges of antiquity, remarked, "This is Salim," and turned back. At the moment Jacob's Well was uppermost in our thoughts. To it we returned.

Two hundred yards in front of the village at the mouth of the valley, is a low mound formed of ruins, surrounded by a broken wall, which encloses the remains of buildings and several prostrate columns. As first seen in winter, there is an aspect of dreary desolation about the spot. We clambered over the stones, and towards the eastern end of the ruined enclosure came upon the remains of a square-vaulted chamber, a portion of the roof of which has fallen in, and which had been erected in later times over the mouth of the well for convenience and protection. On descending into the chamber we found an irregular pile of stones over the mouth of the well, leaving only a narrow aperture, but sufficiently wide to enable us to look down into the shaft. We lighted twists of paper, and sent them down in succession, so that for several minutes we could observe the sides and bottom of the well. The width of the bore is about nine feet, the upper portion built in with neatly-dressed and squared stones like the masonry of the wells of Beersheba, the lower portion hewn, to all appearance, out of the solid rock. The well was still deep, about seventy-five feet, though evidently choked with many feet of rubbish. At the bottom there was no water, but broken stones and some wet mud, showing that it had recently contained water, which indeed we found there afterwards in the month of March.

We mounted to the edge of the old vault, and read together John iv., the first unfolding of a spiritual religion for the whole world. Just there had our Lord sat, probably looking, as we did, towards Mount Gerizim, with that long, dusty road which He had wearily travelled (the

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Wady Mokhna) full in view, while doubtless some trees, palm, olive, or terebinth then overshadowed the mouth of the well, and sheltered the weary wayfarer. When He sat there, the rich plain of Ephraim was not, as now, bare and wintry, but carpeted with a rich expanse of green corn, for it was "yet but four months, and then cometh harvest." (John iv. 35.) The noble temple of Gerizim, even then a ruin, every glance at which would shoot a bitter pang into the Samaritan heart, stood just on the brow at the corner of the mount, commanding from on high the entrance to the narrow valley up which the disciples had gone to purchase provisions, while He entered not the semi-Gentile city. That chapter of St. John, read by Jacob's Well, brings vividly home the accuracy of the narrator. The woman coming down to the venerated well for water, her bitter prejudice against the Jew who asked her to give Him drink even under the shadow of that temple which his people had destroyed,—"our fathers worshipped in this mountain;" the green corn suggesting to His mind in prophetic reverie the coming harvest of the Gentile world; the disciples returning down the glen, and in mute astonishment not daring to interrupt His conversation with the woman: every incident of the story comes home as we read and meditate. Among the wrangling disputes which have perplexed the antiquarian and the geographer, and have cast doubt on so many sacred localities, it is indeed a satisfaction to know that here at least we are on a spot on the identity of which there has never arisen any serious question. Dean Stanley speaks of it as "absolutely undisputed." Jews and Samaritans, Christians and Mohammedans, unite in attesting it. Eusebius and Jerome mention it, and the latter refers to the Christian Church built over it, whose ruins and granite columns now encumber its mouth, while no other spot could so perfectly harmonise all the incidents of the inspired narrative. The very ruins are in keeping with the

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scene, and we could not but hope that the Latins may long defer the restoration of the church, for which it is said they have obtained a firman, but against the execution of which the Greeks have put in a counter claim.

The sinking of a well in the East is a greater work than the erection of a castle or fortress, and, whether the wells be those of Abraham at Beersheba, or of Jacob at Shechem, they hand down the name of their constructor from generation to generation, as the benefactor of posterity. It is the supply of water and the well that decide the site of the Eastern city, and while the walls and even the whole position of the place, as at Nazareth, may be changed, the fountain and the well can never move.

How truly in keeping with Jacob's peace-loving character, as has been observed, was this act of sinking a well in the plain at such enormous cost, so near the city and its abundant springs and rills; fearing lest his sons should be brought into collision with the men of Shechem concerning that water which was far more precious than land. The land might be roamed over by his flocks, for the inhabitants were few; but the springs were not to be drunk up by the herds of the stranger. Therefore, following the examples of his father and his grandfather, Jacob determined to sink a well, but, profiting by the remembrance of their experience at Beersheba, with characteristic caution he first purchased the piece of land of the lord of the country—of Hamor the father of Shechem. (Gen. xxxiii. 18.)

When we rose from the side of Jacob's Well, a few paces brought us, doubtless still treading on that very parcel of a field which Jacob had bought for 100 pieces of money, to the reputed site of Joseph's tomb. It lies between the well and the little village of Askar, where there is a copious spring, and where, if the nomenclature would only permit, one would feel disposed to place the ancient Shalem, so exactly would it satisfy all the requirements of the text. It stands just where the south-eastern



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corner of the range of Ebal begins to rise from the plain. There is nothing remarkable in the appearance of this little whited sepulchre, yet there seems little reason to question the identity of the spot. A low wall incloses an open wely or chapel some twelve feet square, and inside—not exactly in the middle, but placed diagonally across from north-west to south-east—is a simple raised tomb, about three feet high, under which are said to rest the bones of Joseph. It has been preserved from molestation from age to age by the common reverence in which the patriarch is held by Jew, Samaritan, Christian, and Moslem alike, while the fact of his name being the common property of all, has prevented any one of them from appropriating and disfiguring by a temple the primitive simplicity of his resting-place. Thus, too, if report says truth, the fear of the indignation of the population of Nablous recently prevented an effort to search the tomb in the hope of depositing the mummy of Joseph on a shelf in the Louvre. The walls have many modern Hebrew inscriptions written or scratched, but the building has no marks of antiquity, and is simply whitewashed from time to time. "And the bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel brought up out of Egypt, buried they in Shechem, in a parcel of ground which Jacob bought of the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem." (Josh. xxiv. 32.) *

Night was coming on before we could draw ourselves away from these hallowed spots, when a half-hour's walk under the olive-trees transported us back from the patriarchs to the bustling cotton-market of Nablous. Our host joined us at our English Evening Service, and at its conclusion we found the Samaritan guide Yacoob-esh-Shelaby, well known to every English visitor, waiting with

* Since the above was written, the inclosure has been restored by the care of Mr. Rogers, H.B.M. Consul at Damascus.

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EBAL AND GERIZIM, FROM NABLOUS (SYCHEM).

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a compliment of three bottles of wine, an invitation to his house, and an offer to be our guide over Gerizim. The examination of the sacred mountain and of the Samaritan synagogue were well worth another day, and we did not grudge it.

We enjoyed a view of the fine sunrise from the roof of the school, though we were by this time familiar with the really beautiful landscape, which is, I think, the richest in Palestine, and which, according to Van de Velde, owes the variety of its tints to the exceptional moisture of the valley. It is, like Damascus, one of those sites destined by nature to be a city, and where man, whenever he exists there at all, is sure to congregate. It is the very centre point of Palestine, the artery through which all must pass between north and south. Our stand-point presented the city in a somewhat different aspect from that which is gained from other positions. We were on the southern edge of the town on the rise of Gerizim, and the city seemed spread out in line along the valley, pleasingly broken by the groups of dark orange-trees and occasional palm-trees, rather than in the compact form which it assumes when viewed from either of the enclosing hills. Nablous leans on Gerizim and avoids Ebal, at the foot of which, in front of us, was a small level space covered with ancient olive-trees, and rich green turf below them, more English than Syrian in its elasticity and fineness. Its sides are clad for some way up with the smooth variety of the prickly pear, cultivated for the sake of rearing the cochineal insect, so valuable for its crimson dye. Gerizim facing north seemed more bare and scarped; caves and springs diversified its face. Up the little wadys or nullahs which furrowed its side rich fruit orchards of orange, almond, pomegranate, peach, and fig-trees climbed till the rocks were too bare to support them; while on the highest brow we could just see the wely or Mohammedan chapel which marks the site of the ancient Samaritan temple.



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As we afterwards ascended Gerizim with Shelaby we noticed the many caves or hollows, from one of which Jotham must have issued forth to utter in the ears of the men of Shechem the first parable on record. There he looked upon the olive and fig-trees below, and to the bramble clinging to the rocks by his side for his illustration. The acoustic properties of this valley are interesting, the more so that several times they are incidentally brought to our notice in Holy Writ, as on this occasion, when we are told that Jotham "went and stood in the top of Mount Gerizim, and lifted up his voice, and cried and said unto them, Hearken unto me, ye men of Shechem" (Judg. ix. 7), and also in Josh. viii. 33, when, at a far more eventful period, we read that all Israel were gathered together there, "half of them over against Mount Gerizim, and half of them over against Mount Ebal," when Joshua "read all the words of the law, the blessings and cursings, according to all that is written in the book of the law . . . . . before all the congregation of Israel, with the women and the little ones and the strangers that were conversant among them." This very statement has been made the ground for a recent objection against the veracity of the narrative. Yet it is impossible to conceive a spot more admirably adapted for the purpose than this one, in the very centre of the newly acquired land, nor one which could more exactly fulfil all the required conditions. Let us imagine the chiefs and the priests gathered in the centre of the valley, the tribes stretching out as they stood in compact masses, the men of war and the heads of families, half on the north and half on the south, crowding the slopes on either side, the mixed multitude, the women and the children, extending along in front till they spread into the plain beyond, but still in sight: and there is no difficulty, much less impossibility, in the problem. A single voice might be heard by many thousands, shut in and conveyed up and down by the enclosing hills.

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In the early morning we could not only see from Gerizim a man driving his ass down the path on Mount Ebal, but could hear every word he uttered as he urged it on; and in order to test the matter more certainly, on a subsequent occasion two of our party stationed themselves on opposite sides of the valley, and with perfect ease recited the commandments antiphonally.

In the base of Mount Gerizim is a very curious natural recess, eastward of the modern city, so regular that it looks as if hollowed artificially out of the rocky roots of the mountain, now a sacred enclosure of the Moslems, and called "*el Amud*," *i.e.*, "the Pillar." Exactly opposite, in the base of Mount Ebal, is a similar natural amphitheatre. Within the enclosure on the Gerizim side the Mohammedans, who alone are permitted to enter, state that there still stands a column. In Joshua (xxiv. 26), we read that at the great national gathering at Shechem, Joshua "wrote these words in the book of the law of God, and took a great stone, and set it up there under an oak that was by the sanctuary of the Lord." Two hundred years later we read that "All the men of Shechem gathered together . . . . . and went and made Abimelech king by the oak of the pillar that was in Shechem" (Judg. ix. 6, marg. reading). Uninterruptedly for ages down has the place been held sacred. Epiphanius, writing in the fourth century, remarks, "There is at Sichem, which is now called Neapolis, a praying-place outside the city, resembling a theatre, situated two miles from the city, which the Samaritans, who imitate the Jews in all things, have built in an open court." To the Samaritan has succeeded the Moslem. But all alike, little knowing its marvellous history, have held in veneration this sacred spot without a breach of continuity for well nigh 3,500 years.

When half way up Gerizim we turned round and mounted the shoulder of the hill till we came to a little plateau perhaps 150 feet below the summit. Here the

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place of the Samaritan sacrifice was pointed out, the holes in which the lambs are roasted, and the pit into which the bones and offal are cast to be burnt. We then climbed to the top, once crowned by the ancient temple destroyed by Hyrcanus, which was afterwards restored, then changed to a Christian church, and now shrunk into a miserable Mohammedan wely, rudely constructed in the centre of the ruins. It is to be noted that the sight by no means overhangs the city of Shechem, but rather the eastern plain, the well of Jacob and the tomb of Joseph. It is at the north-eastern brow of the range, inside the remains of a massive wall, probably erected by Justinian as a sort of fortress round the Christian church. The stones are of great size, of the same limestone of which the hill is composed, neatly bevelled round the edges, but undressed on the face, in fact the third and latest type of the bevel. The number of ancient deep wells both within and without the enclosure is remarkable; all of them, so far as we could see, were now dry. About 200 yards to the southward, and apparently in the rear of the ancient Christian church, was a row of twelve stones in the ground, pointed out to us as the stones of the *ten tribes*, brought up by Joshua, from the Jordan, and a few paces further on was the spot esteemed most holy by our guide. This is a large bare rock sloping towards the west, and having a deep cave or well in its rear, apparently used, if this were the stone of sacrifice, for the drainage of the blood and offal. The correspondence between this and the pierced rock of the Sakhra in the centre of the Mosque of Omar, the presumed site of the great altar of burnt sacrifice, strikes the observer at once. It is not improbable that the Samaritan temple was in its type accommodated to that of Solomon, so far as difference of position admitted; and that on this principle the hollow behind the great altar was excavated.

We climbed by a broken staircase to the roof of the wely, without offending an old devotee who was there,

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and thence enjoyed a prospect unique in the Holy Land. That from the summit of Nebo surpasses it in extent, that from Mount Gilead, perhaps, in grandeur of effect, but for distinctness and variety of detail Gerizim has no superior. We thought we had bid adieu to Hermon, but once more it rose before us in spotless purity far beyond and above Tabor, Gilboa, and the lesser hills of Galilee. On our right we could trace the trans-Jordanic range from the Sea of Galilee, Baasan, Ajlun, Gilead, down to Moab. On the left, the Mediterranean formed the horizon from Carmel perhaps to Gaza; while Joppa and Cæsarea could be distinctly recognized. The southern view was more limited, being shut in by the hills of Benjamin. At our feet to the right was spread the long plain of Mokhna, into which the vale of Shechem debouches, where Jacob pastured his flocks, and where there was ample space for the tents of Israel when gathered thither by Joshua. All Central Palestine could be taken in at a glance, and the lesson of geography could not easily be forgotten. We looked straight down upon the parcel of ground, Jacob's first possession, marked by the tomb of his son, and the well which his fear of the men of Shechem impelled him to sink. Above our heads no less than six imperial and golden eagles kept circling almost within shot, as wondering at our intrusion.

There are many writers who feel disposed to add to the associations of Gerizim one more sacred still—believing it to be the spot on which Abraham offered up Isaac. The origin of this theory is primarily the Samaritan tradition. But this surely is of little weight, for the Samaritans have very naturally taken care to appropriate to themselves and their holy places as many of the patriarchal sites as possible, and the bitter rivalry between the claims of Jerusalem and Gerizim would induce them eagerly to seize any ground for honouring Joseph above Judah. Some of the arguments for Gerizim have a strong *primâ*

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*facie* plausibility as contrasted with the site of Solomon's Temple; as, for instance, Abraham lifting up his eyes and seeing the place "afar off," which, strictly true of Gerizim from all points of the compass, is not applicable to the Temple site. But the words "afar off" as a measure of distance are most vague and indefinite, and "the place" might be taken in a wider sense than the exact rock on which he was to devote his son. Not indefinite, however, is the statement that it was on the third day that he reached the neighbourhood, and though "afar off," it was not so far but that he could calculate upon arriving at the spot, though delayed by the burden of the wood, performing the sacrifice, and returning to his young men before sunset, else he would have taken provisions with him. Now, travelling at the ordinary rate of the country, Jerusalem would just be reached on the third day from Beersheba—to reach Nablous in the same time *is impossible* * at the pace of fellahin with their asses. Nor will it remove the difficulty to suppose Abraham to have travelled by the plain of Sharon. The time occupied would be as long, and the fatigue to the ass, if not to the pedestrian, greater. I have traversed and timed these routes repeatedly in a greater or less portion of their course, and feel satisfied that so long as the sacred text remains as it is, "on the third day," the claims of Gerizim are untenable. There is certainly also a peculiar fitness in the offering of the type having taken place on the same spot as the offering of the Antitype, the great oblation for the sins of the whole world.

We descended the mountain at this north-eastern corner, instead of winding by the side valleys, and passed through the long street by the fine façade of a ruinous mosque over a crusaders' church, but which no Christian

* Well-mounted Europeans frequently ride in one day from Nablous to Jerusalem; but their muleteers and baggage occupy two days. The traders or carriers usually camp at Beitin, or Beeroth.

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can enter. The hum of the cotton-bow murmured on every side, and the walls were dripping with the juices of cochineal and indigo, as the webs of silk or cotton were hung out to dry. In the fountain at the east end of the town, about the first which drains towards the Jordan (for Nablous is just on the water-shed of the eastern and western slopes), we noticed a number of tiny fish, and, using our pocket-handkerchiefs for nets, with the assistance of a good-natured negro, who had just finished his devotional ablutions, secured several specimens of the minnow-like *Cyprinodon cypris*, Heckel—a species quite different from those we obtained near the Dead Sea and in the Jabbok. Several fossils were also collected, ammonites and others of the lower chalk.

We afterwards went to visit the Samaritan synagogue, the only place of Samaritan worship in the world, unique in its form, in its creed, and its language. The building and its surroundings are in keeping with the position of the oppressed and obscure race to which it belongs. It is a venerable but humble edifice, strangely concealed from observation amongst a labyrinth of buildings, vaulted archways, and dark passages, through which we groped till we entered a little garden and a small clean court-yard, where we left our shoes, and entered the gloomy synagogue, scantily lighted from above, and consisting of a square nave, with a small transept at the end facing the door, and on the left, or east end, a chancel, or square recess, in which the sacred rolls are kept behind a curtain. There was some difficulty about obtaining a sight of the rolls, which was speedily surmounted by the payment of a liberal backshîsh, though before the curtain was drawn, and the precious treasure produced, Amram, the high priest, took care, by some pretext or other, to dismiss all the loungers of his co-religionists who had accompanied us. All wore the red turban, the peculiar badge of the sect, while white is appropriated to the Moslems, green being

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the exclusive colour of the shireefs or descendants of the Prophet, and black or purple left to the Jews and Christians.

The crimson turban of the Samaritans was noted by Sir John Mandeville five and a half centuries ago, and doubtless dates, like their other usages, from still higher antiquity.

When all save the junior priest and Shelaby had been put out, with much deference and trembling hands Amram brought forward the roll which was shown to the Prince of Wales, and which is well known by Mr. Bedford's photograph of its cylinder. The old man's frame convulsively quivered as he produced it, and he seemed to be in momentary dread of the fate of Uzzah, or at least of Uzziah, for his profanity in exposing the holy relics to the eyes of unbelieving strangers. We could not but fancy that the rolls are to these Samaritans the objects of intrinsic worship, their very gods. The graven image, the sculptured figure, the picture even, is shunned, but the *material* of the written word has taken their place as the object of visible adoration.

We were shown several other books of the law in the Samaritan, or, more strictly speaking, in the old Mosaic character; for here the Jews are the innovators, and, as Amram observed, Moses himself could not read his own law, as written by the "Yehudi." These books, though bearing the evidences of great antiquity, and seeming more venerable than the roll itself, were not rolls, but leaves of parchment, stitched together like a modern book, and wrapped in innumerable folds of silk handkerchiefs, which were severally and slowly opened out, so that darkness was upon us before we left the synagogue. Knowing, however, that there was an older roll by far, which had not been shown to us, we lingered and waited still, by no means discomforted by Amram's repeated declaration that we had seen all, and that even the Prince saw no more. A peculiar look and sign from the younger priest induced us to give up our quest, and to retire. He was a man of very different type from Amram: cunning and meanness were in his eye;

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nor has he the learning or the strong faith of his senior, whom he will one day succeed.

The same evening, with an air of the most solemn mystery, he informed us that for a liberal backshïsh he could show us all we wished to see, but that it could only be managed under a promise of secrecy. In the darkness of the night I was conducted alone to the synagogue. A light was struck at the door, and the priest, with an affectation of terror, as though he had been committing an act of sacrilege, admitted me, locked the door behind us, and silently held the light with trembling hand as the curtain was drawn and the rolls and their cylinders examined. The second roll we had seen before, but the oldest was now produced, wrapped in many folds of tarnished brocade and rich but faded satins. The case and appearance of this roll have been fully described by Mr. Grove in "Vacation Tourists," 1861. There is nothing about the old gilt cylinders to corroborate the assertion of their immense antiquity. Mr. Grove assigns to them a date of 450 years back. The roll itself is doubtless much earlier, though the Samaritans would have us believe it is in the handwriting of Abisha, the son of Phinehas, and the priest, with grave face, declared that Dean Stanley, when with the Prince, had concurred in this tradition. When I told him what the Dean had written on the subject, he laughed, and said that at any rate it was the work of Manasseh, the high priest in the time of Ezra. But if we take 1,000 or 1,500 years from this, it still remains a venerable relic. Dr. Deutsch considers that none of the Samaritan MSS. which have reached Europe are older than the 10th century A.D., but he would probably assign a much higher antiquity to this, the parent roll. We unfolded it to its commencement. The earlier portion, having been less exposed than the centre, which is annually kissed by the community, retained a freshness in the appearance of the parchment which to our unlearned eyes militated against its great antiquity.

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The writing appeared not of ordinary ink, but of some gilt or bronzed composition. The priest pointed out, not far from the middle of the roll, letters projecting from the ends of the irregular lines at intervals, and continued through several columns. This, he said, was the inscription stating the name of the transcriber and its date. Our ignorance of the Samaritan characters, of course, prevented our deciphering this quaintly-placed colophon.

It was nearly midnight when we quietly stole from the synagogue, mourning our ignorance of Samaritan, puzzled about the conflicting claims of antiquity, but quite convinced of one thing, that whenever the junior priest succeeds Amram, the fate of the old roll is sealed, and that the cylinders will enclose a modern copy so soon as a sufficient price has been offered for the original.

On leaving Nablous we had several business commissions to execute for our friends, which pleasantly illustrated the way in which communication and trade is still carried on in the East. For instance, bars of gold had been sent to the smith at Nablous to work, the note of the weight of which was shown us; then the article manufactured and the remainder of the ingot were weighed in our presence, and handed over to us, it being explained that so many grains were retained, as an English jeweller would term it, "for fashion." I suspect a London goldsmith would have been ill satisfied to work for such a sum. Among others, a young man entrusted to me a gold bracelet of considerable weight, but not of very artistic work, being, in fact, a string of small gold splints, or wedges, run together on a thread, which I was to place in the hands of a lady at Jerusalem, who was to deliver it to a young person in the school there. This information was conveyed with much hesitation and circumlocution; in fact, as I afterwards discovered, I was to act the part of Eliezer, on behalf of Isaac to his Rebecca; and the bracelet I was conveying was a declaration and well-understood proposal of marriage.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

*Plain of Shechem—Lebonah—Alarm of Shepherds—Situation of Seilûn (Shiloh) Ruins – Reasons for its Selection by Joshua — Variety of Flowers—Ain Haramiyeh, The Robber's Well—Bethel—Ancient Cistern — Frost — Abraham's Camp — Ai — Michmash — Bireh or Beeroth — Crusading Church — Gibeah, Mizpeh, and Ramah — First View of Jerusalem—Russian Hospice—Camp by the Jaffa Gate—A Volunteer Sentry — Missions in Jerusalem — Jewish Converts' Quarter — Bishop Gobat's Schools—English Church—Visit to the Mosque of Omar—The Sakhra — Stone of Sacrifice — El Aksa — Vast Substructures — Immense Stones — Pillars — Arches — Golden Gate — Botany and Ornithology of the Haram—Doves, Ravens, and Crows—The Syrian Mole—Quarries of Jerusalem—Steps in the Rock to the City of David.*

FROM Nablous to Beitin, passing by Shiloh, we had a ten hours' ride to make. For several hours we wound up the narrowing valleys of Ephraim to its southern hills. The plain was rich and fertile—one vast unfenced corn-field, in which the rooks (the first we had seen) were following the ploughs, unconcerned at the strangers' approach. The surrounding hills were all ribbed by the ancient terraces to their tops, and on their lower slopes clad with gnarled blue olive-trees. A few hoary stragglers from the olive-yards still lingered in the plain, dotted here and there, and pleasantly relieving its monotony at the southern end; but not a house was to be seen, nor any other tree than these olives. Only here and there, on some hill-top, inaccessible to the Bedouin horseman, the low-built little cluster of hovels might be descried.

After four and a half hours, we had to climb a low rocky ridge in front, and from its crest turned to gaze on the rich

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portion of Ephraim which extended as far as the eye could reach, still as fertile and as thinly peopled as when first promised to Abraham, three thousand six hundred years ago. Descending the hill, we left an old bleak-looking village, Lubbân, the ancient Lebonah, on our right, and, a mile further on, halted at its gushing fountain, Ain Lubbân, with an extensive heap of ruins around it, apparently an old khan. Here we left our mules, to take the direct road to Bethel, turning ourselves, with two servants, to the eastward, to make a *détour* to the site and ruins of the holy Shiloh (now Seilûn)—"Shiloh, on the north side of Bethel, on the east side of the highway that goeth up from Bethel to Shechem, and on the south of Lebonah." (Judg. xxi. 19.)

The scanty, scrubby vegetation, the few sages, and the *Poterium spinosum*, which held a little scanty soil together by its roots among the rocks, at once bespoke a change in the character of the district. The birds, also, were different. We met again with the chats (*Saxicolinæ*) of the northern rocky hills; and the pretty black redstart, which we had not seen for many days, hopped from rock to rock. I obtained one chat, after a long pursuit, which struck us as being distinct from the others, and which proved to be the Arabian species (*Saxicola mœsta*, Licht.), the only specimen we ever saw.

A short turn in the wady, and then a scramble of two hundred yards up its side, brought us to Shiloh, the modern Seilûn. Its situation is, at least when visited in winter, most dreary and desolate. We had been gradually leaving the fertile lands of Ephraim, typified by the strong and sturdy, yet peaceful bullock, and were approaching the rugged, barren hills of Little Benjamin—barren and more forlorn than the most sterile districts of continental Greece. Shiloh is a mass of shapeless ruins, scarcely distinguishable from the rugged rocks around them, with large hewn stones occasionally marking the site of ancient walls. Generally however, the stones, if they ever were dressed or shaped,

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have utterly lost all traces of art, and are as shapeless and irregular as any flint that has been disinterred from the gravel-beds of Abbeville. There is one square ruin, probably a mediæval fortress-church, with a few broken Corinthian columns, the relics of previous grandeur. On the eastern slope of the hill, on the top of which this church is perched, is a fine terebinth-tree (the oak of Scripture), in front of a massive, half-buried vaulted building, with a flat roof, and some old Corinthian pillars within—a church transformed into a mosque. We crept into it on our hands and knees, but could find no trace of any sculpture or carving earlier than the Roman period. Not one relic could we trace which in any way pointed to earlier times among all the wasted stone-heaps which crowded the broken terraces. So utterly destroyed is the house of the ark of God, the home of Eli and of Samuel. "Go ye now unto My place which was in Shiloh, where I set My Name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of My people Israel." (Jer. vii. 12.)

We sat down on that desolate heap for luncheon, and then read the history of Eli and Samuel. Scarcely a tree, not a house, was in sight; straggling valleys, too open to be termed glens, within an amphitheatre of dreary, round-topped hills, bare and rocky without being picturesque, were the only characteristics of this featureless scene. What then one naturally asked, was the cause of the honour put upon Shiloh in making it the religious centre of Israel through so many generations, and the gathering-place whence the land was allotted to the tribes of Joshua? One reason may probably be found in this very natural unattractiveness, inasmuch as it was a protest against the idolatry of the people of the land, which selected every high hill and every noble grove as the special home of their gods; here being neither commanding peak nor majestic cedar, neither deep glen nor gushing fountain. But, moreover, it was a central point for all Israel, equi-

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distant from north and south, easily accessible to the trans-Jordanic tribes, and in the heart of that hill-country which Joshua first subdued, and which remained, to the end of Israel's history, the district least exposed to the attacks of Canaanitish or foreign invaders. There is so little to mark the spot, or to attract the traveller's notice, that it is only twenty-five years since it was re-discovered, in spite of the precision with which its site is pointed out in the Book of Judges, and of its Hebrew name having been handed down with so little variation of form. It is never mentioned by any of the historians of the Crusades, though the ruins attest its occupation at that period.

After descending the hill we rode along the rugged bed of a winter torrent, which had torn its deep course through a mass of diluvian gravel, covering the limestone. Fossils were plentiful in the rocks of Shiloh, all apparently of the chalk age. A small echinus (*Echinus syriacus*, Conrad), two gryphæas (*Gr. capuloïdes* and *Gr. vesicularis ?*), and several casts of a spiral univalve, as well as a fragment of an ammonite, were collected. As on Mount Carmel, the gryphæas were the characteristic fossils, and occurred in great masses. Both among the ruins, in the earth of the cultivated terraces, and in the gravel below, were numerous pieces of variously coloured mosaics and fragments of coarse pottery. Most of the mosaic pieces were of a coarse marble, different from the limestone of the locality, and indicating the extent or consequence of the place in the Roman period. As there is still much terrace-cultivation, the valley might have worn a less dreary aspect in spring. As it was, L. was delighted by quantities of the mandrake in full blossom, and a white crocus, which sprang out of every little cranny in the rocks. It seemed distinct from any species cultivated in England, and was the characteristic flower at this time through all the central hills. Along the coast we had found chiefly the yellow crocus, identical with our garden species, and a pale purple

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amaryllis, much resembling a crocus. It was interesting to note how sharply defined were the limits of most of the Palestine winter bulbs, and how frequently the characteristic flora changed. Some familiar favourites, like the beautiful cyclamen, smiled on us everywhere. But the separation of Judah and Ephraim seemed often to have reached their flowers, and the hills of Judæa and of Galilee yielded distinct crocuses, tulips, lilies, and sages, though climate and other conditions could vary but little.

An hour's ride brought us to the favourite camping ground of travellers from Jerusalem, Ain Haramîyeh (the Robber's Fountain), after a short *détour* of half a mile to the east to visit a fountain, and some empty and uninteresting rock-tombs, perhaps the ancient burying-place of Shiloh. The name of the Robber's Fountain may have been deservedly given, but at present European travellers need not shun the spot, presenting, as it does, the attractions of a plenteously-gushing spring in the hill-side, with a charming piece of turf for the tent-pegs in front of it, at the entrance of a lovely glen. Now as we leave the camping-ground behind us the scenery changes. For two hours we rode up the glen, terraced to its very top on both sides, the fig and olive trees covering the whole of the slopes and terrace-walls, and growing out of every chink in the rocks; while on each step of the terraces were patches of corn, cotton, or tobacco. Woodpeckers, jays, and little owls laughed, tapped, or hooted, as nature dictated, all up the valley, and gave us the opportunity of securing them in the bare fig-trees. At present the whole looked much like a forest of white coral, but we were told that in spring not a piece of rock can be seen. The maiden-hair fern hangs in luxuriant tresses round the fountains, and the ceterach fern peeps from all the crevices of the rocks, along with the lovely cyclamen, pink or white, and the little white crocus. No villages were in sight. They are all hidden in the recesses. Most of them are Christian, which



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accounts for the preservation of the terraces and the careful culture.

The sun was setting when we reached the head of the valley and rode over a rugged hill, on the south-east side of which we reached the ruins of Bethel (Beitin); among them a few wretched hovels are scattered. By a plenteous spring are the ruins of an enormous cistern, more than 300 feet by 200, inside which we found our tents pitched, while a bright moon lighted up the hill of Bethel. The south wall of the reservoir, under which we were camped on a piece of grassy sward, was entire, but the other sides were in decay. Among several acres of lines of foundations and hewn stones, the only distinguishable ruins in the moonlight were those of a Greek church in front of us, built out of the remains of some more classic edifice, of which the sculptured capitals and cornices occasionally peeped out. Jacob's altar and Jeroboam's abomination are alike obliterated. There is a strange and delightful charm in camping close by the fountain of Bethel, which was rippling in my ear as I wrote up my journal for the day, after reading the various chapters relating to Bethel's history, and then turned out to keep the second watch. In this rather lawless district, having no guard, we mounted sentry through the night by turns. "Why should you come to such τόποι κακώτατοι as Seilûn and Beitin?" asked Giacomo, as we beguiled the watch together. "No holy places here, and no pilgrims ever visit them. I have been dragoman to scores of Russians and Frenchmen, but it is only you Englishmen who come here. Perhaps you only care for places where there are no saints, as you do not adore them?" I tried in vain to explain to him how the place where Jacob slept and saw the vision of the ladder reaching to heaven was the place of all others where we should wish to sleep and feel our nearness to a watchful Providence: there were no saints of the calendar here, and beyond them his veneration could not stretch.

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In the morning we turned out at seven to find the grass white with hoar frost, and to enjoy our sponge bath if we could. It was not so easy for some of us to shake off the effects of camping in a cistern, which, though empty, was scarcely dry, and which had not been selected by our muleteers on sanitary principles. Leaving them to follow the straight route to Jerusalem with the animals and baggage, we struck across country to eastward to visit the Scriptural sites which crowd the little district of Benjamin. First on leaving Bethel we recall how Abraham made his second camp in the Land of Promise at "a mountain on the east of Bethel, having Bethel on the west, and Hai on the east." In the little grassy valley to the south-east of Bethel the patriarch's flocks and herds may have grazed, and that mountain to which he came must be the lofty rugged hill opposite, with a ruined tower and shapeless cairns on its top, to which we climbed,—now called Burj Makrûn. We rode on, and just east again is a rounded hill, covered with really extensive though undecipherable ruins. It is impossible to doubt what this place was, and that we stand on the site of Ai. The name has gone; the topographical indications are indisputable. Mr. Williams has drawn attention to the remarkable fact that the place has no name among the natives save "Tell," *i.e.*, "the heap." The word "Tell" is very common elsewhere as a prefix, *e.g.*, Tell Hum, Tell-Kadi. Here only it is used alone. Literally has the word of Scripture been fulfilled, "Joshua burnt Ai, and made it an heap (*Tell*) for ever, even a desolation unto this day" (Josh. viii. 28). Dreary and bleak as that spot is now, it may have been a lovely park-like glade, such as those we see in Gilead, with open pasturage shaded by well-wooded hills, when Abraham was induced to encamp there. Now there is nothing to relieve the brown and rounded limestone rocks, which rise into bare hills, without a tree to clothe them, and but few olives in the valleys or even round the villages.



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We can see where, in the Wady Harith, between the two cities, Joshua could have placed his ambush to the west, or "behind" Ai, unobserved by the defenders of either place. It is to be noted that from the summit of the hill between Bethel and Ai (Burj Makrûn), we could distinctly see the plain of the Jordan, but not from the lower sites. Now in the history recounted in Gen. xiii. Abraham arrives with Lot at the *same* "place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Hai, unto the place at the altar which he had made there at the first." This altar would probably be erected on *the hill*, and not in the plain below. If it were on this hill that Abraham generously offered the choice of the land to his nephew, Lot could from it have "lifted up his eyes and beheld all the plain of Jordan," but had the transaction taken place further west barely a glimpse of that plain would have been visible. We scarcely perceived at the time the great importance of the incidents mentioned in this chapter in their bearing on the topography of the Cities of the Plain. But these considerations must be deferred to the proper place.

Just across another wady, with many old caves and tombs, rises the indisputable Michmash, preserving its identity of name in the Arabic *Mukhmâs*, once a fortress, now a squalid village. We did not visit it this time, but on a subsequent occasion explored its neighbourhood, with the caves in which Saul's army hid themselves after the Philistines had driven them out of the citadel, and the ravine up which the king returned from Gilgal to Gibeah. (1 Sam. xiii. 15.) The ruins are, if possible, more desolate, but more massive, than those of Ai or of Bethel, and the city seems, by the fragments of columns, as well as by two large rock-hewn cisterns, to have continued to a later date.

From Deir Duwân we crossed back to Bireh, the ancient Beeroth, resuming here the ordinary Jerusalem road. During the whole of our ride, such was the barrenness of

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land, we had added neither bird, plant, nor insect to our collecting-boxes,—a blank absolutely without recurrence in our whole tour. Bireh, though merely a Moslem village with houses built of the fragments of former massive edifices, is well worth a visit, for the sake of the ruins of its noble old church raised by the knights of St. John, whose property the village once was. The apse, with the north and south walls, which are of enormous thickness, is quite perfect, and the architecture exhibits a curious transition from the Norman to the Early Pointed, or rather perhaps an attempt to engraft Byzantine on the latter. The capitals of each pilaster are distinct in their mouldings, no two being alike. Some of the villagers, who had been watching us sketching, came up, and inquired in all simplicity if there were any churches as large as that in England. After pausing a moment at the foot of the hill below Bireh, to admire and to drink from the fine old fountain with its little cupola roof, we rode on by a broken and almost impassable rocky track, but which once was a chariot road, carefully paved or hewn from the native rock, and in which the ruts of the ancient chariot-wheels can still be seen.

M. being unwell, we gave but a hurried glance to Jiba, the ancient Geba, and Er Ram, Ramah of Benjamin. From the former we could look back to Gilgal, as the Philistines from the keep looked towards the camp of Saul; and perhaps the fort which Jonathan captured was on the site of those large square stones and the corner of the tower to the top of which we climbed. The military topography both of Joshua's march from Gilgal and of Saul's great campaign against the Philistines can be well studied and understood from this spot. Ramah, the home and the tomb of Samuel, seemed to be reduced to its primitive elements, and, as we were assured that nothing was to be seen save a mosque formed out of a Crusading church, we contented ourselves with having mounted Geba, and went

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over the rocks—road there is none—to Tuleil-el-Fûl, the Gibeah of Saul. Dreary and desolate, scarcely any ruins, save a confused mass of stones, which form a sort of cairn on the top: yet here stood the city of the first king of Israel, the home of Saul. As we recall also the hideous deed of the men of Gibeah, the blighting doom seems to have settled over the spot. In our sight, to the west, stands out the rival top of Mizpeh (Nebi Samwi), where all Israel assembled to vow vengeance on the perpetrators of the crime within view of the scene itself.

But we must not linger, for we are approaching the Holy City, and all these sites may be visited hereafter.

A few moments brought us to the crest of the hill Scopus, whence Titus and the Crusaders had gazed on the devoted city with very different emotions. In the first sight of Jerusalem there is a thrill of interest which is scarcely weakened by repetition, and one can only pity the man who is not, for the moment at least, imbued with the pilgrim spirit, and does not feel the sight to be one of the privileges of his life. Enshrined in the depths of a Christian's affections, linked with every feeling of faith and hope,—"If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning." I had already in previous years approached Jerusalem from the west, south, and east; this was the first occasion on which we had looked at it from the north. On this side there is nothing to excite the feelings; if the mind were not absorbed in the associations evoked by those blue grey hills which enclose the little foreground in front, perhaps a sense of disappointment would steal over us. There is but one true approach to Jerusalem, and, if possible, even at the cost of some hours' *détour*, let the pilgrim endeavour to enter from the east, the favourite approach of our Lord, the path of His last and triumphant entry. It is a glorious burst, as the traveller rounds the shoulder of Mount Olivet, and the Haram wall starts up before him from the deep gorge of

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the Kedron, with its domes and crescents sparkling in the sunlight,—a royal city. On that very spot He once paused and gazed on the same bold cliffs supporting a far more glorious pile, and when He beheld the city He wept over it. To one who is familiar with this magnificent access, the other three approaches to the Holy City recall the contrast between the grand old entrance to Oxford from the Iffley Road under Magdalen Tower, and the wretched lanes by which Alma Mater is now revisited when the traveller arrives by railway.

We gazed for a few moments, grouped in silence. "That is the Mosque," "There is the Mount of Olives," "That is the Church of the Holy Sepulchre," were remarks enough. The one thought, "This is Jerusalem," absorbs all others. "Thy servants take pleasure in her stones." It is like revisiting a father's grave or the home of one's youth, and no one is disposed to expatiate on the outline or details of the landscape, which rivets itself upon the soul with magnetic power, for over it hover the memories of redemption achieved, and the victory over the grave.

But it is useless to write more on these impressions—every traveller has felt them, every writer has described them, and only those who have felt can thoroughly understand them.

One new building, out of harmony with the other surroundings, arrested our attention,—the immense Russian pile, which had arisen on the rising ground to the west of the city since my last visit, and which completely overshadows every other architectural feature. It combines in some degree the appearance and the uses of cathedral close, public offices, barracks, and hostelry; the flag of the Russian Consulate floats over one part, while the tall cupola of the church commands the centre. There are many Russian priests and monks, and shelter is provided for the crowds of Muscovite pilgrims. Still the whole style of the

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group seems a sort of taking possession of the land by anticipation, in strong contrast with the simple and chaste cluster on the top of Mount Zion, where the English Mission has its centre. The Greeks view this Russian establishment with great jealousy, not to say dislike, and attribute it to a settled determination on the part of the Czar to separate the Muscovite Church altogether from the Greek, and throw off what little dependence is still acknowledged on the Patriarchate of Constantinople. They remark with some bitterness on the settlement of a Russian bishop in Jerusalem in addition to, or rather in rivalry of, the Greek Patriarch.

We rode quickly past the Tombs of the Kings, and the olive-yards which relieve the barrenness of the northern outskirts of the city, through the Damascus Gate. Our thoughts now turned homewards to far distant scenes as we mounted up to the Consulate, eager for the packets which must await us there. Thence we passed through the city and out by the Jaffa Gate, where, just below the Russian buildings, we found our tents erected at the north-western corner of the city wall. It was somewhat unusual to spend Christmas at Jerusalem under canvas, but organized as we were, with our servants and provisions, we found both freedom and economy in the plan, and no cause to regret the experiment, especially as, through the kind exertions of N. T. Moore, Esq., H.B.M. Consul, the unusual privilege was accorded to us of passing through the gates at any hour of the night. Our tents were perched on a platform just above the old fosse, formed of the *débris* of many generations of ruins, somewhat bleak but dry, and in the immediate neighbourhood of the Turkish guard-house, as well as of an Armenian *café*, whence a signal from our doors could at any time bring coffee and narghilies for our visitors. So near the soldiers we could sleep in security, and had no occasion to be on the watch against pilferers during the daytime.

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Indeed, the guardhouse provided us unasked with an invaluable and vigilant sentry, who was never relieved, nor ever quitted the post of duty. The poor Turkish conscript, like every other soldier in the world, is fond of pets, and in front of the grim turret that served for a guardhouse was a collection of old orange-boxes and crates, thickly peopled by a garrison of dogs of low degree, whose attachment to the spot was certainly not purchased by the loaves and fishes which fell to their lot. One of the party must indeed have had hard times, for she had a family of no less than five, dependent on her exertions and on the superfluities of the sentries' mess. With a sagacity almost more than canine, the poor gaunt creature had scarcely seen our tents pitched before she came over with all her litter, and deposited them in front of our tent. At once she scanned the features of every member of the encampment, and introduced herself to our notice. During the week of our stay she never quitted her post, nor attempted any depredations on the kitchen-tent, which might have led to her banishment. Night and day she proved a faithful and vigilant sentry, permitted no stranger, human or canine, European or Oriental, to approach the tents without permission, but keeping on the most familiar terms with ourselves and our servants. On the morning of our departure, no sooner had she seen our camp struck than she conveyed her puppies back to their old quarters in the orange-box, and no entreaties or bribes could induce her to accompany us. On three subsequent visits to Jerusalem, this same dog acted in a similar way, though no longer embarrassed by family cares, and would on no account permit any strange dog, nor even her companions at the guardhouse, to approach within the tent-ropes.

We remained a week in Jerusalem, fully occupied in the arrangements and negotiations preparatory to our Dead Sea trip, and, after our hard work, rejoicing in the comparative quiet and rest of a Christmas on Mount

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Zion. Our intervals of leisure were devoted to visits to the various objects of archæological and sacred interest, for there was but little employment for the naturalist, and though not new to myself, all was novel to my companions. It falls neither within my scope nor my ability to enter upon a description or discussion of the topography and antiquities of Jerusalem, which have been so fully and frequently sifted by far more competent hands; and content to take Robinson for our guide, we penetrated wherever we could, not to discover, but to learn.

Our evenings were spent either at the hospitable Consulate or with the excellent Bishop, making our Christmas-tide feel very homelike; and at each place we met the whole missionary staff, and the learned Dr. Rosen, the Prussian Consul, to whom I am indebted for very much information and kind assistance. It is not possible to associate with the devoted Christian men who form the Mission staff, without taking a deep interest in them and their work; and I have met with few men who combine in a higher degree ardent zeal and perseverance with learning and research, than the missionary body in Syria, whether of the Church Mission, the Jews' Society, or the American Board. Their success, if reckoned by the number of converts, is, in Jerusalem itself, not very great, though two promising congregations, Arabic and German-speaking, have been formed; but, as yet, they have only gathered in the remnant of Israel, and sown the seed for a more plentiful harvest hereafter. About seventy families have openly attached themselves to our Church.

Our search after Hebrew and Samaritan manuscripts and natural history specimens led us more than once into the Protestant part of the Jewish quarter on Mount Zion. The converts have been not only spiritually but socially elevated by their conversion. The neatness and cleanness of their houses, the tidy children with their school-books,

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the clean cradles, the pleasant-looking women in European costume, the neat shelves with the little libraries of German books, Prayer-books, "Pilgrim's Progress," &c., would have cheered the heart of any pastor in an English parish. And this is not from alms or gifts, but is the direct effect of their conversion, which has shut them out from the Jewish means of subsistence, and has sent the husbands to the Mansion House of Industry, where they learn remunerative trades, and soon become thriving artisans. None of the Jerusalem Jews follow any occupation but trade, and most of them are maintained by the alms of their brethren in other countries, employing their time in prayers and synagogue worship on behalf of the contributors, who are too busy or too distant to perform a pilgrimage for themselves. We found the House of Industry most useful in the refit so needful after our journey, in the soling of our boots, in mending our boxes, repairing our guns and instruments, and making our thermometer-stands, and even egg-blowing instruments.

We went on Christmas-eve to visit the Bishop's school, outside the walls, and to see the annual distribution of prizes from the Christmas-tree, which the Prussian deaconesses had taken care to establish. There were upwards of seventy lads present, whose examination, though exclusively on their religious knowledge, showed a much higher standard of attainments, so far, than is ordinarily found in an English school. But the confusion of tongues must render advanced education most difficult in Jerusalem, where it is impossible to adopt, as at Beyrout, the common vernacular Arabic, since old Spanish, German, and, in some cases, English, are the common languages of the Jewish population in different streets respectively. The Spanish introduced after the expulsion of the Jews from Spain by the Inquisition, has retained its hold among their descendants, though archaic in its form, mixed with many Arabic expressions (which may have been learnt from the Spanish

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Moors), and written in the Hebrew character, in which character a Spanish edition of the Book of Common Prayer has been published for their use.

Western customs had extended to the church, as well as to the school-house, and the place of the holly of Old England was supplied, in the Christmas decorations, by olive twigs, pines, and carob-leaves. Though there were no strangers but ourselves, the church was filled at the English service; for most of the German Jews learn our language, and have their children instructed in it. But, weekly within these walls, our ritual is celebrated in five languages, beginning with the Hebrew (daily, at seven A.M.), Spanish, Arabic, English, and German.

One morning was devoted to a visit to the sacred enclosure of the Haram (the Mosque of Omar), from which, until very recently, Christians were rigidly excluded, and which they could not enter at the time of my former visit. Some formalities were still requisite—a letter from the Consul to the Pasha, the attendance of his cavasses as a protection against the fanaticism of the negro guardians of the holy places, and the payment of a backshîsh, or fee, of £1 per head. The visit, too, had to be accomplished at daybreak, and concluded before the hour of prayer (the second hour).

At the entrance of the mosque we deposited our shoes, and, as the rain was descending in torrents, our stockings also; and then, preceded by the cavasses and the chief verger of the mosque (a kindly-looking, stout fellow of six feet two inches in height, with huge turban, and long staff like the others), we crossed the wide, open area, in the centre of which rises the beautiful dome over the great rock of the Sakhra. The sides of the area are all carefully paved, as well as the open courts which partially surround it; but towards the centre the pavement gives place to the flat surface of the native rock, and we were probably treading, barefoot, the very surface which had been trodden

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by kings and priests of old, and which, above all, the feet of the Redeemer must often have touched. We entered the Dome of the Rock, which, unlike any other Moslem building I have seen, is in good repair,—time-worn, but well preserved, without gorgeous, and almost dazzling within; exquisite in its proportions, beautiful in its mosaics; all its decorations, lavish though they are, blend in wonderful harmony, sparkling with glass of every tint, which casts a rainbow hue of blended colours on every object around. In the grey dawn of morning there was even less than a dim religious light,—not enough to distinguish clearly the brilliant arabesques and tracery which lined every part of the dome and of the sides, but quite enough to make the general effect bewildering in its magnificence. But it was neither on Byzantine walls nor on Saracenic decorations that our attention was fixed. Four great piers supported the central dome, Byzantine doubtless in style, but not *in situ*,—removed from some earlier edifice, according to the high authority of the Comte de Vogüé, as well as of many others; in the centre stood a great lattice-work, the grille, the work of the Crusaders in the twelfth century, which screened from profane touch the holy rock, and which at first suggests the idea that this octagonal dome is a mausoleum erected over some venerated tomb. We were not admitted within the screen, but were allowed to peer through, to stretch forth our hands and feel the rock upon which probably David offered his purchased sacrifice on Araunah's threshing-floor, and Solomon erected the great altar of burnt-sacrifice. We were unable to measure this singular mass, but were told that it was sixty feet by forty feet in extent, and seventeen feet high. Beyond the marks of tools,* where at one end a large fragment has been broken off, the only special feature on its surface is a slight indenta-

* This tool-marking at the west end is, according to the Comte de Vogüé, the place of the steps that led up to the Crusaders' altar.

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tion, the impression, says the Moslem, of Mohammed's foot, as he stepped up into Paradise. It is evident that this rock must have been left for some special object, when all that surrounded it was so carefully levelled to form a wide platform ; and when the sides of the mount, south, east, and west, had been built up by massive—we might say, stupendous—substructures, to enlarge that level area still further. There must have been something sacred in that rock in the eyes of the builders of the dome, and the tradition of a peculiar sanctity in the rock has been handed down to the subsequent occupiers, though they have utterly forgotten the original reason for the erection, and have invented a very different legend.

I have elsewhere remarked on the general resemblance between the cave beneath the rock of sacrifice in the Samaritan temple on Mount Gerizim and the cave under the Sakhra, of which the Samaritan was very possibly a copy.

When we had carefully gone round the Sakhra, our guide introduced us to the celebrated cave beneath it, whence have been traced the subterranean communications with Siloam and the City of David.* The passage was low, and the

* As to the connexion between the Sakhra and Siloam, I am assured by the late lamented Bishop Barclay, of Jerusalem, that he has personally tested this, by creeping through the whole tunnel, and that it is simply a subterranean canal cut between the Fountain of the Virgin "Bir Sitte Miriam" and the Pool of Siloam, by which the latter was fed. It seems to have been excavated by simultaneous operations from each extremity; for in its course, not far from the Pool of Siloam, there is a break, where the two lines of excavation have not met, and where the workmen, hearing the sound of their fellows in the other tunnel, have abruptly turned to the right and united the two. There is one other short branch of a few yards in length, which abruptly terminates in the face of the rock, so far as he could ascertain. The channel is very small, and the explorer can only push himself along horizontally from the Virgin's Well among the sediment and moisture at the bottom. But there seems to have been a chain of cisterns south-west of the Golden Gate, fed by a conduit from the Pool of Bethesda, and from the cistern north of the Sakhra. From the last of these a con-

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steps not built, but hewn out of the native rock. One thing seemed evident, that the cave was natural, though it had been artificially enlarged, and the access probably an enlargement of an original fissure. There seems to be some weight due to the suggestion of Pierotti, that the cistern in the Sakhra, with its contracted neck, dividing the cavern almost into two parts, is illustrated by several similar cisterns, which are found in other parts of Palestine, on ancient sites, and which are admitted to be granaries after the fashion of the "silos" of the modern Bedouin. I have seen such in Southern Judæa and Mount Carmel. Possibly, therefore, this may have been the granary attached to the threshing-floor of Araunah, and utilised by King Solomon. Our guide evidently put small faith in the Moslem tradition which suspends the Sakhra in mid-air over the cavern, and laughed heartily when we pointed out that the roof was of the same piece with the sides. In the centre of the cavern was shown to us a marble slab covering a well, in which the Jews believe are concealed the tables of the law, forgetting that of them they find no trace after the return from the Captivity.*

Proceeding southwards from the great dome, we passed to the Mosque of El Aksa, at the southern extremity of the area, and where all writers agree we are on the site of part at least of the old Temple. The architecture is manifestly later than the Dome of the Rock, lighter, with pointed Saracenic arches, and without any entablature over the

duit runs eastward, under the Haram wall, and can be traced at intervals down to the Fountain of the Virgin, whence it went to the Pool of Siloam. A subterranean passage, of considerable size, also runs from Birket es Sultan to the Pool of the Virgin. This, not many years since, could be traversed, though with difficulty.

* Yet the tradition in the Apocrypha (2 Macc. ii. 4—7) tells us that Jeremy the Prophet hid the sacred things, the tabernacle and the ark, and the altar of incense, in a hollow cave on the mountain, where Moses climbed up and saw the heritage of God; and that he foretold that the place should be unknown until the time that God gather His people again together and receive them unto mercy.

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pillars. It is richly and elaborately decorated with glass and lamps, but does not equal the great dome in splendour. The little mosque at the south-west corner, near the Wailing Place, called the Mosque of the Mograbin (Westerns), contained nothing worthy of a special notice, but in the area stand most of those magnificent cypresses which form so pleasing a feature in all views of this part of Jerusalem, conspicuous from the outer hills. A few olive and lemon trees are mingled with them, but are not visible from the outside. We were astonished at being introduced at the south-east angle into the Mosque of Isa (Jesus), a sort of crypt, in a corner of which was pointed out the cradle of Jesus, at the time of His circumcision,—a plain marble sarcophagus, very small, and an object of Moslem adoration.*

After passing through this part of the Haram we proceeded to examine the vast crypts or substructures which support the upper platform on which these buildings stand. These great crypts extend from about the middle of the southern extremity of the area to the south-east angle. If the old temple area were limited to the position in which Mr. Fergusson places it, some part at least of these enormous works possibly might date back to the time of Solomon. There seems no sign, so far as we could perceive, of these crypts having been ever utilised to any purpose, other than that of supporting the platform. We could not detect the traces of any attempt to form chambers or to excavate the floor to an even surface. We descended by a slope until we stood in a large irregular chamber, with massive circular pillars and elaborately carved capitals, supporting narrow semicircular arches. The place was dimly lighted by apertures in the outer

* The Moslems do not believe that our Lord died, Koran c. 3, v. 47, 48, and therefore have never disturbed the Christians in their possession of the Holy Sepulchre, maintaining that the whole history of those sacred sites is a fable.

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Haram wall, which can easily be recognised on examining the wall from the outside. The stones of this wall on the inside are of colossal size. One which we measured was eighteen feet long by about eight in height, and there appeared to be some even larger than this above our reach. We were told of one we could not see, which was declared to be thirty feet in length. The mouldings at the top of the pillars and along the arches were very curious, and different from anything I had elsewhere seen, but the light was too dim for us to make any drawings, or to describe them accurately. There was a very Egyptian look about the palm-leaves of the capitals. We liked to fancy ourselves standing amidst the masonry of Solomon; and as Mr. Fergusson proves the arch to have been used and applied in the time of Sargon, B.C. 721, it *may* have been known to the wise man of Israel.*

On ascending, we were permitted at our leisure to linger about the "Golden Gate," an elaborately-carved gateway and porch now built up, and near which is the pillar where the Mohammedans believe the Prophet is to inaugurate the scene of the last judgment. It can hardly be of the

* One of the strongest arguments in favour of the boundaries of the ancient temple having been conterminous with the Haram, rests upon the traces of the conduits. The aqueduct, after crossing the Tyropœon by the causeway, turns southward till it reaches a cistern in front of the Mograbin Mosque, but previously sends a branch eastward to the fountain before the Aksa. Then it runs eastward to the Birket es Sultan just in front of the Aksa, connected again with the fountain close by on the north, and with the vaults on the south. Thence it turns northward, and enters the lower chamber of the double cave of the Sakhra. Thence it still runs north to another cistern, where it is joined by a conduit from the west, and turns eastward to the chain of cisterns southwest of the Golden Gate, mentioned above; whence it continued to the Pool of Siloam.

The fountain in front of the Aksa is thus the "castellum" of the system. The main stream divides at it, as at a water-shed, to feed (1) Birket es Sultan and various reservoirs near El Aksa; (2) to pass under the Sakhra, and so through a chain of cisterns. It is noteworthy, that at each system of cisterns additional conduits come into the main line, as though to give a flushing power.



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time of the Haram wall, but recalls much more closely the architecture of the Dome of the Rock, with a rich deep cornice running along both sides of the wall, at the height of the spring of the arches of the dome,—to our unartistic eyes, a superfluous ornament. Near this gate I climbed on to the top of the wall, and walked along for some way, enjoying the fine view down into the gorge of the Kedron, with its harvest crop of little white tombs. In a chink I discovered a sparrow's nest (*Passer cisalpina*, var.), of a species so closely allied to our own that it is difficult to distinguish it, one of the very kind of which the Psalmist sang, "Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O Lord of hosts." The swallows had departed for the winter, but the sparrow has remained pertinaciously through all the sieges and changes of Jerusalem.

Before leaving the sacred enclosure we had time to observe the botany as well as note the ornithology of the Haram, and a goodly collection even in mid-winter my companions secured. Besides the olive, the palm, the lemon, and the cypress, many little tufts of flowers, blue, white, and yellow, were bursting through the chinks in the old pavement, among which we found *Ranunculus myriophyllus*, *Draba verna*, *Reseda suffruticosa*, *Zizyphus vulgaris*, *Senecio vernalis*, *Anchusa italica*, *Parietaria officinalis*.

The birds, well appreciating their security in this hallowed area, were not less varied. Besides the sparrow, several pairs of the beautiful little palm turtledove (*Turtur senegalensis*, L.) nestled in the shelter of the olive-trees, and fearlessly sought their food in the porticoes. It is remarkable that this turtledove, though the most southerly and the least abundant of all the species which frequent the Holy Land, does not share in the migratory habits of the common turtledove (*Turtur auritus*, L.), so familiar to

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residents both in the South of England and in Syria. "The turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming." It might be to this turtle and to its habit of nestling under the protection of man in the cities that the prophet referred in Isa. lx. 8,—"Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?" though more probably the allusion is to the clouds of rockdoves flying to their natural caves or to their artificial cotes.

Besides the sparrow and the dove, we observed the goldfinch and the great titmouse (*Carduelis elegans* and *Parus major*) at home among the cypress-trees, and a blue thrush (*Petrocincla cyanea*, L.) perched in the corner of the wall; while the white wagtail ran along the pavement, and several kestrels (*Tinnunculus alaudarius*) had taken up their abode in the sides of the domes. Later in the year, flocks of the beautiful lesser or beetle-feeding kestrel (*T. cenchris*) might have been seen in the walls, as well as the tiny scops owl, the "maroof" of the natives. At present the common kestrel and our old friend the little owl, the bird of Minerva (*Athene meridionalis*), held undisputed possession of the upper regions. But the characteristic bird-life of the Haram consisted in the immense number of the crow-tribe (*Corvidæ*) of high and low degree which resorted thither to roost in security. From the solemn raven down to the impertinent jackdaw, all were there, and in harmony too—of life, not of voice, for more discordant notes never disturbed the echoes of the dell. But while the doves remained within their ark, the ravens quitted it for the day; and as we first crossed the pavement many a hoarse croak gave forth the summons to the lingerers that it was time to depart.

We enjoyed frequent opportunities afterwards of watching the habits of these birds. Of all the birds of Jerusalem the raven is decidedly the most characteristic and conspicuous. It is present everywhere to eye and ear, and the



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odours that float around remind us of its use. On the evening of our arrival we were perplexed by a call-note quite new to us, mingling with the old familiar croak, and soon ascertained that there must be a second species of raven along with the common *Corvus corax*. This was the African species (*Corvus umbrinus*, Surd.), the ashy-necked raven, a little smaller than the world-wide raven, and here more abundant in individuals. Besides these, the rook (*Corvus frugilegus*, L.), the common grey or hooded crow *Corvus cornix*, L.), and the jack-daw (*Corvus monedula*, L.) roost by hundreds in the sanctuary. We used to watch them in long lines passing over our tents every morning at daybreak, and returning in the evening, the rooks in solid phalanx, leading the way, and the ravens in loose order bringing up the rear, generally far out of shot. Before retiring for the night popular assemblies of the most uproarious character were held by them in the trees of the Kedron and Mount Olivet, and not till after sunset did they withdraw in silence, mingled indiscriminately, to their roosting-places on the walls. My companions were very anxious to obtain specimens of these Jerusalem birds, which could only be approached as they settled for the night, and stationing themselves just before sunset in convenient hiding-places near the walls, at a given signal they fired simultaneously, and hastily gathering up the spoils had retreated out of reach of the Haram guardians, and were hurrying to the tents before an alarm could be raised. The discharge of ten barrels had obtained fourteen specimens, comprising five species. The same manœuvre was repeated with equal success on another evening, but on the third occasion the ravens had learned wisdom by experience, and, sweeping round over Siloam, chose another route to their dormitory.

In the olive yards and gardens round the city the black-headed jay was common, fearlessly approaching the walls; but of other birds there were very few in the immediate

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neighbourhood of Jerusalem, owing to the absence of wood and water. The fieldfare had penetrated so far south, but unaccompanied by the redwing; and we were fortunate enough to obtain, through the kindness of Dr. Chaplin, of the Jews' Society Mission, a fresh specimen of the wild swan (*Cygnus musicus*, L.), which had been shot at Solomon's Pools, near Bethlehem, and was brought into market. In a geographical point of view its occurrence here was most interesting, as it has never before been observed so far south. Hasselquist, indeed, mentions having seen a swan off the Damietta mouth of the Nile, but this would most probably be the mute swan (*Cygnus olor*), which often occurs in Greece. Not, however, that either of these can be the תִּנְשֶׁמֶת (tinshemeth) of the Pentateuch, incorrectly rendered "swan" in our version, and it is scarcely possible that the Israelites should have had a name for a bird so rarely (if ever) seen by them. The Arabs called our specimen a flamingo, or بجع (bedjaa).

The crow tribe, with the exception of the brown-necked raven, for the most part quit Jerusalem in spring and summer, distributing themselves over the wild ravines of Judæa. The *Corvus umbrinus*, however, may always be seen about the mosque and the Kedron, and my friend Mr. Egerton Warburton took a nest and eggs after our departure, in the Valley of Hinnom.

In collecting mammalia, through the kind assistance and interest of Dr. Chaplin, we were more successful than we could have anticipated. The hedgehog and the badger, the existence of the latter of which in Syria has been denied, were brought alive, both identical with our European species; and we obtained three species of bats which resort to the Damascus Gate and the so-called Tombs of the Kings. We had long tried in vain to capture the mole of Palestine. Its mines and its mounds we had seen everywhere, and reproached ourselves with having

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omitted the mole-trap among the items of our outfit. From the size of the mounds and the shallowness of the subterranean passages, we felt satisfied it could not be the European species, and our hopes of solving the question were raised when we found that one of them had taken up its quarters close to our camp. After several vain attempts to trap it, an Arab one night brought a live mole in a jar to the tent. It was no mole properly so called, but the mole-rat (*Spalax typhlus*, Pall.), which takes its place throughout Western Asia. The local Arabic name is khlunt, no doubt a corruption of the Arabic خلد (khuld), the synonym of the Hebrew חֹלֶד (choled), translated "weasel" in our version. I kept it alive for some time in a box, feeding it on sliced onions. I may remark, in illustration of the expression casting the idols "to the moles and to the bats" (Isa. ii. 20), that (though the original חֲפוֹר (chephor) has doubtless a more extended signification than the spalax exclusively), we observed that this animal, unlike the mole, affects in great numbers the neighbourhood and *débris* of ruins, among which doubtless it finds cavities ready provided for its nest. It is an interesting little creature, twice the size of our mole, without any vestige of external eyes, and but faint traces of the rudimentary organ within, of a pale slate colour, with huge rodent teeth, a strong bare snout, no external expansion of the ear, but the organ internally very largely developed, short feet, not pads, with powerful nails, and a rudimentary tail. Subsequently we obtained many specimens throughout the hill country.

On the Mounts of Olives and of Offence we obtained a rich harvest of fossils, many of them species which had not occurred on Mount Carmel, but all apparently of the same (the chalk) age. Some of them were perfect casts in silex, embossed as it were on the surface of the softer limestone, and three species of ammonites occurred in some abundance.

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It was impossible to overlook the very great improvement in the outskirts of Jerusalem within the last six years, especially towards the west. Not to mention the buildings and plantations of Sir M. Montefiore, the Greek convent has commenced to terrace and plant olives, and various private individuals have followed the good example. But, alas! no one has yet begun to replace the rapidly-thinned trees on Mount Olivet itself.

One day was given to exploring the old quarries of the city. They are very extensive, and we were able to examine only a small portion. The entrance was by a hole in the north wall, a little to the east of the Damascus Gate, where there is a deep fosse between the road and the wall. Preceded by our guide (a very needful precaution), we crept in, feet foremost, through an aperture about two feet square, and after a precipitous descent of a few feet, lighted our torches, and descended still further. The quarries are not one vast cavern, but a succession of irregular hollowed chambers in labyrinthine disorder, with enormous shapeless pillars left here and there to support the roof; and the whole very much reminded us of a visit to the disused workings of an English coal-mine, with the advantage that it was neither wet nor black. We continued, with the bats fluttering over head, to descend for many yards, on a conglomerate pavement formed of the hardened fragments left by the masons. In many places the very niches remained out of which the great blocks had been hewn which formed the Temple wall. There lay on the ground in one corner a broken monolith, which had evidently split in process of removal, and been left where it fell. The stone here is very soft, and must easily have been sawn, while, like some other limestones, it hardens almost to marble on exposure. There are a few wells, generally dry, sunk probably for the use of the workmen, and for the most part now filled up with rubbish. In one, however, we found good water. Here had the

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sound of the hammer and the chisel been buried, while overhead

> "No workman's steel, no ponderous axes rung;
> Like some tall palm the noiseless fabric sprung."

The jackals and hyænas have not found their way in, and no bones could be distinguished; and the caverns can never have been used as places of sepulture. We were anxious to trace the shaft that tradition makes to have led up to the Temple, and which might yield important evidence on many questions of ancient topography, but our lights were inefficient, and we should have needed the aid of a mining surveyor.* The intricacy of the quarries is such that we could not be certain we had explored to the further end, and may have missed many a chamber, especially towards the south. Certainly we never reached any point at which we could have been so far south as to be standing under Mount Moriah.

It has frequently been supposed, that when the sun had set on the last day of the great struggle, here were hidden the most desperate of the defenders of Jerusalem; and that hence, his last stratagem, rose Simon as a royal ghost, in the vain hope that terror at his apparition might open for him a path through the Roman lines. It is well known that, in sinking for the foundations of the English church, a subterranean passage was discovered, at a depth of forty feet beneath the surface. This has recently been explored as far as the so-called Tower of David, near the Jaffa Gate, where it terminates. In the other direction it has been traced a considerable distance towards the Temple area. Now, since it has been satisfactorily shown that at the spot now occupied by the so-called Tower of David the last stand was made, it must have been by this passage that

* The idea only rests on a vague tradition. There is, indeed, a subterranean passage from the Convent of the Daughters of Sion, which appears to have formerly joined the north-west angle of the Haram. Pierotti thinks it the Strato's Tower of Josephus.—Ant. XIII. ii. § 2.

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Simon escaped, and from it that he emerged to attempt his desperate cast.

One recent discovery in Jerusalem was pointed out to us by Bishop Gobat, through whom it has been brought to light. Immediately under the south-west corner of Mount Zion, on the steep slope leading down to the Wady er Rahâbi (the valley of Hinnom), is the English cemetery. The Bishop has recently been levelling a portion of this, taking down the *débris* from the upper part of the slope, and making a steeper embankment below, to enlarge the burying-ground. During the work, the rock which forms the western face of the ground was laid bare, and exposed a series of steps hewn in its side, steep and much worn. Thirty-four of these have been uncovered, and it is impossible to guess how many more are still buried beneath. In no other spot do we obtain a more striking example of the enormous amount of ruin and *débris*, which for 3,000 years have been gradually filling up the valleys in and around Jerusalem. We have here revealed to us the steepness and formidable approaches of that fortress of Jebus, which in the very heart of the country bid defiance to Israel for 400 years, and was only captured by David when he proclaimed, "Whosoever getteth *up to the gutter* and smiteth the Jebusites . . . he shall be chief and captain." (2 Sam. v. 8.) On all other sides the accumulations of subsequent ages have sloped the cliffs of the once impregnable fortress, so that David's "blind and lame" might easily mount them; and it is difficult at first sight to realise the native strength of the citadel of Zion, still more elevated, and, in the time of David, more precipitous, than its sister mount of Moriah.

But when we turn to Nehemiah, we find a passage which points to another set of stairs. "The gate of the fountain repaired Shallun the Son of Col-hozeh, the ruler of part of Mizpah; he built it, . . . and the wall of the pool of Siloah by the king's garden, and *unto the stairs that go down from*

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*the city of David.* After him repaired Nehemiah the son of Azbuk, the ruler of the half-part of Beth-zur, unto the place over against the sepulchres of David, and to the pool that was made, and unto the house of the mighty." (Neh. iii. 15, 16.) Here we have the exact position of what are called the steps of Nehemiah. They were *to the west* of the Gate of the Fountain, and of the king's gardens, which are admitted to be in the valley leading down to the Pool of Siloam; where they may to this day be seen and trodden, on the steep sides of Ophel, just above the Pool of Siloam, to the east of the Tyropœon. In these two sets of steps, cut in the rock, we have revealed to our sight the only certain remains of the city of David prior to the Babylonish captivity.

Since the above was written, the researches of the Palestine Exploration Fund, under the direction of Major Wilson, R.E., and Captain Warren, R.E., have thrown new light on the topography of the Haram area. The most important results of the excavations have been:—First the discovery of the old valley of the Tyropœon, immediately to the west of the Temple area, now filled in with *débris* to the depth of more than 100 feet; and the exploration of Robinson's arch, which appears to have been a sort of flying buttress, while some way higher up, near the Jews' place of wailing, Major Wilson has traced the old bridge which connected the Temple area with the city of David.

Secondly, the examination of the face of the southern wall of the Haram area, which has revealed the fact that actually 120 feet of the wall once open to the day is buried by the rubbish heaped against it, before the foundation is reached. In fact, there is more than from 90 to 120 feet of the height of the existing platform wall now concealed. On the foundation stones, sunk in the original soil of Mount Moriah, were found Phœnician characters, painted in red ochre, the masons' marks of the workmen of Hiram and Solomon.

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Thirdly, to the south of the Temple area, was traced a considerable part of the wall of Ophel, now altogether outside the city.

Fourthly, a vast system of underground reservoirs was explored in the bowels of the Mount. Thirty-three of these enormous tanks were examined. One of them was 45 feet deep and 63 feet long by 57 feet broad. They for the most part communicate with each other. From Captain Warren's researches, it is difficult to arrive at any other conclusion than that Birket Israil is the ancient Pool of Bethesda, that the Castle of Antonia lay to the north-west of it, and that the present Haram area represents exactly the platform of the Temple and of the Royal Porch in the time of Herod.

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## CHAPTER IX.

"It was a mountain, at whose verdant feet
A spacious plain, outstretch'd in circuit wide,
Lay pleasant . . . . . and so large
The prospect was, that here and there was room
For barren desert, fountainless and dry."

*Negotiations with the Sheikhs of the Jordan Valley and Dead Sea—Abou Dahûk — Diplomacy — Sealing the Treaty — Night Storm — Midnight Flitting — Departure for Jericho — Olivet — Bethany — The Apostles' Well — Bareness of the Wilderness of Judæa — Its Geology — New Birds — Wady Kelt—Situation of the Cherith—Sublime Scenery—View of the Plain of Jordan—Ain Sultân—Elisha's Fountain—Beautiful Camp—Birds — Their Number and Beauty—Bulbul—Sunbird—Shells—Plants Palm and Balsam perished — Mount Quarantania — Native Dance — Sunday Callers — Defeated Freebooters — Women's Dance — A Bridal Party—Ain Dûk—Grakle of the Glen—Caves in the Mount of Temptation—Hermits' Cells — Inscriptions and Frescoes — Sepulchres—Difficult Climbing—The old Anchorites—Arian Persecutions.*

AT length all our arrangements were complete; our long-looked-for companions, Messrs. Shepherd and Upcher, had arrived from England, stores had been laid in, servants, horses, and mules engaged for our enlarged party, and treaties signed with the various Sheikhs who were to be our guides and guards round the Dead Sea. All these matters had required no little time and patience. Horses and muleteers, always dear and bad at Jerusalem, were this year worse than ever. The murrain in Egypt had drained the country of every saleable animal, and my friends were glad to secure what they could, at a price one-half more than we were paying to Hamoud for really good steeds. We

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were more fortunate in our cook, having engaged a Syrian of Beyrout, who had learned in a Russian kitchen how to make even goat's-flesh into most palatable and tender mutton. Wine, likewise, and brandy were added to our stores, for we had all found by severe experience that, with exposure and hard work in uncertain and trying weather, coffee was not a sufficient stimulant, however it may supply the requirements of the inert Oriental in his own climate.

The negotiations with the Sheikhs had been carried on through the kind assistance of the Consuls, who had promptly on our arrival despatched messengers for the Sheikh of the Ghawârineh in the plain of Jericho, and for Abou Dahûk, the Sheikh of the Jehâlin on the south-east of Hebron, who had been the guide and companion of Lynch and De Saulcy. With the former we had very little difficulty. The Ghawârineh have connexions and property near Jerusalem on which the Consul is able to seize as a lien, in case of non-fulfilment of contract; and in fact there is very little real danger to be apprehended in their territory, unless from themselves. However, they take care to magnify the perils, and with good reason, since they levy a black mail of seventy piastres on each traveller who goes down to the Jordan even for a day. But they had never before had a proposal of a visit from a party for a fortnight, with the stipulation that they should roam about and encamp wherever they pleased; and after many exorbitant demands had been made and rejected, it was finally agreed that we should pay the ordinary head-money, and £2 sterling per diem in addition, for two horsemen and five footguards, for as long a time as we chose to remain, having liberty to move about between Jericho, the Jordan, and Ain Feshkhah at the north-west side of the Dead Sea, the southern limit of the tribe. Their terms were not high for the country; and well and faithfully did Sheikh Mohammed and his men serve us during the whole time we were under their protection.

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Far more difficult were the diplomatic arrangements with Abou Dahûk and his lieutenant, or rather prime minister, Sheikh Hamzi of Hebron, to whom all negotiations were entrusted by the old warrior. Again and again we met at the Consulate, and with unchanging politeness the same wearisome compliments were repeated, the same wonderful stories of perils and wars recounted, the old impossibilities alleged, winding up with the assurance, that perhaps for £200 a safe passage might be secured. Even this was only thrown in, with a solemn stroking of the beard, at the very last, as a contingent possibility. Our proposal was to meet the Jehâlin at the convent of Marsaba, when we had completed the survey of the northern plain, and follow down the shores of the Dead Sea, till we should come round to the Lisan, or peninsula, and thence up to Kerak, whence we were to return to Hebron within not less than thirty nor more than forty days from our first joining the tribe. At the third interview business progressed. We were told how much M. de Saulcy had paid, and a like sum was demanded from us. We felt here as we did also some months later in the East, how little cause travellers have to thank M. de Saulcy for his lavish expenditure on both his visits. He has simply rendered it impossible for ordinary travellers to follow him, and the Bedouin argues, very naturally for him, that what it was worth M. de Saulcy's while to pay, is not too much for another to give. The consequence is, that the districts he has visited have been virtually sealed behind him, and can only be entered by a bridge of gold.

At last it was agreed that we should make a present of £30 to the Sheikhs, and that we should pay besides about £5 a day for guards, as they positively refused to undertake our safe conduct with a smaller guard than seven horsemen and twenty-five footmen. There was no help for it, unless we were prepared to relinquish all hope of carrying out our cherished scheme. Half the sum was paid into their hands

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at once, the other half deposited in their sight with the Consul, whose dragoman drew out the treaty in due form in duplicate. These were read and compared, and then came the momentous business of affixing the seals. The seal was not worn in this case on the finger, but from the depths of some part of the Sheikh's under-garments an unsavoury cotton rag was produced, knotted and twisted, at one end of which was carefully folded the signet ring. A little ink being rubbed over it, it was then impressed upon the documents. As the chieftain could not write, we saw at once the reason of the jealous precaution with which the signet was guarded. "To trust a man with your ring" is a Bedouin proverb expressive of unbounded confidence, and indeed it would practically amount to entrusting a friend in England with blank signed cheques. The signature written with the pen was no security in the Arab's eye, and we were requested, after we had signed the deeds, to affix our seals, not with wax but with ink; nor till this ceremony was completed did Sheikh Hamzi's deep-set eye twinkle on the pile of sovereigns on the office-table as without doubt his own.

Our last evening in Jerusalem was spent at the Bishop's house, in pleasant and profitable converse on the past, present, and future of the Land of Promise. It was no ordinary privilege to meet in several members of the Mission staff men of highly-cultivated minds, and of much Oriental and antiquarian research, whose stores of experience and knowledge were all at the travellers' command. With strong faith and untiring zeal they are patiently toiling; finding encouragement in all difficulties from those prophecies which, studied here on the scene of their past and future accomplishment, impart the reality of confidence to the dimness of vague hope. One might hesitate to yield assent to the geographical interpretations of some predictions, yet we could not but feel, in the animated discussion in which that delightful evening passed, comparing Scrip-

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ture with Scripture, that there is much yet to be learned from topographical research in illustration of the literal fulfilment of prophecy, and that, in more senses than one, that land of the past is also the land of the future, and the Land of Promise still.

By the Consul's order we were passed through the Jaffa Gate, and arrived at our camp a little before midnight in a pitiless storm of rain, which swept up from the south-west, threatening to tear our tents to ribbons, as they reeled and shook under the gusts. Everything was getting wet, and we found Giacomo and the servants rushing to and fro, carrying our bedding to the neighbouring *café*. It was pitch dark, and one tent had already given way. No porters were to be had. There was nothing to be done but to put our own shoulders to the work, and in dress-boots and coats to trudge backwards and forwards till we had deposited the whole of our goods under the roof. All was transported by two A.M., and wet and weary we undressed and lay packed in a row in our sheepskins at the end of the *café*, consoling ourselves that our black suits would have three months' time to dry before they would be required again. Our quarters were shared by a party of Turks, who had arrived from Jaffa after the closing of the gates, and whose presence necessitated on the part of Giacomo a sharp look-out on our "*petits effets*."

After a very short night's rest, we were roused by the fragrance of cups of hot coffee, presented under our noses. Our bedding was quickly rolled up, we united in prayer in the quiet corner, and, soon after daybreak, our boxes lumbered up the access to the *café*, and our throng of animals and attendants crowded the road. It is no easy matter to effect an early start from a city, and hopeless to attempt to hurry Orientals, who, with all their keen appreciation of the value of money, have never yet learned the value of time.

At length the signal for a start was given, the last mule had been laden, and, with the weather promising well for

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our journey, we crept round the city walls, outside the Damascus Gate, and towards the gorge of the Kedron. We formed a long calvalcade—thirty-two beasts, horses, mules, and asses; besides our guard of two mounted Bedouins, with their long spears, and some dozen on foot.

As soon as the convoy had got so far that we needed not to fear the return of one after another to the city on some frivolous errand, we pushed ahead. The valley of the Kedron, in the damp morning, looked gloomy enough, paved with tombs as far as the eye could reach, and with its straggling olive-trees, all tenanted to-day by ravens croaking and shivering in the wet, as though they were mourners for the past glories of Jerusalem, or the gloomy ghosts of the buried dead beneath. For once, in the bottom of the wady, a little stream trickled after the rain—a sight rarely observed by travellers; nor does it seem probable that at any period the Kedron was more than a winter torrent, fed not by springs, but by the drainage of the short upper valley.

We reined in our steeds as, slowly and thoughtfully, we passed the dark and solemn olive-trees of Gethsemane. Then a pause, and one more gaze on Jerusalem, from that corner of Olivet "undefiled or unhallowed by mosque or church, chapel or tower," where the Redeemer stayed His onward march, and tears burst forth as He beheld the beautiful but doomed city. We rode on, and turned aside again to that lonely platform above Bethany, shut out from the view, as well of the city behind as of the village beneath, and opening only on the waste of rolling hills and glens that reveal a narrow portion of the deep Jordan valley and its mysterious lake. To this spot Dean Stanley has, with great probability, assigned the scene of that most glorious pledge to mankind, the Ascension of our Lord.

After a short halt here, we left the miserable village of modern Bethany on our left, and rapidly descended, but



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on foot, the rocky staircase which for several hundred feet serves as a road. Here we had a glimpse of the Dead Sea, lying 3,600 feet below us, calm and blue, but without the gauzy haze which overhangs it in fine weather. The sky cleared as we wound down the ravine, and taking our guns, we walked on ahead of our mules all day. By the time we reached the Ain Haud (or Apostles' Well, as it is called), the temperature sensibly rose. By the side of a small ruined khan, an unfailing spring of clear, sweet water, under a Saracenic arch, pours into a trough. How many travellers have quenched their thirst at this well, as they toiled up the steep ascent from Jericho! Often must our Lord have paused here with his disciples, as every pilgrim has since, "drinking of the brook by the way." The spot has been identified as the Enshemesh, or "Spring of the Sun" (Josh. xviii. 17), and is on that high-road from the plain of Jordan to Jerusalem, which can never have taken any other course.

Not only the climate, but the products, began now to change; and here I shot one of the peculiar birds of Palestine, a pretty black-and-white chat (*Saxicola finschii* Hengl.). For three hours we wound down the valleys —if valleys they can be called: depressions of winter torrents, which rake the sides of innumerable round-topped hills, crowded one behind another—of the wilderness of Judæa. A true wilderness it is, but no desert, with the sides of the limestone ranges clad with no shrubs larger than a sage or a thyme—brown and bare on all the southern and western faces, where the late rains had not yet restored the life burnt out by the summer's sun, but with a slight carpeting of tender green already springing up on their northern sides. Not a human habitation, not a sign of life, meets the eye for twenty miles; and yet there seems no reason why, for pasturage at least, the country might not be largely available. But there are no traces of the terraces which furrow the hills

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of the rest of Palestine; and one small herd of long-eared* black goats were all we saw till we reached the plains of Jericho.

Water-worn limestone hills are generally devoid of the picturesque, and about these there is a peculiar desolate tameness. The quality of the rock varies—sometimes a soft white limestone, sometimes a yellow and harder one, and occasionally a conglomerate. One feature we observed to-day, which presented itself continually to our notice afterwards, and has a very important bearing on the solution of the problem how the Jordan valley was first formed. The lower strata appeared, as a general rule, to dip evenly to the eastward as if the Ghor (or Jordan valley) had been, after the secondary geological period, gently and gradually let down. The angle of depression, where I could measure it by my clinometer, was about 5°.

Just west of the ruined khan, on the highest point of the road leaving the Ain-el-Khat, is a long belt, running from north to south, of very hard, semi-calcined, and sometimes, perhaps, metamorphic red limestone, veined with white. This portion is so massed and contorted, that it is difficult to trace its stratification; and all round it the deposition is most irregular and disturbed, pointing, I imagine, to some trap-dyke, or extrusion of basalt or volcanic matter very near the surface, running from the volcanic centre in the north-east of Palestine, but not here exposed. Another geological feature, on which I have elsewhere remarked, was the presence of interposed silex and chalcedony in thick layers or ribs among the limestone, but in a position quite irrespective of its stratification; occurring in wavy undulations and folds, which crop out of the softer limestone on many of the hill-sides.

* These long flapping ears recall the expression of Amos, "as the shepherd taketh out of the mouth of the lion . . . . a piece of an ear" (iii. 12).



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These veins are from a few inches to four or five feet thick, and extend over miles of hills, in apparently detached masses, but having no correlation with the deposition of the limestone matrix. They are of various colours—black, clear brown, and blue—and have been often taken for volcanic remains by cursory tourists. (See De Saulcy, *passim.*)

We obtained several interesting and novel specimens as we walked along, especially a new desert lark—a small bird of rich russet-red plumage and varied note (*Ammomanes fraterculus*, Tristram), not unlike the Isabel lark of Spain and North Africa; a very graceful little bird, slate-coloured, with black tail, of the size of our robin, and resembling the stone-chat in his habits, which we named the black-tail. It had been found by Rüppell, in Arabia, and called by him *Pratincola melanura*. We also found the beautiful little partridge of the Dead Sea basin, rather smaller than ours, with bright orange legs and beak, and its flank striped with black, white, and chestnut (*Caccabis heyii*, Tem.), the very bird that David must have had before his eye when he compared himself to a partridge hunted in the mountains.

At the ruined Khan el Ahmar—perhaps the inn alluded to by our Lord in the parable of the Good Samaritan, but which has long ceased to have an host, though robbers are as plentiful hereabouts as formerly—we halted till our mules came up, and, after eating our bread and oranges, took a long rest. And now the scenery changed rapidly to the grand and savage. Instead of limping among the gravels and boulders of winter torrents, with an occasional zizyphus-bush overhanging them, we skirted the tremendous gorge of the Wady Kelt, which we could occasionally see by peering down the giddy height, with its banks fringed by strips of cane and oleander, the "willows by the water-courses." Here Robinson is inclined to place the brook Cherith. The derivation of the Arabic

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PLAINS OF JERICHO. NORTH END OF DEAD SEA.

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from the Hebrew name is far-fetched; and Mr. Grove has justly remarked, that though the sacred text merely implies that the Cherith ran into the Jordan, yet that the probabilities are very strongly in favour of its having been, according to the tradition of Jerome and Eusebius, on the east of that river, the native country of Elijah, and a far more secure retreat than the frontiers of Benjamin. The gorge opens suddenly at a turn of the path about two miles before reaching the plain, where the traveller finds himself in front of a precipice perhaps 500 feet high, pierced by many inaccessible anchorite caverns, and with a steep rugged hill above. We gaze down into the steep ravine, and see the ravens, eagles, and griffon-vultures sailing beneath us. These are now the sole inhabitants of these caves, the monarchs of the waste—or more strictly, perhaps, the board of sanitary commissioners, a business which would be ill executed in this region, were it not for the beneficent natural provision of the vulture, the raven, and other birds of prey.

When we reached the face of the hill down which the road winds from the top of the gorge, we enjoyed one of the finest views in Southern Palestine. At our feet lay stretched a bright green forest. Beyond it a long brown expanse—the desolate plain which divides it from the Jordan, whose course we could just trace by the depression marked by a dark green line of trees. Beyond rose a little higher the plains of Moab or Shittim (where Israel camped before crossing to the Promised Land), green, rich, and wooded as they retire from the river; and above these stood out clear and sharp the long even range of the hills of Moab, among which Pisgah stands undistinguished. To the right was the calm Dead Sea, while Mount Quarantania to the north, with the ruined chapel at the top, the traditional site of our Lord's forty days' temptation, was the only near object to interrupt the panorama.

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An abrupt descent by a rugged path on the south spur of the wady led us into the plain. Here it was, in the valley of Achor, that Achan was stoned after the fall of Jericho. We mounted our horses again and rapidly rode down a gravelly slope, till, turning to the north, we forded the swollen Kelt, and skirting the bright green oasis of several miles square, which marks the once rich and populous groves of Jericho, we galloped along the plain, well wooded and watered—a strange and refreshing sensation after the bare and stony wilderness.

It was quite dark when we reached our camping-ground, about 200 yards from Ain Sultân, called by Europeans Elisha's fountain; and as the only other fountain of any size, Ain Dûk, has always borne the same name (see 1 Mac. xvi. 15), there can be but little doubt that this is the spring whose waters were healed by Elisha, and that the stone-strewn mounds and fragments of pottery which cover the soil are the remains of ancient Israelitish Jericho. Our new home was snugly sheltered from the north by one of the strange gravel hills which dot the district—left at some epoch of past geologic history by the retiring torrent in some sweep of the once mighty river that filled the Ghor. The bright clear rivulet from the fountain gurgled between its turfy sides three steps in front of our tents, which were overshadowed by well-grown trees of the zizyphus spina-Christi, or dôm tree. More we could not see to-night, as we had enough to do to get our camp pitched, and the mules picketed in a wide circle by their sides. Wood, however, was plentiful. Two or three trees were soon felled, and three bright fires kindled; soup and chops were cooked, and till midnight we stood warming ourselves at the blazing logs in the centre of a group of tents, and gazing at the stars which seemed to hang out of the deep black sky.

In zoology Jericho surpassed our most sanguine expectations. It added twenty-five species to our list of birds

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collected in the tour, and nearly every one of them rare and valuable kinds. The bulbul, or Palestine nightingale (*Ixos xanthopygius*), positively swarms, almost every tree being inhabited by a pair, and the thickets re-echoing with their music; the comical and grotesque-looking "hopping thrush," as we have named the *Craterpous chalybeus*, jumps and spreads his long tail in every glade; the gorgeous Indian blue kingfisher (*Alcyon smyrnensis*, L.), perches solemnly over the little rivulet; the Egyptian turtle-dove inhabits the taller trees; and various little warblers of Indian or Abyssinian affinity, skulk in the thickets. On the plain above are the desert larks and chats, while half an hour's walk takes us to the Mount of Temptation (Mons Quarantania), the home of the griffon, the beautiful little Hey's partridge, Tristram's grakle, various rare rock swallows and Galilæan swifts, and the wildest of rock doves in swarms.

But, beyond all others, Jericho is the home of the lovely little sun-bird (*Cinnyris osea*, Bp.), hitherto only known in Europe by Antinori's unique specimen, though mentioned by Lynch, De Saulcy, and others as a humming-bird, a genus exclusively confined to the new world. The male of Hosea's sunbird is resplendent with all the colours of the humming-bird, and not much larger than most of that tribe, measuring 4¼ inches in length. It has a long, slender, and very curved bill, all the back a brilliant metallic green, the throat metallic blue, and the breast metallic purple, with a tuft of rich red, orange, and yellow feathers at each shoulder (the axillary plume), which he puffs out as he hops in the trees, paying his addresses to his modestly-clad brown-green mate.*

Then the grave-looking grey shrike sits motionless on the topmost boughs, lost in amazement at the proceedings of the howadji in their tents below, waiting for the passing

* There is a very beautiful plate of this sunbird and its nest in the *Ibis* for 1865, pp. 67, seqq., with a full description of its habits.

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of some droning beetle; and the merry little long-tailed wren (*Drymœca gracilis*, Rüpp.) spreads its fan-like tail as it runs up the twigs of the tamarisk. These are only a few of the ornithological riches of Jericho. The little stream swarms with shells (a melania, two species of melanopsis, and a neritina), which stud every pebble: two kinds of fish enjoy the warmth of its waters, besides enormous frogs and the ugliest of toads. There are scorpions under every stone, now and then a fine snake—one very decidedly poisonous (*Echis arenicola*, Boie.), the cerastes of the Dead Sea; but scarce any lizards at this season.

In plants the place is equally rich, and even in mid-winter L. obtained some seventy species in flower, including a beautiful small pæony. The most conspicuous was a beautiful parasite, *Loranthus indicus*, with graceful red blossoms studding its branches as it climbed up the topmost boughs of the thorn-trees. The principal tree was the zizyphus spina-Christi, growing twenty or thirty feet high, with its sub-angular branches studded with long pointed and rather reflex thorns, very strong—a true "wait-a-bit" tree. No one can approach it with impunity unless clad in leather, and in three days the whole party were in rags, from passing through the thickets. The apple of Sodom (*Solanum Melongena*), with its potato-blossom and its bright yellow, but poisonous fruit, covered the ground. The false balsam (*Balanites Ægyptiaca*), a thorny tree, with large olive-like fruit—the Zukkûm of the natives—from which the false balm of Gilead, a sort of oil, is extracted and sold to the pilgrims; the Agnus casti, and a large flowering bamboo, are among the most obvious plants. Yet among all these, where are the trees from which Jericho of old obtained its name, its fame, and its wealth? Not one remains. There are no stragglers in that wild and thorny tangle which have survived from the destruction of the gardens of Cleopatra; not one sorghum stem springs by the water-side as a relic of the plantations which yielded



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vast revenues to the Knights of Jerusalem, and which are attested by the ruined sugar-mills behind us; no balsam-tree lingers in the maze of shubbery; and, above all, the last palm has gone, and its graceful feathery crown waves



TREE AT ELISHA'S FOUNTAIN.

no more over the plain which once gave to Jericho its name of the City of Palm Trees.

Our camp looks charming: we realise for the first time true wild life utterly apart from man and civilisation. The gravel hill behind—the rivulet in front, with an impene-

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trable thicket just across it, some large trees on either side —our main tent, with the English ensign floating over it, in the centre, with the logs of the great camp fire piled in front—to the left the working tent—to the right S. and U.'s compact little Iceland dwelling transported from Hecla to the Jordan, but still "the viking's icy home," as we called it—and the servants' tent opposite. Beyond, on the left, are picketed all the horses and mules of the party, with the muleteer's camp on the other side; and to the right are our guard, with their horses and fire. Wood is plentiful, hands are numerous, and the axe is plied unsparingly from morning till night. It is vain to regret the waste of all that fine, hard, red-heart wood, which we should have coveted for our lathes and carving at home; the three blazing watch-fires at night give half its charm to the scene.

Behind us towers the Mount of Temptation, with its precipitous face pierced in every direction by ancient cells and chapels, and the ruined church on its topmost peak. Before us extends the jungle, where the palm-trees once waved over the balsam gardens of Herod; while beyond we look at the blue hills of Moab, wonder where Nebo was, and enjoy a peep of the blue calm lake to the south. The ruins and shapeless heaps around us are old Jericho (not Herod's city), and the arches and vaults just above, with their little broken aqueducts, are the remains of the sugar-mills, which once yielded £5,000 sterling annually to the Knights of the Holy Sepulchre, and were not altogether neglected in the days of the early caliphs, but are now only the refuge for our horses in the heat of the day, and the retreat of the jackals at night. Before us the land *might be* as the garden of Eden; behind us is a desolate wilderness.

*January* 1*st.*—Under a bright sun and a cloudless sky, with a natural warm bath in the open air, we began the new year. It was a day of thankful retrospect and

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sanguine anticipation, and the happiness of the party was crowned when M. appeared in the afternoon from Jerusalem, and our mystic seven being complete, we formed a light-hearted and enthusiastic dinner party. In the evening our guards took it into their heads to treat us to a "fantasia," or native dance, in honour of M.'s arrival and the completion of the party. It is hardly a dance, scarcely acting, but *rude* it certainly is. One of them standing with his drawn sword, and facing the others, gave the time as they commenced with a series of deep guttural grunts in 2/4 time, accompanied with a clapping of the hands. Then came an extempore song of endless verses in praise of the Howadjis, their success in shooting, the style of their horsemanship, and of course a prophetic intimation of their generosity in gifts. All this long tale continued confined within three semitones, and also in 2/4 time. Then the grunts and the ducking, and hideous gasps, as they clapped their hands—then the song again, and so on for nearly an hour, till we stopped them and distributed a backshîsh for this Bedouin concert. Neither the dance nor the measure was like those of the Zickars I have often seen in Africa, although the monotonous chant and the indescribable grunting or soughing recalled them. We could not but heartily enjoy the quickness which had invented and applied an appropriate nickname, under which, in this heroic poem, each member of the party figured and was described: L., from his botany, was celebrated as Abou-hashîs, *i.e.*, the father of herbs; U., decidedly the best and quickest shot in the camp, was Abou-'eyn-t'nîn, father of two eyes, and so on.

All were busily employed during the whole of the next day at our various avocations—writing, photographing, shooting, collecting, skinning, and sketching; and right welcome was Sunday, with its associations of home and its peaceful services, a day of calm repose. We were just assembled for our morning service when we were startled

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by a party of armed Bedouins, riding rapidly down to the camp. Some of them carried broken spears, one had his arm bound, and altogether they wore a decidedly irregular appearance, even for irregular horse. They dismounted by our guard, baited their horses at our expense, and ate with their friends. But their words seemed few and their compliments short, and in an hour they rode off. As soon as they had departed we learned that they were a party of warriors, out at elbow, belonging to a small tribe at war with Abou Dahûk, our future guide round the Dead Sea. They had lately made a raid upon his tribe, the Jehâlin, and driven off some of his camels in the foray, but had been pursued and attacked by him. They had lost not only all their booty, but their own camels by way of reprisal: and now, with two of their party wounded, they were on their way across Jordan, to take shelter for the present among the fastnesses of the Beni Hamêdi, in the hills of Moab, as Abou Dahûk's men would soon be in pursuit. In the same country had David placed his parents and family when pursued by Saul. We saw here a perfect specimen of Arab warfare and of the state of the country. However, their battles are seldom bloody, and the vanquished party usually emigrates at once.

In the afternoon we were serenaded by another fantasia or Zikkar; this time by the women of Er Riha, the village which stands on the site of ancient Jericho. They came up and formed in front of the tents with loud shouts, and the strange "trill trill" with the tongue which we had often heard from the women of Algiers. The dance consisted in the movement of the body rather than of the limbs, and one woman in front of the circle, with a scarf in both hands, gave the time gracefully enough to the twenty-three performers who made up the party. They were a miserable and degraded-looking set, scantily clad in blue cotton, all very filthy; and, excepting two or three of the younger ones, most repulsive in feature. I never saw such vacant,

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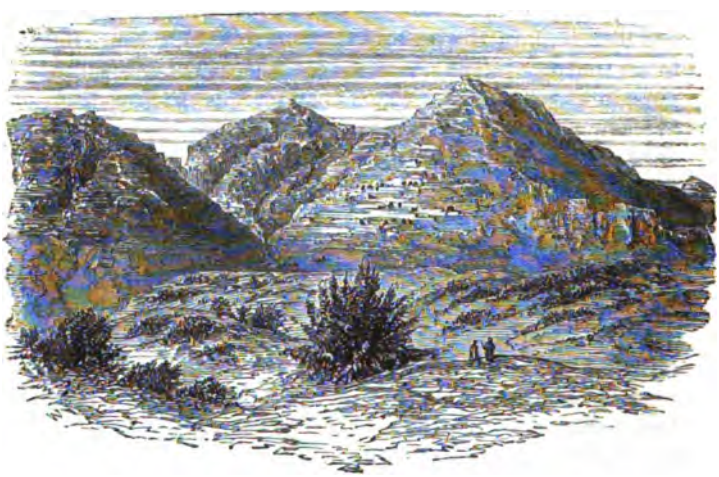
sensual, and debased features in any group of human beings of the type and form of whites. There was no trace of mind in the expression of any one of these poor creatures, who scarcely know they have a soul, and have not an idea beyond the day. They are the despised women of despised fellahin, who repay to their wives the contempt they meet with from the Bedouin. The women of the Ghor, unlike Moslems of the towns, do not veil, and truly there is no need for them to do so. In vain we told them it was our Sabbath, and that we did not wish for their performance. Still they persevered, till we left them and dispersed, in the hope of getting quit of them. But to no purpose. The Amazons of the party rushed in pursuit, and caught L., whom they forcibly dragged back. We saw resistance was useless, and were glad to purchase quiet by a liberal backshîsh. We now observed among them a little childish figure completely covered, and an old red silk handkerchief tied over head and face. It was discovered that this was a wedding celebration, and that the poor child was the bride, who was led round with only one hand exposed, into which every one was expected to put a piece of silver as a wedding gift. This done, they retired, dancing and singing our praises; while we felt, as we looked after them, that if there is one thing more trying than to witness pain which one cannot alleviate, it is to behold degradation which one cannot elevate. And this, too, on the very spot where the Redeemer had taught and healed.

Wherever we have been among Scriptural scenes, we have felt that the author of the "Christian Year" had been there in spirit before us, and often on the very day to which his hymn is appropriated—not least to-day, when, after we had taken the subject of Zacchæus at our evening service, the lines occurred—

> "Is not the pilgrim's toil o'erpaid
> By the clear rill and palmy shade?"

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The next day we made a long expedition to the northern part of the plain, and the caves of Mount Quarantania, or Kuruntîl, as our guides called it, of which but scant accounts are given by most writers. First we skirted the foot of Jebel Kuruntîl, after leaving the ruins of the sugar mills, by the side of a cane-shaded rill, which conducts, almost to Ain Sultân, the water from Ain Dûk, the other great source of life in this marvellous oasis. It was an hour's walk from our camp. The spring, clear as crystal,



MONS QUARANTANIA, JERICHO.

and not warm like Ain Sultân, gushes forth in a copious volume from under the roots of an enormous dôm-tree, the *sidr* of Egypt (*Zizyphus lotus*). It was the largest and finest tree we had yet met with in Palestine. The fresh-water shells (*Melanopsis prærosa*, Lam.) here attain an enormous size, and the fountain seemed equally favourable to the development of the frogs which revelled in it. Even

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now, neglected as it is, Ain Dûk fertilises a tract of several miles square, but this area is much wasted by the indolence of the Arabs. They do not appear ever to cut down the useless nubk or zizyphus-trees, but cultivate among them, letting in the water upon the land when required from the little open channel we had followed. This is constructed at the highest possible level under the hill, so that the plenteous stream is available for all the plain below. So light and rich is the warm soil, that large patches which had been dry and hard on Saturday, had become, by only two days' watering, so soft and pulpy, that we plunged through them ankle-deep in wet adhesive mud, while the wheat was already shooting forth.

We thence turned up the hill-side, when I obtained my first specimen of the beautiful grakle (*Amydrus tristrami Scl.*), well known to all visitors of the Convent of Marsaba as the orange-winged blackbird. It is a bird exclusively confined to the rocky gorges round the Dead Sea, and the gorge of the Kedron at Marsaba. It may, perhaps, also be found at Petra. Geographically considered, the occurrence of this bird here is very interesting, for it belongs to an exclusively African group, without any representatives in Europe or Asia; and certainly no member of the genus occurs further north than Abyssinia, save this isolated and restricted species. It is considerably larger than our blackbird, with lustrous black plumage and rich chestnut-coloured wings. Its note is of wonderful compass, rich and sonorous—I think the most powerful and melodious whistle I ever heard—as it re-echoes from cliff to cliff. Wild and wary, it lives in small flocks of five or six, and it requires no little perseverance to approach it within shot.

After a quarter of an hour's scramble up the *débris*, which slopes away at the bottom, we reached the foot of the cliffs of the mountain, which is here a sheer face of perforated rock. On this eastern face are some thirty or

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forty habitable caves and chapels; and probably there is a much larger number on the south face in the gorge of the Kelt. In the days when they were all tenanted, the anchorites must have formed a large and social community. Many of the cells communicate with each other, and, in front of many, seats have been scooped out in the face of the rock, where the inhabitants could sit and enjoy one of the most lovely views the country affords, of the plains of Jericho, the mouth of the Jordan, the hills of Ajalon and Moab, and the north end of the Salt Sea. These caverns have all been approached by staircases and paths hewn out of the face of the rock; but time and water have worn away many of these, and left the upper caverns in some cases wholly inaccessible. The lowest range of caves is close to the edge of the sloping *débris*, and they are still tenanted by the Arabs, who used them for sheep-folds and donkey-stables, and sometimes, as we discovered, for corn and straw depôts. The next tier is easily reached; and generally every spring a few devout Abyssinian Christians are in the habit of coming and remaining here for forty days, to keep their Lent on the spot where they suppose our Lord to have fasted and been tempted.

This tier is easily accessible to any one with a steady head. The way to it is by a niche hollowed in the side of the precipice. The ground-floor of these cells, if the expression may apply to such aerial dwellings, appears to have been a series of chambers, with recesses hollowed out for beds and for cupboards. There are four of these apartments opening into each other, the natural caverns having been artificially enlarged behind. Below is a large, well-plastered reservoir, or tank, to which the water had been formerly conveyed, through cement-lined stone tubes, from the waterfall, several hundred feet to the right. These tubes are neatly concealed in the rock, and were quite out of reach of any attack.

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In the centre of the roof of the third chamber was a small round hole, scooped out of the native rock. Standing on the shoulders of a tall Arab, B. was just able to reach this and to climb up. He then let down a rope, and we followed, when we found ourselves on the upper story, with a well-arched front of fine dressed stone, and various arched doorways and windows looking east. So dry is the climate, that the traces of fresco-painting and fresh colouring still remained on the outer faces. There were three consecutive chambers, all lined with frescoes, of which the faces alone had been chipped out by Moslem iconoclasts. The centre room was evidently a chapel, covered with Byzantine paintings of saints, and had an apse in the east front, with a small lancet window. The dome of the apse was filled by a fresco of our Lord, with the inscription Ὁ ΠΑΝΤΟΚΡΑΤΩΡ over it. On the south side was another figure, encircled by a halo. The face was erased, and the inscription read—

Ο ΑΓΙΟC Ο
Ι ω̃ ... Π ... Ο C.

The next chamber was artificially vaulted over one half, and a gallery chamber thus contrived above it. In this there were, below the large frescoes, small figures drawn on the plaster, in a sort of chrome, quite unlike the others —not figures of saints, but apparently likenesses executed by the artist to gratify his own taste, and exhibiting much greater power of shading and contour drawing than we usually see in Byzantine art.

In the roof of this, again, was a small hole, athwart which lay a stick. After many efforts we got a string across it, and so hauled up a rope, by which, finding the stick strong enough, we climbed, and, with a short exercise of the chimney-sweeper's art, found ourselves in a third tier of cells, similar to the lower ones, and covered with the undisturbed dust of ages. Behind the chapel was a



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dark cave, with an entrance eighteen inches high. Having lighted our lantern, we crept in on our faces, and found the place full of human bones and skulls, with dust several inches deep. We were in the burying-place of the anchorites. Their bones lay heaped, but in undisturbed order, probably as the corpse had been stretched soon after death; and, as in the *campo santo* of some Italian monasteries, had been desiccated, and in the dry atmosphere had gradually pulverised. The skeletons were laid west and east, awaiting the resurrection. After capturing two or three long-tailed bats, of a species new to us (*Rhinopoma microphyllum*), the only living occupants, we crept out, with a feeling of religious awe, from this strange sepulchral cavern.

We then visited another set of hermits' dwellings, 100 feet higher up, much of the same kind, but in worse repair, as the Abyssinians inhabit them every spring; and many names were cut in Ethiopic characters on the walls, as well as a few in Greek.

Higher up, again, we found winding galleries in the rock to another series; but the foot-hold was hazardous, and the height giddy. The difficulty was greatest when we came to a spot where the path had been entirely worn away, and one had to swing round a projecting ledge by the hands merely, with the feet hanging over a perpendicular precipice 700 feet above the gorge, and the vultures sailing beneath. Having screwed up my nerves to the requisite pitch, with a rope round my waist, I was easily passed round the corner by the Bedouin. In fact, if one can only resolve not to look down, but to keep the eye fixed on the objects close at hand, half the difficulty of rock-climbing is overcome.

We crept through a little tunnel in the rock, climbed several sets of broken stairs on the face of the cliff, and rounded some projecting points, till we were nearly at the top of Mons Quarantania. Clouds of rock doves dashed

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from the caves as we passed the entrance of many of them, and in the outer galleries were the empty nests of at least three species of swifts and swallows (*Hirundo rufula*, *Cotyle rupestris*, and *Cypselus affinis*).

I need describe only one set of caves, as all were on the same model. We entered a large open chamber. It sounded hollow; and under a slab was the entrance to a sepulchral vault. Behind the cave, again, was another low dark cavern, a chamber of still decay, deep with human dust, and covered with bones and skulls. The old hermits had been laid here, as if, even in death, they would still be within hearing of their hourly chapel service.

We passed along the rock and through a short tunnel, into another chamber, nine yards by seven, and a long cave behind it; where, by the aid of our lanterns, we captured several of the long-tailed bats. The front cave was vaulted, and of good masonry, faced with dressed stone, and over one half of it were two more gallery chambers. At the further side were two doorways, one arched, the other square-topped, with all the plaster coloured and covered with frescoes, now much defaced. These doorways led to the chapel, the apse of which was built out into the face of the precipice, with a fresco of the Virgin in its concave, and a small pointed window below. On each side of the apse was a little niche in the wall, as if for a piscina or credence-table, but no drainage-hole. The whole roof was vaulted. Behind this, again, was a burial-cave, and beyond it a good cemented cistern, hewn in the rock, ten feet by six, and perhaps ten feet deep, with a little dormitory over it. The angel Gabriel and the Annunciation seemed a favourite subject, and, in all the chapels, occupied the right of the apse. But we observed that, with one exception, the figure of our Lord occupied the centre of every wall, and that there was no trace of the favourite Romish symbol of the Virgin and Child. There were several figures of saints. St. Paul occurred frequently, and St. Andrew once. The



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following are the other inscriptions over the various paintings, some of which exhibited fair artistic skill. Ὁ ΑΓΙΟC ΓΡΗΓΟΡΙΟC Ὁ ΘΕΟΛΟΓΟC. Ὁ ΑΓΙΟC ῶ Ι..... ΧΡΥCΟC-ΤΟΜΟΥ. Ὁ ΑΓΙΟC ΒΑCΙΛΕΙΟC Ὁ ΜΕΓΑC. +. Ὁ ΑΓΙΟC ΑΘΑΝΑCΙΟC Αλ.....ΔΙΑC.....

In another chapel was a still more interesting inscription, very legible, viz., *ὁ αγιος Αθανασιος της αληθειας μαρτυς.*

Having gone through as many of the chapels as was necessary to have a good idea of them, and having considerably exercised our climbing powers, we returned to camp in the evening. I have described these hermits' caves at somewhat tedious length, as we were disposed to believe that they had not hitherto been thoroughly explored by any traveller, nor described by any writer. Certainly neither Robinson, Porter, nor Thomson, had entered them; and ordinary tourists are not likely to provide themselves here with torches and ropes, nor to trust themselves to the latter. It is true they have no bearing on the history of the land, whether Sacred, Roman, or Crusading; but they may help to elucidate a dark and little-known period of the Eastern Church. When we observe the type of the frescoes, and the prominence given to the great fathers in the Arian controversy, Gregory Theologus, Chrysostom, Basil the Great, and Athanasius, all contemporaries at the beginning of the fourth century, and all owing their fame to the part they took in that controversy, may we not ascribe the date of these structures to the period when that fierce struggle was at its height, and probably, too, to the hands of those who fled for safety and seclusion, from the Arian persecution, to these caves? There is no mention of St. Jerome among any of the inscriptions; and one would feel disposed, therefore, to assign them to his followers during his lifetime, or before he was canonised, for, had they been of a later date, it seems scarcely probable that one whose life and fame were so closely connected with this locality, and whose traditions are linked with the ruins which these cells

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overlook, should not have been celebrated among his compeers.

Perhaps, too, the reverence in which these cells are held by the Abyssinians, and their neglect by the Greeks, may indicate a traditional connexion with Egypt, and that their occupants were emigrants from, or affiliated with, the innumerable societies of ascetics on the banks of the Nile.

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## CHAPTER X.

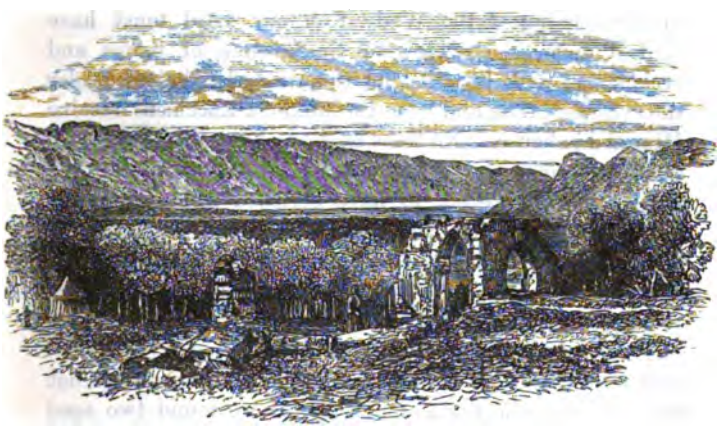
*Ancient Jericho—Its Traces—Gilgal, probably Er Riha—Wady Kelt—Herod's Jericho — The Sycamore—A Native Naturalist — Capture of a Wild Boar — Native horror of Pork — Geology of Jericho — Night Scenery — Climate — Ride to the Jordan — Deir Hajla—Beth Hogla—Convent — Sulphur on the Plain — Banks of the Jordan — Its annual Rise—Kurn el Yehudi, St. Jerome's Monastery—Formation of Terraces on the Plain — Effects of Rain and Floods — Ruins — Rock Doves — Native Ideas on Natural History — Ride to Jerusalem in the Rain — Nebi Mousa — Limestone and Chalk Formation — Talmireh Camp — Ruin of a Khan—An Italian Traveller—Return by the Hills of Benjamin —Anathoth—Grottoes—Sheep and Goats—Sunday Rest.*

ELISHA'S Fountain, Jericho.—Another day was devoted to a careful examination of the district immediately adjoining our camp, and the traces of the various cities which have successively occupied it. That Ain Sultân marks the site of old Jericho there can be no reasonable doubt, though the ruins are but desolate heaps, and the remains of the masonry round the spring are of very modern date; perhaps Herodian, or contemporaneous with the sugar-mills just above. The absence of masonry need not cause difficulty. We have no reason to believe that the Israelitish cities possessed any architectural features. All the relics on the hills of Benjamin, or at Bethel or Shiloh, are, apart from the Herodian or Roman works, absolutely undecipherable; while the quantities of fragments of pottery, and small sharp, not rolled, pieces of stone in the earth here point to a long-continued occupation by man. Whatever masonry was available we may be quite certain would be carried up the slope by the Saracens or the Crusaders, when they

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constructed the extensive sugar-mills and aqueducts we have mentioned.

Of the other site, *Gilgal*, so interesting as the first camping place of Joshua after the passage of the Jordan, but the faintest traces remain. Josephus tells us it was fifty stadia from the Jordan and ten from Jericho. Ruins there are none; but about one and a half mile from the modern Jericho, *Er Riha*, lingers the name *Tellayàlt Jiljulich*, attached to a number of low artificial



AIN SULTÂN, JERICHO.

mounds, traces perhaps of the first permanent camp of Israel in the Land of Promise.

From Er Riha we walked up to the remains by the banks of the Kelt, the Herodian and New Testament Jericho, attested by many lines of foundations and fine crumbling aqueducts, by which all the flow of the Wady was once intercepted. Two sets of arches still span the little dell, beautifully overhung with dôm and zuhkûm trees. By the side of the glen, the castor-oil plant (*Ricinus officinalis*) flourishes as a perennial, and becomes

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a goodly shrub. The *vitex agnus-castus* unites with the oleander to form a perfect tangle, the delight of scores of chiffchaffs and willow-wrens in their winter quarters; and on some bare gravelly mounds above the banks, L., more fortunate or more persevering than his predecessors, from Hasselquist to Robinson, found the Rose of Jericho (*Anastatica hierochundica*) in some abundance.

But we could find no trace of the Hippodrome of Herod, and the whole area has been stripped of every relic of sculpture or architecture. Along the road which leads up to the opening of the Wady Kelt our Lord must have walked under the shadow of the avenue of palms and sycamores; and just beyond the ruins He halted under the sycamore-tree, and bade the anxious Zacchæus receive Him at his house. No trees now overhang that dusty and scorched track, and the sycamore would seem, like the palm and the balsam, to have perished from the plain. The tree into which the publican climbed must not be confounded with the Oriental plane common by the streams of Northern Galilee, but was the sycamore fig (*Ficus sycomorus*), already mentioned in the Plain of Phœnicia, but never found in the central highlands. We were gratified by the discovery that, though scarce, it is not yet extinct in the Plain of Jericho, as we found two aged trees in the little ravine just to the south of these ruins, in illustration of the Gospel narrative.

Several of our guards became much interested in our collections, or rather in the backshîsh which a good specimen calls forth. One of them, Gemil, the brother of our Sheikh, who afterwards became a confidential friend, assisted us greatly, and showed acute powers of discernment. Seeing my interest in land shells, he collected them in some quantities, and recognised every species. This morning with great delight he came and announced he had found a new species in the rocks. I cast a cursory glance at his handful, and told him I had the shell already;

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upon which he replied I was mistaken, and pointed out a minute but constant difference in the form of the lip between this Helix and the other for which I had taken it, and in which I at once saw he was perfectly correct. Gemil, with a little training, would soon have made a first-rate collector.

Our pay for such services was not very magnificent, never more than one charge of powder at a time, which having obtained, the guards would start off with their long matchlocks, and presently return with a specimen. They had not the slightest idea of shooting flying, but with a rest behind a rock had an unerring aim. They brought in to-day a fine marmot (*Psammomys obesus*), three grakles, and some partridges. But the event of the day was the capture of a large wild-boar, which one of them brought down in a jungle near the Jordan. Of course no one would touch the unclean beast, and, when we heard of the fact, it was with the greatest difficulty we could obtain one of our mules to convey the prize to camp. Hamoud at first was obstinate. The mule would be defiled, the saddle must be burnt, the camp would be polluted. It was only by a stern exercise of authority that we despatched an animal with our Christian servants alone for the pig. It oozed out afterwards that the real dread was lest we should feed upon pork ourselves, and our followers be thus debarred from their accustomed perquisites from the kitchen. Our dinner testified to the value of the "chasse," and our table was varied by wild pig in every shape for three days. It certainly was delicious eating, bearing the same relation to pork as partridge to chicken.

After dinner we had an animated discussion on the geology of the district, on which all had been making observations. The absence of volcanic traces was indisputable, and the evidence to our minds conclusive that only the Jordan, or that ancient tongue of the sea which

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it represents, could have formed the Ghor, and especially the strange gravel hills around us, and that the Ghor is chiefly a fissure of erosion, accelerated perhaps by the agency of depression during the volcanic period of the Ledjah, at the end of the tertiary epoch. These huge hillocks which fringe the plain are all composed of conglomerate, quite unlike the sedimentary remains lower down, and are very soft, with *land* shells intermingled of *existing* species. The plain is generally covered over with a coating of mud mingled with the existing fresh-water shells of the Jordan and its tributary streams. But in the case of the genus *melanopsis* especially, there are three species common, viz., *M. prærosa*, *M. costata*, and *M. Saulcyi*. Of these the former abounds everywhere in the Ghor; the second has been found in a living state only in the upper waters of the Jordan and the Lake of Galilee; and the third only near Ain Sultân. Almost all the semi-fossil shells in the deposit of the Jordan plain are of the second species, and we could not discover any of the third. This seems to point strongly to the supposition that all this mud has been brought down and repeatedly overflowed from the upper waters, unless the distribution of the species has become changed. At any rate, the general inference appears irresistible that, within a comparatively recent geological period, the whole lower valley has been exposed to fresh-water floodings from the upper Jordan, and that the great mounds and hillocks which stud the sides of the valley under the hills are the results of sudden freshets and torrents from the wadys to the west, which have brought down enormous masses of soil, in which the shells that lived on its surface have been mingled.

We talked and speculated till long after ten o'clock, our usual hour for prayers, and then the night was too lovely to induce us to retire. Under the clear starlight we sat or stood round the camp fire till midnight, M., no

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mean performer, practising on his violin to the delight of the Bedouin, who could not resist the temptation of getting up a "fantasia" for an accompaniment. But they evidently did not appreciate the sonatas of Mozart. Our fire was a huge one, and pleasant it was to stand with the back to it and the face to the brilliantly-lit canopy overhead. The stars glitter with peculiar lustre down into this deep gorge, and it is not till towards morning that any sharp cold is felt.

The climate is much like that of Egypt—the same dry, hot days and chilly mornings just before sunrise. Rarely the thermometer fell below 49°, its average minimum in the fifteen days from 30th December to 13th January being 53° 5′ at 10 P.M., and 43° the average minimum registered during the night, whilst during the day it ranged as high as 85°, averaging 72°, and with a radiancy of atmosphere which converted the eastern mountains of Moab and the Dead Sea into a fairy land of glowing softness.

All were out by daybreak next morning for an excursion to the Jordan and the ruins of the plain. Our steeds, which had been standing idle at their pickets for a week, were fat, frisky, and in unbounded spirits, an exuberance resulting in various summersaults on the part of the less experienced riders during the day.

We had to ride carefully for a couple of miles through the frightfully prickly tangle of jujube bush, which here grows to be a fair-sized tree, until we reached the rubbish heap on which the hovels of Er Riha are thrown up round the old castle, after the fashion of an Egyptian village of the lowest class. On the slopes of the mound were a few unfenced plots of tobacco plants, marked by circles of loose stones, and below the village some enclosures of fruit-trees. Here the cultivation suddenly ceases, the jujube bushes become more sparse, and gradually the oasis fades away into an open, bare plain, looking much like a district which has not yet recovered from a sudden

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inundation. But there is no reason in the nature of the soil why the land should be barren and all that is required to restore fertility here is the utilisation of the abundant fountains above.

Turning to the south, we cantered across a wide plain of alluvial soil, scantily covered with scrub, from which were started several hares, and which abounded in tracks and holes of marmots and jerboas, until we came to the slight tree-fringed depression of the Wady Sidr, the next little stream-bed south of the Kelt, so called, doubtless, from the dôm-trees which occasionally mark its course. We looked in vain for the ruins of Moharfer, suggested as Gilgal by Van de Velde, and our Ghawârineh seemed unacquainted with the existence of any such hereabouts. Having dismounted, we walked some way down the course of the wady, and obtained a hare (*Lepus sinaiticus*), and a Greek partridge, welcome contributions to the pot. U. also brought down our first specimen of the sand-grouse, of the African species *Pterocles senegalensis*, Lath., which we should scarcely have looked for so far east. Thence we struck across to Deir Hajla, called by our Christian servant Deir Mâr Yahanna—the convent of St. John, a fine, well-built Greek convent, of the Byzantine style, with many of the walls, external and internal, still standing, the outlines of the chapel still entire, and the frescoes remaining, defaced, but distinct on the walls.

From this place we turned to the north-east, to visit a well, which our Arabs declared the best in the country, Ain Hajla, the ancient Beth Hogla, on the frontiers of Judah and Benjamin, in a slight depression, unmarked by trees or ruins. In a little oasis of rich green herbage, the neatly-constructed circular well is sunk, not very deep, but perfectly clear to the gravelly bottom, the sides studded with little black neritina shells, and the water standing at the level of a few inches below the edge of the structure. At the south side it ooses out, and fertilises a pretty green strip

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towards the Jordan, till its powers are exhausted. But no trace of ruins could we find. Perhaps they were all carried off for the construction of the monastery, since, though that shares its name, the ancient town must have been planted by the unchanging spring, rather than on the barren plain, two miles distant.

From Ain Hajla we hastened across the plain to the Jordan. The soil was all diluvial recent deposit, with many blanched specimens of the common Jordan shells embedded in the dry earth, but no trace of fossilised specimens. Here and there, especially as we approached the river, there was an incrustation of nitre, and the soil had a saltish taste, yielding few plants, save salsolas and salicornias. On some parts of the plain were considerable superimpositions of impure sulphur, and occasional fragments almost pure, of which I collected some several ounces in weight. It seemed as though, by some chemical process, the sulphur was at present in course of deposition; and this was corroborated by our guide, who stated that the Kerak people come and collect it for the manufacture of their gunpowder. We could not hear of any sulphur springs on the north end of the lake, though we found many further south.

The atmosphere was very clear, and the mountains of Moab stood out in grand relief above the placid, glistening surface of the sea, mantled with a lovely purple hue, in pleasing contrast with the stern-looking, precipitous mountain behind us, which frowned in a sombre russet dress.

The Jordan itself could not be seen, nor yet the belt of green we had looked on from Ain Sultân; but we could easily trace its course by the bare banks opposite to us, furrowed and ploughed by barren nullahs and thirsty ravines, since the eastern bank is here very much higher than the western. Suddenly descending a slope of thirty feet, we found ourselves in front of a belt of impenetrable jungle and trees, chiefly a sort of poplar evergreen, a

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sycamore, and several deciduous trees unknown to us; while the undergrowth was principally tamarisk and cane, and not, so far as we could observe, the familiar oleander.

We were on the banks of the Jordan. After turning a little way down, we came to an opening in the belt, and were at once on the river-side, at the well-known pilgrims' bathing-place. Muddy, swollen, and turbid, the stream was far too formidable and rapid for the most adventurous to attempt their intended bathe; and we sat and ate our luncheon under the tree where I had breakfasted six years before. Had we arrived a few days sooner, we could not have approached the river at all; for it had been overflowing its banks, and filling the lower level, to which we had decended from the plain, and which was still a deep slimy ooze. Under our tree, however, the drift had formed a sandbank, on which we could sit. By measurement, we found that the river had lately been fourteen feet higher than its present margin, and yet it was still many feet above its ordinary level. Though there were no oleanders in blossom, the tamarisk was putting forth its graceful feathery plumes; and the trees were green as summer, while the air resounded with the music of the bulbul. Everywhere were traces of wild-boar, hyæna, and jackal,—washed, probably, out of their usual lairs, and taking refuge in the higher grounds. The subject of this rise of the Jordan is of some interest, as doubts have occasionally been raised on the question. Robinson, who remarks that no traveller had visited its banks in November or December, does not appear to have been aware of it. Probably, when we visited it just now, the rains had been more copious than at any other period of the year; and, as I shall have occasion to mention subsequently, this overflow was far more considerable than the second flooding in the month of March.

Our guard insisted upon the horses being at once with

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drawn out of range from the river-bank, lest, if detected, they should afford target-practice to their neighbours, the tribes on the other side, with whom they informed us they were at war. We then separated on our various errands —ruins, plants, ducks, or pig—agreeing to meet at this point in five hours, for our dinner together.

On the barren upper plain stood a pile of ruins, to which I betook myself, the Kurn-el-Yehudi of the Arabs, *i.e.*, Castle of the Jews, but in reality a Greek monastery, of very early date, probably contemporary with St. Jerome. Hither, local tradition states, the father frequently came for seclusion and study; and hence, we are told, the monks migrated to Marsaba, when the constant inroads of the Arabs rendered their frontier position no longer tenable. It was pleasant to fancy the tradition true, and to muse on the contrast between the desolate home and the living works of the great father. The scene was barrenness itself. A large square pile of building had been thrown into a mass of shapeless ruins, apparently by an earthquake, many blocks of wall being heaped in overthrow in all directions, but held together by the mortar. The view stretched from the head of the Dead Sea at the south, all up the dull flat Ghor to the bold headland of Kurn Surtabeh in the north, with a conical peak pushing out from the mountains of Samaria, and intersecting the valley apparently almost to the edge of the river. On either side, before or behind, not a tree or a blade of grass was visible, save the oasis of Jericho in the rear, and the fringe of the Jordan in front. The ruin stands just on the edge of the wide upper plain mentioned above; while the lower plain, which had been inundated within the last few days, reached up to the foot of the bank of *débris* on which the convent was planted.

Yet this barren desert had once been fertile by the irrigation of the plenteous streams above, and nothing but neglect has reduced the well-watered plain to such deso-

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lation. We could detect the traces of the old watercourses for irrigation, and the upper plateau must, within the last 2,000 years, have extended much further towards the bed of the river. Sudden winter floods are rapidly wrinkling its edges, and washing it piecemeal into the gulley below. I can scarcely describe the singular way in which the banks were scored, and, as it were, large islands left, forming flat-topped mounds, the soft marl of whose crumbling sides, encrusted slightly with natron, without a particle of vegetation, are year by year restoring to the Jordan its old deposit. From no point can a better or clearer elucidation be obtained of the various plateaux of which the lower Jordan valley (the Aulon) is composed, and which throw such light on the history of its formation. First, gradually declining from the western hills, and formed principally of their *débris*, is the upper terrace on which stand the two great oases of Ain Dûk and Ain Sultân; commencing at a height of 750 feet above the level of the Dead Sea, and sinking at Er Riha to 500 feet. Hence a somewhat steep slope descends nearly 200 feet to the second plateau. This is now barren, but merely so from neglect, except in the portion nearest the lake, where the soil is impregnated with salt and covered with efflorescence of sulphur. Thirdly, comes the extent of ground about 100 feet lower still, occasionally overflowed by the river; and lastly, fringing the stream, and very frequently under water, the narrow, depressed belt, which is a mere tangle of trees and cane, often only a few yards in width. No person, I think, can carefully study these various terraces without being convinced that on them are engraved the past physical history of the country, and how, step by step, the once mighty flood has dwindled into the narrow but still impetuous stream.

While sitting among the ruins I was startled by a cloud of rock doves, rising by hundreds out of the earth beneath my feet, and soon found a small hole, opening into exten-

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sive subterranean caverns, the cellars and tanks of the old monastery. I could see they were finely vaulted, but without a rope quite inaccessible. Three very large arches could be perceived below, and, on firing down, the vaults resounded like a rumbling earthquake, and another cloud of pigeons dashed frantically in my face. Though the upper building is wholly ruined, the lower substructure, or crypt, above these cellars remains, and here is a plain large chapel, with its apse entire, but, unlike the ruins of Hajla, without a trace of plaster or colouring. There was a small window at the top of the apse, and traces of the altar. All was built of good sandstone, which must have been brought from some distance, as none is known in the neighbourhood.

From the ruins I descended to the swamps above the river, attracted by the flocks of duck which I had seen alight there, and had two ineffectual shots at a wild-boar. Here I rejoined my party; we collected a few more birds (U., as usual, establishing his right to his Arab soubriquet), and all returned safely to camp a little after sunset.

The curious haze which we had observed in the evening, over the Dead Sea, explained itself after dinner, not, as we had hoped, by a sirocco, but by a downpour of rain, which continued during the night, from the south-west, but very warm withal. Happily, our tents were well pitched, and we suffered not the slightest inconvenience. A party of thieves were detected prowling about, under cover of the storm, on the look-out for a horse, mule, or anything else they could lay hands on; sentries were accordingly posted at the door of each tent, and a vigilant patrol maintained, who kept us, if not the thieves, on the *qui vive* till morning by their shrill cries.

We catechised our Sheikh on his knowledge of the upper part of the Ghor. He told us, besides the ruins of Fusail (the ancient Phasaëlis), of some others, to which



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he promised to conduct us, existing in the lower level of the plain, and having, as he said, great caves, made by the Yehudi, beneath them. These he called Es Sumrah, and declared they were much larger than those of the Herodian city beyond. Having now satisfied himself that we were not in search of such treasure as *he* should value, he evinced no reluctance to impart all the knowledge he possessed of the curiosities of the neighbourhood. He looked upon us rather with reverence, as slightly crazed (a sure title to respect with the Bedouin), for our pursuit of things good neither to eat nor to sell; but apologised once for having inadvertently intimated this, by adding, that he supposed we had some spells, by which we should restore all the birds to life when we got into our own country. "But why," he inquiringly exclaimed, "should the Howadji use witchcraft to bring *serpents* into their country?"

*January 8th.*—Daylight brought with it no very cheering prospect for a six-hours' ride. The rain still came down in torrents, and the hills were black. Even at balmy Jericho, the postman, when there is one, will sometimes have a hard life of it. To climb through a shower-bath from the tropics into a storm of November sleet is no trifle, and such was my lot to-day. But the hope of letters made the labour light. The ordinary road was sufficiently familiar, and, having heard of some ruins accessible by a route to the southward, I determined to make the détour, chiefly with the view of noting the geology on the way. A southward track leads along the foot of the hills, from the site of Herod's Jericho to Nebi Mousa, a Moslem chapel on the top of a conical hill, where their tradition has placed Pisgah and the burial-place of Moses, doubtless for the convenience of their pilgrims from Jerusalem, who resort thither in great numbers at the time of our Easter. Leaving the hill of Nebi Mousa on the left, we now turned across an irregular and rather rugged wilderness to the upper part of the Wady Dabûr, where were ruins of which

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our Arabs had spoken, called Melâah. Nothing was distinguishable beyond the traces of old foundations, and a few shallow caves, but the slopes were green, and we found here an encampment of our friends, the Ghawârineh, with their flocks. The women brought us out liban, or sour curds, "in a lordly dish," but the men were all absent. As we ascended the hills, I had an opportunity of noticing the geology at my leisure, for there was no fear of falling among thieves, and we were by this time personally known to all the tribe. Two strata were generally exposed. The lower, of hard, almost crystalline limestone, dipped the whole way towards the east, as though the valley had been depressed, rather than the hills elevated. But the upper stratum, of a soft, chalky limestone, was rarely conformable with these lower deposits, being frequently contorted; and, where dislocations of the lower stratification were exposed, the interstices and fractures had been filled in by the deposition of the more recent chalk. The silex of this, where the hillside had been washed bare into a cliff, presented, by its wrinkled and crimped appearance, somewhat of the effect of a frill round a cap.

Riding westward, the character of the wilderness became more tame; steep cliffs gave place to grassy slopes, and the whole country assumed the character of rolling downs, where we could travel without track in almost every direction. As we had observed on the way to Jericho, the north slopes were everywhere covered with a fine velvet herbage, while the southern sides still retained the brown livery of summer. The Ta'âmireh, a powerful tribe between Bethlehem and Engedi, were pasturing their camels; and we met several straggling Arabs; but they were all acquaintances of our protectors, and did not even demand a backshîsh. It seems that they were trespassers in the eyes of the Ghawârineh, who, being too weak to assert their rights, were allowing them to lie dormant for the present. The round-topped hills, with their wadys encircling them,



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reminded one of the contour drawings of mountains in ancient atlases. These wadys were by no means dry to-day, and sometimes it was as much as we could do to ford them without swimming. Partridges, of the large Greek species, were abundant, and I was able to secure a brace without dismounting. My favourite chestnut horse, a thoroughbred Arab, had by this time become perfectly trained as a shooting pony, and, with the docility which characterises his race, would implicitly follow the commands of the voice, and, without flinching, allow me to traverse my gun between his ears. If I dismounted, "Il Bey" would stand patiently, untended, till my return, or follow at the word of command.

From El Melâah, we went on to another ruin, which consisted merely of a large khan, with many arches and vaults still entire. Apparently it was a very early Saracenic structure, half fortress, half hostelry, or perhaps a Crusading post adapted by their successors. The place had no special name in the vocabulary of my companions, nor could I detect traces of any earlier ruins in its immediate neighbourhood. It lies on the direct road from Jerusalem to Nebi Mousa, about equidistant from each.

From the khan, we rode sharply on to Jerusalem, rejoining the ordinary track a short distance before reaching the Apostles' Well. It was not yet two o'clock when we arrived, and the gates were locked. Every Friday, from noon till two P.M., the time of prayer in the mosque, the gates are rigorously closed, on account of a tradition that at that hour the Christians will some day seize the city. I thought of "Patience on a monument smiling at grief," and fancied she must have learnt her lesson from a horseman, drenched and hungry, sitting for an hour on his dripping steed under the walls of Jerusalem. A black-headed jay tried this patience too much, when, with the familiarity of a sparrow, it lighted under the Damascus Gate, and secured its niche among my *souvenirs* of Jerusalem. For once the

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post-office was open,—a rare event, and our mails were soon deposited and received.

Through the kindness of Mr. Moore, I made the acquaintance of an Italian gentleman, who had been spending some months among the tribes to the north-east of Petra, and beyond the Belka, for the sake of purchasing horses for the King of Italy. Unfortunately, Signor Guerracio was neither an antiquary nor a naturalist; though he had had opportunities such as fall to the lot of few. He was a perfect Arab scholar, and the object for which he travelled was a sufficient passport everywhere. But he had never ventured to keep a journal, lest he should excite suspicion. Living as an Arab, in their costume, and without baggage, his mode of travelling was to attach himself to some tribe so long as it suited his plans. The Bedouin, firmly convinced that their horses were unequalled in the world, considered his errand most natural, and accepted it as a compliment. Besides, he never quitted a tribe without making a purchase. He stated that he had travelled at least a hundred miles due east of Esh Sherah, the ridge which runs down to Akabah; and that in the interior there was very little true desert, but that the whole of Northern Arabia, east of the Hadj route, was more or less pastoral, and capable of maintaining large herds of camels and goats; and that the population, though always nomad, seemed to increase in the interior. Of cultivation beyond the Belka (the ancient Moab), there was little; there were traces of many ancient cities, and of artificial irrigation, with a few existing oases of palm-groves, but no ruins of any beauty or magnitude, like those of Petra. His description of these ruined towns reminded me of what the oases of the Beni M'zab, in the Sahara, would become, if deserted for a short time. Signor Guerracio maintained that, except where the natives have been corrupted by travellers, the requisite for penetrating Arabia is not money, but a perfect knowledge of the language, and *time*. With patience and tact, he considered

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that a persevering explorer ought not to fail of success, if willing to attach himself to such a tribe as the Beni Sakk'r, and to travel along with them. He did not, however, hold out any favourable prospect of our being able, with baggage and a retinue of our own, to explore the eastern border of the Dead Sea, inhabited as it was, not by nomads, but by little tribes of sedentary plunderers.

I remained for the night under the hospitable roof of the Bishop,—a sudden step into civilisation from our gipsy life,—and, having finished our marketing, left early next morning, along with my muleteers and a couple of guards. In descending the hill from Bethany, we saw an illustration of the wretched insecurity of the country, in a drove of donkeys laden with firewood for Jerusalem. Each ass was attended by a man armed to the teeth with pistols, sword, and a long gun; and in one little valley—the only one beyond Bethany where there was any cultivation—each ploughman was holding his firelock in one hand, while he guided the plough with the other.

As I wished to explore the country to the north of the route, Sheikh Mohammed offered to conduct me across the ridge from this point, the foot of the hill below Bethany, to the banks of the Wady Fârah, where, he said, he could show me many ruins, and we could then follow the course of the wady till it joined the Kelt, and opened on the plain of Jericho. I gladly embraced the offer, and off we scrambled on our goat-like steeds, having despatched the mules by the direct road. We were well repaid for the détour. As we crossed the shoulder of the ridge, the village of Anâtâ (the ancient Anathoth) could be seen to the north-west, but too far distant to pay it a visit. Descending into the valley, we passed the squalid hamlet of Isawîyeh, where Van de Velde places *Nob;* but we saw no ruins, beyond the heaps of worn and shapeless stones. Turning to the east, as we rode across a rugged and trackless, but not barren, waste, we had several grand landscapes of the Jordan

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valley, and the hills beyond; and, at length, after crossing with difficulty some little gullies which contained feeders of the Kelt, we reached the Fârah. On the other side of the ravine, our guide said, was once the village of Fârah; but I saw no remains, as we could not cross. The place, I understood, had only recently become deserted through the wars; but what wars I was unable to discover.

Soon after we had reached the edge of the deep valley, another stream joined it from the north, and it took the name of the Kelt. Our route became worse, and the scenery wilder and grander as we advanced. Before reaching the ruined town of Kakôn, on looking down the gorge, we saw a fine broken aqueduct spanning the chasm, and lower down, another, from which channels had conveyed the water to the plain. These we could trace hewn out, or built on to the sides of the cliff, far above the torrent, which was dashing and foaming beneath. They appeared to have existed on both sides of the valley, and to have been repaired in several places in a very inferior style, and with smaller masonry. Now they were utterly broken down. As we proceeded, various hermit chapels and grottoes stood forth on the face of the cliff, wholly inaccessible from the washing-down of the nichelike paths by which they had been once approached. Some of the upper grottoes are still used as sheepfolds by the Bedouin shepherds; and it was a pretty sight to watch an Arab shepherd carefully threading his way, apparently on the face of the opposite cliff, calling loudly as he crept along, and followed by two long lines, a black one of goats, who went in a continuous thread straight after him, and a white one of sheep, who more cautiously took a parallel sinuous route above, till they reached a little platform just over the cavern, down which the goats leapt for themselves, and the sheep were carefully handed down one after another by the shepherd. Once within, they were safe for the night from jackals or thieves.

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Night was now approaching, and I had only time to examine one chapel on the south side, when we hastily descended, and galloped on to our snug camp, where there had been rain enough, but neither cold nor wind. Dinner was ready, and the Jericho mail was welcomed with loud hurrahs. It would have been difficult to have put any one of the party out of temper, on that night at least, when "absent friends" were drunk, and letters and newspapers busily scanned. My bag contained also various items to us most interesting — hedgehog, moles, and other small quadrupeds, as well as snakes, collected for us through the kindness of Mr. Barclay and Dr. Chaplin at Jerusalem.

*January 10th.*—Who would not live in the Ghor in winter, bathe in the warm fountain of Elisha, and dress under a dôm-tree in January? That bath removed all remembrance and sensation of the wet and cold of Jerusalem. Our Sundays are most certainly days of rest; and physically as well as mentally do we need them. The day was fine, the barometer rose to 31·2, and everything promised settled weather. I was sitting with my book on a stone, when a scorpion showed himself to the sun, and tempted his fate, and even a viper, allured by the warmth, came forth from the ruins to bask. Our Arabs came incessantly for powder, and could not comprehend our objection to their shooting for us to-day, as it was not their "yôm khuds" (holy day), but quite appreciated our practice of giving them a goat for dinner because it was a "festa." In this they were supported by our Syrian cook, who, in honour of its being a "grande festa" of the Greek Church, produced a wonderfully elaborate dinner of four courses—soup, fish from Elisha's fountain, wild pig, partridge, and real plum-pudding. The dinner was not hurried, as the plates and dishes had to be washed between each course.

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## CHAPTER XI.

*Ride up the Ghor—Boar-Hunt—Ruined Aqueducts—View of Shittim—Es Sumrah, Zemaraim—Its Quarries—Hyæna Caves—Formation of Bone Breccia—El Aujeh—Phasaëlis, Ain Fusail—Kurn Surtabeh—Wolf—Turtle Doves—Lynx—Ride on the Desert Plain—Its Geology and Formation—Departure from Ain Sultân—Revisit the Jordan—Traces of Leopards—Wild Animals—Date Palms—Mouth of the Jordan—Dead Sea Shore—Skeletons of Trees—Mineral Specimens—Birds and Fishes—The Estuary—Island—Doubtful Ruins—Terraces on the Hills—Trap Dyke—Gomorrah of De Saulcy—Ain Feshkhah—Conies—Warm Spring—Character of the Shore—Ras Feshkhah—Bold Headland—Difficult Climbing—Coast Line—Fine Landscape—Sand Spits—Solitary Expedition.*

OUR expedition next day to Sumrah and Fusail was interrupted by a boar-hunt. We had hardly passed the Fountain, when we saw half a dozen dogs and as many Arabs rushing wildly across the plain after a huge boar. Of course, my guards galloped on with a wild shriek, and I after them. The dogs reached the boar just as he was getting to the foot of the hills, and back he turned. In the present state of the larders a wild pig was not to be despised, and I did my best; but "Il Bey" had no stomach for close quarters. I had never before realised the great size of a wild-boar with his huge shoulders, as he clumsily rushed across the plain, at a speed equal to a horse's gallop, with half a dozen dogs at his heels and sides. Just before the beast reached the cover, as a last resource I dismounted, and having dropped a wet bullet down my barrel, fired without avail. The others came up, but too late to turn him back.

We rode on, passing a perfect but waterless aqueduct

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across a ravine. The soil was rich, a vegetable mould, which would grow anything if the copious streams from Ain Dûk were utilised. As we proceeded northward at a rapid pace, the Ghor did not contract, but seemed slightly to expand. For many miles up, the width of the plain cannot have been less than ten miles, a desert, but only so by man's neglect. On the other side of the river we could plainly see the low woodland of Moab, the plain of Shittim, where Israel camped before entering the Promised Land. It seemed to retreat far into the hills, especially at the south-east corner, where the plain runs right under the steep hills, behind the front ridge of which lie the ruins of Heshbon. Above us, to the left, was the gap which leads up to Bethel, and we could see, but not identify, the hills of Benjamin. Here and there we rode over the foundations of walls and heaps of stone, telling of ancient population; but not one human being did we see, though the plain and the many little watercourses or nullahs which we crossed were carpeted with plenteous verdure. The chrysanthemum, an ornithogalum, hawkweeds, several species of prickly centaurea, and especially a pale lilac-coloured stock (*Matthiola sinuata*), scented like our garden plant, covered the plain. For the first time I noticed the African bird, Menetries wheatear (*Saxicola isabellina*, Rüpp.), which has a disagreeable habit of sitting on a bush out of gunshot, and then, on the approach of danger, dropping down into a burrow, of which the plain is full. One we marked into its hole, apparently the deserted burrow of a jerboa, and, having stopped three exits, began to dig it out with our spears. When we had worked through about a yard of hard soil, the bird made its escape by a fifth aperture four paces off.

Es Sumrah stands on the very edge of the Ghor, close to the rise of the hills. It has been with great probability identified by Mr. Grove with the Zemaraim of Joshua xviii. 22, one of the towns of Benjamin between Beth-abarah and Bethel. Though now only a collection of

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crumbling heaps, it has been a place of considerable extent. Its most interesting remains are beneath the surface. Furnished with a torch, we easily descended into its quarries, which are like small catacombs. From these the city above, and perhaps also, as Mr. Grove has suggested to me, Fusail and the Roman Jericho were built. Most probably, too, the sandstone, of which we found a layer, supplied the material for the erection of St. Jerome's monastery. All was fresh and clean, as though the workmen had left it but yesterday. Half-hewn blocks strewed the floor, and the sides were scored with the niches cut for fixing the wedges by which the stones were split. We wandered through these subterranean halls, which had been excavated on the same system as the quarries of Jerusalem, and were very like the forsaken workings of a coal-pit, but much more lofty. We counted fifty-four irregularly-shaped square pillars left, and there may have been many more, as it was not easy to reckon them. The place afforded a good section of the stratification of the plain. Underneath a bed of artificial mortar, probably a house-floor, on the surface, was a gravel conglomerate of rolled pebbles three feet thick. Below this was a layer, two feet thick, of soft sandstone, then six feet of chalky marl, which I believe to have been a fresh-water deposit, not yet hardened into stone, but of such consistency that it might be cut with a knife, and which was tolerably indurated where exposed. Below this, again, twenty feet of the quarried stone stratum was exposed, which may, and probably does, extend to a much greater depth. We collected specimens of the different layers, but searched in vain for any organic remains below the soft upper sandstone.

These caverns are now the den of wild beasts, and the excrement of the hyæna covered the floor. Vast heaps of bones of camels, oxen, and sheep had been collected by these animals, in some places to the depths of two or three feet, and on one spot I counted the skulls of seven

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camels. There were no traces whatever of any human remains. We had here a beautiful recent illustration of the mode of formation of the old bone caverns so valuable to the geologist. These bones must all have been brought in by the hyænas, as no camel or sheep could possibly have entered the caverns alive, nor could any floods have washed them in. Near the entrance, where the water percolates, they were already forming a soft breccia. Having obtained half a dozen bats from the roof, of the same species as those in the hermits' cells, we scrambled up again.

No time was now to be lost if I wished to visit the ruins of Phasaëlis. We cantered for perhaps ten miles up the Ghor without once drawing rein. The direct distance could not have been more than seven or eight miles; but, flat and even as the plain appeared, there were many channels sunk deep in its surface, which compelled us to make *détours*, and to keep a course at some distance from the hills, about three or four miles from the Jordan. By this route we unfortunately missed the ruins of El Aujeh, which lie close under the hills. The view of the expanse was fine and exhilarating, a wide even plain, with Kurn Surtabeh and its symmetrical peak completely intersecting the Ghor to the north; and the bold bluff of Jebel Osha (Mount Gilead) becoming conspicuous to the north-east, edged with a dark green line, the forests of Ajalon, behind it. We crossed four or five principal watercourses, but only one of them, El Aujeh, contained any flow, recent as had been the rains. Pools, however, were still to be found here and there in several of them. For one only of these, Er Rashash, had my guides any distinct name. Soon after passing this, we swept up to the westward, a thicket of trees seeming to fringe the next wady.

As we approached a low spur of the hills, we could discern a bright green streak running down from the steep side in front, but not reaching to the plain—the Ain Fusail. Below this, on a knoll, we could see a village of hovels

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perched among ruins. We were riding up to it, when some of the people came forth armed, and evidently prepared to treat us as marauders. Our Sheikh said that these fellahin were tebâa (protected) of the Schoor-el-Ghor, a tribe hostile to his own, and that it would be impossible to hold communication with them. Had we come upon them unobserved, we might have thrown ourselves upon their hospitality, and reassured them. As it was, nothing would induce him to enter the place. I saw that parley was useless; it was now afternoon, and a long ride was before us—to be benighted in this debatable land would have been by no means safe, and without an interpreter I could not have ventured into the village. Consoling myself with the belief that the ruins were only, as Mohammed described them, "hadjera kussa," crumbling stones, and that nothing of importance was visible, I turned my horse's head, and followed my terrified guards at the top of my speed down the plain. The deep glen which led down from the fountain promised to reward exploration, and is left for future adventurers. We returned by a more direct course than we had taken in the morning, and passed some traces of ruins on a spur stretching out into the plain at a distance of two or three miles north of the Aujeh.

On our return to camp, we found that boar-hunting had been the order of the day, but as unsuccessfully as with ourselves. The beasts had been washed out of their lairs in the thickets by the rise of the Jordan, and several had secreted themselves close to our camp. U., too, had come across a large solitary wolf, of a dark tawny colour, which he thought appeared a distinct variety from the wolf of Northern Europe. The Syrian species has not yet been ascertained. Jackals had been seen in abundance, but no leopards. In birds an interesting addition had been made to our list in the collared turtle-dove (*Turtur risorius*, L.), an Indian and Asiatic species, which we should scarcely have expected to meet with here, certainly not in mid-winter.

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Next morning we were roused at sunrise by the news of a lynx in one of our traps, and, rushing out, found a fine specimen of the booted lynx (*Felis chaus*, L.) fast by the foot. In another trap was a curious little sand-mouse (*Acomys dimidiatus*), about half the size of a rat, pale tawny colour, and its back covered with spines instead of hair—in fact, a pigmy porcupine. This was to be our last day at Ain Sultân, and I was anxious to complete my survey of the district we had traversed yesterday.

Our ride gave us an opportunity of examining the geological structure of the spurs at the foot of the western range more closely than we had hitherto done. These, at a distance, bore the semblance of mere masses of *débris* gradually worn down from the steeps. They are a regular conglomerate, in stratified form, of very soft pudding-stone; composed, not of rounded pebbles, but of sharp angular fragments, flints largely predominating, which show no signs of having been river-worn, but were evidently deposited by rapid floods and conglomerated in masses. Again we observed that, as in the lower part of the valley, there were many fragments of land shells, of the recent living species, embedded in these soft rocks, while it was only lower down on the plain that the river shells of the Jordan and its tributaries occurred. All tended to confirm our first impression, that at a recent period the whole Ghor must have been under water, and covered by a sluggish *fresh-water* stream, either flowing down to the Red Sea, or, perhaps, stagnant subsequently to the elevation of the ridge of Akabah.* Even here, several hundred feet above

* My own impression is, that the Akabah for ages formed a ridge, separating the lake from the Red Sea, at a period when the latter was a fresh-water lake in the East-African series opened out to us by Speke and Livingstone. The Rev. F. W. Holland has shown me specimens of the Common Cockle (*Cardium Edule*) collected by him on raised beaches by the Red Sea, many feet above its present level, of precisely the same distorted form which exists in the brackish waters of the Baltic and the Sea of Azov, and have been found by me on the

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the Jordan, there were no true fossils in the marl. I need not add that not the slightest vestige of igneous action or volcanic traces could we perceive.

*January 13th.*—We left our quarters as we should have bid adieu to an old friend, for our natural history researches had been most successful; we had not had a single contre-temps, and I believe the whole party look back upon their fortnight by the Prophet's Fountain as the happiest portion of a most happy journey. Leaving the muleteers to take the direct route, accompanied by M., who wished to examine the Wady Dabûr, we started at eight o'clock, accompanied by Giacomo, our Sheikh, and the mounted spearmen, to make a *détour* to the mouth of the Jordan, and thence to skirt the shore till we should reach our new camp. This was calculated to be an eight hours' ride. After passing through the thickets (in which U. shot another specimen of the Indian collared turtle-dove) to Er Riha, we turned to the channel of the Wady Kelt, and followed its winding banks for some time, beating the scrub for larger game. The stream, which when we went to visit the Jordan had scarcely any flow above ground, was to-day a considerable torrent, and required care to ford. Then, turning across the plain to the south, we rode direct to Kus'r Hajla (Beth Hogla), and revisited the fine old monastery of St. John; and then, turning to the north, followed another little stream, now in full flow towards the Dead Sea.

In its gorge we found a fine clump of date palms—one old tree, and several younger ones clustered round it, apparently unknown to recent travellers, who state that the last palm-tree has lately perished from the plains of Jericho. Near these palm-trees in the thick cover we came upon the lair of a leopard or cheetah, with a well-

African Sahara. The form of these shells tells unmistakably of an epoch when there was at least an immense influx of fresh water into the Red Sea.

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beaten path, and the broad, round, unmistakable foot-marks quite fresh, and evidently not more than a few hours old. However, the beast was not at home for us. Doubtless it was one of these which M. de Saulcy took for the footprint of the lion. But, inasmuch as there is no trace of the lion having occurred in modern times, while the others are familiar and common, we must be quite content with the leopard. Everywhere round us were the fresh traces of beasts of every kind, for two days ago a great portion of the plain had been overflowed. The wild-boar had been rooting and treading on all sides; the jackals had been hunting in packs over the soft, oozy slime; the solitary wolf had been prowling about, and many foxes had singly been beating the district for game. The hyæna, too, had taken his nocturnal ramble in search of carcases. None of these, however, could we see. One hare was shot, of a species quite distinct from that obtained a few days before near the Jordan (the *Lepus sinaiticus*), and several others escaped. The black stork had been treading over the mud, and the little footprints of jerboas and marmots crossed and recrossed those of redshanks and sandpipers. Of birds there was a great variety. Here and there an eagle or a raven passed overhead, and a few warblers flitted about the thickets. Both the Greek partridge and the little Hey's red-leg were here, and two or three brace were secured for dinner.

The descent during the ride was so gradual, that it was difficult to believe we had come down 500 feet when we reached the shore. On descending from the upper plateau of the plain to the narrower and lower terrace, which has been mentioned as occasionally overflowed, and which is in many places becoming extended by the rapid washing away of the upper terrace, we took the opportunity of measuring the difference of elevation between the two, and found it to be fifty-five feet. As we approached the sea, the whole of the upper level was more or less in-

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crusted with a thin coating of salts, apparently deposited from the atmosphere, with deposits of gypsum, and occasionally varied by a thicker deposit of sulphur. Beneath this crust the soil is a soapy marl. We dug down two feet, and filled a small box with earth, which looked like a very rich mould. It was, however, impregnated with some mineral salt, for, on water being poured over it, the drainage had a nauseous bitter taste; and two species of salsola and an inula were the only plants growing on its surface. There were, in the exposed sections, where it is being washed away, many thin layers of this salt, and also of gypsum, and in places the marly deposit had become hardened into a sort of crumbling friable limestone. In this we found many blanched and almost calcined specimens of Jordan shells.

Leaving our horses to be led to the river-bank, we had a weary walk through the ooze to the north end of the sea, sinking ankle-deep at every step in adhesive mud. But, once arrived there, the fatigue was over. The beach is composed of a pebble gravel, rising steeply, and covered for a breadth of 150 yards from the shore with drift-wood. Trunks of trees lay tossed about in every possible position, utterly devoid of bark; grim and gaunt, a long and disorderly array of skeleton forms. There was great variety in the species of timber, but a very large proportion of the trees were palms, many with their roots entire. These must have been tossed for many years before they were washed up along this north shore. The whole of the timber is, indeed, so saturated with brine that it will scarcely burn, and, when it is ignited, emits only a pale blue flame. It is difficult to conceive whence such vast numbers of palms can have been brought, unless we imagine them to be the collected wrecks of many centuries. Certainly, in the present state of the vegetation on its banks, but few can have been brought down the Jordan, for there is no place there where more than a rare



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straggler could be found. The Zerka or the Arnon may supply more, but we should scarcely expect their trees to be washed into the back-water of the Jordan. It seems more reasonable to conjecture them the wrecks of generations, perhaps of centuries, past, accumulating here from the days when the City of Palm-Trees extended its groves to the edge of the river.

We were fortunate, so far as some questions respecting the Dead Sea are concerned, in visiting it at this time of the year, since no writer has observed it accurately during the winter floods. We found the height of the crest of the beach to be eighteen and a half feet above its present level, and the line of drift-wood somewhat less. The line of sticks and rubbish left by last week's flood was exactly five feet above the water-line to-day, and, from all appearance, that had been the highest point reached during the present season. But the Jordan several miles above had risen at least fourteen feet, and the plain through which we had just passed had been inundated twenty feet above the actual water-line.

We came upon an interesting example of deposit in course of formation. In one place the surface of last year was quite hard and slaty, and upon it was a syrup of mud several inches thick, of the consistency of pea-soup, left by the floods. This, under the broiling sun, will in a few days dry into hard clay, and upon it will be formed an incrustation ready to resist the soaking of the next overflow. We gathered several pieces of lava, and buoyant balls of pumice-stone, carried down by the Jordan, and also a lump of bitumen, besides morsels of sulphur. Among other examples of chemical action in progress was the rapid deposition in some places of oxide of iron. Of this we collected specimens quite soft, and apparently formed this year.

Among the rounded pebbles of the beach dead land shells were thickly strewn, and a few fluviatile, the castings of the

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Jordan, chiefly *Helix carthusianella* and *H. syriaca*. Quantities of very small dead fish, the fry of the common Jordan species (*Chromis Niloticus*, Hasselq.) lay on the gravel, killed by the salt water and thrown up by the flood; and on these various birds were feeding. A fine brown-necked raven (*Corvus umbrinus*) came right across the lake towards us, and fell to my gun. S. also shot a kingfisher, of the English species (*Alcedo ispida*), actually sitting on a dead bough in the water, and watching for the dying fish. There were many gulls. Dunlins, redshanks, and wagtails were running along the edge, and B. obtained another desert wheatear (*Saxicola deserti*, Rüpp.). Several small flocks of pochard ducks were passing to and fro, skimming the surface at some distance out. These facts are enough to show how utterly absurd are the stories about the sea being destitute of birds. At the same time it is quite certain that no form of either vertebrate or molluscous life can exist for more than a very short time in the sea itself, and that all that enter it are almost immediately poisoned and salted down.

We walked eastward along the edge of the lake with some difficulty, till we reached the mouth of the Jordan. Strange, indeed, is the contrast between the romantic birth of that mysterious stream, under the beautiful cliffs of Banias, cradled in the lovely recesses of Hermon, and its ignoble, sewer-like exit into its final home. The volume of water it poured in was at present very great, and its turbid flood might be distinctly traced by its coffee-brown colour for a mile and a half into the lake, the clearness and purity of whose waters—in colour at least—is unequalled. Standing on the highest ground near, we fancied we could trace the formation of a mud-bank on the left side of the river's mouth, some way into the sea.

The embouchure of the Jordan does not exhibit the usual characteristics of the outfall of a southern stream. No rich belt of trees or verdant tangle here fringes its bed.



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The river rushes violently between its narrow banks, through a muddy, naked plain, sparsely covered with salicornias, and here and there bordered by stunted tamarisks to the very edge of the sea. As we stood at its mouth on the right bank, we threw stones easily across to the Ghor-es-Seisaban (the plains of Moab) on the other side. The island which, when Lynch was here, divided the channel, is now joined to the plain on the left bank. Beyond its mouth, the whole bay was covered with trees and heaps of reeds and canes, with tangled masses of roots and branches floating calmly on the surface. This collection of "snags and sawyers" recalls the appearance of the delta of an American river; and there must be a very rapid deposition of mud silting up the top of the basin. The process is slow, owing to the enormous depth of the fissure at this end; but the operation is sufficiently palpable to explain the formation of the whole lower Ghor, and how the older terrace level has been gradually washed down, and then deposited, partly here, and partly at the southernmost extremity of the lake.

The lowness and barrenness of the land bordering the mouth of the river, and the bay into which it runs, are very noticeable. On the snags, in the water itself, several cormorants were sitting; herons were patiently fishing from them, while gulls from time to time came sailing down the stream. A fine golden eagle came pouncing in pursuit of them, and I gave him a couple of cartridges, when he fell, provokingly enough, on the other side, to waste his carcase on the jackals and vultures in the land of Moab.

Oh, with what longing eyes did we gaze on those eastern mountains, so near, yet so inaccessible!

The afternoon was far advanced before we mounted, and struck across the plain to the point where we had first reached the shore. Thence we proceeded to visit the well-known promontory, or island, where alone most travellers touch the Dead Sea, and where I had bathed six years

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previously. Then it had been a peninsula, to be reached by stepping-stones almost dry-shod. Now it was an island, and we tried to ford across to it; but the water soon became too deep to allow of our reaching it without swimming our horses. M. de Saulcy has imagined that he can discover ruins in the heaped rocks which form the island. Those who can detect these will, doubtless, be equally ready to recognise the foundations of Gomorrah and Sodom, as revealed by the learned antiquarian. To our unlearned eyes there were no traces either of tools on the stones or of design in their arrangement.

The effects of the western sun on the mountains of Moab were very rich, clothing them with a brilliant red; while the deep wadys of the Zerka, Maïn, and Mojib (River Arnon) stood back in grand dark relief. More than half way up these mountains a long even terrace-line was clearly traceable, just at the same elevation, so far as can be ascertained by the eye, with the less interrupted terrace-line, or old raised beach, scored on the face of the western range. These terraces in the old secondary lime-stone must be about the present level of the Mediter-ranean; for our barometrical measurement made the western one 1,150 feet above the water-line of the Dead Sea, and they seem to tell of a period long antecedent to the tertiary terraces and deposits which have interested us below; when the old Indian Ocean wore the rocks and scooped out caverns as its unbroken tide swept up from the coasts of Africa; or when the Salt Sea formed one in a chain of African lakes.

As we turned our faces southward along the shore, the parallelism of the two ranges of hills became very apparent; nor do the enclosing mountains at all expand to receive the waters of the Dead Sea. For many miles north, the plain was as wide as the sea, the mountains on each side running due north and south. The sea merely fills the lower end of an oblong depression

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On the sides of the western mountains, as we approached them, we could distinctly trace a broad fringing belt of white clinging to the lower slopes of the red limestone, and only occasionally interrupted by the gullies and wadys which had washed through it. Turning the eye northwards, this white band gradually melted into the flat-topped mamelons of the higher plateau of the Ghor, of which deposit it was in fact merely the continuance. No similar band could be observed on the east side of the sea, owing, doubtless, to the precipitous character of the cliffs.

A little to the south of the Wady Dabûr a mass of porphyritic greenstone crops out of the hills like a dyke, in two or three ridges, cutting through the gravel at an angle of 70° or 80°. The variety of rock at the foot of the ridge was very perplexing. Stones of all colours and degrees of hardness were scattered over the plain. Very few of these, except in the bottoms of the watercourses, showed any signs of fluviatile action. They are traceable to the cliffs above, from which detached masses have been precipitated; generally a sandy limestone, but frequently mixed with coarse conglomerate, in which iron is common, colouring the cliffs with its oxides; and stones of all sizes are embedded, from the smallest gravel to large boulders, all angular or but slightly worn.

We took a course due west, rather than skirt the shores, in order to investigate the ruins of M. de Saulcy's Gomorrah. On the way we put up many birds in the marshy plain. The Norfolk plover was very common; a flock of splendid black storks rose before us, and a solitary crane (*Grus cinerea*), but all, of course, out of shot. We reached the foot of the hills very little below the opening of the Wady Dabûr, but could find no trace of a Wady Goumran between it and Ain Feshkhah. Nor were we more successful in discovering the remains of Gomorrah. We found at intervals many indistinct rows of unhewn stones, which, if at all the remains of human constructions, carry

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us back to a ruder period than the flints of our gravel beds, and which were all classed by our Bedouin under the expressive name of Rujûm-el-Bahr—"castings of the sea." The name of *El Gumrah*, or anything approaching to it, seemed quite unknown to our guides, and we took care not to suggest it, else we might have had the whole Pentapolis of the plain identified for us at once.



AIN FESHKHAH, WEST SIDE OF DEAD SEA.

Water was not scarce here, and we found a good spring under the hills about a mile and a half before reaching Ain Feshkhah, called Ain Tannour, but which, according to our guides, is not permanent in summer. Our own impression on these hypothetical remains, or Rujûm-el-Bahr, was, that the Arabs had accurately embodied their history in their name, and that they are truly the "castings of the sea," the fragments which have fallen from the cliffs above, and have been formed by the waves into a sort of shore-line.

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We reached our camp a little after dark, and found it delightfully situated, overhung by the hills just above a reedy marsh which here fringed the shore, and close to the bright hot fountain of Ain Feshkhah, which sends a steaming rivulet through a dense strip of cane-brake into the sea. The day had been a prosperous one in natural history. B—t had obtained, close to our tents, a specimen of a very small sand-coloured night-jar, which turned out to be a new species, and which we have since named *Caprimulgus tamaricis*. Another new wheat-ear was added to our list; and, more than all, the cliff above supplied us this evening with our first specimen of the coney (*Hyrax syriacus*)—the שָׁפָן shaphan of Scripture, the وبر "wabr" of the Arab. It was an adult specimen, about the size of a well-grown rabbit, with short ears, round head, long plantigrade foot, no tail, and nails instead of claws. With its weak teeth and short incisors, there seem few animals so entirely without the means for self-defence. "The conies are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks." (Prov. xxx. 26.) But the stony rocks are a refuge for the conies, and tolerably secure they are in such rocks as these. No animal ever gave us so much trouble to secure. They are far too wary to be taken in traps, and the only chance of securing one is to be concealed patiently, about sunset or before sunrise, on some overhanging cliff, taking care not to let the shadow be cast below, and there to wait till the little creatures cautiously peep forth from their holes. They are said to be common by those who have not looked for them, but are certainly not abundant in Palestine, and few writers have ever had more than a single glimpse of one. I had the good fortune to see one feeding in the gorge of the Kedron, and then to watch it as it sat at the mouth of its hole, ruminating metaphorically if not literally, while waiting for sunset. A childish difficulty has been raised on account of the classification in Deuteronomy of the

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cony among unclean animals, although it is said to chew the cud, מַעֲלֵה גֵרָה while it is well known that it has not a ruminant's stomach. It is quite sufficient to watch the creature working and moving its jaw, as it sits in a chink of the rocks, to understand how any one writing as an ordinary observer, and not as a comparative anatomist, would naturally thus speak of it—and this apart from the question whether the Hebrew word signifies anything more than "re-chew." Our cony is distinct from the Abyssinian species, with which it has been confounded, and may always be recognised by the pale russet spot on the middle of its back, which alone diversifies its tawny fur.

Our prospects at Ain Feshkhah seemed as bright as at Jericho, and we were already prepared to pronounce the Dead Sea shore to be the shore of charmed life. Water, vegetation, birds and beasts, geology, and hot baths—everything was in abundance. The poor fountain has had, methinks, rather scurvy treatment at the hands of its biographers. One remarks that "in the absence of better it may be drunk, with such wry faces as we may." Another says, "the water is clear and sparkling, but the taste abominable." Even Dr. Robinson complains that "it is brackish, and has a slight taste of sulphuretted hydrogen." Perhaps our tastes were vitiated, or perhaps after the recent rains the mineral element was unusually diluted; but, though the spring itself had a temperature of 82° Fahr., we found it tolerable. It made good tea and coffee, though with a slight flavour of soda, and we had no hesitation in determining to spend two days by its reeds.

The daybreak next morning afforded us a splendid sight. As the thick mist, which shrouded everything, gradually lifted before the sun, we began to distinguish the cliffs which overhung our tents, at the height of more than 1,500 feet. The red limestone was beautifully gilded with a metallic lustre. Still no sun was visible to us, and a canopy of haze covered the sea at our feet, so that we could scarcely

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distinguish anything but a steaming vapour beyond the belt of reeds which separated our camp from the shore. At length a little white segment of the sun pierced through the mantle. He was just overtopping the tall mountains of Moab, and gradually revealed the outline of the summit, perhaps, of Nebo, bringing into sharp relief a dark line, the crest of the range, which divided the mass of clouds above and below.

After an early sponge in the warm fountain, where we alarmed shoals of little fishes, and sent them to the cold stream, we breakfasted on the plain in front of the camp, and all set to work at their various avocations. B. got out his camera, M. mounted the cliffs with his water-colours, L. buckled on his tin box, S. and U. indefatigably set traps among the reeds before starting with their guns, and B—t had ample employment with the spoils of yesterday. I first of all took to the water side, and examined the shore for a couple of miles. A narrow strip of shingle and conglomerate separated the cane-brake from the sea, and for several yards out stood the gaunt skeletons of many tamarisk bushes, crystallised and pickled, if not petrified, where they had once lived. The sea had manifestly been gradually encroaching here, by the shingle slowly forming a hard conglomerate, and driving back the pure waters of the spring, which oozed through soft soil for several hundred yards north and south of the fountain. I could find none of the sharp flints mentioned by Lynch as characteristic of this place. The surface of the beach was, like the north shore, a mass of small flat rounded pebbles, without a trace of sand, and with little drift-wood. The warm stream, which runs for 300 yards to the sea, overhung with impenetrable caves, swarmed, like the fountain, with fish. With a butterfly net I caught about fifty specimens of two minute species (*Cyprinodon cypris*, Heckel, and *Cyprinodon sophiæ*, Heckel), and one of a larger species (*Cobitis insignis*, Heckel). Of another common and larger species, six inches

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long (*Chromis niloticus*, Hasselq.), I did not succeed in obtaining a specimen, but U. during the day shot one swimming about in the Dead Sea, a few yards from the mouth of the stream, and afterwards picked up another dead on the beach.

Lynch's sharp flints I think I afterwards discovered two miles off, at Ras el Feshkhah, where a quantity of *débris* had slipped down from the bold headland, and choked the beach with fragments, washed but not water-worn. That this is the explanation of the phenomenon I think is plain, from the face of the promontory being composed of exactly the same sharp and broken flints bedded in soft con glomerate.

Ain Feshkhah is two miles north of this bluff, which is one of the few spurs from the range; the first one south of Kurn Surtabeh, and which interrupts the view of the southern hills. Just beyond it, the Kedron in the days of its abundance has worked a tremendous chasm, a few feet wide, through which it winds to the sea.

No traveller had yet made an accurate survey of the coast from Ain Feshkhah to Ain Jidy; and upon completing this we had set our hearts. There is something indescribably exciting and interesting in working through a new country, be it ever so small a fragment of unknown ground. Every phenomenon, the most trifling, is noted; every incident is remembered; and, if the notes on these should be found dull or prolix, I can only beg that allowance may be made for the importance with which, at the moment, every particular was invested in our eyes.

Lynch had only passed in his boats from Ain Feshkhah to Ain Terabeh; Robinson, De Saulcy, and all our predecessors by land had mounted the ridge, and descended inland to the south. We inquired of the Sheikh whether we could not pass by the Ras (headland), and thence up the gorge to Marsaba. He replied that it was quite impossible, and that no one had ever been by that route. I told him that

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the English for "impossible" was "we will try," and set off, with my barometer, prismatic compass, and gun, determined to round the headland and map five miles of coast for my day's work. The Sheikh's brother, Jemîl, followed me, in duty bound, as my bodyguard. The cane-brake soon tapered off to a fine narrow edging, running for a mile along the shore. Then we scrambled among huge boulders, rolled down on to the narrowing beach from the hills above. Here we found a large vein of the bituminous stone or shale, "stink-stone," from which many of the ornaments sold to pilgrims at Jerusalem are manufactured. The substance seemed to have been partially ejected in a liquid form, and to have streamed down the cliffs. It was generally mixed with flints and pebbles, sometimes covering the boulders in large splashes, and then, in the sea itself, formed the matrix of a very hard conglomerate of gravel and flints. When thrown into the fire it burnt with a sulphurous smell, but would not ignite at the flame of a lamp.

After scrambling on for more than a mile, we found our passage barred, and I took to the water. For some distance there was no difficulty in wading, the sea not rising to the hips; but Jemîl, with true national dislike of the element, followed me no further. On coming to the point of the headland, I found the rocks went clear down, from a dizzy height to an unknown depth, and I had to give up my aquatic excursion. But there was a way of scrambling up the cliff, which I accomplished, sadly incommoded by my gun on my back; and, crossing close over the water-line, I scrambled up and down three narrow gullies—the two first, Wady Samâarah and Wady Sakâtah, not being named in the maps, and the third being the main gorge of the Wady en Nâr, or the Kedron, running down from Marsaba. The first of these is flanked on the north side by a trap dyke, which runs boldly out, and which appears to account for the projection of the headland.

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Over the third, the hard crystalline limestone cliffs stand perpendicular, cleft and cracked, looking at first sight like columnar basalt. On crossing it, and getting to the other side, I was astonished to find the cliff standing sheer out, not more than fifty yards thick, and a precipice down to a wide plain on the south side. It is strange that the stream should have cut for itself this deep gorge through the very edge of the rock which forms merely a thin wall on the south, and that it should never have burst through it to the plain. I never saw so thin a wall of rock of so grand a height.

From the top, the view was magnificent. A wide plain, pushing out in several gracefully sweeping sand spits into the sea, was spread at my feet, and did not, at this distance, reveal its barrenness. A strange, conical hill, like a colossal cairn, stood about three miles off, isolated, nearly in the centre of the plain, and the view of the low coast-line was uninterrupted towards the south for ten miles, till it reached Ras Mersed, not far from Engedi. No map, excepting Lynch's, whose accuracy I have since tested, gives the slightest indications of the indentations and irregularities of the coast-line in this quarter, where the contour is more embayed than in any other part of the sea. The plain, though terminating in sand spits, is by no means barren; tamarisk, acacia, and retem bushes stud its surface; and the camels of the Ta'âmireh were browsing on its herbage.

I had mounted, so far as I could judge by my barometer, perhaps 1,300 feet above the Dead Sea, and the general range of the mountains of the wilderness of Judæa could be distinctly traced running due north and south. Exactly parallel to them, one could follow the line of the eastern mountains from Jebel Ajlun to Kerak, for I had now mounted above the sirocco haze, which obscured everything below with a sandy mist. After wandering some way on the south plain, and taking the bearings at the edge

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of the spit for the coast-line, it was time to return, unless I wished to try the somewhat doubtful hospitality of the Ta'âmireh, who could not be far from their camels. When I should have got back I know not, had I not lighted on an Arab track a little further west, near the crest, which I followed as rapidly as I could, that I might cross the ravines before nightfall. I was overcome with thirst, when I found a little muddy rain-water in a hollow in a rock, which I drank, thankful for the providential provision as Hagar must have been for the well in the wilderness, and at length returned thoroughly exhausted, but with the ample reward of having accomplished a very satisfactory piece of surveying.

All our party had been equally successful. S. had obtained two other species of kingfisher, the beautiful Smyrnian red and blue bird, and the large black and white kingfisher, fishing on the shores of the sea. Three specimens of Tristram's grakle had fallen to the guns of the party, two more conies had been brought in, one with three fully-grown young, and the traps set by U. had yielded a goodly return of strange rats and porcupine mice. M., after completing his sketches, had zealously assisted me in measuring the height of the alluvial terrace above the sea level. The result of three different observations in as many places, at some distance apart, gave us the elevation as from 221 to 235 feet. The sea was probably five feet higher than its ordinary level. A broad strip of this alluvial marl adhered all along the cliffs almost to the headland, and the evidence was unmistakable that at its top had been the old tertiary level of the sea, which has been washing out again this deposit to silt up its lower extremity, and form the peninsula of the Lisan.

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## CHAPTER XII.

*Ascent to Marsaba — The Sheikh's Invitation to Dinner — A Bedouin Camp—Reception—Arab Girls—Carpets and Cushions—Coffee-making —Dinner—Huge Dish—Arab Etiquette—Below the Dais—Washing Hands—Squaring Accounts—Mental Arithmetic—Principle of Backshîsh—Blackmail—Sunday Morning—Convent Bell—Matins—Monks of Marsaba—Severe Rule—Contrast between Roman and Greek Monks —System of Rome — Relics of Martyrs — Pet Wolf—Delays—Non-arrival of the Jehâlin—Abou Dahûk—The Archimandrite of Marsaba — Library — Departure — Wady Ghuweir — Ta'âmireh — Fossils — Ain Ghuweir — Ain Terabeh — Its Oasis — New Sparrow — New Raven — Moonlight on the Dead Sea—Map-making—Arab Tales—Walk to Ain Jidy—Bitumen.*

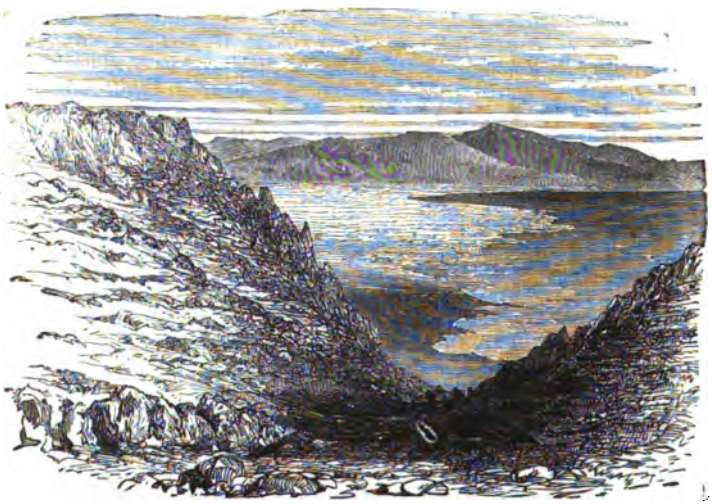
AFTER a few more days at Feshkhah, we set off for the Convent of Marsaba, climbing to the crest of Ras Feshkhah. When we reached the top the day was tolerably clear, and the whole Dead Sea basin lay stretched at our feet, 2,000 feet below. This is undoubtedly the route by which, for effect, travellers should be introduced to the Dead Sea, and I should recommend those who can afford a day to ride from Marsaba to Ras Feshkhah, and thence to the Ain and along the shore to Jericho, camping where we did, on good ground, with abundance of water.

Nothing could be more dreary than the remainder of our day's ride over a barren wilderness of rounded hills, with scanty herbage, and little tufts of shrubs here and there, about a foot high. It had all the desolation without the fine effects of the Sahara. Soon after starting we obtained a specimen of the white-headed black chat (*Saxicola leucoce*

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*phala*), familiar to me in the Algerian Sahara. It was interesting to find the same species occurring again after so wide an interval. There were three of these birds together, but we never met with another specimen. One troop of gazelles came across us, and once we started a fine ibex, the wild goat of Engedi, or *Beden* of the Arabs, which bounded off with a start of 400 yards.

The geology was uninteresting, hard limestone, and we found no fossils. One basaltic dyke crossed our path, running N.E. and S.W. about 500 yards wide on the surface, but more expanded further to the south. From its



VIEW FROM TOP OF PASS ABOVE AIN FESHKHAH.

direction, we were led to believe that this was a continuation of the same dyke which I had observed yesterday near Ras Feshkhah. The limestone strata all dipped to the southward and eastward. Just midway the inclination was shown very clearly in two sections, exposed by ravines formed by watercourses, where the angle of depression was

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in the one case 4° 5′ towards the south, and in the other 12° towards S.E. These were probably sections of the same stratum, showing the general depression to be S.S.E. It is very possible that this dip may be a local disturbance, caused by the trap dyke extruded to the north of it. At any rate, this appeared to have been extruded before the Ghor assumed its present form.



MARSABA.

As we approached the convent of Marsaba and the gorge of the Wady Nâr, the prospect was less desolate, and the scenery bolder; but the rain began to descend in torrents,



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and we were not sorry to use our letters of recommendation, and to claim the hospitality of the brethren, in preference to pitching our tents outside; and we found comfortable quarters over Sunday in that well-known hospice.

We were next day to be freed from the guardianship of Sheikh Mohammed and the Ghawârineh, whose territory we had traversed to its utmost limits, north and south. The Sheikh had already intimated his hope that he might entertain us under his own tent; and this morning we were bidden in due form, and told that the sheep was slain, and that dinner would be ready at noon, at a camp about an hour and a half distant. It was a day lost to research, but even in the desert something must be sacrificed to the claims of society, and its demands are neither frequent nor numerous. Sending on our horses to his camp, U. and I followed leisurely on foot, wishing to trace, as far as possible, the trap formation which we had noticed yesterday. On further examination, we found a few boulders and fragments of basalt scattered over the plain to the west of the narrow ridge we had crossed, but it was clear that no more trap rises to the surface in any mass. There seemed to be no continuous dyke, and the ridge which protrudes at Ras Feshkhak has only been pushed up very near the point of its termination. We suspected we had discovered at the same time the source of De Saulcy's mistake about his basaltic ridge, which Lynch's party could not find, in a singular line of flint, strongly impregnated with oxide of iron, which covered the surface for some distance, running south-east, and which a casual observer might easily have taken for igneous rock.

We found, however, a rich fossiliferous bed in the gorge of the Kedron, which we traced, both above and below the convent, for more than a mile each way. It is a layer, averaging seven feet thick, of very hard crystalline limestone—one mass of organic remains, chiefly *Hippurites liratus* (?); while neither above nor below this stratum

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could we detect any trace of fossils. It is shown at both sides of the ravine, at the same depth from the surface (eighty-two feet), till it is suddenly lost by a fault in the stratification, and then it reappears ten feet lower down. This is the only locality south of the Lebanon where we have found a hippurites; and here it is the predominant, almost the exclusive, fossil. We picked up a good horn of the ibex on the plain.

Arrived at the camp, which lay in a valley between the barest and dreariest of hills, without a shrub or a tree in sight, we recognised the Sheikh's tent, among a group of twenty others of which the encampment consisted, by the tall spear planted against it;* and, after a halt, that our horses and companions might come up, we mounted at a proper distance, and rode forward—nine horsemen in all. To have approached a Bedouin camp on foot would have been a breach of decorum, and a degradation only to be paralleled by the Queen proceeding to open Parliament in a hackney-cab.

Leaving our horses in charge of the various ragged retainers who came rushing round us, we stepped across some tent ropes, and under a large, low black tent, open in front, found an abundant display of cushions and Turkey rugs spread on the ground. One half of the tent was hermetically closed to view, though through a slit there occasionally protruded the noses and eyes of sundry secluded little girls; but no women appeared even at the chinks. The carpets were thickly folded, and backed by cushions; and, taking off our spurs and boots, we reclined in Arab fashion, having first, as etiquette required, piled our arms against a pole in the outer corner. The cushions were spread along two sides of a square, and the Sheikh very carefully motioned us to our places, according to what he considered our seniority. Georgio sat behind—of course, off the carpets. Though the firstling had already

* "So Saul had his spear stuck at his bolster."—1 *Sam.* xxvi. 7.



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been killed, and the fine flour kneaded for the feast, we had an opportunity of seeing the whole process of coffee-making, with the serving of which our entertainment began. Over a few hot embers and wood-ashes was placed a sort of perforated ladle, and over this was held a second smaller one, on which a few green coffee-berries were placed and roasted, each berry being singly turned so soon as it was sufficiently toasted on one side. They were then placed on a wooden block, scooped into a shallow mortar at the top, and, while still quite hot, were pounded by a round-headed wooden mallet, and at once, without further grinding, put into the kettle of boiling water, and simmered for a few minutes among the embers. Delicious coffee, fragrant and strong, it was, though the supply of cups was short. Pipes followed, till dinner was brought. This consisted of a single course, served in a huge bowl about a yard in diameter. The bottom was filled with thin flat cakes, thinner than oat-cake, which overhung the sides as graceful drapery. On them was heaped boiled rice, saturated with butter and soup; while the *disjecta membra* of the sheep which had been slain for the occasion were piled in a cone over all.

The bowl having been placed in the corner, in front of us, the Sheikh and his brother sat down opposite to us, but without partaking; and, turning up our sleeves, we prepared for action. Knives and forks are, of course, unknown, and we were expected, using only one hand, to make balls of the greasy mess, and devour, chucking the morsels into the mouth by a dexterous movement of the thumb. This, after a little practice, we contrived to do. An important piece of etiquette was for each to have his own digging in the dish, and to keep his fingers to it alone. To have used the left hand would have been as great a solecism as putting the knife into the mouth at home. The meat had to be rent in strips from the bones, and eaten, too, with the fingers. The mutton was tender,

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and deliciously cooked; and equally good were the rice-mess and the cakes below. As soon as the host was quite satisfied that it was a physical impossibility for us to eat more, the huge bowl was lifted by two attendants, and placed a little further to the left, where the retainers of the better class had been sitting, and watching us with eager eyes. All the rest, the rabble of the camp, about twenty-five in number, sat outside, motionless and silent. As soon as the second table had been sufficiently gorged, which was a very rapid process, the bowl was passed outside, and cleared in the twinkling of an eye, the monkey paws of sundry urchins being inserted from behind their seniors, and extracting large flaps of greasy cake with marvellous dexterity. Finally, the pack of poor hungry dogs had a scramble and a fight over the well-picked bones. Meanwhile, water and soap had been handed round to us, the water being poured from a silver ewer on to our hands, over a basin also of silver, and covered with a perforated plate! and we felt a little less like savages than before. Coffee again served, black and strong, without sugar, in tiny cups, concluded the primitive feast. We had not yet settled accounts, and proposed now to enter upon the business of the day. But Mohammed had too fine a sense of delicacy to receive money from his guests under the curtain of his own tent, and evidently had no anxiety that his people should know the extent of his charge for black-mail. He preferred, he said, to escort us back to the convent, and transact our affairs there.

On our return, sitting down *vis-à-vis* on the ottomans in the convent-hall, we entered upon the business without interpreter. Trying the Sheikh's powers in mental arithmetic, we began—18 days with 8 footmen at 10 piastres each per diem, and 2 horsemen at 25 piastres each, and 70 piastres head money for 7 howadji to the Sheikh: how much will it come to? A long pause, and he remained wrapt in thought. At length, with a smile, "The howadji

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are my brothers, let them speak, and it must be right!" He preferred to leave the arithmetic to us, and professed himself satisfied with our reckoning. But then came the counting. He must not appear puzzled, only confiding. Turkish coinage is almost unknown in Syria, and every other is current. Our stock consisted of Austrian gold ducats and Spanish pillar dollars; and, though Mohammed might not be able to reckon how many Spanish dollars beyond 41 Austrian ducats were needed to make up 2,830 piastres, a feat of arithmetic beyond his Bedouin education, he must not confess ignorance. Again and again he counted the pile, looked to his brother, who, with two favoured retainers, had been admitted to the hall of audience, re-examined every piece, and looked very wise. After a proper interval he pronounced all "tayib," correct. Then came the backshîsh, to which your true Bedouin seems to attach more importance than to the principal of any payment, and which is always an indispensable part of every transaction. Unless something, however small, over and above the stipulated sum is paid for any service, it is presumed the employer is dissatisfied with the mode in which the contract has been fulfilled. We handed the Sheikh an English sovereign for himself, another for the cavalry, and a napoleon to his brother for the infantry of the guard. We shook hands all round, and they kissed our fingers, gave and received mutual assurances that we were all brothers and fathers; our guards retired, and we found ourselves till Monday in the position of unprotected females!

They were kindly, good-natured, and obliging fellows, those Ghawârineh. £30 seemed a heavy price to pay simply as a fee for not being robbed for a fortnight, and that to the very men who would have robbed us had we not paid it, for no one else could have done so in their territory. Yet the system is recognised and legalised by what pretends to be the government of the country. It may be a very heavy police-rate to pay, but it saves the

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authorities from the exposure of their utter powerlessness outside the walls of Jerusalem. We should not complain, for to us the plan was certainly most convenient, insuring perfect safety, while for the trifling gifts of a charge of powder or a pipe of tobacco the guards were always ready to make themselves useful. We became acquainted with their habits, we could study their customs, and improved ourselves in their language, while every ruin, cave, and fountain in the district were pointed out to us as they never could have been by any other than the tribe in possession.

*Sunday.*—We were all housed together on ottomans in a long room built like a swallow's bed on the cliff-side. At 4 A.M. I was roused by a loud deep bell just overhead, and putting on dressing-gown and slippers, turned out in the bright, starlit night. The sound of a chant rose through the still air from the chapel below. I went down the steps, and, stealing into the richly-decked chapel, found the monks at matins. They were chanting the psalms of the day in old Greek, but in a tone which, without a book, it would have been impossible to follow. Anything more irreverent than their manner it is difficult to conceive. They have indeed a round of services to perform—matins daily at 4 A.M. and 6 A.M.; mass at 10 A.M.; vespers at 6 P.M. and 8 P.M.; orisons at 10 P.M. and at midnight. At these services there is much Scripture read in detached passages, and an appointed Gospel is daily read aloud at dinner by one of the priest-brethren in turns. Only one-third of the forty monks are in holy orders, and many of the lay brothers, even the one who waited on strangers, are unable to read. They are chiefly from the provinces of European Turkey; but some were Greeks, and three or four Russians; and modern Greek is the language of the society. Scarcely any of the members were acquainted with Arabic. On religious subjects, those of the priests with whom I conversed seemed for the most part pro-

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foundly ignorant, and it is no wonder that there is little either of devotion or understanding in the worship of the serving brethren. One of the priests, a Greek from the Islands, who understood Italian, evinced both knowledge and understanding of the Scripture, as well of the Old as of the New Testament, and had a very clear comprehension of the Christian system. He had studied the writings both of St. Chrysostom and St. Jerome, and was imbued with the spirit of the Father of the Golden Mouth. The discipline of the convent is most severe. All are under a vow never to taste flesh meat, and their diet is both meagre and stinted in quantity. Eggs are permitted on Sundays only. On other days, the allowance is a small brown loaf, a dish of cabbage broth, a plate of olives, an onion, half an orange, a quarter of a lemon, six figs, and half a pint of wine for each brother during the twenty-four hours. These rations are carefully counted and distributed to the monks in the refectory. No wonder that they are attenuated and meagre, most cadaverous and pallid in feature, and without any sinew, wholly unfitted for any physical exertion, which, however, is rarely required from them. Several of them came to consult our doctor for dyspepsia and stomach complaints, but he could only tell them their diet was insufficient, and prescribe white bread and flesh meat, at which they sadly smiled, and sighed forth *ἀδύνατον* (impossible).

There is all the difference between the monks of the Greek and Roman rites in Palestine that characterises the political and religious position of the two Churches. The one is always on the aggressive, the other on the defensive. In everything Greek there seems embodied a cold dead conservatism, tenacious it knows not why, and obstinate, looking on every concession or relaxation of a rule as a confession of weakness. Thus, though the rule of the Carmelite may be as stringent as that of St. Jerome, there is no fear of the former being enforced to the injury of

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health, or the disadvantage of the order. "Reculer pour mieux sauter" is the motto of Rome in small things as well as great. She has shown this in her management of the Maronites and of the Greek Catholics, lost to Constantinople through obstinate mismanagement. The marriage of the priests, the use of the Syrian language, the liturgy of St. James, a different calendar of saints—all have been conceded, since union could be had on no other terms. The Greek never dreams of enlarging his fold, nor of concessions which might retain the waverers. In matters ecclesiastical, all the proverbial astuteness of the Hellenic race seems to desert him. A monastic life is chosen, as one of the monks here told me, for the sake of peace, of eating the bread of idleness; and there is no training for their vows, nor any thought of applying the life of the religious to the advantage of the Church. Thus, while every Latin monastery in Syria is the centre of an aggressive mission, the Eastern Church does not even adapt her battalions of celibates to man her defensive works. Ages of Moslem oppression and the dense ignorance of the local priesthood have done their work; and while the truth has been obscured, and the written Word of God forgotten, she seems to have lost even the desire to discover or understand it.

After our morning service, one of the monks called to take us over the convent, and to call on the Prior. The convent has been too often described to render it necessary to give here any details of the buildings and their extraordinary position, perched, like a group of nests, on the precipitous side of a deep glen, a collection of caves, staircases, turrets, and chambers clustering one above another, surrounded on both sides by a deep fosse, and strengthened by enormous buttresses. We visited the strange cave-chapel, in which are piled a museum of skulls of (they say) 10,000 martyrs. It is certainly a collection the Anthropological Society might envy, and out of which they might

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select as many types as it suited their fancy to create. I afterwards wandered down the glen, and sat with my book in one of the old hermits' caves till the descending sun reminded me it was time to return to dinner, when I found Sheikh Mohammed waiting to tell me he considered the backshîsh was insufficient, a point on which we decidedly differed in opinion. The monks were on the roof near us, feeding their beautiful tame grakles, one of the few solaces of their dreary life; and one of them lower down had a piece of bread ready for a pet wolf, which comes across the ravine every evening at six o'clock for his ration, and then goes back again. Sometimes other wolves accompany him, but he always chases them so soon as they arrive under the convent-wall. My friend, the Italian-speaking brother, remained in the room during our evening service.

Next day we visited several little ravines, in three of which we came upon the same fossiliferous bed of hippurites we had found on Saturday, when I filled my pockets and used up my chisel against the hard limestone. We obtained the solitary blue thrush, the Abyssinian rock-martin (*Cotyle palustris*), the backstart (*Pratincola melanura*), and some desert larks and chats, as well as the Syrian hare. In returning we had the pleasure of seeing and meeting a wolf. He unexpectedly turned a corner close to us, and quietly doubled and trotted off among the rocks. He looked larger and was much redder in colour than the European wolf. We also found the smallest quadruped I ever met with, a shrew of a pale slate colour, about half the size of our shrew-mouse.

We made the acquaintance of some more of the strange pets of the monks—three foxes, who come every evening to a spot under the convent-walls, apart from the wolf's place of call, and howl for their piece of bread, with which they quietly return up the ravine. We watched them coming for their supper. Five appeared, but the two intruders were speedily chased away by the others.

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Soon after midnight we were roused by loud cries outside the convent and thunderings at the iron gate. Abou Dahûk and our Jehâlin guard had arrived, and demanded admittance. But the porter was inexorable, and refused to open, so they had to bivouac outside till morning. We pitied them, for the thermometer fell nearly to the freezing point, but they found a cave in which to shelter themselves. We had not dressed, when, at daybreak, the old chieftain paid us a visit, evidently desirous of an early start from his inhospitable quarters. He was a venerable old man, apparently about seventy years of age, but really long past fourscore, very spare and thin, with prominent nose, good features, keen, deep eyes, but his face much furrowed by time and exposure. His dress was shabby and mean for a man of such distinction, being in no wise different from that of the most beggarly of his suite. His kafiyeh was of striped yellow silk worn brown, with camel's hair agyle or band; a ragged saddle with a sheepskin thrown over it, and a sorry-looking grey mare for his mount. The only distinction in his dress was that he wore an under dressing-gown of new and clean white calico. He evidently reserved all his display for the cities, not for the wilderness.

Breakfast over, Mr. Wood kindly accompanied me as interpreter to pay a visit to the Archimandrite of the convent, a venerable old man, who has never left the monastery for forty-eight years. He still retains by preference the little cell he had on his first entrance, and is only distinguished from his subordinates by his coarser dress and more severe austerities. His cell was about ten feet by six, containing no furniture but a broad shelf for sleeping on, a cupboard, and bookshelves. He never uses a bed, and his old and tattered folios were piled in the corners, in such confusion that it was difficult to make out the contents of more than one or two editions of some Greek Fathers. It was a pity that dirt seemed to be a part

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of his self-denial most largely imposed. We could not get beyond formal conversation with him, for long disuse had rusted his communicative powers. We had been anxious to explore the library, which had been reputed to contain MSS. of St. Jerome of great value, but the key is now kept by the Patriarch at Jerusalem, in consequence of the abstraction of certain volumes by a visitor. The books are shut up in a tower near the gateway, apart from the monastery. We mounted the stairs and looked through a chink in the door. There were a few shelves, with old folios and quartos scattered irregularly about, while dusty manuscripts strewed the floor. As Russian scholars have had free access to make researches, it is not probable that any literary treasure remains undiscovered. But the last thing thought of is that the monks should wish to use their own library—the one resource, as we might have thought, of their isolated life. The slumber of death seems to have fallen on everything in the Greek Church; and the nutriment of the monks, intellectual or spiritual, is as dry as the bones in their cave,—"Can these dry bones live?"

After seeing our boxes carried outside the convent, we took our leave with Abou Dahûk, and directed the muleteers, accompanied by some guards, to take the best road they could find to Ain Terâbeh on the shore where we proposed to camp. Our course lay at first S.E. across the ridge of a rocky, desolate hill, where we found ice yet unthawed by the morning's sun. As the day advanced and we descended, the warmth rapidly increased, till, by the time we had reached the beach, the air was sultry and the heat oppressive. After threading our way for an hour among slippery rocks, we struck upon the valley of the Wady Ghuweir, a dry watercourse, which we followed for several miles. It was a piece of easy road in comparison with that to which we had lately been accustomed, but as destitute of life, animal or vegetable, as any other. U.

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brought down a fine red kite as he rode along, the first specimen we had obtained, and at once established himself by his prowess in the good opinion of the Sheikh; but, besides a few gazelles and an eagle or two, we saw nothing else. We came upon a section of the bituminous limestone, or stone pitch of the natives, and also on a large bed of fossils in the bottom of the wady, washed into relief on the surface of the chalky limestone. They consisted of a nerinæa sp. (?) a very pretty cucullæa (*C. lintea*, Conr.) in flint, an astarte (*A. undulosa* (?), Conr.), but especially a cephalopod (*Baculites syriacus*, Conr.) in enormous quantity. The scenery improved as we approached the crest of the hills. Sage-bushes and other obscure plants dotted the hollows, which had assumed a pale green hue, and gazelles and camels were browsing on the scant herbage. We passed two small Bedouin camps of the Ta'âmireh tribe, at present on good terms with the Jehâlin; and beyond them, on the crest of the hills, espied three men travelling with camels. At the approach of nine armed horsemen, the men left their charge, and fled as if for dear life, nor could any signals of peace and good-will avail to stay their flight.

In three hours and a half after leaving Marsaba, we reached the crest of the precipitous rocks which overhang the Dead Sea. The view was very grand—the hills being steep as a wall, and the day bright and clear. From our dizzy height we looked down on a strip of barren plain, with a rich dark belt of tall cane-brake fringing it from headland to headland; and those red mountains of Moab, furrowed by the deep ravines of the Zerka and the Mojib, looking more fascinating every time we gazed on them. Southward for the first time we obtained a good view of the Lisan (tongue), that broad flat peninsula which half intersects the southern part of the sea. From our position it appeared to stretch right across, and to be simply a long sandspit, which dovetailed in with the wavy

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outline of one low spit after another running out to meet it from the western shore. So far from there being here any approach to that long straight line by which the western side is represented in our maps, the eye could scarcely trace the continuity of the water, as it seemed to meander, like the tortuous course of some mighty but sluggish stream, amid tidal sandbanks and endless creeks. These white spits all sparkled and glittered in the sunlight, like diamonds studded over a field of silver. We had to dismount and lead our horses down the ladder pass, which might puzzle any animal but a goat. For mules it is impracticable, and ours had to make a *détour* of four hours.

At length we reached the shore, at a spot a mile north of Ain Ghuweir, on the flank of the plain which I had visited from Ras Feshkhah. We at once turned to the south, following the inland edge of the now contracting plain, till we reached the Ain, a warm clear spring of the temperature of 96° Fah., bursting forth in the midst of a reed belt 100 yards from the shore, and completely concealed. Our guides were by no means certain of its position, and found their way to it by following the well-beaten tracks of the wild-boar. In the midst of the brake it forms a shallow basin of about twenty yards square, before running down to the sea. The pebbles and the bottom were covered with black meritinas, and with the same species of melanopsis we had found at Ain Sultân. We dismounted, and watered our horses. We would have rested and refreshed ourselves, but the heat was stifling, the air stagnant and fetid, and charged with gnats and mosquitoes, which clogged every aperture of sense—eyes, nose, mouth, and ears. We could only drink and lave, and, unrefreshed and irritated, were glad to rush out and sit under the glare of the open ground. We continued our course, sometimes by the side of, sometimes through, the tall cane-brake, for a mile and three quarters, as far as Ain Terâbeh, where we were to camp.

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From Ras Feshkhah the mountain spur recedes at right angles to the shore, leaving a scrubby plain between the projecting sandspit and the main range. This is three quarters of a mile wide at the north, exclusive of the projecting sandspit, and gradually contracts to the south, till, a mile beyond Terâbeh, another headland juts out, the cliffs of which descend sheer to the water's edge.

A few tamarisk-trees are scattered in small clumps about Ain Terâbeh, and the space between the brake of canes, twenty feet high, and the hills is choked with bushes, thick and dense, but not prickly, and about six feet high) *Atriplex halimus*), through which many an over-arched path has been beaten by the wild-boar. Having fastened our horses to stones, we set forth to discover the spring of the locality of which Abou Dahûk was ignorant. In fact, the district belonged to his friends, the Ta'âmireh, and, excepting when he had accompanied Lynch and De Saulcy, had never been visited by him at all. Finding a track through the canes to the shore, we followed it, in the hope of seeing a stream trickling by its side, but in vain; till at length Giacomo's sharp eye detected water oozing through the gravel, close to the water's edge, exactly two feet from the nauseous brine, and with a ridge of gravel, about four inches high, alone separating the two. We at once set to work to scoop a basin in the beach, as our reservoir, and then proceeded to explore the little oasis. It is full of life; but birds are very difficult to be seen in the bush, harder to shoot, and well-nigh impossible to find when shot. We put up the pochard, the common wild duck, the teal, and several desert hares, disturbed the great crested grebe, and saw numberless tracks of wild-boar, of jackals, and foxes. We picked up the horn of an ibex (*Beden*), and the skull of a porcupine. The crateropus, or hopping thrush, the bulbul, and most of our Jericho acquaintances were here. One unquestionably new species rewarded our search—a very small and richly-marked

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sparrow, which I have described in the Proceedings of the Zoological Society as *Passer moabiticus*, about half the size of our domestic sparrow, with chestnut wings and a rich yellow patch on each side of the neck. The female, of uniform russet plumage, also exhibits, but less distinctly, the yellow patches. It is, indeed, strange and interesting to discover, in this little restricted locality, a species which seems absolutely confined to its narrow limits, and not a straggler either from Africa or India.

There were no signs of the mules yet, and, though very hungry, we continued our search along the shore, to the southern headland, where we found the rocks near the water covered with an incrustation of bitumen, in which gravel was thickly imbedded, to the depth of from a foot to a yard. On our return, we came across the fresh track of a leopard, which evidently had its lair somewhere in the impenetrable cane-brake. We also observed several specimens of a raven quite new to us, but could not obtain one. It looked, when on the wing, as large as the common raven, but had a short, very broad tail, and much greater depth of wing, which reached almost to the end of the tail. The note was a remarkably shrill cry, almost musical, if any raven throat ever did perpetrate music, and very unlike the croak of its fellows, with whom it was consorting. It proved afterwards to be the *Corvus affinis* of Rüppell, who found it in Arabia.

It was dark before our baggage arrived, after its hazardous descent; and we had long to wait, tired and hungry, for dinner—a small price for so great a treat as we had enjoyed to-day. The moon was nearly full, and there was a majestic calm in the flood of silver light she poured on to our camp from the east. The eastern hills, which had gleamed with so warm a glow in the morning, were now shrouded in gloom; while the moon's radiance shot over the burnished surface of the lake, and cast a pale reflection on our camp, which strangely contrasted with the lurid glare

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of the watch-fires, without extinguishing them. There was a stillness that might be felt. We seemed to be the only living things down in that mysterious chasm, save when, once or twice, the distant wail of the hyæna floated from above, or a cane-tuft trembled with a shivering whisper as some bird stirred on his perch. We could have sat in revery for hours, and conjured up the phantoms of Arabian tales from the other side, or evoked the ruined Cities of the Plain.

But time was precious; we were there to work, and postponed the dreams of fancy till our return to the upper world. With our map before us—and our map of the shore was, in size, worthy of the ordnance scale, having been enlarged for us from Van de Velde on the scale of an inch to the mile—we reclined round the watch-fire, discussing topography and listening to Abou Dahûk's stories of his former experiences. The coast-line, as we had it, was evidently wide of the truth, being traced as almost a straight line from Ain Feshkah to Engedi. We saw that the tracing to the south of us was as inaccurate as that to the north of our position had proved, and that headlands, and bays, and sandspits were all unrecorded. But our old guide was quite determined that no one could follow along the shore. If the Frenchman could not do it, how could we? There was nothing to be seen! it was all a worthless country, "moush tayib";—not even a wild goat would go down there. We did not argue the matter, but remained fixed in our resolve to attempt it on the morrow. The old Sheikh began to beguile the watch by telling many a tale of Arab war and peace—how he had driven some of his foes, in his youth, over the precipice behind us, and how one man survived the fall, and returned to his tribe; how, after he had lost many camels, but taken more, an armistice had been proposed, on the basis of his paying blood-money for as many of his slain foes as exceeded in number the slain of his friends; how his opponents tried



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to count among the dead men the crippled victim over the cliff; and how hostilities were, thereupon, upon the point of being renewed. If the interpreter and the listeners had not, one after another, dropped asleep, the old warrior would fain have continued his tales till morning.

Our vigils did not prevent our being up at sunrise, and all our chattels were hurried into bags and boxes for an early start towards Engedi, our next proposed camp. S. and U. began the morning by each obtaining a male specimen of our new sparrow, to give them an appetite for breakfast. Mr. Wood, M. and B. then joined me in the attempt to trace out the coast-line on foot, while the rest of the party should take the higher route on horseback, according to the track followed by De Saulcy and Robinson. It was only eight miles direct to Ain Jidy, but the windings of the coast and the headlands made it at least twelve or thirteen. We were in pretty heavy marching order, with guns and ammunition, revolvers and belts, barometer, surveying compass, maps and instruments. However, though with no guide but the sea itself, we managed the walk without much difficulty, beyond doing occasionally some break-neck climbing along the ledges, where they shelved down into the sea, and finally reached Ain Jidy in seven hours and a half. At all the projecting points we took observations with the compass, and found the maps very erroneous, the coast being embayed and trending inwards very deeply from Ras Feshkhah to Ras Mersed; and there are two long landspits and three bays not laid down. M. made outline sketches as we proceeded. For a great part of the way we had fair walking over the shingly beach and gravel diluvium, the whole shore having the same ghost-like appearance as the north end, strewn uninterruptedly with the grim, bark-stripped trunks of countless trees. Now and then the lower portions of the cliffs pushed into the sea in broken masses, over which we had to climb. Close to the Wady Derejeh we found another wady, a fork

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separating from it just at its embouchure, forming a tremendous fissure of surpassing grandeur, but the grandeur of terrific desolation, where the cliffs gape and open upon the shore. At the spur of this wady, the Wady Sighetreh, there was a broad, low diluvial spit, with scanty acacias and tamarisk-trees, both of them of species new to us, and a quantity of shrub and thicket which extended close to the water's edge, tenanted by the birds peculiar to the Ghor, identical with the inhabitants of the groves at Jericho. Thus, wherever there is the slightest supply of fresh water, however occasional, the luxuriance of the climate stimulates a vegetation disproportionately exuberant.

Here again we could trace uninterruptedly the high diluvial deposit of chalky limestone and gravel, mixed with shells of existing species, at the same level (250 feet) as we had previously observed it. Where there are wadys, as at Derejeh, running down to the sea between high cliffs, this diluvium reaches up to perhaps 400 feet on the sides of the ravine. So also it does at Engedi in the Wady Sudeir. From this altitude it slopes away in terraces to the present level of the sea, as if this had been gradually evaporating, and had left the mark of its receding tides. The gravel conglomerate, which abuts on the foot of the cliffs, seems due to the recent action of the water, for, wherever the rocks come down to the water's edge, a new conglomerate is being rapidly formed of a similar nature, with pebbles, boulders, and flints, partially waterworn, and agglutinating by aqueous deposition. Above the white marly terrace, three separate lines of terrace were visible in the secondary cliffs, but the edges of the old beaches are generally lost by the heaps of *débris* which have crumbled down, and encumbered the steps of these Titanic stairs. Just before reaching Wady Derejeh we found the shore lined with a mass of bitumen, in which pebbles of all kinds were thickly embedded. At this place we could count on the shore no less than eight low gravel terraces,



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the ledges of comparatively recent beaches distinctly marked above the present water-mark. The highest of these was forty-four feet above the present sea-level.

The next wady, *Hasdeah*, is faced by another spit, running out into the sea, and the white chalky terrace is heaped in its mouth to the height of 540 feet, clinging inside the opening of the tremendous gorge.

In two places under Jebel Shukif, the highest peak in the neighbourhood, the little wadys, just before reaching the sea, had hollowed out enormous circular basins or craters in the cliffs, which are scooped perpendicularly from their summit (1,500 feet) almost to their bases. Their terrific grandeur, unrelieved by any sign of life or colour, strikes the beholder with awe. This erosion and scooping out of the solid mountain of rock must have been the work of some mighty extinct waterfall. The mind is lost in the bewildering extent of past geological eras, when we try to conceive the length of time that must have elapsed since the furious torrents of the once-watered hills tore down that ravine and ploughed through the flinty rocks. And yet the lowest of these rocks is, in the eyes of the geologist, scarcely more than a modern deposit.

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## CHAPTER XIII.

*Dead Sea — Sulphur Springs — Description of Ain Jidy — Engedi — Hazezon — Tamar — Plain — Trees — Apple of Sodom — Rashâyideh Arabs — Hungry Bivouac on the Plain — Retreat to a Cave — Dreary Night — Meeting Friends — Moonlight — Return — Want of Water — Difficulties of the Caravan — Fountain of Engedi — Arab Acquaintances — Wady Sudeir — Lovely Grotto — Palm-trees — Ferns — Conflagration — Wady Areyeh — Ascent of Ras Sudeir — Ancient Vineyards — Reports of War — Salt-making — Wild Goats — Allusions to Engedi in the Psalms of David — Canticles — Camphire.*

MORE than one interesting discovery rewarded our long walk from Ain Terâbeh to Ain Jidy. In a little bay, just before reaching the Wady Shukif, we were struck by a powerful sulphurous odour, and, after some search, found hot water bubbling through the gravel at a temperature of 95° Fahr. only six inches from the sea. The smell of sulphur and rotten eggs was very strong, and, while scooping in the gravel, my hands became quite black, and my boots were covered with a yellow incrustation. Pebbles thrown in became incrusted with sulphur in a few minutes, and all the rocks in the sea, which was here quite hot—of the temperature of 80° Fahr.—were covered with it, as well as in a less degree the boulders on the shore, probably from its fumes. There must be an enormous discharge of this mineral water under the sea, as the heat of the water extended for 200 yards, and the odour to a much greater distance. The ordinary temperature of the sea elsewhere was 62°. I waded out for several yards, and found the temperature fell from 80° to 75°, by which we presumed that the principal source must be close to the shore.

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No vegetable life could be detected in the neighbourhood, and the hills all round were utterly naked and bare, more scathed if possible than in any other part,—without a blade, a leaf, or a bird. Elsewhere there had been birds in abundance, and we had several shots at ducks, sand-piper, and Norfolk plover close to the shore, and had even bagged, not the desert partridge, but the large Greek *Caccabis saxatilis*. The ducks and a great-crested grebe (*Podiceps cristatus*, L.), were apparently feeding in the sea, and many gulls passed over our heads. This spring, not hitherto noticed, is exactly under the highest peak of Jebel Shukif, bearing S.W. by W. M. secured three flasks of the water for analysis.

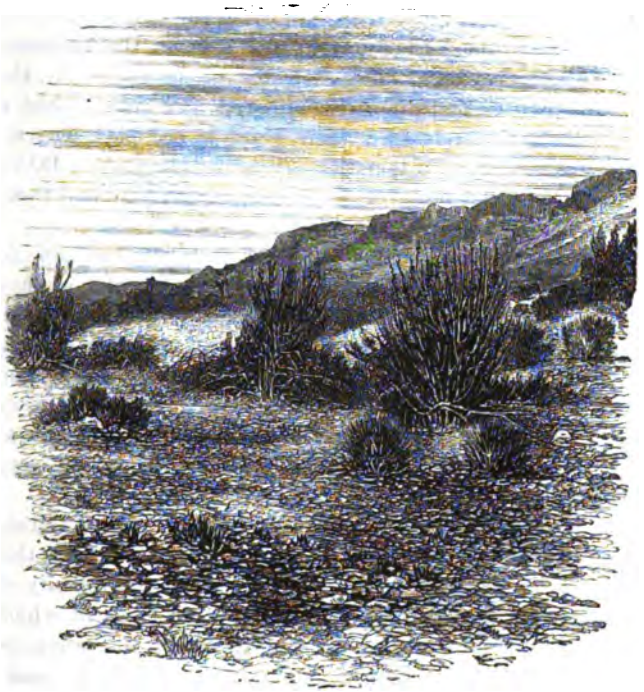
From the sulphur spring we rounded, by a difficult track, or rather by forcing a way where there was no track, the headland of Ras Mersed, where it appears, from his journal, we had been preceded by the indefatigable Seetzen at the beginning of this century. Thence we descended to the beach, along which a walk of a mile and a half round a lesser headland brought us to the sloping plain of Engedi, across the gravelly bed of the Wady Sudeir, which forms its northern boundary.

The plain, or rather slope, of Engedi is about a mile and a half in extent from north to south, and is formed by the Wadys Sudeir and Areyeh, both of which, though occasionally lost in the sand, are perennial. Between these the mountain range, which pushes eastward in the tall crest of Jebel Sudeir, slightly recedes, forming a re-entering angle at the north-east, and thence trending a little eastward of south.

Several hundred feet up the slope, about a mile and a half back from the shore, is the true Ain Jidy, midway between the two wadys. Its little silver thread of a streamlet dashes down lofty, but (in volume) pigmy, cataracts to the sea. Below the falls, in the centre of the plain, is a group of ruins of some extent, built of unbevelled, squared

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stones of fair size, but nothing megalithic, and all very much weathered. These crumbled walls carry us with a mighty stride across the history of man. They are all that remain to tell of a city as old as the oldest in Syria, perhaps in the world, "Hazazon Tamar" (the Felling of



ENGEDI.

the Palm-trees), "which is Engedi" (2 Chron. xx. 2), the contemporary of Sodom and Gomorrah, an existing city when Hebron first arose. Through it passed the Assyrian hordes of Chedorlaomer, on the first great organised expedition recorded in history; the type and the precursor

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of all those invading inroads which, from the days of Tidal, king of nations, to Saladin, have periodically ravaged the East.

The plain around is now as desolate as the old city of the Amorites, though once a forest of palms. Not less deserted of their fruitful vines are the slopes above, though the old terraces remain distinct, from the foot of the hills to the pass above the fountain, and also on the enclosing mountains beyond. The "cluster of camphire in the vineyards of Engedi" * is withered and gone. Not a palm or a vine remains; their place is occupied by scattered acacia-trees, a tamarisk (*Tamarix tenuifolius*, D.C.), the nubk, and a few straggling bushes, with here and there the *Calotropis procera*, the "*osher*" of the Arabs.

We walked on to the middle of the plain, but saw no trace of our mules or of the rest of the party, who, as they were mounted and had taken the upper and regular road, ought to have arrived long before us. It was four o'clock, and we had been scrambling for eight hours, hungry and tired. And now ensued one of the episodes of travel, very amusing to recall, but often by no means so pleasant at the time, though this was enjoyed on the whole very thoroughly for its excitement and interest.

We wandered for some time about the stony, thirsty tract, lighted by a glare such as can only be seen in this deep clear atmosphere, and wondered at the scarcity of animal life among the scattered trees, so many of which were strange and new to us, but especially the osher, or Sodom apples (*Calotropis procera*, R. Br.) with its cork-like, thick and light bark, wrinkled and furrowed, its huge glossy leaves, rounder than those of the laurel, and almost as large as the foliage of the caoutchouc-tree. We might have taken it for a species of spurge (*euphorbia*), from the abundance of acrid milk it discharged when broken or punctured, but M. at once recognised it as an old

* Cant. i. 14.

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acquaintance in Nubia. It was now both in flower and fruit. The blossoms were like those of some species of caper, and the fruit like a very large apple in shape and colour, golden yellow and soft to the touch, but, if ripe, crackling like a puff-ball when slightly pressed, and containing only a long thread of small seeds on a half-open pod, with long silky filaments, which the Bedouins prize highly, and twist into matches for their firelocks. On its leaves we gathered some enormous orthoptera, the females of which had bodies larger than a locust, but black, with yellow spots and with red wings.

While we were thus occupied, three Arabs with their long guns came down the hill from the Ain above. They were of the Rashâyideh tribe, a very small and insignificant clan, almost stationary near Engedi, and half fellahin, cultivating a portion of the soil in the spring. Whether it was their fear of Abou Dahûk, or the fact that we were four to three, and that they perhaps held the only guns of their camp, they showed no disposition to molest us, and only demanded backshish, which we promised to give them if they would go up the hill and keep a look-out to tell us when they saw the mules approaching. They asked us if we were the same Franghi who had once been there with boats and glasses, and had been their brothers; referring, of course, to Lieutenant Lynch's party, who were the only Westerns they had ever seen there, and had evidently left a good name behind. Having at length got rid of our visitors, we wandered about till dusk, when it began to grow chilly. We set about collecting some dry shrubs and branches of zizyphus, and with these and a bundle of camel's bones, the hottest of fuel, made an excellent fire, at which we sat on the ground, and ate two pieces of brown bread and some morsels of chocolate. We carefully divided our last crusts, for we were ravenously hungry. One hour, two, passed, but no tidings of the mules or of any of

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our party. Ain Jidy was immediately behind us, 200 feet up the hill, and the light of an Arab encampment glimmered on the heights above it, and another from a cave below it. About eight o'clock we began to feel uncomfortable, especially as our friendly Rashâyideh had warned us that a little to the south of us, close to the shore, were camped some Ta'âmireh, hostile to the Jehâlin.

We held a council, and though the fire was beginning to burn well, and the camel's leg-bones were yielding a delightful glow, we thought it prudent to leave our exposed position, and to seek some snug quarters where, if we must pass the night untented and alone, no hostile Bedouin could detect us. Besides, if they could take us at a disadvantage, we could not rely on the friendship of the Rashâyideh, who knew exactly our strength and our weakness. Having heaped up all the firing we could collect, to deceive any watchful foes, and having put a note into a cleft stick on the top of a small cairn hard by, to inform any of our party, who might arrive in search of us, that we had gone back into the wady northwards, we cautiously crawled away on our faces, taking care to put trees between ourselves and the hills, for the moon was nearly at the full, and cast deep shadows on the ground. When, after crossing the plain for nearly a mile, we reached the gorge of the Wady Sudeir, a pale light glimmered up the glen, and we crept cautiously forward to reconnoitre, but, seeing only a party of Arabs sitting round it, we stole back to the shore. We soon found a small, rough valley running down to the shore, which seemed in the moonlight to have caves in its side, and clambered up it, till we found some ledges, and at length one into which we could squeeze ourselves horizontally, with the overhanging brow of rather a loose conglomerate nearly touching our faces. A sloping cliff was just below us, down which we must roll if we should incautiously

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turn in our sleep. It was not a pleasant bedroom, but certainly a safe one, as all the Arabs of the Ghor might have sought us in vain. The moon shone brightly overhead, and Orion and Sirius travelled leisurely (oh, how leisurely for us!) to the westward. We solaced ourselves, under the pangs of hunger, with a pipe, reserving just enough tobacco for a whiff each for breakfast, and then joined in prayer and lay down to sleep. I had a wisp of dried grass in my pocket, collected for lighting a fire, and found it most useful as a warm pillow instead of a stone. After lying quiet for a couple of hours, we felt the wind beginning to sweep very coldly into our shelf, and started to reconnoitre. We crept along the desolate shore among the grim, naked timbers which fringe it, and back again up the plain, but could see no signs of our party. Having found a large rock under which there was good shelter, we determined to run the risk of Arabs, and make a fire in front of it, as the Bedouins, if there were any on the look-out, must have been by this time (past midnight) quite off our scent. We were busily employed in collecting firewood from the shore, when we saw in the moonlight an Arab approaching, followed by three others. Snatching up my gun, I called out to B., "Take your gun, there are only four of them," and went to meet them. To our great relief we found it was a Rashâyideh guide from Engedi, with Giacomo, U., and S. behind him, who had already been three hours out in search of us. The light we had noticed in the Wady Sudeir was, after all, that of a look-out party sent after us; but, as our friends had donned the Arab abeyehs, we had not recognised them.

It seemed that Abou Dahûk, fearing the hostility of the Ta'âmireh tribe on the heights, was afraid to trust our baggage-mules on the ordinary road, and had tried a reported donkey-track nearer the shore. The consequence was, that the baggage had to be seven times unloaded, one

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horse was seriously injured, some of the men much bruised, and, worse than all, Georgio, the cook, had fallen into a hole, with my mountain-barometer on his back, and smashed it, and was half an hour before he could be extricated. Finally, the whole party had come to a dead halt on the shore, three miles back, man and beast completely exhausted, and, worst of all, without a drop of water. We were starving, they suffering from thirst. They had at once sent out scouts who had fallen in with the Rashâyideh, visited our bivouac-fire, and were returning, after a weary reconnaissance. We at once started back together; three rough miles over rocks, by moonlight, seeming a trifle with supper in prospect. North of the Ras Mersed, we came upon the camp, and were soon eating bread, cheese, and sardines, and washing them down, on the gravelly beach, with our last three bottles of wine, having given up to our exhausted Moslem attendants the little water our party had been able to bring back. There was no pitching of tents—our baggage, which lay piled on the shore, was not unpacked, save our bedding—a blue-burning, sulphurous fire was kindled from the drift-wood, and, lying down in a circle round it, feet inwards, and covered with our rugs, we were soon sound asleep. The poor beasts stood mournfully round, refusing their parched provender, and without a drop of water after their toilsome day.

After a comfortable, but only too short, repose by the edge of the sea, we were roused as the first pale bars of light penetrated the haze over the eastern mountains, and, refreshed by our slumbers and our open bivouac, longed in vain for a cup of coffee or a draught of water. The nine strongest mules were sent on at once to Engedi, with very light loads, to get water, and to give them a chance of getting over the rough headland of Ras Mersed, leaving the remainder of the baggage for a second trip. We followed, leading our horses over ground hard enough for

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a climbing footman—fit only, as the growling Giacomo remarked, for goats and Englishmen. But our sagacious beasts were persuaded, after a little reluctance, to step from rock to rock, and get through a pile of boulders which no horse ever traversed before, and such as, I trust, I shall never have to coax a horse through again. Ultimately, by dint of lifting and unloading, all our baggage—even the great boxes—were got past the point with few breakages. Tents were soon up, and coffee boiling, at the edge of the Wady Sudeir.

After breakfast we climbed up to the Ain Jidy, where, on the hill-side, a warm, pure stream, of temperature 79° Fahr., gushes forth from under some stones—a sort of horizontal fissure in the rocks—and, spreading itself at once over a little bed of gravelly sand, soon turns down the hill, and nurtures a broad ribbon of verdure, till it is lost in the sands below. It was full of shells, all very diminutive of their kind—*Neritina jordani*, *Melanopsis prærosa*, *M. saulcyi*, and a new species of melania, resembling *M. tuberculosa* (*M. rubripunctata*, Tristr.). These melanias were all buried in the sand; and others, of course, were on the surface. We also found fresh-water crabs luxuriating in its warmth, but no fishes. Some of the Rashâyideh came about us, and, to our satisfaction, set us down at once as hakeem. We found the Jehâlin a poor exchange for our Jericho friends, and much inferior in intelligence and zeal to these despised Rashâyideh. Throughout the country there seems to be a stamp of almost nationality in each clan. Kelt and Anglo-Saxon, Gaul and Teuton, are not more clearly distinguishable at a glance than some of these petty clans. The quick-witted intelligence of the Rashâyideh won upon us, and tobacco-pouches produced soon made us good friends. We sat down together by the warm spring, which leaps and gambols forth like a kid (Ain Jidy is "Fountain of the Kid"), and began to question them on the neighbourhood, while they examined our guns with

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delight, and our revolvers with awe. To them percussion-cap and revolver were alike mysterious novelties. While sitting in friendly intercourse, a long train of donkeys, laden with salt, came up, and halted to drink of the spring, and were soon afterwards followed by their armed drivers, about a dozen very suspicious-looking Ta'âmireh, who had been to Jebel Usdum, with this little caravan, for salt, and were conveying it to Bethlehem for sale.

Our Rashâyideh afterwards took us to visit what they called the tombs of the Yehudi, ancient sepulchres, probably Jewish, since we could find no remains indicative of Roman occupation. In the best of these tombs there was an inner as well as an outer chamber hewn in the rock, with stone coffins for the bodies lying alongside; and the great stone, which had been cut to fit as the door, lying on the ground; while in the doorway we could plainly trace the grooves into which the slab had fitted. Everywhere through this barren wilderness were the traces of the old terraces where once grew the vines of Engedi.

There are, in the heights above, abundance of wild goats (*Ibex syriacus*) the *Beden* of the Arabs, and antelopes called by them Bekk'r el Wash, probably the *Antelope addax*, but the pursuit of them, except by a chamois hunter, would be as vain as the chase of Saul and his 3,000 chosen men "when they went to seek David and his men upon the rocks of the wild goats" on these same hills (1 Sam. xxiv.).

On ascending the Wady Sudeir to trace its source, we soon came upon a fairy grotto of vast size under a trickling waterfall, with a great flat ledge of rock overhanging it, dripping with stalactites, and draped with maiden-hair fern. Its luxuriance was wonderful. We gathered many tresses of its fronds a yard long, and yet the species is identical with our own. The sides of the cliffs, as well as the edges of the grotto, were clothed with great fig-trees, hanging about and springing forth in every direction, covered with luxuriant foliage, and just now budding into

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fruit. Mingled with these were occasional bushes of retem (*Genista rætem*, Forsk.), with its lovely branches of pendent pink blossoms waving their sweet perfume all around. To reach the grotto we had to force our way through an almost impenetrable cane-brake, with bamboos from twenty to thirty feet long, and close together. No pen can give an adequate description of the beauties of this hidden grot, which surpasses anything Claude Lorraine ever dreamt. An amphitheatre in a deep glen where the sun never penetrated, with a warm stream perpetually sprinkled over a vegetation of tropical luxuriance, where the foot of civilised man for ages has never trod, was indeed in bewildering contrast with all else around these desolate shores. The water of the pool was deep, but of wonderful clearness, and full of shells (the *Melanopsis prærosa*), the largest specimens we ever procured. The process of limestone-making is here going on with great rapidity, and often one half of a tuft of maiden-hair fern or of cane might be seen growing, while the other half was already petrified. The place was still famed for its palms long after it had won its early name of Hazazon Tamar from them in the days of Abraham and Chedorlaomer, and they are mentioned by Pliny* and Josephus, but not a palm-tree now remains; yet we found interesting proof of its former abundance in this wady in great masses of palm-leaves, quite perfect, beautifully petrified, and entire from the root of the stem to the last point of the frond. In fact, the whole wady is faced with limestone, a mass of the most recent petrifactions, and some of the caves have been so choked up with stalactite that they have become simply a great block of carbonate of lime.

When with our hammers we had broken away the front of the cliff to the depth of several inches, and reached the original rock, we found large beds of chalk fossils, of the same species as those on Mount Carmel, but chiefly the

* Pliny, Hist. Nat. v. 17.

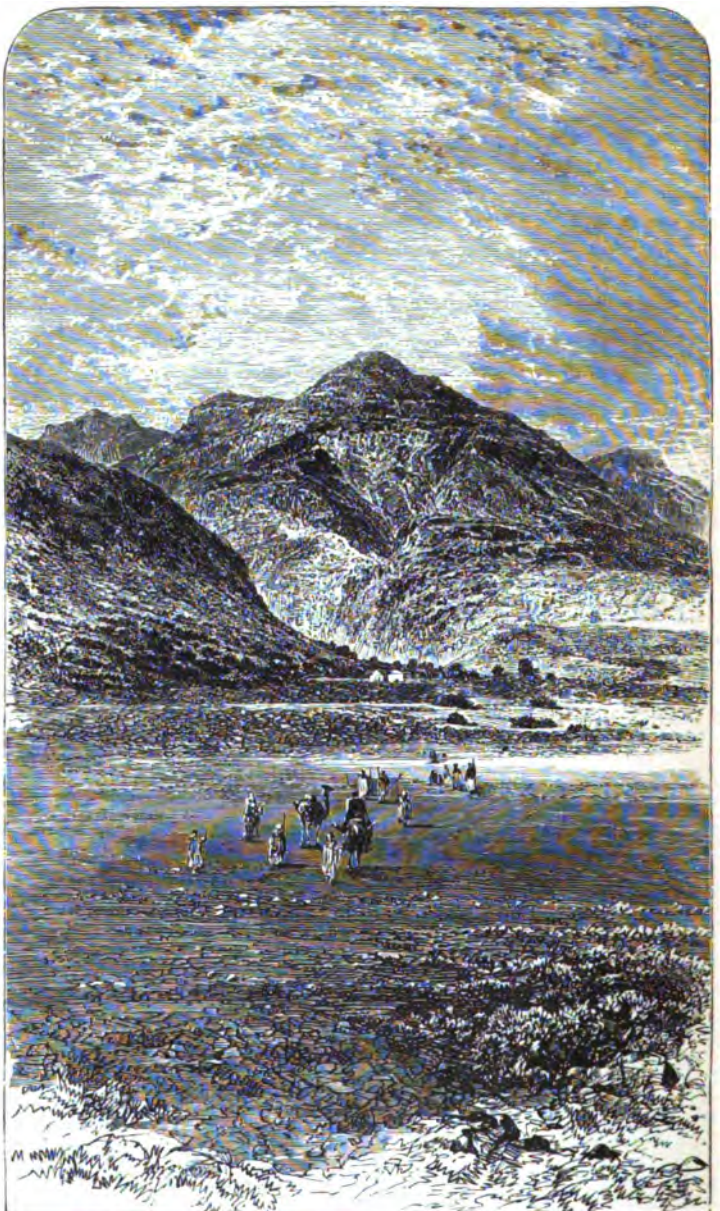
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gryphæa (*Exogyra densata*, Conr.), which Lynch's party appear to have found only in the mountains of Moab and the Wady Zerka Main. I may add that our collection on the west side of the sea contains every species which occurred only to the American explorers on the east side; and thus far we have no evidence of any difference in the age of the two ranges.

The sportsmen of the party were not unsuccessful. S. brought in several specimens of the striolated bunting (*Emberiza striolata*, Tem.), an old Sahara acquaintance of mine, and found also in the Nubian desert, but which has never yet been noted as occurring in Asia. The little desert partridge (*Caccabis heyi*) was very abundant and tame on the lower slopes, the hopping thrush was in little flocks among the acacias, a few bulbuls frequented the rich foliage which fringed the fountain of the Wady Sudeir; many little warblers—chiff-chaffs and black-headed warblers—resorted to the rills, or hopped among the retem bushes; in short, we found, albeit in scant numbers, nearly all the peculiar inhabitants of the Jericho Ghor. The various desert wheatears are plentiful on the higher cliffs, but the characteristic bird of the place was the pretty little blackstart (*Pratincola melanura*, Rupp.), of which we could have obtained any number, and which nowhere else occurred to us so plentifully. It was curious among the miscellaneous produce of the collecting bags to find that B. had obtained a solitary lapwing, our English species, which had certainly wandered out of his latitude, in getting to Engedi, and was almost destitute of flesh—well-nigh starved to death. L. had been tolerably successful in plants and insects. One butterfly, a species belonging to Nubia, and apparently connected with the osher plant, we never found elsewhere. The colocynth plant strewed the lower plain with its pretty but dangerous fruit, and the general type of the flora told of a drier and hotter climate than that of Jericho.

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ENGEDI, WITH SHUKIF.

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One day, in exploring the Wady Areyeh, we found a perennial stream in a romantic glen, but not a deep gorge like Sudeir, and with cane-brakes, bulrushes, and a species of willow new to us, whose leaves were larger than those of the oleander, growing luxuriantly to some size. We obtained a single specimen of a new bird, a species of drymœca, or long-tailed warbler, very like a species described by me from the Sahara in similar localities, *Drym. striaticeps*, and which is described in Zool. Proc. as *Drymœca eremita*, Tristr. We also came across another rich bed of fossil gryphæas, similar to that previously visited, and composed of *Exogyra densata*, Conr.

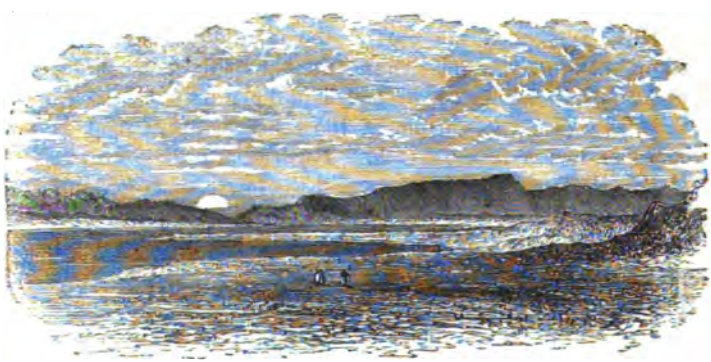
Having climbed the top of the mountain behind our camp, we found the relative positions of Sebbeh, the Lisan, and Jebel Usdum to be correctly laid down only in Lynch's map, and that the outline of the coast in other maps is more or less a fancy sketch. Bare as are these barren slopes, we were astonished to find the lower ones covered by the remains of terraces, some quite perfect, where once were the vineyards; and above them large cisterns built and plastered in the rock side, and formerly fed by neat little aqueducts, which we could still trace, from the higher sources of the Wady Sudeir. The ascent gave us a fine illustration of the mountain range which encloses the sea east and west; and the view from the top was a grand panorama, showing us every portion of the coast line of the Dead Sea, looking at the east side in front, and the western shores beneath our feet. All was stretched out as in a map. Balaam, when he looked across from the opposite heights, and gazed at the nests of the Kenites in the rocks of Engedi, could not have had a more magnificent prospect. The sea itself looked anything but dead. There were strange lines of foam across it in the distance, and detached areas covered by ripple-marks, which were probably caused by local wind-currents down some of the opposite wadys, but which at first had almost the appearance of islands



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studding the surface of the lake. The haze of the heat overhung the basin in irregular patches, but near the water, forming at times a mirage in which low islands seemed most distinctly marked, glittering with crystal shores.

The Jordan Valley, wide and flat, could be traced till lost in the haze of distance; the unbroken, even line of the red mountains of Moab, with their parallel terrace-lines, exactly corresponding with those on this side; the bold crest, with the town and great castle of Kerak, clearly revealed through the glass, with all its recollections of the



FROM UNDER JEBEL SHUKIF, ENGEDI.

haughty insolence of its Duke, which lost the Holy Land to our fathers in the last Crusade; the low flat plains of the peninsula, scarcely rising above the sea, but joined to the mainland by the hump of a white descending ridge. The Ghor-es-Safieh opens beyond, with its dark green recesses, fringed to the northward by a pale green ribbon, its belt of reeds and open glades; with the mountains of Arabia stretching far away perhaps to Petra; the long mound-like hill of Usdum blocking up the south end of the sea; the rugged peaks of Masada (Sebbeh) to the right;

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and an expanse of round bare hills rising like the successive billows of an ocean behind us, and just concealing Hebron from view—every feature is stereotyped in the memory. Man was absent; the walls of Kerak in front, and two of our Arabs engaged in the vain pursuit of a wild ibex in the distance behind, were the only objects to remind us of his existence.

We carefully noted the barometric measurements of the various terraces and heights of the mountain of Shukif, which were from the level of the Dead Sea :—

| | |
|---|---|
| Crest of the mountain, | 1,992 feet. |
| Fourth terrace . . | 1,654 feet, crystalline limestone. |
| Second terrace . . | 665 feet, hard limestone. |
| Alluvial terrace . . | 322 feet, marl on limestone. |
| Our camp . . . . | 69 feet, on the plain. |

Barometer at sea level, 31·75.

The dryness of Engedi is something extraordinary. The wet and dry bulbs of our thermometer differ to a degree never observed elsewhere, often as much as 15°. A bird skinned in the morning is perfectly stiff and hard at night, and plants dry in paper in a single day. And yet it is by no means oppressively hot. The maximum thermometer in the shade in four days was 86°, the day average 72°, the minimum at night as low as 45°. But we all felt an indescribable elasticity and capacity for physical work. The pressure of the atmosphere at this depth must supply an extraordinary quantity of oxygen, and one felt as if half a breath were sufficient. What a sanatorium Engedi might be made, if it were only accessible, and some enterprising speculator were to set up a hydropathic establishment! Hot water, cold water, and decidedly salt-water baths, all supplied by nature on the spot, the hot sulphur springs only three miles off, and some of the grandest scenery man ever enjoyed in an atmosphere where half a lung is sufficient for respiration!

We catechised Abou Dahûk on the possibility of fording



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from Sebbeh to the Lisan; but though the ford has been laid down on his authority and statement to Dr. Robinson, he assured us he had only crossed it once, and that, when a boy, on a camel, some seventy years since, and that the water reached far above the camel's back, on which he had to stand, holding on by its head, and that for horses it is impracticable. It seems certain, however, from the testimony of Irby and Mangles, that when they passed in 1818 the ford was used. It must have been either a remarkably dry season, or the true place of passage has been lost by the present generation.

On Sunday, as we were preparing for service, an Arab guard came in with an ibex he had killed yesterday in the mountains, the true wild goat of Scripture. But, alas! he brought only the skinned body and its skin, having cut off the head, the horns, and the legs, and thrown them away to lighten his load. When we expressed our disappointment, he asked us what we could want more, when we had the flesh to eat and the skin of which to make a water-bottle, and intimated his very decided opinion of our bad taste—our "fantasia," as he termed it—in appreciating the venison less than the horns. Sheikh Hamzi also arrived from Hebron with sheep and some oil, besides sundry smaller groceries, so that our larder was replenished for a few days.

In the afternoon I enjoyed a few delightful hours and a reverie with my books in the fairy grotto up the Wady Sudeir, where one can imagine David, the hunted outlaw, often retiring from the rough companionship of his motley followers, for prayer and seclusion. Here, perchance, were breathed into the imagination and the fancy of the poet king many of those striking pictures of wild and romantic nature with which his Psalms abound. Perchance here, too, the Spirit of the Lord may have breathed into his soul; perhaps here, in the calm seclusion of his meditative hours, he was divinely inspired to pour forth some

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of those heavenly utterings, which reflect that Holy Spirit's image from the converted soul, and are the vehicle in which the spiritual longings of every child of God, in sorrow or in joy, have been carried upwards for about 3,000 years.

I could not but fancy that there were many local allusions in Ps. xlii. which correspond remarkably with the features of this glen and the surrounding country. Shut out from the tabernacle, and in a dry and thirsty land, the Psalmist longs for his restoration to the public ordnances of the sanctuary, "as the hart panteth after the water-brooks,"—as the antelope or ibex, hunted by his men above, longed for the streams which were gushing around him, and perhaps was timidly stealing forth to drink in the thicket below. And as the sound of the water dashing down the rocks in the narrow gorge above strikes on his ear, he exclaims, "Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts." When he casts his eye upon the cliffs to his right, those barriers which were a wall to him against his enemies, he remembers that God is his true rock, and resolves, "I will say unto God my rock, Why hast Thou forsaken me?" It is true that this psalm is generally ascribed to the time of David's flight from Absolom across Jordan, and that the expression, "from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites from the hill Mizar," strongly supports this view. Yet the shores of the lake were still in the land of Jordan, a part of the Ghor, at least as much so as Bashan. Hermon was rather to the north of Jordan than across it, and we have no record of David having visited it; and may he not have applied the expression to the range of lofty mountains generally, perhaps to the Hermon-like peak behind him, and Mizar "the little" to the lesser hills below, in the caves of which he was secreting himself? When he remembers God from "the hill Mizar" (מִצְעָר) may he not be comparing himself to Lot saved among those very mountains, in *his* Zoar? For, in the original, "Mizar" is only the root "Zoar"

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with the prefix ב. The topographical argument may have weight on one side as well as the other.

Other psalms of David also recall the associations of this spot, such as the 57th, probably uttered here when he felt his soul among lions, like the lions which then inhabited these dense brakes, as the leopards do still. Still more the 18th Psalm, with its imagery from the mighty rocks, and the recollections of the fate of Sodom, which the bitumen, and the sulphur, and the salt of that sea would suggest—"the dark waters" below, and the rent "channels" of the old world waters above—the earthquake such as this region has often experienced, dislodging the bitumen, from the bottom of the sea, and the sulphur on its shore, as when once "there went a smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth devoured" (Ps. xviii. 2—15).

We walked up afterwards to some ruins close to the fountain of Engedi proper, which appear distinct from the traces of the old Jewish city, and have been partly a mill and partly a strong keep, or watch-tower, built, probably, as one of that chain of posts, whether Saracenic or Crusading, which can be traced along the whole route from the Jordan, round by the south to Kerak. Here seems to have been situated the village of Engedi, which existed in the time of Jerome. The view from the fountain gives an impression of more present fertility in the oasis than is conveyed by a walk across it in its wintry desolation, before the anxiously-expected rains; for we could trace, almost to the water's edge, the large patches of barley-stubble, and the rough boundaries of the various cucumber-plots which constitute its staple.

The camphire of Engedi, mentioned in the Book of Canticles, we identified in a pretty shrub, with bunches of graceful pink-white blossoms, which was already in flower in some sheltered nook, and called El-Henna by the Arabs, from which they procure the Henna dye—the

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*Lawsonia alba* of botanists. We also observed two species of acacia; the most common being the Seyâl of the Arabs, from which gum-arabic is obtained, and which, from Engedi southwards, occurred sparsedly in all the wadys. It does not, however, bear a white blossom, as a recent traveller in these parts has described it, having, doubtless, confused it from memory with the American pseudo-acacia of our shrubberies; but, with its dainty hairy tufts, is like all its congenors, exactly described by the poet by its one epithet, "the yellow-haired acacia."

Georgio delighted in supplying us with a true Sunday dinner of ibex venison, which, truth to say, was rather dry, and slightly goaty in flavour; and, after evening service, we all turned in early, preparatory to a long day at Sebbeh. We remarked two brilliant fires on the shoulder of the Lisan, either near Mezraah or up the Wady Kerak, which we took to be signal beacons, connected with the war on the other side.

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## CHAPTER XIV.

*Ride from Engedi to Masada—Sulphur Springs—Wady Khuderah—Wells dry—Halt under Sebbeh—Ascent to the Fortress—Its Height—Its Tragical History—Access—Roman Causeway—Description of the Ruins—Chapel—Crusading Remains—Cisterns—Magnificent View—Roman Camps—Roman Camp—Capture of Ibex—Wady Um Bagkhek—Water—Lovely Glen—Ruins—De Saulcy's Thamara—Salt Springs—Camp Zuweirah—Plants—Jebel Usdum—Mountain of Salt—Difficulty of Ascent—Extent of the Rock Salt Ridge—Theory—Geological Speculations—Similarity to the Sahara—Destruction of Sodom.*

AT length we must leave Engedi for the south. Our route was by the high road used, not for commerce, but by marauding parties from the south and east, since the time when Chedorlaomer and his confederates marched against El Paran. It was a dreary, desolate, hungry ride, more truly reaching the popular notions of the Dead Sea than anything we had yet met with. All around us was utterly lifeless and brown, with the cliffs and mountains glaring red in the sunshine, and the soft alluvium below dazzling our eyes by its whiteness.

About an hour south of Engedi, just half an hour before reaching the Wady Khuderah, we were attracted by a powerful sulphurous odour, and by the yellow coating of the rocks and pebbles on the shore. The water bubbled through the gravel at the very edge of the sea, and when we scooped holes we found it black and fœtid, the temperature 88° Fahr., and the temperature of the lake at the spot 62°. On proceeding a little further, the smell was yet stronger; and on digging six inches from the water, the

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black liquid bubbled up at a temperature of 93° Fahr., while the sea, quite warm from the spring, had increased to 72°. This temperature continued for a space of fifty yards. The principal part of the supply must evidently be forced up under the sea at this spot, and higher up we could find no traces of sulphurous or other water at a depth of two feet. The exhalations of these springs seem abundantly sufficient to account for the crusts of sulphur found on the shore. The large supply issued directly under Ras Khuderah. We could find no trace of the Birket (or pool) Khalîl, marked by Van de Velde.

The plain along which we rode during the greater part of our day's journey was from 150 to 250 feet above the present sea-level, with here and there a scattered acacia or tamarisk tree, very stunted, in the dry watercourses, and varied in width from one and a-half to three miles. It pushes forward from the straight range of mountains which rise immediately behind it, like four great rows of eroded terraces one above the other, and heaps of *débris* forming a slope at the foot of each. Nearer the edge of the sea we could occasionally trace three or four terraces, like tidal marks, as if very recently left, which had washed into the post-tertiary marl, and left their marks at heights varying from fifteen to forty-five feet above the actual water-line. These were the most recent symptoms of a very modern diminution of the volume of the lake which we had observed, and we carefully collected specimens of the soft and crumbling sediment at different depths.

In the rocks higher up, we came upon the same fossils as at Ain Jidy, and we crossed several of M. de Saulcy's lava torrents with volcanic balls, which turned out to be crystalline limestones, with much black flint, often studded with nodules and lumps coated with oxide of iron. South of the Wady Khalîl, we crossed the dry bed of the Wady Makheras, not marked in the maps. In front of this ravine we were standing due west of the north point of the Lisan, and

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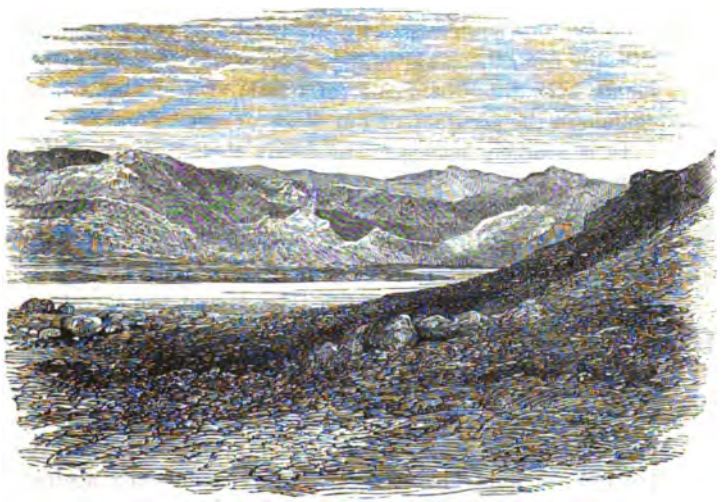
a section of the Moab hills was finely exposed up the Wady Kerak. So far as we could use the clinometer by the help of the eye, we traced very clearly the dip of the stratification to be 8·5° towards S.E. If this observation be correct, it is a very interesting fact, the same inclination having been noticed near Marsaba, on the west side of the sea, and seeming to denote the disturbance of this lower formation prior to the erosion or elevation which formed the Ghor.

At half past one P.M. we reached the foot of Sebbeh (Masada), and halted. Our guides had fully reckoned on finding a supply of water in the Wady Seyâl, the last but one before reaching Sebbeh, but the pools and wells were alike dry. Our whole store consisted of two goatskins full, brought from Ain Jidy. This was a blow to all our plans, for we had intended to spend two days at Sebbeh for explorations, and there were many questions of interest to be solved in the neighbourhood. But with our caravan we must move at once to water. We may have felt very angry with our Arabs, who ought to know, but had been too lazy to ascertain the state of the wells beforehand, but wrath would have been an useless expenditure of energy; there was no time to be lost. We had to make the best of it. B. promply got out his photographic apparatus, which was shouldered by an Arab, and at once we commenced the ascent to the fortress of Masada. Some of our Bedouin had already been dispatched up the adjacent Wady Nemriyeh with goatskins to search for rain-pools, and very determinedly we told the thirsty party that we must remain here, water or no water, until next morning.

The difficulty of the ascent to the fortress has been much exaggerated by some writers. An English lady could accomplish it easily, and there is nothing perilous or trying beyond what is of daily occurrence in the rocky mountain paths of the country. We left the camp and mounted on

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the north side of the ravine, which isolates the citadel to the south of it; and then, getting on to the west side of the mountain across a narrow ravine, clambered by an easy zigzag to the top, while our attendant toiled after us with the camera on his back. In this we were assisted by the enormous causeway, or rather embankment, thrown up by Flavius Silva in the celebrated siege. The whole ascent occupied forty-eight minutes of very hard walking. Once



THE LISAN AND MOUNTAINS OF KERAK.

on the top, we were richly repaid by a view, the most grand in its sternness and desolate magnificence I ever beheld. A solitary imperial eagle was soaring close above us, and a lanner falcon was pursuing a small flock of rock-pigeons, while a few rock-martins (*Cotyle palustris*, Rüpp.) darted past us, and swept round the corner of the cliff. These were the only signs of life on this mountain of rocks, sharp, angular, and bare, without a green blade or leaf from its foot to its crest, except a few stunted

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salsolas. Yet even among them I found in great numbers, a new species of snail (*Helix masadæ*, Tristr.), something like a dwarfed and stunted *H. cæsariensis*, but with a deeply-striated shell, hidden under the stones and in the fissures.

We measured the height of the peak barometrically, and found it exactly 2,200 feet above the level of the Dead Sea. This is very much higher than the usual computation, which gives it as from 1,200 to 1,500 feet. But as we found our observations of the height of the bottom of the cliff from the sea-level (554 feet) almost exactly to coincide with those of Poole (563 feet), I feel disposed to confide in the accuracy of our observations.

It is scarcely necessary to detail, though we may for a moment recall, the tragical history of Masada, the last refuge of Jewish independence, after the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus. The fortress, which had been built by Jonathan Maccabæus, in the second century B.C., was strengthened and beautified by Herod the Great, as a last place of refuge, should he ever require it, either from his own subjects or from Rome. On the fall of Jerusalem, Eliezer and a band of upwards of a thousand of the so-called Sicarii seized Masada, which was abundantly stored with provisions and arms, and from its position, as impregnable a fortress as could exist against the military appliances of the period. Flavius Silva was despatched with a Roman force to subdue it. After a long siege, a stupendous causeway was erected against the western, the only approachable, side, and the walls battered into a breach. This was repaired by the erection of a framework of massive and more elastic material, which the Romans at length succeeded in igniting. When entering on the following morning, prepared for a final attack, they found Herod's palace blazing in ruin, and apparently not a human being left alive, till an old woman emerged from a vault, and told the tale of horror, how two



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women and five children were the sole survivors of nine hundred and sixty-seven persons, who, rather than submit, had first slain their own wives and children and then drawn lots to decide who should be the executioners of their brethren; until the last who remained, after despatching his brother-executioners, set fire to their gathered treasures, and having examined the prostrate multitude to see that not one breathed, fell on his own sword,—the last, as he thought, of the garrison of Masada. The two women and their children had concealed themselves, and escaped alone to tell the tale. The tragedy is recounted at great length by Josephus (Bell. Jud. viii. 8, 9)). From that date the name of Masada disappeared from history, until Dr. Robinson, viewing Sebbeth through his telescope, from the shore of Engedi, conjecturally identified it with Masada; and four years later (in 1842), Messrs. Tipping and Wolcott explored its ruins.

Josephus describes the only two modes of access to this citadel; one by a pathway hewn in the eastern face of the cliff, and winding along its front with most perilous turns at a dizzy height, called, from its shape, "The Serpent;" the other, more accessible, on the west. It seems that some foreign writers, in describing their ascent, must first have read the description of the Jewish historian, and then endeavoured to apply it to the western instead of the eastern approach. The traces of this we could easily make out at intervals, but the pathway itself is completely broken away; and it is probable that, for many ages, no unwinged creature has ever reached the fort from the east. On the west side, by which we ascended, the enormous causeway of the Roman general remains as intact as when he mounted by it to the walls, and without its aid the scaling of the fort would be indeed a breakneck undertaking. The causeway is of so stupendous a character, that it is difficult at first to realise that it was an artificial mound, hastily thrown up. Here we could at once recog-

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nise the spur of the rock, called by Josephus "The White Promontory," and first seized by Silva, as the "*basis* of his attack."

When we had reached the top of the causeway, we had a little hard climbing to the edge of the crest, and over some half-ruined walls, till we found ourselves in Masada. It is a flat platform, on the summit of a peak, isolated by tremendous chasms on all sides, of an oblong shape, widest at the southern extremity. At the north end it tapers to a promontory, only thirty-two yards wide. Here was placed the strongest part of the fortification. About seventy feet below (so far as we could judge), on a slight projecting ledge, was built up a strong circular fort, with double walls, and a hollow space of four feet between them. These walls were perfect; but we found it impossible, without ropes, to descend to them, though we got down to within twenty feet, and saw several windows, or loopholes, in the solid rock, which we could not reach, but which told us plainly of vast subterranean vaults yet remaining to be explored. A lanner falcon was quietly perched at the point, and calmly watched our ineffectual attempts. About thirty or forty feet lower still, the rock runs out into a fine point, and on this were the ruins of another fort, quadrangular, and which had once reached up, as we could see by the fragments of masonry, to the base of the round bastion above. Below this the precipice was sheer for a thousand feet. It was difficult to conceive for what strategic purpose these ramparts could have been occupied, at such enormous cost of labour, since they must have been wholly untenable when the city was captured.

As I sat astride a projecting rock on the north peak, I could look down from my giddy height, 1,500 feet, on both sides and in front; and yet so clear was the atmosphere, and so extraordinary its power of conveying sound, that I could carry on conversation with my

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friends in the camp below, and compare barometers and observations.

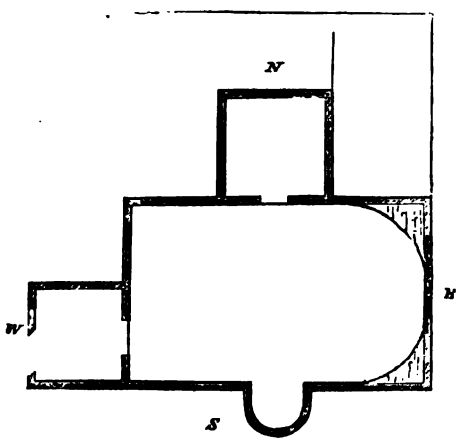
The total length of the platform we made 620 paces, and its width from east to west at the greatest breadth 210 paces. This measurement is exclusive of a great space of broken irregular ground at the southern extremity. The whole of the platform was enclosed by a wall rising on the edge of the precipice, and affording no foothold outside it, and which is everywhere partially, but nowhere entirely, ruined. Several loopholed windows, with pointed tops, remained entire, through which we could gaze out on the wondrous expanse eastward.

Across the north end, immediately above the circular fort, is a strong wall of rough masonry, south of which the platform rapidly widens; and from this wall, at right angles, run twenty-one parallel walls, or heaps of rough masonry, for the most part thrown down into ridges, and frequently intersected by a diagonal network of other walls, not, however, continued in straight lines right across. These parallel heaps are five yards apart, and extend out thirty paces to the south. To the west of them is a strong outer wall, where the platform expands, while the north and east faces are a terrific precipice. What this extraordinary accumulation of masonry may have been, unless constructed as a breastwork for the last desperate defence foot by foot, I do not presume to conjecture.

To the west of them, in the open space, is a large plastered cistern, or reservoir, hewn out of the rock, now dry, about twenty-six feet square and twenty feet deep. Eighty-five yards further south is another large reservoir, sunk in the rocky platform; and forty yards further again, in the centre of the plateau, stands an isolated building, in a better state of preservation than any other part of the fortress, and which in any other place would be unhesitatingly put down as a Byzantine church or chapel. It measures eighteen yards from north to south, and sixteen

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from east to west. The west porch is five yards square, the nave ten and a-half yards, with a semicircular apse and a circular arched light at the east end, and is all very neatly plastered with fine cement, and flat pebbles and fragments of pottery in mosaic patterns. There are also the remains of a marble mosaic pavement. On the north side, high up in the wall, are two small lights; and on the south side, a semicircular recess, not a porch. The whole place reminded us somewhat of the shape and arrangement of the Samaritan synagogue at Nablous. Did



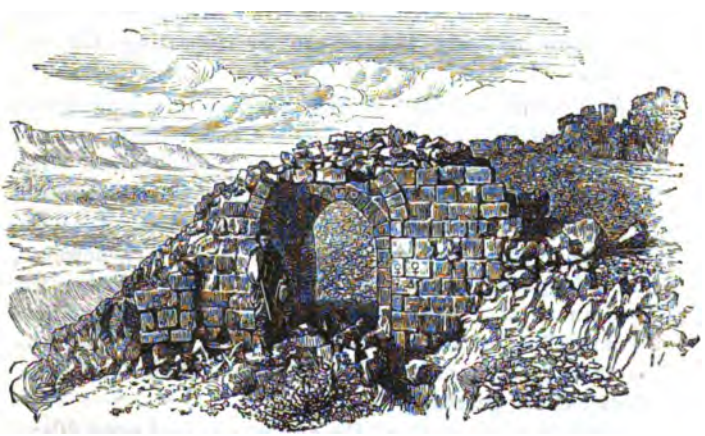

PLAN OF CHAPEL AT SEBBEH (MASADA).

we not know that Masada has no history after its capture by Silva, this chapel would certainly have been set down as a Crusading ruin.

Indeed, I should feel strongly inclined to believe, notwithstanding the silence of chroniclers, that the hill had been seized upon and occupied by those indefatigable constructors. They held Kerak as a very important post, their frontier towards Arabia. They took care to keep up their communications with it. The only access to Kerak

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from Jerusalem was round the south end of the Dead Sea, and the road must have passed along the shore below. In several of the wadys we can trace their fortresses in one continuous chain of posts, as in the Wady Um Bagkhek, Zuweirah, and the Safieh; but of none of these is there any record. It is scarcely possible they should have overlooked so conspicuous and commanding a position as Sebbeh, where they would find materials, cisterns, and some considerable fortifications ready to their hand, and where a



SEBBEH (MASADA).

mere handful of men could maintain themselves against Arabs for months.

This conjecture is deepened into conviction, when, after leaving this chapel, and passing fifty-eight yards to the west of it, immediately above the causeway by which we had entered, we re-visit the archway which M. de Saulcy has described, standing alone, pointed on one side, and round on the other. Of this B. obtained two good photographs. The annexed engraving from one of these suffi-



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ciently explains the character of this gateway, which is of better and more modern-looking masonry than any other part of the ruins, except the chapel. It stands on a part of the ledge on the west, which is considerably lower than the northern fortifications. The photograph shows clearly the marks and figures, like Greek letters and planetary signs spoken of by M. de Saulcy. They are merely Arab tribe-marks, and some of them almost as little weather-worn as the names of an English party who had visited the place last year, and had scratched their record on the inside of the arch. Some Arab in search of Beden had been amusing his leisure by repeating the old marks.

Just north and west of this gateway is a long line of ruins, probably of Herod's palace, with many rooms, corridors, and chambers, and many crypts entire. The edifice must have been of considerable size, but we could see no traces of the general splendour, nor yet of the porticoes which Josephus describes. There are, however, a few fragments of pillars. But the whole has rather the appearance of a barrack than a palace; and, if our conjecture of a Crusading occupation be correct, it was probably a building erected out of the old material for the shelter of the garrison.

For 120 yards south of the archway extend some dilapidated walls, and 140 paces further still is an isolated ruin, of very peculiar workmanship, evidently much older than the arch or the buildings at the north-west. It has no traces of plaster in the inside, and in the centre of each stone, on the inner face, a square pigeon-hole is cut out.

For 163 paces further, the ruined city extends to the southward, and ends, at length, over a tremendous gorge, at the edge of which, a little way down, we clambered into a great plastered cistern, now dry, perhaps thirty feet deep, into which cavern little cemented channels had once conveyed water from the surface of the rock. The plaster was

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white, smooth, and perfect, and a complete set of steps remains inside, which were used for reaching the water when low. Water had recently been in the bottom, which contained a thin deposit of mud and dust, and was well paddled all over by recents footprints of the ibex.

Above this we made use of some notches and hand-holes, which had evidently been cut by recent explorers, and climbed into a low cavern just above the cistern, to which it opened by a fissure near the top. It was a natural cave, artificially enlarged, and a window hewn in the rock looked out on the opposite face of the gorge of the Wady Hafaf. To the east of these reservoirs were the remains of other ruined cisterns, all of them like the great cistern in the face of the cliff, and outside the wall of circumvallation.

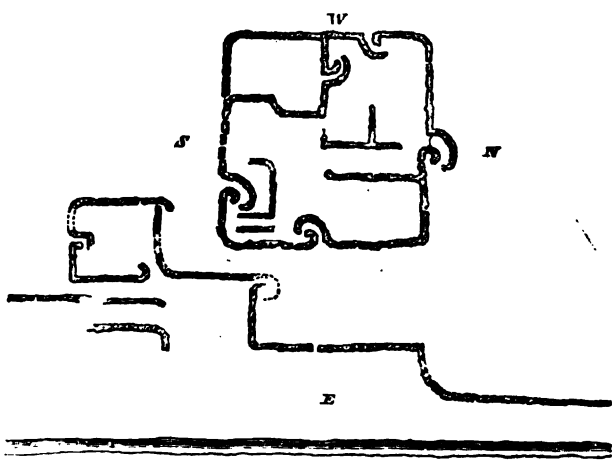
Returning again, we found many ruins clustered in the south-east corner of the platform, and extending in line along the east face, as though the garrison had lived under the walls, and the whole of the centre space had been reserved for cultivation and for the two public buildings which remain. We again carefully examined the second ruin, whose walls are honeycombed outside, but could not conjecture its use, nor had we elsewhere observed a building of similar workmanship. I may mention that many of the walls are built with little or no mortar, and with small stones and rubble filling in the interstices of the courses.

Looking down from the top, the whole of the Dead Sea was spread out as in a map, with the low-lying Lisan, Kerak, Mezraah, and the Ghor es Safieh distinct in the distance. It was a picture of stern grandeur and desolate magnificence, perhaps unequalled in the world. All round at our feet we could trace the wall of circumvallation by which the Romans hopelessly enclosed the devoted garrison. In the plain to the east beneath us, and on the opposite slopes to the west, were the Roman camps, with their outlines and walls as distinct as on the day when they were left, one large and two smaller square camps on the



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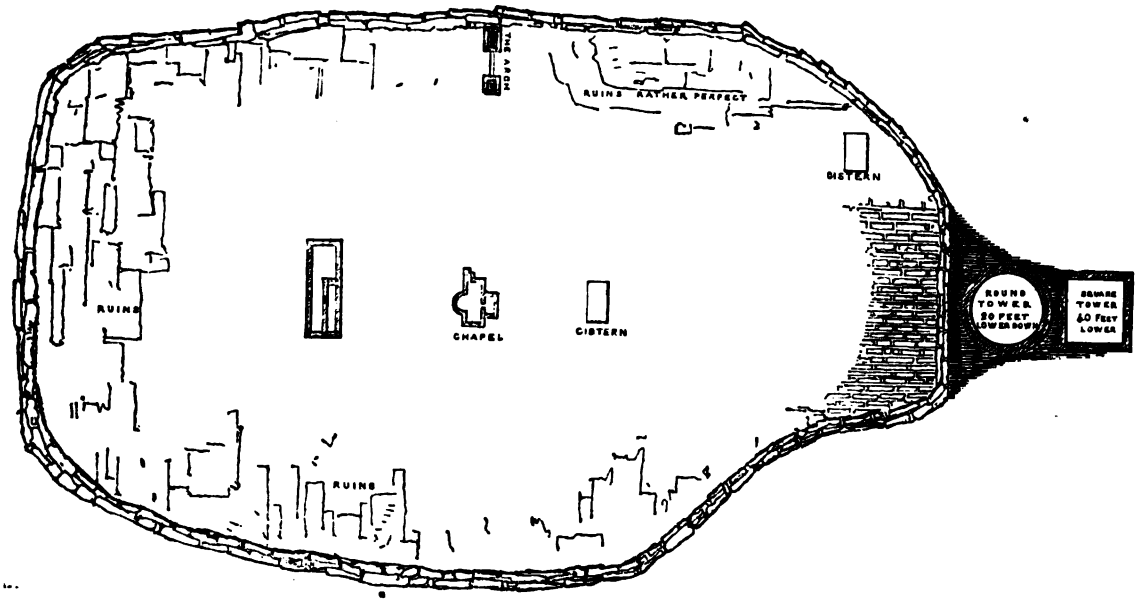
plain eastwards, and a long series of encampments on the slopes facing us westward. Apparently not a stone had been removed. Built without mortar, they had fallen from walls to sharp ridges, but all in gentle though desolate decay. The Prætorian, Decuman, and other gateways, the Prætorium, Via Principalis, and all the details of a Roman camp, were here sketched out as plainly as on the plates of a classical dictionary.




PLAN OF ROMAN CAMP AT MASADA.

On our return to camp we found that S., who had remained below, had obtained at length a specimen of the fan-tailed desert raven (*Corvus affinis*), and had rescued from the talons of a lanner the remains of a pochard duck taken on the Dead Sea. As we descended we observed various windows and loopholes, or apertures, in the cliff-side, showing that the whole fortress must have been well supplied with vaults now inaccessible.

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ROUGH GROUND SKETCH PLAN OF THE PLATFORM OF THE FORTRESS OF MASADA.

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We made an early start next day. I had a run down to the sea through a labyrinth of nullahs, dry wadys, and barren salt hills, which baffle description, almost as much as they did my efforts to thread them. But it was important to ascertain our barometric levels, and unless by actual experiment, we should have had little idea that the base of Sebbeh was no less than 554 feet above the sea-level.

Again and again the question recurred without solution, how the garrison of the fortress of Masada could ever fill their cisterns, and, above all, whence the camp of the besiegers could have obtained their supplies. There surely must have been, even since the days of the Crusaders, a considerable diminution in the rainfall of these regions.* In taking leave of Sebbeh, we must not forget the very strong similarity in position and architectural arrangement between it and the castle of Kulat-el-Kurn in the north, though this latter is on a small scale. An inspection of the two must strengthen the impression that el-Kurn is also originally a Jewish fortress adapted by the Crusaders.

By eight o'clock all were off, and we rode through the old Roman camps. It is here that we can best realise the truly terrible barrenness of this shore. Elsewhere the desolation is comparatively partial, here it reigns supreme. The two miles of rugged slope that lay between our path and the sea are formed of a soft white and very salt deposit, torn and furrowed by winter torrents, which have left fantastic castles of olden shape, flat-topped mamelons, cairns, and every imaginable form into which a wild fancy could have moulded matter, standing in a labyrinth, north and south, before and behind us.

When we reached the Wady Hafaf, we found in its bed many seyâls (acacia), gnarled old trees sunk in the depression, and never rising above its top, but no trace of water. Here we turned down to the shore, which we followed

* In a subsequent visit, in 1872, I discovered a spring under the west face of the mountain.

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C. P. MEDLYCOTT, PINX.

JEBEL USDUM, (THE SALT MOUNTAIN)
AND SOUTH END OF THE DEAD SEA.

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for about two hours. It differed in character from that further north. There was not so much drift-wood to mark the reach of the lake in spring, and when the old terraces sink down to the water's edge, the beach is merely soft shale, scarcely disintegrated. In other places it is a very fine deep shingle, with no large rounded pebbles, but small flat gravel and angular flints, all very fine. In fact, now that we have reached the shallow south portion of the lake, or backwater, the action of the sea is very different from what it was north of the peninsula. Yet there must be a considerable current, for while the thermometer in the shade was 75°, the temperature of the sea in the shallow part, marked as a ford in the maps, was only 58°. There were several birds, ducks, and grebes, swimming about, as if feeding, and swallows skimming on the surface in pursuit of the myriads of water-flies and mosquitoes, which danced over it. In several shallow lagoons the bottom was well paddled by the footprints of the black storks, which we had seen in the distance, and which had evidently been searching for a scanty breakfast in the early morning. At the depth of two feet, several yards in, we found crystals of salt formed in a thick crust at the bottom, and of course not a trace of any shells.

At Jebel Hatrûra, the path climbs up a low projecting headland, and on the summit we found an Arab shouting and signalling to us. He was one of our guard, who had been for two days on the look-out, to watch that the coasts were clear, that there were no raiders from the other side, nor any hostile or suspicious tribes in the neighbourhood; an employment which generally occupied more than a dozen of our household troops. He had well employed his leisure in shooting a fine ibex, with which he was encumbered, and which B—t soon threw in triumph across his saddle. I bargained for the horns and skin for a sovereign, and all the party rejoiced in the prospect of two days' dinner off venison, no trifling matter in the state of our

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larder, and with all our stock of eggs broken by the fall of a runaway mule.

On the hills we passed considerable quantities of a very beautiful siliceous stone, which occurred in small irregular patches, and which we took to be Oriental onyx. It was evident that the Jehâlin set some value upon it; but unfortunately our specimens were lost during the march.

About one o'clock we reached the mouth of the Wady Um Bagkhek, and turned up it in search of water. We soon found a little trickling rill of sweet water, lost at intervals in the sand, and re-appearing as a moist ooze through the gravel. Following up the gorge, the horses had a copious drink, and we sat down to eat our bread and cheese. Presently up rushed the caravan of laden mules, hinnying and sniffing as thirsty beasts know how when they scent water on a scorching day. Happy they looked as the halters were loosened, and when, after their thirty hours' abstinence, they all plunged their noses into the rivulet. After enjoying "the shadow of a great rock in a weary land" for an hour, the rest of the party followed the caravan, and I climbed alone up the ravine, where I found the stream expanded as the gorge deepened and contracted, till I reached a deep clear pool under a little cascade, where the sun never penetrates, and, having laid down my clothes on a soft cushion of maiden-hair fern, enjoyed a delicious bath.

The contrast of these lovely glens, few and far between in this rugged wilderness, is very enchanting, and one might have expected an exuberance of animal life collected in such a spot; but beyond the traces of ibex, gazelle, and porcupine, I saw no sign of living things. Plants, indeed, there were in rich profusion—tall canes, acacias, oleanders, ferns and willows. I was also rewarded by the discovery of a new fresh-water shell, a small brightly-coloured melanopsis, which I collected in some quantity. It never

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WADY RUBT EL JAMUS.
WEST SIDE OF DEAD SEA.

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occurred to us elsewhere, and is very distinct from the other Syrian species. There are the traces of an old road up the glen, which appears to have led down from the wilderness; and at the mouth, but quite in the open space in front, and doubtless connected with the road, are the ruins, very perfect, of a square fortress, with corner bastions, which cannot be referred, from its style, to an earlier period than the Crusading or Saracenic epochs. It had no other name, with our guards, than Kulat Um Bagkhek, given from the ravine behind it.

I omitted to mention that, at the distance of an hour and a half before this, we had discovered another hot sulphur spring, close to the edge of the sea, nearly opposite to the mouth of the Wady Um-el-Bedûn. M. de Saulcy has endeavoured to identify Um Bagkhek with the Roman station of Thamara; but beyond the square fort, and a loose circle of stones, apparently an outer breastwork of no great strength, there is not a trace of other buildings, and had there been any population besides a very small garrison—for the building measures only twenty-five paces by eighteen—they surely must have left more visible remains of their dwellings than we could detect. Supposing M. de Saulcy's data to be correct, Thamara would, with far better evidence from ruins, be placed at the mouth of the Wady Zuweirah, where the buildings have been of far more considerable extent; but then the learned antiquary had reserved these for his Zoar.

As I rode with my companion guards on a piece of level ground, near the shore, the scenery rapidly lost its desolate character. I shot a rare black wheatear (*Saxicola leucocephala*, Br.), my first bird to-day; and the strip between the hills and the shore was covered with a dense carpet of a salicornia (*S. fruticosa*, L.), growing in a marsh, fed by innumerable salt springs oozing out through the mud, and having many little shallow pools, tenanted by myriads of a

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very small fish (*Cyprinodon sophiæ*, Heckel), which I collected in some number by the aid of my pocket-handkerchief. None of these little fish attempt to go down to the sea—or, at least, none were seen, dead or alive, in its shallow waters; and on trying the experiment, and leaving for the night half-a-dozen in a basin of the salt-water of the spring, and an equal number in a vessel of the sea-water, we found the former all lively in the morning, while every one of those in the brine of the lake had turned lifeless on their backs. There were, besides, in these pools countless swarms of the larvæ of mosquitoes, and a few very small white crustaceans, half an inch long. This salicornia is called by the natives "*kali*," and they turn it to ashes, which they use as a potash, instead of soap.

Our camp was pitched in front of the Wady Zuweirah, with the northern end of Jebel Usdum (the "Mountain of Salt") little more than a mile distant in front, and a wild thicket of shrubs of various kinds, and many fine acacia-trees, reaching down to the very shore. The plain of Zuweirah was of considerable extent, and irregular in shape, furrowed in all directions by the dry water-courses and gravel-beds, nowhere deep enough to be gullies, and often very shallow, of the many departed torrents which have issued from the gorges of Zuweirah and Mahawat.

We had, at length, completed the whole tour of the Dead Sea, on the western side, without one hiatus, and were fairly at the south end. Contrary to the asseverations of the Jehâlin, there was no water in the wady; but plentiful pools had been discovered two miles up the valley, accessible for mules, and the muleteers had already brought down a good supply. The old warrior had the grim delight of seeing our tents pitched under the hillock where, he told us, lay buried eleven of his foes, slain by him in battle. B. had already got a photograph of Jebel Usdum before I

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came up, and had shot a hare for breakfast to-morrow. Ducks were swimming in large flocks in the sea. U. had shot a water-rail and a coot in the marsh by its edge; and L. had almost gone wild with excitement at the quantity of new and tropical plants in flower which carpet the southern shore. He had already, within an hour, collected sixteen species, new to him, of Indian or Nubian genera, and all in blossom. The air was delicious, elastic, dry, and warm (some might have called it hot); and at once we determined to remain two days before moving on to the Ghor-es-Safieh, said to be richer still in the prolific fertility of its soil.

Here at length we found life in the Dead Sea, the first and last we ever detected, in the larvæ of some small mosquito or gnat, which were wriggling about in the shallow lagoon. Some almost potable water oozes out in the bed of the Zuweirah, under the shade of a thick scrub, where U. discovered the drinking-place of the gazelles, paddled about by innumerable feet.

Next day was entirely devoted to surveying and geologizing on the glaring salt hills, with the thermometer 80° in the shade; but in the bright wholesome air, thirst is the severest inconvenience felt, even with a far higher temperature than this. In the first place, we examined the peak to the north of the Zuweirah, where De Saulcy (who is followed by Van de Velde on his authority), professes to have discovered an extinct crater and streams of lava. After a toilsome ascent to the summit, we could discover no traces of volcanic action, and had no doubt that the reported lava pebbles are merely the rolled black flints with which the hill is strewn. Some very fine casts of shells in clear silex were picked up. There is no crater, but a flat-topped peak of secondary limestone left after the erosion of the rest of the stratum by fluviatile action. The circular summit is certainly of very remarkable shape, but is parallel to the remaining upper terraces on

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the neighbouring heights. On descending, we noticed a dip in the stratification between the Wadys Zuweirah and Mahawat of 7° S.S.E., thus corresponding to that observed in several places further north. We afterwards went down to the shore to correct accurately the position and bearings of Jebel Usdum. The ridge makes an obtuse angle about one-third of its length from the north-end. The northern limb of the hill is about three miles long, and bears 15° east of magnetic north. We were enabled to make out very clearly the shape of the Lisan, and to correct several of the outlines in Van de Velde's map. Subsequently, on comparing these with Lynch's map, which we had not with us, we found ourselves borne out in every particular by his survey, in which the coast line is laid down with admirable precision.

The temperature of the water at the edge of the sea under Jebel Usdum was 66° at nine A.M., while that of the air, by a thermometer in the shade four feet from the ground, was 64°. The shore is here all composed of fine sand, instead of the pebbles which we found on every point of the west coast. We collected specimens of this, and also of the soil at a depth of two feet from the surface, where it is a rich, greasy loam, but strongly impregnated with salt. The formation of sulphur seems to be going on at the surface in various places, though it is generally impure and mixed with sand; and the ground is covered with crystals of gypsum.

Jebel Usdum itself is a solid mass of rock salt of a greenish white transparency, very much the colour of a shallow sea, covered at the top with a loose crust of *débris* of gravel, rolled flints, and gypsum, but chiefly with a chalky marl. We walked for three miles along its eastern face, in the hope of finding some means of ascending it, but it was quite impracticable. Portions of the salt cliff are continually splitting off and falling, leaving perpendicular faces; and when this is not the case, the *débris*

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is far too loose and steep to permit of any climbing. Wide as the hill is, there is no plateau on the top, but a forest of little peaks and ridges, furrowed and scarped angularly in every direction; and when one pinnacle has been reached, it is only to see a deep fissure forming an impassable gulph between it and the next peak which shuts out the view. The salt has a stratified appearance, with varying lines of cleavage, and the base of the deposit is far below the present surface, as may be seen from the depth of some of the hollow caverns and subterranean channels with which the rock is perforated, and which are revealed by occasional holes and fissures exactly like the crevasses of a glacier.

In several places we found the ground hollow, and echoing under our feet as we walked by the shore, and in some the crust has given way, and a laden camel has suddenly disappeared from the file of a caravan, and been salted to death below. The layers of rock-salt are frequently contorted conformably with the overlying marl and gypsum.

At the distance of about three miles south-west from our camp a sort of spur seemed to run from the ridge close to the re-entering angle, about half-way between its extremities; and here it is linked by a depressed shoulder to the alluvial terraces which run on to the Wady Mahawat. I had to skirt the mountain to this place before I could find a practicable spot for scaling, though the height is contemptible; and, after several hours of weary toil, I found myself, just before sunset, on a pinnacle, but by no means, so far as I could judge by the eye, on the highest peak. With this, however, I had to be content. Its height was by aneroid 347 feet above the level of the Dead Sea, and I have no doubt there are points north of the shoulder fifty feet higher.

The view westwards—the only one I obtained on this afternoon from the top of this ridge—was interesting.

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The mountain range diminished to more insignificant hills than those to which we had been lately looking up. It stood back about four miles, leaving at the south-west corner of the sea a large plain, the embouchure of the Zuweirah and Mahawat, which here combine their forces, when they have any; and then, splitting as in a miniature estuary, sweep over wide gravelly beds, spotted with the dark green, weather-beaten acacia (*A. nilotica*), and sparsedly carpeted with a profuse variety of tropical shrubs and flowers, which afford sustenance to some hares, and many coveys of the little Hey's partridge. About a dozen beds are furrowed through the coarse gravelly plain, each about five or six feet deep. In one of these I surprised a heard of twenty-two gazelles, but was not provided with the means of capturing any. On Jebel Usdum, and there alone, we obtained specimens of the large black and white Nubian wheatear (*Saxicola monacha*, Rüpp.), a few pair of which were scattered about the edges of the hill; but never elsewhere did we meet with this rare species. Some of our party also employed themselves in searching, but without avail, for life in the Dead Sea, and especially for any traces of the coral (*Stylophora pistillata*) exhibited in the Museum of Paris as from hence. No person who has examined the southern portion of the lake can for one instant believe that this specimen, or any other coral, ever came from it, unless as a semi-fossil, though microscopic crustaceans may possibly be found, as they live in the salt lagoons close to the shore, but which are not so strongly impregnated with salt. In this shallow part under Usdum the water may be best characterised as syrup of chloride of sodium. In the brakes and by the edges the sportsmen and collectors were more successful, since ducks, rails, coots, rufous, and rock-swallows all were found, besides many warblers, and all the peculiar birds of the Ghor.

We had subsequently an opportunity of almost completing the circuit of Jebel Usdum, having reached Ain

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Beida (the White Well) at the south-eastern extremity, the water of which may be white and clear, but is more than brackish. As our time was limited, we made no survey here, but satisfied ourselves we had reached the limit of Usdum, properly so called. Here, for the first time, were traces of vegetation, but only tall cane-brakes, with a few tamarisks and other stunted shrubs. The water, certainly not drinkable, oozed out among the canes much like the springs at Ain Terabeh. From this line of cane-thicket the terraces began at once to rise to the south-west, like those further north, and we could easily see the opening of the Wady Fikreh, by which our Jehâlin told us there is a route direct to Wady Moussa (Petra), from which we were only distant two days' journey. This spot, Ain Beida, was the southern limit of our travels. The ride gave us a good opportunity of noticing the shape of the ridge, and its complete isolation from the surrounding mountain system. With a breadth of from one to one and a-half miles, it is simply a huge rock of salt, extending from its northern end for three miles north-east and south-west, and then for four miles further due north and south (magnetic), covered with a coating of marl fifty feet thick, which may be taken for a continuation of the old diluvial terrace uplifted on the salt. It is penetrated by many drainage fissures, choked with glittering stalactites of salt, though the general aspect of the mount is anything but glittering until closely inspected. The sides of the cliffs have been everywhere slightly affected and scarped by the action of occasional rains; and sand and dust washing in and adhering to the soft material have concealed all the native brilliancy of the salt.

Some of the caves are of considerable size. We entered one on the east face, which had evidently formed the channel of a drainage stream, and which is sufficiently capacious for the use to which it is sometimes put as a place of concealment by predatory bands from the Wady

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Moussa. The cavern was narrow, but we were able to follow it up for 200 or 300 yards. It is evident that it frequently changes in form and extent, from the rocks being undermined and falling down, and being then gradually melted from beneath; but the sides were too much covered with dust and lime to afford the beautiful reflections of a salt-mine. There were no traces of robbers, but the hyæna had found for himself a cool and comfortable home.

The only point of connection with the enclosing ranges is at the south-west, and there only with the marly deposit, which forms a depressed shoulder, from which the ridge rapidly rises, like a long vista of Titanic tents, or colossal ruins. But this forest of pinnacles is only perceived when close to it. At a distance it would have been put down from its shape, by the Greeks, as a "hog's back" (χοιράς).

Here, perhaps, we may find a key to the phenomena of the Dead Sea. It is impossible, I think, after tracing the Ghor from top to bottom, to suppose that any other action than erosion and abrasion have scooped out those secondary rocks in the first instance. However slight (comparatively speaking) might be the evidence for this in the upper part, yet, when we come to the lower portion, the shores of the Dead Sea, and notice the extinct waterfalls, the enormous ravines, worked through hard crystalline rocks to the depth sometimes of 1,200 feet, we see that at a remote period, long prior to the marl deposits below, there must have been a mighty fluviatile and aqueous force in operation for a period almost inconceivable. The whole surrounding region must have become dry land before the close of the eocene period, there being no fossils of a subsequent date anywhere detected in the country. Then the water probably flowed uninterruptedly to the Red Sea, or rather its waves laved the shores of a narrow gulf; plenteous rains drenched the neighbouring hills, and car-

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ried down the disintegrated rocks of their channels to form the marls of the sea. But the great fissure had probably been a submarine depression before the desiccation of the ocean. Then followed the great volcanic period of the north, when the Lejah smoked with the fires of a hundred boiling craters, and the liquid masses poured in red torrents down the upper valley as far as the Lake of Gennesaret. Meanwhile the concomitant earthquakes rent and shook the southern and central districts. The subterranean fires, which poured forth their rivers of basalt over the north, drew their fuel from beneath this gulf and at this period, possibly while the ridge of Akabah was gradually rising by the same forces, and interrupting the continuity of the sea; but it is more probable that Akabah had been left bare by the receding ocean, and that the Ghor formed one salt basin, and the Red Sea another; while the undulations of the earth's crust depressed the enclosing ridges of the Ghor, and caused that continuous synclinal stratification which we have frequently observed. As Akabah slowly rose, by a compensating action the Ghor gradually sank, until a vast oblong lake was formed, stretching up the Arabah for twenty miles south of the present shores of the Dead Sea, and extending northwards up the Aulon or Jordan plains, perhaps nearly to Kurn Surtabeh. Over this surface the sun's rays soon produced an evaporation which more than counterbalanced the supply from the feeders of the basin; and as the waters subsided the chalky sediment registered on the hill-sides their gradual diminution, from the terrace which at the south end rests against the enclosing barriers at a height of 320 feet in the Wady Mahawat, up to that chalk and marl in the Ghor above Jericho, which is deposited a few feet deep on the surface of the plain.

But while the volume of water was steadily diminishing the residuum would retain the whole of the mineral salts and would, when saturated with chloride of sodium, begin



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to deposit its rock salt throughout the basin. The deposit would gradually augment by the accretion of the superfluous salt, until the equilibrium was restored. Then, as the waters still continued to subside, they would accumulate a *débris* of gypsum, chalk, and marl upon the salt, until they finally sank to their present level, at which the forces of the supply from the streams and the evaporation are in equilibrium.

Subsequently to this, I conceive, the ridge of salt must have been elevated, as indicated by its sustaining on its top a similar deposit to that on the wadys around, but which elevated here, sinks, though the continuity is uninterrupted, to a much lower elevation on the connecting shoulder.

Drainage and occasional rains have been for ages restoring portions of the brine to its original source, so that as the sea has decreased in bulk it has increased, and still is increasing, in intensity of saltness.

One thing, I think, is clear, that the Jordan valley and the Dead Sea have been formed quite independently of any oceanic influences, and that they have never had any connection with the Mediterranean: the highest level of the water not having been since the disappearance of the ocean of the cretaceous period more than 320 feet above its present level. The existence of this marl at the south end proves the lake at a very early period to have been separated from the Red Sea.

The only igneous traces near the lake are the streams of basalt of inconsiderable size on the north-east, between the wadys Zerka Main and Ghuweir, mentioned to me by M. Lartet. These were probably evolved at the same time as the great eruptions of the Lejah, and though with the glacial epoch, of which we find traces in the Lebanon, they may have affected the level of the waters, yet they have had nothing whatever to do with the formation of the basin itself. Since the volcanic epoch the extent of the water has probably not appreciably varied.

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There is a remarkable similarity, I had almost said identity, of character between the phenomena of Jebel Usdum and of the Sebkhas and salt hills of the African Sahara, several of which I had some years before carefully examined and explored. There are the same general features in each: traces of a tertiary or post-tertiary sea; a plain occasionally overflowed and encrusted with salt and gypsum; in several instances a similar existence of sulphur springs in the neighbourhood; and always the salt rock isolated from the mountain range, and capped by a deep marly deposit. When I visited the African salt hills, the mode of deposition of this superincumbent mass was to me a great difficulty, and I think the position of Jebel Usdum assists us to the conclusion that in each case there has been a subsequent uplifting of the salt rock. Let this be admitted, and the *débris* is accounted for as part of the surrounding deposit,* elevated with the mass beneath.

Other circumstances would lead me to infer that the reduction of the Dead Sea to its present limits was synchronous with the desiccation of the post-tertiary ocean of the Sahara, and with the increasing temperature which marked the close of the glacial epoch, and that it is in fact only one (the last) in a chain of salt pools stretching across North Africa; and for this there is very strong ichthyological evidence, in the genera and species of fishes inhabiting the Jordan basin; but this will be mentioned elsewhere.

The question of the operation by which Divine Providence destroyed Sodom and the Cities of the Plain is altogether independent of the question of the formation of the Dead Sea (of which latter event the Scriptures say nothing), and belongs to a very much more recent period; and it seems to have been an unhappy though not unnatural mistake which has connected in the popular mind the overthrow of the guilty cities with the eruption of an

* See "Great Sahara," chap. iv. pp. 70, *et seq.*



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ordinary volcano. There are, in reality, no grounds for assuming the shower of fire and brimstone to have been poured forth from an ordinary crater, and it will be in vain to search for such in the immediate neighbourhood of the Lake. There is evidence enough, however, from which the probable occurrence of such a catastrophe might be inferred, apart from the direct testimony of the Word of God.

At the north-east corner of Jebel Usdum, between it and the shore, is a heap of stones and some indistinct ruins, very much dilapidated, of a rudely-built tower, named by the Arabs Um Zoghal, apparently a little outpost from the station in Wady Zuweirah, but in which the antiquarian dreams of M. de Saulcy have discovered the ruins of Sodom.

As we stood round the watch-fires, the bright gleams of a beacon-light from the other side shot across the dark water. "There," said our guide, "is the village of Safieh; to-morrow we shall lie down on the other side."

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**DEAD SEA SHORE UNDER SEBBEH.**
**(MASADA)**

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## CHAPTER XV.

*Departure from Zuweirah for the Safieh — Jebel Usdum — The Sebkha or Salt Marsh—Its Rivers and Birds—False Alarm—Oasis of Feifeh —Belt of Reeds—Capture of Prisoners— Vegetation and Luxuriance of the Ghor es Safieh—A Burning Village—General Pillage—Dead Bodies —Indigo—Arab Ideas of Morals—Council of War—Causes of Fertility —Streams—En Nimeirah—Ruined Sugar Mills—Crusading Traces— Geology—Sandstone and Trap—Determination to return—Sirocco Wind —Night Watches—Ravens—Camp at Zuweirah—Abou Dahûk—Hamzi —Saul and David—Jehâlin Guard, an inferior Caste — Method of Baking — Indolence — Poor and Aged—Zuweirah—Ruined Fortress and Archway — Cistern — Our Bath — Shrimps — Wady Mahawat— Singular Deposit—Sulphur and Bitumen—Method of the Destruction of Sodom—Natural and Supernatural Agencies—Absence of Volcanic Traces — The Cities of the Plain not submerged — Arguments for their position at the South—at the North—Superiority of the latter—Plain of Jericho—Zoar.*

AT length we leave Palestine proper, on our long-anticipated visit to the east side and the desolate Lisan, or Peninsula—we are to enter the land of Moab. Our day's journey was to be very short in time, for the track was smooth; no ravines or rocks arrested the progress of horse or footman, and our guides fully expected that we should be able to camp at Borj-en-N'meirah in the afternoon. The first part of the road was uninteresting, but very curious. The sky was cloudless, and the sun's light brilliant and dazzling; while a tremulous haze peopled the horizon of the sea with islets set in a fringe of diamonds; yet, as we kept close under the hill to our right, the heat of the day was relieved by the cool zephyrs which breathed fresh from the tall cliffs. The ground echoed dull and hollow beneath our horses'

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hoofs, as they pranced and cantered on the hard, elastic sand; and we noticed several holes on the shore, where animals had fallen in through the hollow crust formed by the underground drainage to the sea.

For seven miles we skirted between the Jebel, or Khasm ("Nose") Usdum. on the right; and the shallow sea, and, latterly, the Sebkha, or salt flat, on the left. This is a large flat of at least six by ten miles, from north to south,



JEBEL USDUM.

occasionally flooded, but now dry. Taught by the experience of M. de Saulcy, we made no attempt to cross it to the northward, as the mud would have been far too deep and treacherous for us to pass in safety. We rode up nearly as far as Ain Beida, at the extremity of the salt hill, before we turned due east across the Sebkha. The glare then became very trying, and a fine mirage floated before us. We were not far from the southern end of the flat, and the old terrace of diluvium which here bounds it, stood

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up like a wall in front, apparently about 300 feet high, and shone like molten silver in the dazzling sunlight; while the true salt hill frowned brown and gloomy. The ridge seemed, at first, an unbroken bar across from east to west; but we could soon perceive sundry irregular channels and ravines rent through it,—the various watercourses from the south. Not a plant or a leaf could be seen, save just under the hills, where the cane-brake seemed to stretch from Ain Beida, and to fringe the foot of the ridge with a narrow belt of deep green.

The whole of this great flat is formed of fine sandy mud, brought down by the Wadys Fikreh, Jeib, Ghurundel, and Tufileh, which, with many smaller tributaries, discharge their waters together here. The plain was furrowed by eight small watercourses; but only the first and last (the Fikreh and the Tufileh) had any supply of water worth mentioning. The sea was evidently low at present; for the line of driftwood was half a mile from the water's edge, and under Jebel Usdum six feet higher than the present water-line. The Sebkha itself is as nearly as possible a dead flat about fifteen feet above the sea-level at the time of our visit, but, doubtless, overflowed every year. Nothing in the Sahara could be more desolate; every feature of this strange scene recalled some of the characteristics of the North African deserts, and not least in the brilliant and beautiful mirage which spread like a fairy land before us. Having kept well to the south, we did not meet with any of the difficulties so pathetically described by M. de Saulcy, while we cheerily spurred our horses, and our Arabs waved their spears and firelocks, dashing from watercourse to watercourse. Little as there seemed for the subsistence of waterfowl, yet we made no inconsiderable addition to our lists in these streamlets, which had not so much as a sprig of salsola growing at their edge. A pair of the ruddy shield rake (*Casarca rutila*) were swimming in the Wady Fikreh; and I obtained the common

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redshank, a pair of the little stint (*Tringa minuta*, L.)—the only specimens obtained in our tour—and several of the Asiatic and Kentish dottrels, before we had crossed the Sebkha. The rare ash-coloured martin (*Cotyle palustris*, Rüpp.) was skimming over every stream, and our bags were enriched by half-a-dozen specimens of this ornithological prize. During the pursuit, we had become scattered over the plain; on looking back, we could detect some little black specks among the bright ridges behind us, and then the occasional flash of spears or firelocks in the sunlight warned us of a party of armed men gathering in our rear. With the promptness of skirmishers falling back, we plied our spurs, and, leaping many a furrow, galloped up to our mules, and formed in line; when our Jehâlin soon pronounced the party to be only a reinforcement of their own men, expected here by Abou Dahûk. One after another had kept dropping in during the morning, till we found ourselves with a guard of forty-eight footmen and fifteen mounted spearmen, besides our own party; so that we were now more numerous than Jacob's family going down into Egypt—seventy-six armed men in all. We were inclined at the time to attribute this great following to our Sheikh's love of military display in the territory of his neighbours; but had afterwards no cause to regret it.

The white terrace to the south now presented an even ridge, running east and west, with a spur which rounded off towards Jebel Usdum, and then joined the terrace at the Wady Mahawat. But, to the south-east, a rich oasis evidently extended for several miles behind the belt of canes which fringes the whole Sebkha south and east. The strip of green and forest gradually contracts, till at the south-east corner it disappears altogether from view. Behind it rise a series of bluff, precipitous hills, the lower parts of which are here a deep red, and, as we afterwards ascertained, a red sandstone. From these hills an abundant supply of fresh water gushes forth, and fertilises all

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the land above the level of the Sebkha, upon reaching which it is neutralised by the salt deposits. This oasis, which bears to the Safieh the same relation that that of Ain Dûk does to Ain Sultân at Jericho, has a village called Feifeh, inhabited by the same tribe of Ghawârineh as the other, and stretches about eight miles south of the sea.

Close to the banks of the last stream, the Wady Tufileh (having a permanent flow, and the water of which, coming from the Ghor of Feifeh, was only brackish instead of abominably bitter), the ground rises, and is covered by the narrow belt of reeds, of his passage through which De Saulcy gives so formidable an account. Here we halted for the mules to come up, and the guard to muster, while we picked up several very good birds. A party of footmen were thrown forward as skirmishers, and soon came in with six armed men as prisoners, whom they had found skulking in the bushes; they refused to give any account of themselves, or to state to what tribe they belonged. All that was known of them was that they were not Ghawârineh of the Safieh, to whom we were going; and Abou Dahûk, who pronounced them to be Káâbineh, and probably from Petra, ordered them into custody, and informed them that if any one escaped the lives of the others would be forfeited. We, then, in military order, with baggage in the middle, entered the Ghor. The reeds had lately been cut, and afforded little cover, and the belt where we crossed it was only sixty yards wide, up a gentle slope. From this we entered immediately on the Ghor, a wild thicket and oasis of trees of various kinds, with fertile glades and opens of irregular shape, rising gradually to the mountains of Moab; and, here at its widest, extending three miles inland, about six miles to the north, and perhaps as many to the south. As we advanced, the trees became more open and scattered, being chiefly retem, zizyphus, false balsam, and the osher-tree; and among these, the ground was tolerably cultivated for wheat, barley, maize,

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and indigo, all of which were now shooting up, and carefully watered by innumerable little rills brought down from the Wady Safieh. The thorns were often impenetrable, and left their traces in our ragged dresses and bleeding hands. The place positively swarmed with birds in countless myriads, rising at every step with the indifference of strangership. There were doves by the score on every bush, large and small (*Turtur risorius* and *T. ægyptius*), bulbuls, hopping thrush, shrikes, the gorgeous little sunbird, resplendent in the light, and, once more, our new sparrow. The Abyssinian lark, pipits, and wagtails luxuriated in the moist rills at our feet, which were fringed by drooping tufts of caper (*Capparis ægyptiaca*) in full flower. All teemed with a prodigality of life. It was, in fact, a reproduction of the oasis of Jericho, in a far more tropical climate, and with yet more lavish supply of water. The heat was even now oppressive, and the atmosphere was close as in a moist stove-house. We were wild with excitement at the promise of a rich harvest, but not a shot would our chieftain permit us to fire till he had ascertained the history of our prisoners. For three miles we rode through these rich groves, revelling in the tropical verdure and swarming ornithology of its labyrinths. But all the garden tillage was desolate—not a human being did we meet, though we passed a little village about half a mile from us on the right. A little ahead of us hundreds of ravens, kites, and other birds of prey, were soaring thick as rooks over a newly-ploughed field.

At length we reached the head village of the tribe, where we were to camp, and from whose Sheikh Abou Dahûk had a letter promising a good reception. A reed wattled stockade enclosed it, and the hovels were built of reed mats fixed to posts, and plastered with mud. A sudden turn brought us in front of the stockade. It was a smouldering ruin, and the embers were yet hot and smoking. Our guard ahead raised a yell, and made a rush forward. We

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spurred our horses to follow them, and leaped the charred and smoking embers. Scrambling through the burning fragments, I came upon the body of a man stripped naked, with a bullet-hole through his hip. A piteous scene of ruin was around us. We were in the middle of an open space of some size, which was surrounded by wattled houses all within the palisade, some of them burnt, others still standing. All order and discipline were lost in a moment. Another hideous yell, and half our guard had disappeared. With the true Bedouin instinct, they were plundering and searching for loot in all directions. The square was full of "silos," the underground concealed granaries of the inhabitants. These had been opened and left exposed, and to them a rush was made, and each man leaped into the first he could find. There might have been about fifty of these storehouses, each rather more than six feet deep. One of the muleteers in front of me, seizing a sack, threw it down a hole, and jumped down after it. Heaps of millet, wheat, barley, and indigo were being briskly thrown up from the granaries on all sides; and had an enemy at that moment appeared, he would have found the whole guard below ground, and had to contend with the Franks alone. Others were rushing into the yet standing houses, and searching for plunder there. Meanwhile we stood together, dismounted, in a group, silent with amazement and horror. In one house lay the naked body of a lad, apparently about sixteen years of age, and across another doorway was stretched the body of a man—slain, no doubt, in defending his wife and home. We turned sickened from the fearful sight, and joined in conclave apart. It was in vain to attempt to get an explanation, or to gain attention from any one except Giacomo. Our baggage had all been discharged from the mules, while the whole party were searching for plunder and filling their sacks. What could it all mean? What was the story of this horrid scene which they beheld with such

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joyous excitement? All we could make out was, that there must have been a battle a day or two since—that the villagers had been beaten and fled—and that the victors, after sacking the place, had left with their plunder. At length we got hold of the Sheikh, and asked him what we were to do. "Oh," said old Abou, "we have had nothing to do with the fray. Of course we will camp here to-night, and you can go and search the Ghor." "Here!" we exclaimed, "among all these dead bodies!" "Yes; it will be nearer for our men to get what is left. When God has provided us a dinner, should we not be foolish not to eat it?" "But God did not provide it for us, but for the Ghawârineh." "True; but they have left it, and if we do not take it, some one else will. Besides, the Ghawârineh are our friends, and would rather we than their enemies should have the good things." In vain we all expostulated. We were told it was no affair of ours—that we should be protected—but they would take what was theirs by Arab law and custom, which was all right. Meanwhile, other pits had been discovered inside the houses, under the women's apartments, filled with indigo, which had escaped the search of the original plunderers. Many of the barley sacks were speedily emptied, and filled with an ample store of the more precious commodity, while old Hamzi went smilingly round, feeling the weight of the sacks, and encouragingly tapping the looters on the back, exclaiming, "tayib, tayib,"—"good, good."

At length we carried our point about the camp; and, after many threats and angry words, our baggage was got on to the mules again, and we went up about a mile to a little open ground by a rill, where we should have a tolerably clear space to prevent a surprise; and here we halted and took counsel on our position. Were we to go on, or to return, was the question. The Sheikh was ready to go on; we were a very strong party, quite a match, he considered, for 150 men; and if the case were

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as he imagined, a war between two tribes, we should have nothing to fear, but must merely take care to keep ourselves neutral. But then he had heard of no wars in the neighbourhood, and the thing must have been very sudden, for rumour flies fast in these regions. The Kerak man, who had been with us for some days, opined it had only been a sudden raid, but he would not venture to go on in the daylight. Could we stay in the Safieh? This we all decided in the negative, tempting as the spot was in every way for the naturalist, for one party or the other was sure to return in two or three days, either for plunder or war, and neither would be in any humour to find strangers roaming about the place. However, as we were so far, we determined to remain for the day, and see what we could, as it was not yet noon, and our chieftain assured us he could answer with his head for our personal safety. As to the movements of to-morrow, we agreed to defer the consideration of them until after dinner, and meanwhile to make the most of our time.

Leaving orders that the mules should be unloaded, and the tents pitched in this place, B., U., and I hastily pushed on, in the first instance, towards the north, accompanied by a small picked guard, in order to ascertain the limits of the Ghor; not without a shivering feeling that we might come on dead bodies at any step. However, the ravens and eagles were all busied nearer the sea to the left, so we rightly guessed we were safe from this on the upper side. The fertile Ghor appears to contract about a mile south of the spot at which we entered it, and then to expand where the feeders of the Wady Tufileh come down from the hills; but it extends about six miles to the northward. On pushing forwards, we found an endless variety of shrubs and plants, many of them new to us, the most conspicuous beside the cultivated indigo being the osher, or Sodom apple, and a beautiful creeping caper. We soon reached the Nahr-es-Safieh,

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plentiful stream flowing down from the Moab mountains in a north-westerly direction, and supplying the numberless artificial rills we had crossed. This is the source of all the wealth of the Ghor. On its right bank, which rises steeply, all was barren desolation, a mass of rugged *débris* heaped at the foot of the mountains; on its left bank all was verdure and luxuriance, down to the very edge of the sea. At a little more than half an hour from the camp we crossed the river near its entrance into the lake, and just afterwards another stream (apparently a fork of the Safieh), the Khaderah. Here the Ghor contracts, and the hills push close to the lake, almost interrupting the belt of wood and cultivation. On advancing a little further we found ourselves in the Ghor-en-N'meirah, and could see the course of the river of that name, by the side of which are some ruins, which we could not examine, as our guard refused to advance a step further. These may be the ancient Nimrim, mentioned both by Isaiah and Jeremiah in the burden of Moab. "For the waters of Nimrim shall be desolate, for the hay (herbage) is withered away, the grass faileth, there is no green thing" (Is. xv. 6); and "the waters also of Nimrim shall be desolate" (Jer. xlviii. 34). There is certainly a singular appropriateness, if this be the locality, in the expression, "the waters of Nimrim," with these plenteous brooks gushing from the lofty hills, and then hugging them, loath to enter the sea until they have run far to the northward, and done their work of fertilising the shores with their numberless streamlets. Let these supplies be cut off, and the curse indeed has come upon Nimrim, the herbage is all withered at once, the grass has failed, there is no green thing, and the desolation is like that of the salt plain opposite.*

* My subsequent visit to Moab has led me to believe that the Nimrim spoken of is a ruin still retaining the name of Nemeirah, in the highlands, near the springs which feed this stream.

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On returning to the south, but keeping as close to the eastern edge of the oasis as we could, we found, about half a mile to the east of the village of Safieh, a fine ruin, apparently of the Crusading times, with a well-built pointed arch, quite perfect, the old gateway of the building, of the same style as that at Masada, and with the same Arab tribe-marks scratched on its lintels. There could be no doubt of the former uses of this building, from the aqueduct, and frames for mill-wheels could be plainly identified, even if we had not had the evidence of the Arabs, who called it the "Tawahîn-es-Sukkar," "sugar mills."*

The ruins resembled those of the sugar mills at Jericho, of which in all respects the Safieh is a striking counterpart in art as well as nature. The village is of the same style, composed of wattled huts, only seen by us in these two places, by Huleh, and on the plain of Acre, where they are used by colonies of the same race; and there is the same bare, stony spur between the mountains and the oasis with similar ruins upon it. Just above this ruined mill are remains, apparently of a coarsely-built old chapel or Crusaders' church. The whole of these buildings probably belonged to the period of the Crusades, and would form a natural link in the chain of posts and settlements which connected Kerak with the west side. Yet here, as at

* These are evidently the sugar mills mentioned by Burckhardt (Travels, p. 391), who, after describing the Safieh and Mezraah, and identifying the former with Zoar, adds also, from the information he obtained at Kerak, "About the middle of the lake on the same eastern shore are some ruins of an ancient city, called Towahein-el-Sukkar. Farther north the mountains run down to this lake, and a steep cliff overhangs the sea for about an hour, shutting out all passage along the shore." Burckhardt seems to have fancied these ruins a little further to the north than they really are, and to have been misinformed as to the practicability of the road under the cliff, which was traversed by De Saulcy. Dr. Robinson, who had no information on these parts, is rather hard on Sheikh Ibrahim, and remarks (vol. i. 556), that he has, on the random information of the Arabs, placed Tawahin-es-Sukkar on the eastern shore of the Dead Sea, a most improbable site.

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Jericho, the balsam, palm, and sugar-cane have utterly perished.

While examining the ruins, we espied two horsemen and five footmen reconnoitring us from a little distance, who on being observed fled up the mountains. We obtained some specimens of the sunbird, and a male of the pretty new sparrow (*Passer moabiticus*, Trist.), which, on being shot, fell into a nest at the top of a tree, and delayed us long in retrieving it. We also secured abundance of doves and partridges for dinner.

Hastily we hurried across the rugged belt of *débris* east of the ruins to examine the nature of the cliffs. These we found in strong contrast with all we had seen on the other side. A *red sandstone* of great thickness forms the face of the mountains, topped, so far as we could see, by a calcareous limestone in the upper part, corresponding doubtless to the formations on the western side. Unless we were much deceived, there is a hard crystalline and metamorphic limestone beneath this red sandstone. Quantities of trap boulders strewed the foot of the mountains, and we picked up several fragments of greenstone and of syenite, but could not trace their origin. There was a dip of 8° in the sandstone stratum, apparently S. by E. The absence of the sandstone on the western side is curious, and seems to point to the great antiquity of the gorge, as having been formed before the tertiary period. How has it slipped out? Has it been denuded on the west, or has it been elevated, and the chalk denuded on the east? Perhaps the depression commenced soon after the deposition of the sandstone. We had no time to look for fossils, nor to trace out the source of the igneous fragments so abundant all round us. Among the specimens we preserved was a fine piece of hard red limestone, very like rosso antico.

Our guard, who had all along been very uneasy, hastened us back to camp, which we reached, without further

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adventure, after sunset; and we held a council of state with the two Sheikhs and Giacomo. It was a sore trial to give up the Lisan and Mezraah. But, if we went on, we should have no other means of returning than by again traversing the Safieh, and we might find ourselves embroiled in some Arab wars. To return involved only one day's risk, to advance involved the uncertain risk of a week.

At length we agreed to return, and the Sheikh told us twenty-five men should be detailed for patrols, and thirty-five remain awake round the watch-fires. Nine large fires were lighted in a circle, to give an imposing appearance as of a very large force; our horses and mules stood picketed in rows inside the watch-fires in front of our tents; a muster was made by the old Sheikh, each man's piece was overhauled, and powder and ball served out to him, and Abou Dahûk bade us to go to bed and be happy, but at the same time added, that we had better not undress, and must be sure to keep all our arms by our side. He had good reason for this, as he informed us that, after we were well away, he had wormed the truth out of our six prisoners, who were Bedouin of the Kââbineh tribe, from the north of the Wady Moussa (Petra), and who, having come 150 strong on a secret marauding expedition, had fallen on the unhappy village in the night; that the inhabitants had fled towards the Lisan; while their own party had gone to the mountains with as much plunder as they could carry, and were to return in a few days for the rest. They said there were seven others left with them, two horse and five foot, which corresponded with the number we had seen run to the mountains, but which we soon found to be an under statement made to put the Jehâlin off their guard—the real number left being nearer fifty men. Such a band of Edomite brigands would have been far more dangerous to us than Arab belligerents, as they were restrained by no



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tribal laws of war. However, we were ignorant of this at the time. After joining in prayer together for protection and safety, we retired to our respective tents, and I envied my tent-comrades, who were soon sound asleep on their mats.

The wind was blowing hot and gusty, and swept choking clouds of dust into every crevice of tent and clothing; and hour after hour I rose and visited the watchfires, which were burning bright and still so near that sickening scene of destruction. Every man was on the alert, and the *qui vive* went hourly round, after which a stentorian voice roared out, "Hear, all men: this is the camp of the great warrior Abou Dahûk, who is conducting Englishmen, friends of the Sultan, and is at peace with all men. Touch him not, and on you be peace." This friendly warning did not, however, prevent a more than peaceful inquisitiveness on the part of sundry strangers; for no less than twelve prisoners were captured during the night, probably scouts sent to reconnoitre our strength. It was, except for the gusts of the sirocco, a lovely night; and the moon, bright in a cloudless sky, favoured not ambuscades, while she lit up the rich red mountains, which towered in front, with a glowing flood of colour. That inexpressibly calm beauty in the works of God, and the hideous scene so near us, the work of man, were in startling contrast. I could fancy the human storm pictured in the volumes of dust which swept along the ground, but never rose five feet above it.

After a night of feverish anxiety, the hum of preparation which began at five o'clock was indeed welcome; and, thankful for safety, we met again in our tent. All the baggage was loaded, and everything ready for a start before sunrise, as there was little packing to be accomplished. With dawn we began to look after the ornithology of the district, and especially the ravens, who were rapidly coming in from the south, and against whom we per-

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petrated a regular battue on their way to their uncleanly feast. "Wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together," was unmistakably illustrated here, and all the vultures and kites of North Arabia seemed to be rushing to the banquet. We brought down more specimens than we could carry of the three specimens of raven—the common, the brown-necked, and the new fan-tail (*C. affinis*); the vultures and raptors sailed too high, out of reach of our shot. But our people were impatient for the move, and we had to proceed onwards. Our guard, however imposing in numbers, could have been but of little use in case of attack to-day, unless they had stripped, for each man had turned his abeiyeh into a sack, and trudged heavily along, borne down under his weight of plunder. We started a little in advance of them, spreading ourselves on each side to search for skulkers, who might not have been all captured during the night, and we shot hard as we went, securing, besides several rare birds, some thirty couple of doves for the next two days' dinner.

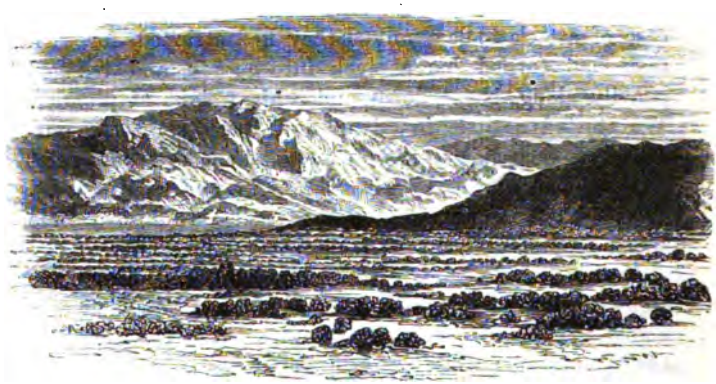
By seven o'clock we reached the reed belt, where our eighteen prisoners were dismissed, and went on their way across the Sebkha towards Wady Moussa by the ravine of the Wady Jeib; while we rode westwards to our old quarters outside the Wady Zuweirah, where we were in perfect safety. Here our guard was reduced to twenty-five men, and the rest were sent home by their chieftain. After dinner the Sheikhs came in, in high good humour; for Hamzi, with his old craft, had bought from the men all the indigo at a nominal rate, allowing them to retain the corn as their share of the booty. We arranged that, to console us for our loss and disappointment eastwards, we should be conducted across the wilderness of Judæa to the south as far as Beersheba, and thence up to Hebron. Having now learnt the whole history of the raid against the Safieh, we felt we had acted prudently in retreating, and only hoped we might never again have to witness so sickening a sight



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as the smouldering village of yesterday. Yet our Arabs laughed at it, and said it was nothing.

Our tents were beautifully planted on a rising ground near where the Zuweirah issues into the plain, with the sea and Jebel Usdum facing us to the east. We looked down on the delta, apparently fertile, but really gravelly and barren, studded with trees, through which half a dozen torrents must sometimes pour down mighty floods, though now quite dry. The scattered trees and bright salsolas, and many Indian plants now in flower, gave to the scrub



OASIS OF ZUWEIRAH.

an air of richness which could not last long. In some places the rose of Jericho (*Anastatica hierochuntina*) was in bloom in great abundance. The patch of comparative verdure, reaching two miles from west to east, became gradually more barren as it receded towards the hills. The camp was a truly picturesque Oriental scene, particularly at night, with all our animals picketed; the horses, mules, and asses apart, on various sides of the central group of four tents under the shadow of the proud red ensign, and six or seven watchfires around, with the swarthy guard

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reclining by them in little knots—wild-looking Ishmaelites, equally ready to guard or to rob, but all implicitly devoted to their aged chieftain. Old Abou Dahûk, though the hero of a hundred Arab fights, has nothing of the savage about him, but has a very mild expression of countenance. Like all his followers, he is very dark—not so black as the commonalty, but of a deep olive brown. This may partly arise from the habits of these people, who never wash. They occasionally take off their clothes, search them, slaughter their thousands, and air themselves, but never apply water to their persons. The consequence is, that when they perform their toilet, although they are camped tentless under a clump of bushes ten yards in the rear of our tent, the odour is unendurable. The old chief is as filthy in his dress as in his person, his "kâfiyeh," or head-dress, having long lost its original red and yellow, and all his outer garments of many colours having, with the exception of his red boots, sombred into a dingy uniform brown. But his white calico shirt is bright and clean, and so are his arms.

He is the most powerful Sheikh between Hebron and Petra, being head of the Jehâlin, who now roam from this corner nearly to Gaza and up to Hebron. To the south he borders upon the scoundrels of Petra, and thus occupies the whole "Negeb," or south country of Judæa, with the country of the Amalekites.* The old man is fond of music of a sort, and every evening a youth of the guard comes under the tree and sits down before him. This youthful David will sometimes play before his royal Saul on a long reed, with three notes in a minor key, for hours together. Many of our customs perplex the old man very much, especially our eating off separate plates, which he considers very unbrotherly; and our using forks, when God has given us so many fingers. My map-making is not

* The Jehâlin have now (1875) lost all their prestige, and nearly al their territory.

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quite such a mystery to him, as he had watched De Saulcy, Van de Velde, and Poole at the same work, and is very fond of telling us long stories about our predecessors and their adventures, scarcely half of which we can comprehend. They have all, however, left a very affectionate remembrance in the memory of their old guide, who expatiates largely on their virtues, and their follies in deter-



SHEIKH HAMZI.

mining to see places where he told them there was nothing to find but old stones. M. de Saulcy evidently has the first niche in his Walhalla of Western travellers, somewhat dearly purchased, I fear, by over-liberal backshish. His adjutant, Hamzi, is an aristocratic-looking old man, rather better dressed than his chief, very fair and light-coloured, with a long pointed grey beard, aquiline nose, eyes set

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close together, and a keen, avaricious expression of countenance, which his dealings with us and his quiet glee at the looting of the burning village fully bear out. He is cringingly and fawningly civil, while the old Sheikh is dignified and even princely in his bearing. For ever he pesters us by coming to our tent, and inquiring in oily tones, "Enta mabsoot? Ana mabsoot;" "Are you content? Then I am content." The five or six men who sit round the same watchfire (for none of them would condescend to a tent in travelling) are of noble families, and are remarkably distinct in feature, style, and even in colour, from the commonalty. They are taller, much sharper in feature—so much so as to suggest a difference of race.

The common herd of footmen are nearly black, with locks of their black, coarse, and almost woolly hair carefully plaited down in tails from their otherwise shaven crowns, and sticking out from under a greasy brown woollen fez. All are breechless and barelegged; some barefooted, others with a piece of hide for sandals, tied by a thong on to the toe; and none of them wear more than a short ragged shirt, and a short mantle over it, with a káfiyeh bound round with a camel's-hair rope. Over the mantle is usually thrown a sheepskin, untanned, the woolly side in; the outside being used every evening as a kneading-trough, when each one takes his handful or two of grain, pounds it between two stones, then mixes a little salt and water, and, having kneaded the knotty flour on the back of his jacket, thrusts it for half an hour into the hot embers. This rough bread seems to be their whole sustenance except a handful or two of parched peas in the morning, and the wild sorrel and seeds they gather on the march during the day. Our own bread is made for each meal in the same fashion, always excepting the leathern kneading-trough, and the grinding, which has been done beforehand; and we find these simple, unleavened barley-cakes very good and wholesome.

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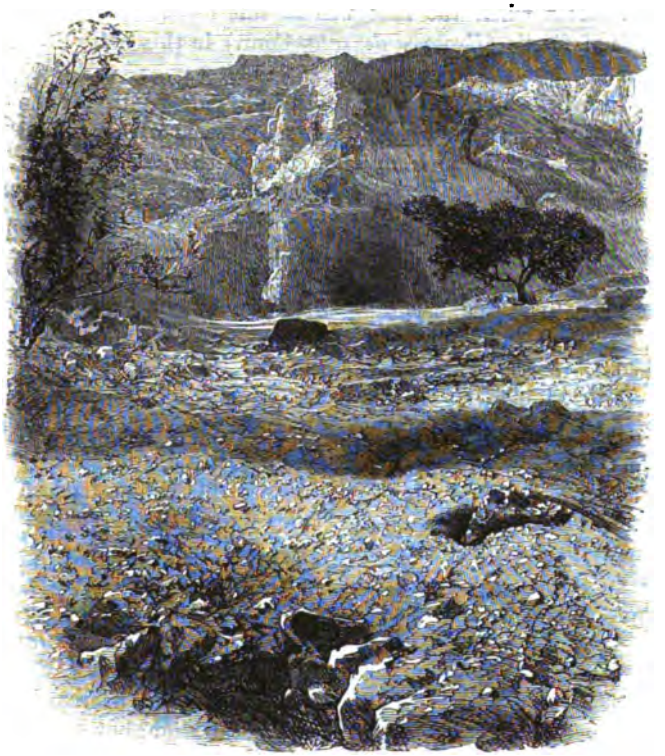
The Sheikhs alone have coffee, which they look to us to supply; and a pipe of tobacco seems to be the only luxury of their followers. These have an abject, vacant look; and we quite agreed with Lynch that the Jehâlin are among the most degraded of the Bedouin. They are far inferior to the Ghawârineh of Jericho, and even backshîsh will scarcely rouse them to exertion. We could not induce them to collect or look about for anything; and when out with us, if we stopped to examine a fossil or a plant, the guards would be down on their hams and asleep in a moment. But they are nocturnal animals, and keep up an uninterrupted chatter all night round the watch-fires. One old man, however, was compelled by his necessities to collect for us. Even among the poverty-stricken he was the poorest; and a piteous tale he related of his wife and three children having only the milk of a couple of goats on which to sustain life; for he was too old to go to war for plunder, and had no friends to help him at home. The reward of a piastre brought him to his knees, with tears in his eyes. Debased as these poor wanderers were, they were all decidedly of the Semitic type, and, excepting the colour and the smell, had nothing of the negro about them. They must, however, be far inferior to the races they have supplanted, and one can scarcely believe them to be of the same Ishmaelite blood as the Sheikhs. The two classes never intermarry, for the high-caste Arabs are the proudest of aristocrats.

We were up before dawn, sensible of the blessing of a quiet resting-place, and thankful to the Providence which had guarded us from all dangers. Even in this strange corner of the world we felt at home, after the uncertainties of yesterday.

U. and I started before sunrise up the Wady Zuweirah. We followed the windings and twistings of the valley, which at times narrowed to a few feet, between enclosing precipices of the hard secondary limestone, the cleft of

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which existed long previous to the diluvial period, as evidenced by a partial lining of the latter which rested against its sides here and there, not quite obliterated by



WADY ZUWEIRAH.

the torrents which had scooped it out a second time. The junction of the two strata was beautifully exhibited in this valley, in a perpendicular section of 200 or 300 feet.

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The diluvial marl here reaches a height of at least 650 feet above the sea. Numerous peaks and rocks of the limestone cut through the diluvium, many of which were never covered by it, but must have existed as islands or peninsulas when the lake was at this level. We found beds of fossils (*Exogyra densata*, Conr.) in this older lime stone.

Just before reaching the pools, in a widened bay of the chasm, was a stack of the diluvium, crowned with a ruined fort, and at the foot an enclosure, with a pointed-arch doorway of fine masonry, the entrance of a dilapidated and now inaccessible pathway to the crow's nest above, some eighty feet high. The archway was exactly like that of Masada. On the south side of the valley, just opposite, was a natural chamber, some fifty feet up, to which a stair of masonry had been built, the fragments of which might be traced, as well as a window cut in the rock. It was evidently, with the citadel itself, a point of defence, and completely commanded the approaches both up and down the valley. But of what epoch? The ruin is scarcely mentioned by Dr. Robinson, who speaks of it as a modern Saracenic fort; while M. de Saulcy fixes on the Zuweirah as having been the site of Zoar. The latter theory has been amply disposed of by Mr. Grove's topographical arguments. The shape of the arch and the masonry bespeak a Crusaders' post, perhaps afterwards repaired by the Saracens. While Kerak was in Christian hands, the Zuweirah must not only have been important as a connecting link to keep open the communication, but as the strongest natural position in the district to check the inroads of marauders from the south-west, who would naturally have passed through this defile, still the high road to Hebron and Gaza. Zuweirah seems to be another of the many instances which show that the grip of the Crusaders upon the Holy Land was much firmer than we are apt to imagine, and that they have left in all parts of

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it the stamp of their architecture and their indefatigable building energy.

Immediately above the ruins are the remains of a noble cistern, which has been formed most naturally out of a



(RUINS) WADY ZUWEIRAH.

great hollow in the watercourse, by building up its sides, and roofing it over with an arch. The roof is destroyed, and the reservoir filled with mud. It must have been thirty feet deep. Did the Bedouin but possess the fore-

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thought to preserve or adopt these ancient appliances, they might have water everywhere round these shores; but, like true savages, with the sight and instinct of the keenest red Indian, they are very babes in prevision or prudence. A little above, as we scaled the polished rocks, we came upon a long chain of pools, most of them dry, but some twenty or thirty still containing a little rain-water, with a thick deposit of mud below. Nature had provided us with beautiful marble baths, and we each selected one. There were many signs near the pool of that exuberant life which the presence of fresh water evokes in the most desolate of deserts—fine acacias growing out of the clefts, many shrubs of a pretty prickly astragalus* in flower, salsolas, retem with its most delicate of blossoms, and a fine tall crimson ranunculus we had not before seen. In some of the pools many small crustaceans of the shape of the common shrimp, and about three quarters of an inch long, were darting about, and were not easily caught. How these little creatures preserve the continuity of their species during the dry half of the year seems a mystery, unless the larvæ or eggs lie dormant at the bottom of the muddy sediment.

Next we examined the Wady Mahawat—a broad, deep, dry ravine, commencing two miles to the south of us, and running up to the westward, being the principal channel of the drainage of the wilderness of Judæa south-east of Beersheba. Though not the deepest, it was the finest gorge we had yet met with, from its width and the bold sweep of many of its turns. It is similar in character to the Wady Zuweirah, the same sharp cutting through the old limestone, the same deposition of the post-tertiary marl, and the same denudation of this latter. But since the marl has been washed out there has been a second filling in of an extraordinay character, which is only now in course of denudation. There are exposed on the sides

* This species has not been identified at Kew.

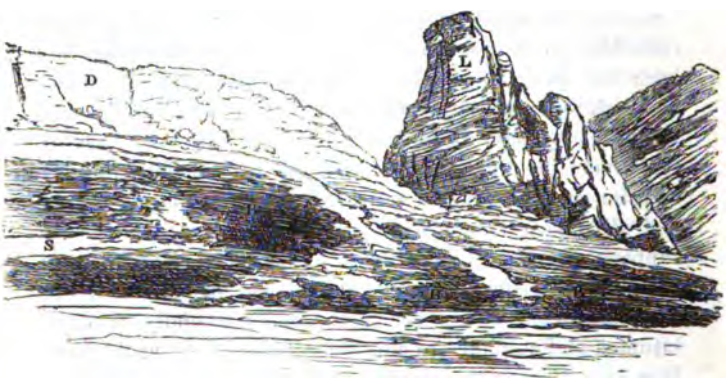
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of the wady, and chiefly on the south, large masses of bitumen mingled with gravel. These overlie a thin stratum of sulphur, which again overlies a thicker stratum of sand, so strongly impregnated with sulphur that it yields powerful fumes on being sprinkled over a hot coal. Many great blocks of the bitumen have been washed down the gorge, and lie scattered over the plain below, along with huge boulders, and other traces of tremendous floods. The phenomenon commences about half a mile from where the wady opens up on the plain, and may be traced at irregular intervals for nearly a mile further up. The bitumen has many small water-worn stones and pebbles embedded in it. We are at once led to inquire what has been the probable origin of this singular deposit. The first solution that suggests itself is that the bitumen and sulphur may have been washed up when the sea was at this level; the next, that it may have been deposited by a spring on the spot. Of the latter we could find no traces, and all appearances are against it. Against the former supposition are the objections—first, that the formation is evidently subsequent to the scooping out of the marl, and therefore to the subsidence of the lake; secondly, that the bitumen and sulphur are not deposited as they would have been by a tide or stream, but at most irregular heights—sometimes detached, sometimes in masses slightly and irregularly connected with the next fragment by a thinner stratum. The layer of sulphurous sand is generally evenly distributed on the old limestone base, the sulphur evenly above it, and the bitumen in variable masses. In every way it differs from the ordinary mode of deposit of these substances as we have seen them elsewhere. Again, the bitumen, unlike that which we pick up on the shore, is strongly impregnated with sulphur, and yields an overpowering sulphurous odour; above all, it is calcined, and bears the marks of having been subjected to extreme heat. In weight and appearance it differs from the bitumen of

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the shore as coke does from ordinary coal. Whether any other chemical action than heat may account for this, I do not say. The pebbles and boulders, which are far more numerous near the top than the bottom of the deposit, have probably been simply dropped on the surface by the stream, which must have flowed over the bed for many ages before denuding it, and have gradually penetrated more or less deeply as they lay there.

Here, so far as I can judge, we have the only trace of anything approaching to volcanic action which we have met




GEOLOGICAL SECTION IN MAHAWAT.

L. Secondary limestone. D. Diluvium, or marly deposit.
S. Sulphurous sand adhering to the side of the Wady.

with in our careful examination of the northern, western, and southern shores. The only other solution of the problem, the existence of a bituminous spring when the supply of water was more abundant, would scarcely account for the regular deposition of the sulphurous sand, and then of the sand with the bitumen superimposed. I have a great dread of seeking forced corroborations of Scriptural statements from questionable physical evidence, for the

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sceptic is apt to imagine that, when he has refuted the wrong argument adduced in support of a Scriptural statement, he has refuted the Scriptural statement itself; but, so far as I can understand this deposit, if there be any physical evidence left of the catastrophe which destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, or of similar occurrences, we have it here. The whole appearance points to a shower of hot sulphur and an irruption of bitumen upon it, which would naturally be calcined and impregnated by its fumes; and this at a geological period quite subsequent to all the diluvial and alluvial action of which we have such abundant evidence. The vestiges remain exactly as the last relics of a snow-drift remain in spring—an atmospheric deposit. The catastrophe must have been since the formation of the wady, since the deposition of the marl, and while the water was at its present level; therefore, probably, during the historic period. The traces are extremely local, not extending to the neighbouring wadys, nor very far up this one. Unfortunately, no previous traveller has searched the wady, and we have no opinions of competent observers to guide us. Robinson and Van de Velde passed to the south of it; De Saulcy, Wolcott, and Poole, all went to the north of it.

Two questions here naturally occur to us, viz., the site of the Cities of the Plain, and the means used to accomplish their destruction. With regard to the latter, the inspired writer simply says, "The Lord rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven" (Gen. xix. 24); and, though this passage has generally been read as signifying destruction from the eruption of a volcano, this is by no means necessarily implied. Nor can it be admitted to be simply a question (depending on the date of the basin of the Dead Sea, and on the existence of traces of volcanic action in the neighbourhood of the lake within the historic period), whether the ordinary interpretation of Gen. xix. is to be

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accepted, or whether one is to be sought "more consonant with the conclusions of modern scientific knowledge." We shall find ourselves adrift in a sea of endless perplexities if we endeavour to ascribe every instance in which the Bible speaks of the interposition of Providence, to the operation of natural causes; and we might as well expect modern scientific knowledge to reveal to us the cause of the miraculous supply of water in the wilderness, the provision of the manna, the passage of the Red Sea, and the crossing of the Jordan, or the overthrow of the walls of Jericho, as the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. If every occurrence in Sacred History is to be thus tested and accounted for, the whole question of miraculous intervention has been surrendered to the enemy, and modern scientific knowledge, not legitimate criticism, is made the test of Scriptural authenticity. If we are told in the Bible that any special event was brought about by the ordinary agencies of nature, like the thunder-storm in wheat harvest (1 Sam. xii. 16—18), the extraordinary droughts, or the rain in answer to Elijah's prayer on Carmel, let us by all means accept the explanation; but when it is declared to us that any visitation like those alluded to above, like that under consideration, or like the fire from heaven which consumed Elijah's sacrifice, was sent direct from God; and we are not told of any ordinary or so-called *natural* agency being employed; if, in such cases, we are to suspend our belief in the occurrences until we have dug in the earth to find the records of natural causes, we may as well at once refuse all credence to the miraculous as beyond our own experience, and reduce the Word of God to the level of the tales of Egyptian priests, or the traditions of Livy.

I think there can be no question but that the old notions of volcanic agencies about the Dead Sea were erroneous, and that many writers, like De Saulcy, have been misled by endeavouring to square their preconceived interpreta-

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tion of Scripture with the facts they saw around them. The preceding pages have shown, with perhaps a wearisome prolixity, that such traces are not to be found; that the whole region has been slowly and gradually formed through a succession of ages: and that its peculiar phenomena are similar to those of other salt lakes in Africa, or referable to its unique and depressed position. But setting aside all preconceived notions, and taking the simple record of Gen. xix. as we find it, let us see whether the existing condition of the country throws any light upon the Biblical narrative. Certainly we do observe by the lake sulphur and bitumen in abundance. Sulphur springs stud the shores, sulphur is strewn, whether in layers or in fragments, over the desolate plains; and bitumen is ejected in great floating masses from the bottom of the sea, oozes through the fissures of the rocks, is deposited with gravel on the beach, or, as in the Wady Mahawat, appears with sulphur to have been precipitated during some convulsion. We know that, at the time of earthquakes in the north, the bitumen seems even in our own day to be detached from the bottom of the lake, and that floating islets of that substance have been evolved (see Robinson, Res. i. 518), coincident with the convulsions so frequent in north-eastern Palestine. Everything leads to the conclusion that the agency of fire was at work, though not the overflowing of an ordinary volcano. The materials were at hand, at whichever end of the lake we place the doomed cities, and may probably have been accumulated then to a much greater extent than at present. The kindling of such a mass of combustible material, either by lightning from heaven, or by other electrical agency, combined with an earthquake ejecting the bitumen or sulphur from the lake, would soon spread devastation over the plain, so that the smoke of the country would go up as the smoke of a furnace. There is no authority whatever in the Biblical record for the popular notion that the



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site of the cities has been submerged; and Mr. Grove (in his able and exhaustive article in the Bib. Dict., "Sodom") has justly stated that "there is no warrant for imagining that the catastrophe was a geological one, and in any other case all traces of action must at this distance of time have vanished." The simple and natural explanation seems—when stripped of all the wild tradition and strange horrors with which the mysterious sea has been invested —to be this: that during some earthquake, or without its direct agency, showers of sulphur, and probably bitumen, ejected from the lake, or thrown up from its shores, and ignited perhaps by the lightning which would accompany such phenomena, fell upon the cities and destroyed them. The history of the catastrophe has not only remained in the inspired record, but is inscribed in the memory of the surrounding tribes by many a local tradition and significant name.

The question of the site of the Cities of the Plain has been involved in much obscurity. It is, however, limited, since they were not submerged, to two only possible localities, the lower end of the lake and the upper. In favour of the former position, generally adopted by recent writers, there are various considerations; and Dr. Robinson has assumed this view as a matter beyond question. First, there is the general traditionary evidence from the time of Josephus and Jerome, who identify a Zoar at the south-east of the Dead Sea with the Zoar of the Pentapolis. Secondly, there is the strong argument from the existence of the names which are applied to localities at the southern extremity, as Usdum, Zoghal, and, though at a considerable distance back from the lake, Wady 'Amrah. Thirdly, there is the existence of the Mountain of Salt at that end, illustrative of the fate of Lot's wife: to which may be added the presence there of the vast even plain of the Sebkha, and the shallow sea which forms its continuation.

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But, examined in detail, these arguments are far from conclusive. The tradition of Josephus and Jerome seems contradicted by the plain description of the localities in the earlier record of Scripture. The argument from the names of the places is not irresistible, for none of them are convertible *literatim* with the Hebrew, and Dra'a, ذرعة, the modern Zoar, is further from the Hebrew צֹעַר than Zoghal (زرغل), which cannot possibly be the Zoar of the Pentateuch. There is no difficulty in supposing either that there were two Zoars at the same time, or that a new town sprang up in a different locality, and assumed the name of the elder. How many Kadeshes, Gilgals, or Shalems may we not find through the country, like the Newtons or Suttons of England? The existence of the Salt Mountain of Usdum, of the plain of the Sebkha, with its bitumen (slime-pits), and the deposition of the sulphur and bitumen discovered by us in the Wady Mahawat, do not invalidate the existence of similar phenomena on other parts of the lake.

But when we turn to the arguments for the position of the cities at the north end, in the plain of Jordan, between Jericho and the seas, though less popular, they carry with them to the writer's mind a preponderating weight of evidence. First, there is the uniform expression, "the Cities of the *Plain*," or *plain of Jordan*, "ciccar" (כִּכַּר), *i.e.*, the circle of Jordan, an epithet most appropriate, as all those will know who have gazed on that circle from the surrounding mountain-tops, but wholly inapplicable, and one which never was or could be, by any stretch of language, applied to the south end of the sea, where the Jordan never flowed, or, if it ever did, it must have been in a geologic epoch far remote from the appearance of man on the earth. Abraham and Lot stood together between Bethel and Hai, when "Lot lifted up his eyes and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that



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it was well watered everywhere, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar. Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east" (Gen. xiii. 10, 11). Now from these hills it is impossible to gain a glimpse of the south end of the Dead Sea, shut off by distance and by lofty intervening mountains, while the plain of Jericho is spread almost at the beholder's feet, and the bright green oasis of Ain Sultân shines like an emerald in the dreary waste. If the two fountains of Sultân and Dûk can produce such amazing verdure by their waters, in their present neglected exuberance, what must not the whole plain have been when it was well watered everywhere, "even as the garden of the Lord," seeing that its whole subsoil, to the very edge of the sea, is, as has been before mentioned, a rich alluvial loam?

Again, after the destruction of the cities, we are told that Abraham, then encamped at Mamre, "looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain, and beheld, and, lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace" (Gen. xix. 28). It is not here stated—and we mark the verbal accuracy of the Scripture text, that Abraham *saw*, but that he *looked toward*, the Cities of the Plain. From personal observation, we may add that, while from the hill above Mamre the plain itself is invisible, yet the depression between the nearer hills and the distant tops of the Ajlun is plainly to be perceived, which is not the case with the depression of the southern Ghor, and that therefore Abraham could have at once identified the locality whence the smoke arose.

Again, in the account of the inroad of Chedorlaomer, we are told that the Assyrians smote the Horites in Mount Seir unto El Paran, and returned and smote the country of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites that dwelt in Hazezon Tamar (Gen. xiv. 7). Hazezon Tamar, we know,

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is Engedi. It was after this that the king of Sodom and his confederates met the invaders in the vale of Siddim, and on their defeat Abraham pursued the victors on their march home by Damascus, and overtook them in Dan. Had Sodom and the other cities been situated at the south end of the sea, it was certainly not after smiting the Amalekites and the Amorites at Engedi that they would have met the invader, but long before he reached Hazezon Tamar. But, when we place these cities in the plain of the Jordan, there is a topographical sequence in the whole story, while Abraham and his allies hurriedly pursue the plunderers up the Ghor without delay or impediment till they overtake them at the sources of the Jordan.

Once more, in the view which was granted to Moses from the top of Pisgah, he beheld "the south, and the plain of the valley of Jericho, the City of Palm-trees, unto Zoar." Now, from the summit of Nebo, it is utterly impossible to behold the south-east of the Dead Sea, or the situation of the modern Dra'a; but if we place Zoar, as it naturally would be placed, according to the narrative of Lot's escape, directly in front of the spectator, we see that here was just the limit of Moses's view in accordance with the record. As we gazed from the top of Nebo, the plain of Jordan seemed to run on uninterruptedly till it was cut off by the Headland of Feshkhah, and the force and literalness of the Scriptural description of the panorama came vividly home to our minds.

Mr. Grove has remarked (Bibl. Dict. iii. 1857) that the Jerusalem Targum identifies Zoar with Jericho, "the plain of the valley of Jericho, the city which produces the palm, that is Zeêr." It is very possible that some of the cities of Pentapolis may have been on the east side of the river, in the plain of Shittim, which is quite as luxuriant and as abundantly watered as the western plain of Jericho. On that side, likewise, there is the broad belt of desolation, like the sulphur-sprinkled expanse between Er Riha and

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the sea, covered with layers of salt and gypsum, which overlie the loamy subsoil, literally fulfilling the descriptions of Holy Writ,—"Brimstone, and salt, and burning, . . . not sown, nor beareth, nor any grass groweth therein" (Deut. xxix. 23). "A fruitful land turned into *saltness*" (Ps. cvii. 34). "No man shall abide there, neither shall a son of man dwell in it" (Jer. xlix. 18).

## NOTE.

On the question of the position of the Cities of the Plain, I must refer my readers to Mr. Grove's articles on Sodom and on the Salt Sea, in Smith's "Dictionary of the Bible;" and am glad to acknowledge here how much I am indebted to him on this subject.

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## CHAPTER XVI.

*Departure from the Dead Sea — Description of the Lisan — The Negeb, or South Country — Haddâdah — Zuweirah el Fôka — Sudeid — Birds — Dotterel — Rujum Selamel (Shema) — Wilderness of Judah — Abou Dahûk's tempting Proposal — Offer of a Bedouin Wife — El Mihlha Moladah) — Wells — Ruins — Cranes — Sand Grouse — Beersheba — Horned Cattle — Cultivation — The Wells — Insurgents — Their Chief, Mohammed Isa — Ruins — Turkish Foray — Flight into the Wilderness — Arab Warfare — Proposals for the Pasha — Sudden Collection of Warriors — Precipitate Retreat from Beersheba — Tell Hhora — Its Well — Ruins — The Hill Country of Judah — Attir (Jattir) — Rafat — Semûa Eshtema) Turkish Officer — Susieh — Yuttah (Juttah) — Maon — Kurmul Carmel) — The Convoy lost — Ride in the Darkness — Perils of the Way — Hebron at Night — Sheikh Hamzi's House — Nocturnal Invasion — Hospitable Reception — Changes of Raiment.*

FEBRUARY 1st. Farewell for the present to the Dead Sea, and the balmy climate of its shores! A winter sanatorium at Engedi would surpass all that the Nile, Madeira, or Algiers can promise. It has been a month of intense interest; and we cannot expect elsewhere the vivid enjoyments of this lonely but not desolate shore. We ascended the Wady Zuweirah, and had a complete panorama of the Lisan, the mysterious peninsula. It is altogether composed of the same chalky marl, salt and barren. Its greatest height is from 250 to 300 feet, and the highest point is a central ridge from north to south. Its sides are steepest on the north face, but there is no regular angle of inclination, as the edge is furrowed by countless little nullahs a few feet apart, and the sides stand at such an angle as tolerably hard mud will do when washed by water. On the west face it slopes much to the shore, and is fringed

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by a low strip of sand running out into a spit at the south-west angle. The south face is not so high as the north, but higher than the west, say 200 feet, and, where it joins the mainland on the east, the furrowed marl leans against the spur of the mountains till it reaches an elevation of 500 or 600 feet. The barrenness of the whole peninsula is self-evident.

For two hours the ascent was rocky and slippery, and generally we had to lead our horses till we entered upon the south wilderness of Judæa. Our course lay north-west, and for another hour nothing could surpass the mountain range in repulsive desolation. Rocks there were, great and small, stones, loose and sharp, but no other existing thing. Occasionally, in the depression of a small ravine, a few plants of salsola or retem struggled up, but this was all; and we only saw one rock-chat and two desert larks. Almost sudden was the transition to the upland wilderness, the "Negeb," or south country—a series of rolling hills, clad with scanty herbage here and there, especially on their northern faces; and steadily rising till the barometer, falling three inches and a half, told us that we had mounted 2,300 feet above our camp of the morning. Near the highest part of the pass of the Zuweirah, on a brow to the south-east of the wady, we turned aside to examine the ruins of what must once have been a strong watch-tower, on the edge of a bluff—a square keep, called by our Arabs Hadâdah, and very possibly the Hazor Hadattah of Joshua (xv. 25), one of the cities of Judah. The ruins were like those at Wady Um Bagkhek, but much more dilapidated, and we could not trace any remains of more extensive buildings. We soon afterwards passed the vestiges of Zuweirah-el-Fôka, very insignificant, and consisting only of indistinct foundations spread over an area of some extent. From the crest of the hills near this we had our last, and almost our finest, view, though a distant one, of the southern portion of the Dead Sea.

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From this point we turned northwards, and crossed a low rolling ridge, until, by a gentle slope, we descended into the wide valley of Wady es R'mail, up the course of which we followed till we reached the spot where we were to have camped; but the wells were dry, and, after halting for luncheon, we had to proceed. As we had filled our water-skins, and our animals had all drunk at the rain-pools of Zuweirah, we were not inconvenienced. At three o'clock water was found in a pool near some caves and shapeless ruins, called Sudeid, to which we had turned a little to the south-east of the Wady R'mail. The spot is unidentified with any ancient site, but is a favourite camping-ground of the Jehâlin, and very attractive it is—a long shallow basin of tender and fresh verdure, in cheering contrast with the scant vegetation of the highlands of our morning's ride. The whole district is a fine upland pasture, and had been improving from the time we left Zuweirah-el-Fôka. A Scottish moor is not better stocked with game. Plover and sand-grouse abounded, and we obtained thirteen brace of fat dotterel (*Charadrius morinellus*), the rare sand-grouse (*Pterocles guttatus*), besides many little larks of species belonging to the Saharan group; so that we fared sumptuously off dotterel boiled and grilled.

As soon as the tents were pitched, I started for the ruins of Rujum Selâmeh, nearly three miles distant, a little knoll, with a green basin of pasture, like that of Sudeid, within smooth encircling hills; but the ruins were mere foundations, scattered irregularly over a considerable area, and affording no clue to their architecture or their period. The mention of Shema just before Moladah in Josh. xv. 26, would lead us to conjecture its identity with the somewhat similar name of Selâmeh, especially as the LXX. render it Σαλμάα.

Nothing can be barer than the south country of Judah. It is neither grand, desolate, nor wild, but utter barrenness

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—not a tree nor a shrub, but scant, stunted herbage, covered with myriads of white snails, of five or six species, which afford abundant sustenance to the thousands of birds which inhabit it. It is the very country for camel-browsing, quite unlike any we had hitherto traversed, but sometimes reminding one of the best parts of the Sahara. We were perplexed at first to account for the sudden transition from the sharp rocky peaks, without a blade of green, to the verdure of the smooth rounded hills, till we noticed that we had come upon the soft limestone, which here covers the hard crystalline, as it does near Sidon.

Old Abou Dahûk, who at ninety sits his horse with the ease of a man of fifty, rode by my side for a great part of the day. We had become great friends, and he pressed upon me the tempting offer, that if I would only come and stay with the Jehâlin for as long as I liked, he would make me a sheikh; and that I should have a black tent of my own, if I would live like them. Moreover, he would give me one of his grand-daughters, a very pretty girl of only fifteen, for my wife. I told him I had a wife and seven children in England; to which he replied that I need stay but three months with him, to see how free was a Bedouin's life, and could divorce the new wife when I wished to go home to the old one. I told him this was not according to English custom, nor Christian laws, and tried to explain to him the nobler principles of Christianity on the position of woman; but the old gentleman observed that our customs were very strange, and that, if I would only make trial of Bedouin ways, I should soon prefer them!

We had next day but a short day's journey (twelve miles), across a gently-undulating down, to El-Mihlha, and, in search of birds and shells, we walked behind the caravan for this easy stage. The downs were peopled by myriads of larks, of which we obtained seven species, besides twenty brace of dotterel. We saw, also, many

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cranes and sand-grouse, and I shot some specimens of the bush chat (*Saxicola philothamma*), discovered by me in the Sahara, and never found by us elsewhere in Palestine.

After walking for three hours, we detected a bright-green spot in the far distance on the vast plain, strongly contrasted with the dingy brown of the surrounding landscape. This was El-Mihlha (anciently Moladah, the town of Simeon, Josh. xix. 2), marked only by some shapeless rows of stones and foundations, and two ancient wells—perhaps, according to the local tradition, as old as the



WELLS OF MOLADAH.

time of Abraham. We were now on the Mediterranean side of the watershed, in a depression which runs into the Wady Khulil, and passes Beersheba. Before we reached our quarters, the tents were up, the ensign flying, and our animals were luxuriating in the juicy, fresh pasturage. Not a human being could be seen within miles of our camp. How vividly such a spot illustrates the priceless value of wells in the desert! These were seventy feet deep, and their sides of hard marble, polished and deeply fluted all round by the ropes of the water-drawers, perhaps

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for four thousand years. The only other wells near them are those of 'Ararah, eight miles south, and Beersheba, a day's journey west; and thus these supply the wants of an area of some twenty miles square. Eight ancient water-troughs stand irregularly round, some oblong, many cup-shaped, and others apparently the scooped pedestals of ancient columns, which have once supported a portico over the well. Into these our muleteers and guards were busily pouring water for the various cattle. The whole scene was a vivid illustration of patriarchal life. Flocks of birds hovered around, attracted by the moisture; a fox slunk away as we came up; and we disturbed a wild-boar, drawn many miles from his ordinary cover. Just to the south of the two wells rises a small isolated "tell," or hill covered with ruins, and now used as a burying-ground, heaped with the graves of the 'Dullam tribe. The hill seems to have been the fortress of the city below, and we could clearly trace the circuit of the wall which once surrounded it, nearly square in shape, and still, in places, three or four feet in height. The traces of buildings and fragments of walls remain over an extensive area, to the south as well as to the north of the citadel; and near its foot, on the south-east, are the outlines of a building, which was probably a Byzantine church. The other ruins seem to belong to an earlier and ruder period, and are probably the remains of the old town of Simeon. All round the troughs of the well are traces of an old rough pavement, like that of a stable-yard.

Our tents were pitched on a green patch of *Malva mareotica* (?), and a pretty *parterre* from Nature's hand surrounded us—asphodels (*A. ramosus*), the small "Star of Bethlehem" (*Ornithogalum arabicum*), a small hyacinth *Muscari racemosum*), a small bright calendula, several cruciform flowers, and especially a sweet-scented stock. The small white snail *Helix seetzeni*, and *H. vestalis*) clothed the asphodels and salsola bushes in such multi-

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tudes, that, clustering on the twigs and branches, they looked at a distance like a profusion of snow-white bloom. The wild-boars had been rooting around us, and searching for a pretty white crocus and an iris, the bulbs of which seemed to form a special dainty with them. We found a regular roosting-place of the common crane—marked like some resort of sea-fowl, a gently-sloping, isolated knoll, where no ambush was possible, and where a good look-out could be kept on all sides. Their whooping and trumpeting enlivened the watches of the night, and all night long we could hear flocks passing overhead, on their way to their quarters close by. Cold as the temperature was, it was still and calm, and every sound floated lightly through the air.

The night was bitterly cold, the minimum thermometer having registered 25° Fahr.; but, warm and comfortable in our woolly beds, we felt only the more fresh and vigorous for work, as we started for our walk to Beersheba over these downs, having sent on our horses.

U. distinguished himself by bringing down several spotted sand-grouse, and the Asiatic plover (*Ch. asiaticus*), which from this time continued to occur in plenty. Flocks of the great crane (*Grus cinerea*) continued to pass overhead, and a few ruffed bustards (*Otis houbara*) were seen. Herds of gazelle were frequently dashing across the plain, but at very safe distance, one herd of eleven being the only one within reach of the wildest shot. As we neared the Wady es Seba, large flocks of sheep and goats were being pastured. Herds of camels and of horned cattle were grazing all around, the first time for many a day that the spectacle of neat cattle had greeted our eyes. Molehills covered the ground in all directions; and lizards darted in and out of their burrows at the root of every tuft.

About two o'clock we reached Beersheba, where the tents were already pitched round one of Abraham's wells. Long lines of foundations mark the ancient city, about half a mile in extent, very much scattered, but not a

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fragment of wall remains above the surface. Just in front is the wide gravel bed of the Wady es Seba, checked from encroaching on the north side by an ancient wall of strong masonry; and in front and behind is a vast uneven plateau, almost green, pastured over by thousands of goats, horned cattle, and camels, while several Arab encampments were in sight, drawn to this favoured spot by the grateful wells and the comparatively abundant herbage.

One feature in particular marks Beersheba as still the boundary between the desert and the uplands, though all else has perished. This is the cultivation of large portions of unfenced land for corn by the Arabs. Here, for the first time since leaving Jericho, we came upon arable land. The rich low-lying flats by the Wady Seba are ploughed, or rather scratched, for wheat and barley, each piece lying two years fallow, and sown the third year. In riding across the wide expanse, these occasional patches, the only evidence of man's presence, arrest attention at once, strangely incongruous with all else around. They are the lingering evidence of what the land once was, and may yet again become.

The wells vary from five to thirteen feet in diameter. The one at which we were camped was twelve feet and a half in diameter, thirty-four feet till we reached the living ock; and, as we were told by the Arabs, twice that depth. At present the water stood at thirty-eight feet from the surface; but, when Robinson visited it, it was much lower, and doubtless varies according to the season. The native visitors to our camp pointed out, with all the pride of race, that the wells were the work of Ibrahim-el-Khulil, "Abraham the friend." The well above the rock was built with finely-squared large stones, hard as marble; and the ropes of water-drawers for 4,000 years have worn the edges of the hard limestone with no less than 143 flutings, the shallowest of them four inches deep. The ancient marble troughs were arranged at convenient distances

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round the mouth in an irregular circle some oblong, most of them round, for the convenience of the cattle. From their style and material, they are probably co-eval with the original well. All day long, our men, or the Bedouin herdsmen and their wives, were drawing water in skins, and filling these troughs for the horses, camels, cattle and sheep, recalling many a scene in the lives of the patriarchs, of Rebecca, and of Zipporah. There are traces of the pillars of an ancient open roof over the well. How delicious must have been its shade in this treeless prairie!

Shortly after our arrival we saw, on the long rolling plain to the south, one little figure after another emerging, which, as they approached, we could make out to be footmen, with here and there a horseman. The wide gravel bed of the Wady es Seba separated us from this plain, and on the opposite bank the scouts gradually converged. After a consultation, two of the boldest, with their guns unslung, ventured across to demand, "Is it peace?" Our Arabs, all exhibiting the most formidable arsenal of small arms that could be mustered, replied that we were friends, Inglez, brothers of the Sultan, who had much powder and lead, but little silver. No sooner had they reached the opposite bank and repeated their news, than the groups quietly dispersed, and, in a few minutes more, the eye wandered in vain over the plain for any trace of human inhabitants. These people are a collection from various tribes, chiefly fellâhin, or cultivators, who have revolted against the conscription, and have retired with their flocks and herds into the wilderness to elude the troops. It is against these very men that Abou Dahûk is ordered to lead the Jehâlin so soon as his trip with us is at an end; and at the same time he is receiving a handsome backshîsh from them for their pasturing on a part of his territory. In the evening, many fellâhin dropped in by our camp, and sitting motionless in a circle round the

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well, watched the howadjis, and held conversation with our muleteers. Our whole guard left us for the night, and retired for dinner and shelter to the rebel camp—about an hour further south; as we could get no fuel, though the



VIEW OF BEERSHEBA.

night was bitterly cold, and the thermometer fell to 24°. Yet there was an elasticity in the still dry air which invigorated us, and made us almost indifferent to the temperature.

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Next morning we rose at six, and set out to examine the other wells and the ruins. Probably Beersheba was always open and unfortified—a village, as it is called by Eusebius "κώμη μεγίστη." For two or three miles on the north bank are occasional vestiges of buildings, merely levelled foundations. The Arabs say there are seven wells, whence their name, Bir-es-Seba; but I was only able to visit five, two only of which contained water. Close to the easternmost is an interesting ruin, the perfect foundation of a Greek church, with apse, sacristy, and aisles. Only a fragment of the apse remains above the pavement. It was once the seat of a Greek bishopric. In several of the ruins are traces of what may prove a hitherto unnoticed peculiarity of the Jewish fortress—a *circular* tower or keep of double walls, each four feet thick, and with a like space between them. There are several such on the banks of the Seba, but the most perfect specimen we have seen is in the north tower of the fortress of Masada. We have also met with the same style in several of the desert cities. There are no traces of trees anywhere, and all that ever existed must long since have been extirpated for fuel, here as precious as water. Abraham planted a grove at Beersheba, and the shade of a clump of terebinth must indeed have been a boon to every desert-wanderer; nor can there be any doubt that, if permitted to grow, the terebinth would still flourish in the fine sandy soil. The pale green mantle of the southern plateau was beautifully spangled with many a bulbous flower—crocus, white and blue iris, and crimson ranunculus abounded everywhere.

We had just sat down to our eggs, barley-cake, and grilled plover, outside our tents, for the days were as hot as the nights were cold, when we observed brown figures emerging from the downs in all directions. We ran up to a mound behind, and lo, from the north, flocks and herds, camels and cattle were hurrying towards us, urged on by



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boys and women with frantic eagerness. Meanwhile, men were gathering in from south, west, and east, and coming in the opposite direction. 'Twas like Roderick Dhu's men starting from the heather, and from behind each stone. By twos and threes singly, or in parties of a dozen or more, they seemed to spring from the ground.

Yet more magical was the gathering of cattle of every kind, all hurrying towards the thirsty wilderness. Soon a small party of horsemen, armed with lances, scimitars, and pistols, galloped up to our tents, and all was explained. The Government had sent out troops against the rebels, and a brigade of 800 men, camped four hours to the north of us, had that morning made a sudden raid, and pounced upon a quantity of camels and cattle, after a short skirmish with their guards, who had been speedily overpowered. The poor rebels were hastily driving everything to the south, preferring that their animals should perish with drought rather than fall into the hands of the Turks.

The alarm had been signalled far and wide, and all were hurrying to the rescue, having made Bir-es-Seba their rendezvous. At the head of the group of horsemen was Mohammed Isa, the leader of the band, who, seeing the English flag, came to beg our good offices, through the English consul, with the Pasha. His story was soon told. His elder brother, Jellah, Sheikh of Beit Jibrin, had been seized by the Pasha, as Mohammed said, to extort money on a false accusation of treason, and under promise of safe conduct had been banished to Cyprus; where he had been at once beheaded and all his property confiscated. Mohammed, on hearing the news, had retired into the wilderness; and the authorities had thereupon seized his family and all his possessions. Once here, he had naturally become what David in the very same region was after his breach with Saul, the nucleus for all the disaffected, till the band he could muster now reached to 4,000 men. There had been no open or declared war, and

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the raid of this morning was a sudden surprise by the Turks. The soldiers had fallen back with their booty, and Mohammed was mustering his irregulars for a pursuit. But he assured us of his earnest desire for peace, and gave us a letter under his seal, undertaking, if the Government would permit him to return to his home, and would restore his family, giving him a promise, *guaranteed by the Consul either of England or France*, that his life should be safe, that his followers would at once disband, and submit to the Pasha of Jerusalem. As it was, the battle of the morning had not been very bloody, only two of his men having fallen. But before night 2,000 armed desperadoes would be on foot. We did not know at the time the whole character of Mohammed Isa, nor how many red-handed murders lay at his door; but our sympathies, as well as those of our men, were certainly with these insurgents, for of all the robbers of this down-trodden land, the Pashas are the worst. We promised to execute Mohammed's behests, and after another cup of coffee he galloped off.

And now one group after another came hurrying by, chiefly footmen, each armed with his long firelock. Fine stalwart fellows they looked. It was the first time we had seen Arabs ready for the battle. They were all stripped to the hips, that if they fell the enemy should get as little as possible, and wore only sandals and a ragged kilt or pair of bags, with powder-horn, and a little water-skin strapped round their naked waist. Instead of the kafiyeh, a ragged cloth formed the turban round the fez-cap. They took but little notice of us as they hurried up to the well, took a draught of water, and received instructions from a group of immobile ancients squatted round it; but, looking up at our flag, would exclaim, "Ta'yib, tayib,"—(good, good); and press onwards with elastic step, eager and snorting for the fray; ready, like every Arab, for battle at a moment's notice, but quite understanding the rights of neutrals.



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Still, our great wonder was whence they all came. Men in this country are as hard to find as jackals, and conceal themselves much in the same fashion.

Meanwhile, from every point of the northern horizon, eastwards and westwards, herds and flocks came pouring past us, large or small, according to the wealth of their possessors. Occasionally a man perched on the hump of a camel accompanied them, but generally only the women and boys on foot. Their tents and other goods they had left or secreted in some of the caves with which the district abounds. One poor little lad, of about ten years old, we met limping along with bleeding feet, carrying a little kid too young to be driven, and its dam by its side. He was crying bitterly. His father had gone to the war, and his mother and brothers had gone on ahead with the rest of the goats. The black cattle had now mostly passed, but the sheep and goats could not be overdriven, and even up to one o'clock many flocks were passing, while now long ungainly lines of camels brought up the rear, trotting clumsily along with a few women and armed men on their backs, evidently the rearward of the flight. The scene reminded us of Jacob's arrangement of his caravan, when about to meet his brother Esau. We wished those who cannot comprehend how the Israelites had such vast flocks and herds in the wilderness could have witnessed the gathering of to-day, and how in a few hours thousands upon thousands of cattle could be collected on a given track. Another hour, and still black masses of goats and strings of camels kept passing in one direction, and armed men in the other. We seemed destined to be in the midst of Arab frays.

Here was an end to all our hopes of visiting Kadesh-Barnea, or penetrating to the coast by Gerar and Gaza, for Abou Dahûk was determined not to compromise himself by association with the rebels. Tents were struck, and in half an hour we were off in a N.E. direction. The

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mules were urged to their utmost speed, and we hurried on till about sunset we reached Tell Hhora—not the place of that name marked in the maps of Van de Velde, but another noticed only by Zimmerman—a ruined city of heaps, but with many walls standing, and a natural cave full of sweet water, a little south of Es Semua (Eshtemoa). We followed the banks of the Wady El Khulil the greater part of the way. The whole journey was across low hills and rolling green plains, or downs, till we reached the spur of the low ridge on which the ancient city stood, and had left the Negeb, or "south country," and entered upon the "hill country" of Judah, where we pitched tents.

Again the thermometer touched the freezing point in the night, but the hill country is not so cold as the southern plateau. We were camped under a little knoll, tolerably sheltered, and close to a cistern of abundant water. There were several Arab camps near, whose inhabitants would come and sit silently for hours in front of our tents, scrutinising our proceedings. In the forenoon a party of five most ill-looking scoundrels came for water to the cistern, and on questioning them we found they were Ka'abineh, who had been among the plunderers of the Safieh, and who, we had the satisfaction of hearing from themselves, had been repulsed three days afterwards by the returned villagers. A solitary horseman presently halted for a drink, and reported another skirmish with the Turkish troops above Beersheba yesterday afternoon, and that ten of Mohammed Isa's men were missing.

The ruins were situated on a hill just above us, and though not yet identified with any of the many towns of Judah recounted in Joshua xv., are, doubtless, the remains of an Israelitish city of the earlier period. They occupy in a line the crest of three low hills overlooking the southern plain, and the buildings have been extensive. Some of the walls remain to the height of several feet, built of a flinty conglomerate, which has almost the

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appearance of marble; and there are many wells, now dry, besides several well-plastered subterranean granaries, the home of owls and hundreds of rock-doves. The site is a very commanding one. One cistern below was partially hewn, an enlargement of a natural cave, to the mouth of which we descended by broken steps, and on looking in we could see a double-*arched* tunnel, hewn in the rock, but how far these parallel tunnels extended we could not see. They are supplied merely by surface drainage, but are so capacious that the supply very rarely fails in the driest season. So secluded is the well, that it would be impossible for a stranger to discover it, and the circular mouth is half-concealed by dwarf bushy fig-trees, which grow out of the fissures, and must in summer protect the water from evaporation.

After camping here a night, we arranged to make a considerable circuit on our way to Kurmul (Nabal's Carmel), where we were next to halt, in order to examine the ancient cities of the hill-country, Jattir, Eshtemoa, Sûsieh, and Maon.

We soon began to pass from the "south country" of Judah to the "hill country," and marked indeed was the change, from easy smooth tracks over gently rolling downs to rocky slippery paths, up and down narrow valleys, between naked rugged hills full of caves, dreary and now (in winter) barren, save where a few patches of corn had been here and there sown in the hollows. Full of meaning came home the question of Amos, himself an inhabitant of the south country, "Shall horses run upon the rock? will one plough there with oxen?" (Chapter vi. 12.) There is a wonderful reality in many of these apparently trifling expressions of Holy Scripture, which day by day our journey brings home to the mind—"the wilderness," "the south country," "the hill country," all in Judah, yet each so distinct, so characteristic in every feature.

All now was changed—the plants were different, the

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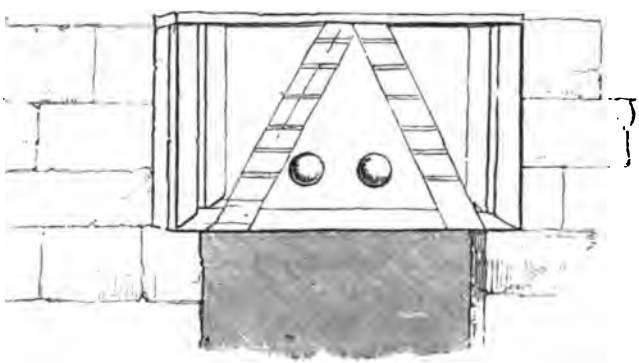
desert bulbs and alliums had given way to species like those of Southern Europe. The birds were changed; no more desert-larks, but the crested lark (*Galerida cristata*) and the skylark of England. The sand-grouse had given place to the Greek partridge, the dotterel and Asiatic plover to the lapwing of our own country, and the crane no longer trumpeted overhead. I had remained behind with S. and L. to dig some bulbs of an iris new to us, and B—t had just shot our first red-tailed buzzard (*B. ferox*), a rare and magnificent Eastern species, and U. a red kite, when we quite lost the convoy, which was to halt at Kurmul but to which place Giacomo, who was with us, knew the route.

And now the ruins of the ancient cities of Judah followed fast and thick one after another, yet desolate without inhabitant. They are very different from the levelled vestiges of the southern cities; a large portion of the houses remaining intact, true troglodyte dwellings, chiefly long archways, either the vaults of houses or the roofing of the streets, just as to this day many of the streets of Hebron are dark tunnels, with an occasional glimmer of light through openings in the archways. First we came upon 'Attir, the ancient Jattir (Josh. xxi. 14), one of the cities of the priests in Judah, and to which David used to send presents in his outlawed days. It is situated on a green knoll, in an amphitheatre of brown rocky hills, studded with natural caves. Perhaps this was once part of the country of the Horites, dwellers in caves; or perhaps the men of Judah took their idea of domestic architecture from the suggestive caverns around, for certainly it is a most cavernous-looking place. We counted upwards of thirty of these arched crypts remaining entire, some longer and some shorter; but most of them without end walls, and having perhaps been merely passages or streets, with houses over them. The arches are round, slightly domed, or sometimes a little pointed, built of well-dressed stones,

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generally two or three feet square. Those which had the gable ends intact had square bevelled doorways, at one end flat-headed, about six feet high, and three and a half feet wide. The tunnels are generally eighteen or twenty feet long, though I measured one upwards of forty feet. Some ancient carvings remain on the doorways. On one door-head, seven feet by three, was a singular carving.

There was one large square building, of which only four tiers of well-dressed stones remained above ground, which may have been a castle, or perhaps a basilica in later



DOOR-HEAD IN THE RUINS OF JATTIR.

times; and at the entrance of the town, and again on the side of the hill, lay the under stone of a very large oil-press —an undeniable evidence of the existence of olive-trees of old, where neither trace of tree or shrub remains. In several places we could perceive the ancient terracing on the hills, and there were many wells, all now dry and partially choked with rubbish. The eastern face of the knoll consisted chiefly of natural caves once used as dwellings, enlarged, and with outside extensions of arched crypts in front. We noticed one very large cave, the only access to which was by a hole at the top, and which may have been

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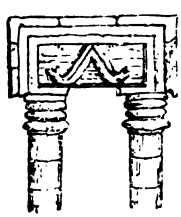
a strong place or concealed granary. There was one arched building roofless, but with the side walls and gables remaining, which stood out alone on the hills. The south door of this was square-built outside, but with a flat arch of four stones on the inside. The only modern building in sight was a little wely, or tomb of a Moslem saint, on the crest of the hill.

Cultivation began to appear in the valleys as we left 'Attir, the bottoms being generally scratched for corn, without fences, while here and there small herds of goats browsed on the hill sides. In another hour we reached Rafat, the ruins of a city of some size, not yet identified, and very similar in its architecture to 'Attir. Considering the universal use of the arch in all these ruined cities, it would be interesting to discover at what period it became common in Palestine. If Roman, it is remarkable as being unaccompanied by any other Roman features, such as are found in other parts of the country. Probably Rafat is one of the unidentified cities of Judah mentioned in 1 Sam. xxx. 28—30,—Rachel, Chorashan, or Athac; and if the latter name be not a misreading for Ethec, perhaps this place represents Rachel. There is one building here worthy of notice, about forty-five feet long, of considerable height, with an arched roof flat on the outside, and apparently constructed from the fragments of a more ancient edifice, as carved stones with mouldings have occasionally been worked into the walls. The building runs east and west. On the north side, in the centre, is a small doorway, with a circular arched head inside and a flat lintel outside. Opposite this, on the south side, is a niche, or recess in the wall, with a scallop-carved apse roof, buttressed on the outside with fragments taken from an older building. Between this and the east end is a small loop-holed window, arched inside, and a mere oblong slit outside. The north and south gables are nearly destroyed. It stands conspicuously on the hill, and is either, I pre-

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sume, a Greek church or a more ancient structure adapted as a church. Here, again, an ancient oil-press remains.

Half an hour more brought us to Semûa, the ancient Eshtemoa, still inhabited, and the first occupied town which occurs on the way from Egypt to Palestine. It stands, like the others, on a low round-topped hill, somewhat isolated, and surrounded by small cultivated valleys. Here, for the first time for weeks, our eyes were refreshed by the sight of a grove of olive-trees, tenanted by a dozen or more of red kites. A half-ruined old castle, evidently of Saracenic or Turkish work, towers above the wretched town, and is at present the station of a company of Turkish



DOORWAY IN THE RUINS OF SEMÛA.

regulars, who crowded the walls and gazed on us with much curiosity. The captain, seeing us remain for some time on the opposite slope, politely sent a mounted orderly to know if he could be of service to us. We met him afterwards in the town, and strangely out of place did his trim uniform and neat European style appear in the midst of the ruined caves and archways which serve as dwellings for the present degraded inhabitants. He was a gentlemanly-mannered man, and asked for public news; but we could only tell him of what we had seen at Beersheba, and he had evidently no desire to be ordered to seek glory in the wilderness. Semûa is a shrunken decrepit continuation of the old Eshtemoa, with about 500 inhabitants; but one description

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will serve for all these hill-country ruins in Judah, which must once have been considerable towns. The officer was anxious to do the honours of the place, and pointed out the extensive remains of an early Greek church. There were many pieces of ancient carving, and an inverted marble sarcophagus was built into a more modern wall, with the same style of decoration which we had observed at Jezreel and Tyre. Carved doorways and fragments of columns abounded; but nowhere in this part of the country did we come on the slightest traces of Crusading work.

We rode rapidly on through Sûsieh, a town of ruins, on a grassy slope, quite as large as the others, and with an old basilica, but less troglodyte than 'Attir. Many fragments of columns strewed the ground, and in most respects it was a repetition of Rafat. Still pressing on, we found we had missed our way, and came in an hour to Yuttah (the ancient Juttah), the remains of which were more perfect, but scarcely so extensive as the last, though possessing no special features to distinguish it from 'Attir or Semûa; but, like the latter, it is still inhabited.

The greater part of a long day had been passed among these ruined cities, when the clouds began to lower, and a drenching rain came down, the first we had had for a month. Determined to have a glance at the hill of Maon, the possession of Caleb, and the birthplace of Nabel, we turned back to the south-east, and galloped over the rugged ground. An hour's very hard riding brought us to Tell Main, or Maon, a hill more elevated than the rest, covered with ruins less distinct, and perforated by caves as numerous, but with fewer remains of vaults. The crest is said to afford a fine view, but the storm of rain limited our horizon to two hundred yards. Down the hill, and up the next rise, we cantered to the extensive ruins of Kurmul, the Carmel where Nabal sheared his flocks. It must have been an important place in later times, to judge from the

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extent of the ruins. A fine castle surmounts them, built by Herod, and repaired by Crusaders and Saracens. The outer walls are built of large stones of the later bevel; but inside are many pointed arches, especially in the upper parts; and the first floor is easily accessible, with only a few holes broken through the vaulting beneath it. There were the remains of churches, and of a double round tower, like those already mentioned; and below, down the hill, was a large open reservoir, now abundantly supplied with water. By the time we had reached Ziph it was pitch dark, and we could not see a trace of the ruins among which we were stumbling. Onward we stumbled for a weary hour and a-half, unable to see each other.

And now glimmering lights in the distance gladdened our eyes. We were approaching the ancient city. But by what a road! Open wells on the right, then on the left; unfenced cliffs and slippery rocks, over which we staggered, leading our weary steeds; till, near the city, we overtook the mules, all in bewildering confusion. We entered the town through a broken gate, and found ourselves in a cavernous vault, among a ruck of mules pushing, yelling, and jostling, and not a glimmer of light. We dared not proceed, for just before one of our servants, having in vain urged his steed, dismounted to force him on; but his volley of imprecations had been cut short by his sudden descent into a tan-pit, whither the cautious beast declined to follow him. Long time in vain we shouted for a friendly "fanouil"—"sham'ar" (light—candle); till, at length, a little hole in a wall opened, and a kindly female arm stretched out a wax taper, which was just enough to show us that we were in a vaulted street. At least we were out of the rain; and after some delay, a little mixture of bribery and intimidation induced the sentry at the gate to find a lantern, and with it to precede us to the mansion of Hamsi, close by the celebrated mosque, or Haram. A low door, four feet high,

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opened upon an inclined plane leading into a large cavern. Dismounting, we led our horses within; and then, returning to the door, the mules were unloaded one by one, and passed down; a tally of the animals being kept by one of the party, and a vigilant look-out on the baggage by the rest, lanterns in hand. By some extraordinary good fortune, and their own instinct, all the forty-three beasts were forthcoming.

Through dark, ruined passages, and up broken staircases, we then followed our guide; till, up the fourth flight of stone steps, we found the Sheikh in bed, in a vaulted chamber. The household, aroused by the untimely intrusion, swarmed forth like bees from various crannies; and, overcome by curiosity, the elder Mrs. Hamzi and three younger Mrs. Hamzis came forth, unveiled, from their different rooms, each followed by a troop of sleepy, unwashed children. The junior wives of our host soon retired; but the elder, the wife of the old man's youth, and evidently the mistress, remained, and busily carried cushions and rugs for our reception in this room, which was to be our quarters. Our host's wealth seemed, after Eastern fashion, to consist largely in changes of raiment. A dozen new suits were speedily produced, and we were stripped of our dripping garments, and clad, Arab fashion, in turbans, kafiyehs, and striped abeiyehs, with red slippers. Coffee and pipes soon appeared, and, after some delay, barley-cakes and bunches of the delicious raisins of Eshcol, followed in due course by a huge dish of rice stewed with butter. We made a hearty meal, sitting round the bowl on the floor, and after prayers lay down in a row in our Bedouin disguise, on the comfortable Turkey mats, wearied enough to sleep soundly in far less luxurious quarters.

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## CHAPTER XVII.

*Hebron—Abraham's Oak—The Haram—Cave of Machpelah—Antiquity of the Wall — Manufactures — Glass — Leathern Bottles — The Upper and Nether Springs — Dura (Adoraim) — Rameh — Well — Mamre — View of the Ghor—Road—El Burak—Solomon's Pools—Ducks—Urtas (Etham) — Gardens of Solomon — Ancient Baths — Frank Mountain—Herodium—Tekoa—Adullam—Giacomo Lost—A Night on the Hills—Bethlehem — Women— Flowers— Rachel's Tomb —Jerusalem— Settlement with Hamzi—Arab Avarice and Cunning—Tombs—Entrance to Tombs of the Kings—Rolling away the Stone—Ride to Jaffa—M.'s Departure —Ramleh — Fruit Trees — Persecution — Domestic Changes — Signs of Spring — Agriculture — Plains of Ephraim (Mokhna) — Lepers — The Pasha's Harem—Sanûr—Lake— Women of Nazareth.*

HEBRON.—The rain had passed away, and the beams of a bright Eastern sun peering in through the open door found us still asleep. After a little delay we got at our dry clothes, and mounted the roof to have a look at the massive building which encloses the Cave of Machpelah, so long hermetically sealed to Christians. We were not one hundred yards from it, and we were looking round on one of the most ancient cities in the history of the world. On the hill-sides, and in the valleys below, Abraham had walked and communed with God; the dust of the patriarchs mouldered in the caves beneath these huge walls. We were in David's royal city, and by the pool below us the monarch had taught a higher morality to Eastern conquerors, and hanged up the murderers of his rival. Here, above all, were many of those Psalms written which still rise heavenward in the daily worship of every land.

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We with difficulty cleared our room of visitors for service, as it was Sunday, after which we strolled about a mile and a-half from the city to visit the so-called Abraham's Oak, no representative or descendant of the famed oak of Mamre, which was a terebinth (*Pistacia terebinthus*), but a mere substitute, and in a different direction from Hebron, west instead of north, a noble



OAK OF HEBRON.

holm oak, the finest tree in Southern Palestine, of the species *Quercus pseudo-coccifera*, Desf. Arabice "Scindiân." It is sound, measuring over twenty-two feet in circumference, and stands close under the vineyards in a grassy field, with some of its descendants not very far off. Under its shade, in quiet seclusion, we sat and spent our

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Sunday afternoon in reading the history of Abraham, and the promises of blessing through him to all nations, pledged to him in these valleys near 6,000 years ago, and fulfilled now to ourselves. The walk up the valley revealed to us for the first time what Judah was everywhere else in the days of its prosperity. Bare and stony as are the hill-sides, not an inch of space is lost. Terraces, where the ground is not too rocky, support the soil. Ancient vineyards cling to the lower slopes; olive, mulberry, almond, fig, and pomegranate trees fill every available cranny to the very crest; while the bottom of the valley is carefully tilled for corn, carrots, and cauliflowers, which will soon give place to melons and cucumbers. Streamlets of fresh water trickled on each side of our path. The production and fertility, as evidenced even in winter, is extraordinary; and the culture is equal to that of Malta. That catacomb of perished cities, the hill country of Judah, through whose labyrinths we yesterday wandered, is all explained by a walk up the vale of Eshcol; and those who doubt the ancient records of the population, or the census of David or his successors, have only to look at this valley, and by the light of its commentary to read the story of those cities.

On our return from the oak we walked round the Haram; and, accompanied by Hamzi and one or two of his friends, personages of importance in Hebron, had less cause to apprehend molestation than ordinary travellers. We were permitted to ascend the staircase, which gently rises from the south-east corner of the inclosure, having the massive stones of the Haram wall at our left, smooth and polished like marble. The inclosure thus embraces not a level space, but the side of a very steep hill, just such as would contain a sepulchral cave. We were not allowed, however, to turn again to the left, or look in—the angry scowls of a few loungers, and the noisy shouts of some mischievous boys, warned us it was time to

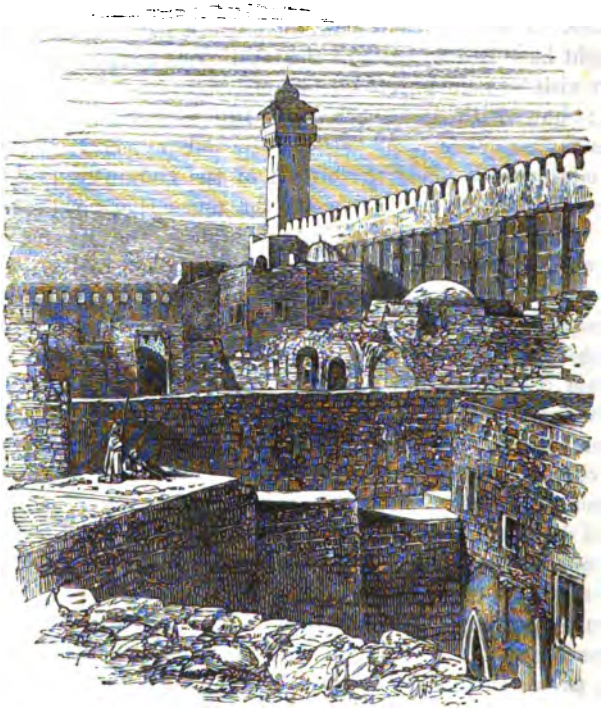
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return; and we beat a precipitate retreat, without further molestation than some unpleasant jostling at the foot of the stairs. We had, however, had abundant time before to look through the little hole near the entrance, where the Jews are at times permitted to peep at the sepulchres of their fathers, but we could make out only an open space. I believe that, had we made a dart at first, we might have had a glance at the mysterious area within, for our visit was unexpected, and none were on guard against us; but, with Dean Stanley's full description in our minds, we were well satisfied by our external survey. We afterwards made the circuit of the Haram as closely as we could, and from above on the upper side we climbed on to the roof of the adjoining building, the Mosque of Jâwali, and looked down through a window in its little dome, but were unable to discover anything of interest, though we were here not far from the summit of the old megalithic wall, and had hoped to find a point where we could peep down into the area. The Haram wall is about 200 feet long, by about 115 wide, and upwards of fifty feet high, without a single window or opening of any kind except the doorways at the north, which are completely concealed from view. The stones are sumptuous in size and dressing, exactly like those of the substructure of the temple area at Jerusalem. We had no opportunity of measuring exactly the size of these enormous stones, but could not doubt the statements that some reach the amazing size of thirty-eight feet by three feet and a half, or, as we should say of some, by four feet. The shallow pilasters, which, two feet and a-half wide and five feet apart, relieve the outer face and run evenly to its top, have a very fine effect; and there is a simple and austere grandeur about the massive plainness of the ancient wall, which not even the paltry Saracenic addition on its top and the two minarets at the corners can affect. The design is unique and patriarchal in its magnificent sim-



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plicity. The only buildings with which we can compare it, to elucidate its date, are the substructures of the Temple of Jerusalem, and the Castle of Hyrcanus at Arak el Emir, the latter being but a small though perfect fragment.



MOSQUE OF HEBRON.

Both of these carry us back to the ante-Roman period, and we must at a glance assign a greater antiquity to the style of the Hebron Haram than to the similar but more elaborate architecture in Gilead. Let the traveller gaze

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on these stones, and, unmoved by the remorseless attacks of critics, let him feel satisfied that for once he has grounds to believe in a Jewish tradition, and that he has been permitted to survey the one remaining work of the royal Solomon, or perhaps of his greater father. The words of Josephus will apply to the existing structure, "πάνυ καλῆς μαρμάρου καὶ φιλοτίμως εἰργασμένα," and as Mr. Grove has observed, if Herod had been the architect, Josephus would not have forgotten to extol his work.

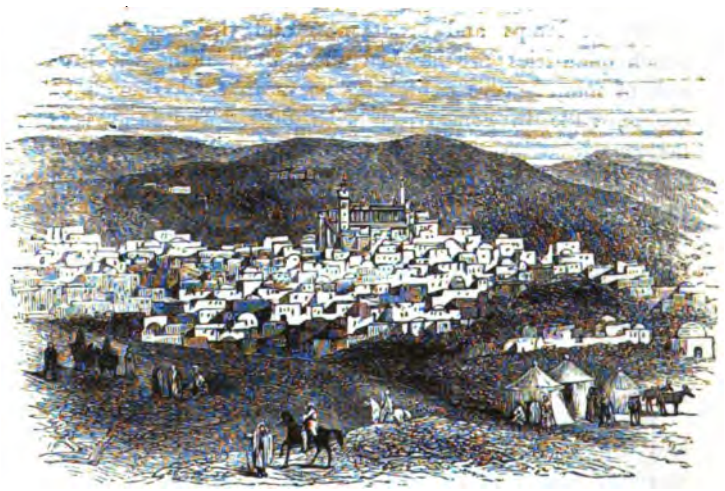
Next morning one of the sons of our host took us to see the two principal industries of Hebron; glass-works, chiefly of lamps and ornaments, and the bracelets, of which quantities are hawked about Jerusalem—the process of manufacture exhibiting no mean skill, though, of course, rude in comparison with ours. The large tanneries, where water-skins are prepared, exhibit the other staple employment of the town, and it was very interesting to watch the several processes. The skins are half tanned, then sewn up and filled with water, the sutures being carefully pitched. They are then exposed on the ground for several days, covered with a strong decoction of tannin, and water pumped into them from time to time to keep them on the stretch till sufficiently saturated. They are all prepared with the hair on.

We afterwards walked to Dura, the ancient Adoraim, and Dewir Dan, probably Debir, the fortress for the storming of which Othniel won the daughter of Caleb as his bride. It was sixteen miles there and back, but the country was very interesting, and the views lovely. The most interesting part was the upper and the nether springs, the wedding portion of Achsah from her father Caleb. She pleads, "Thou hast given me a *south* land," where there are no fountains, only wells here and there; "give me also springs, 'bubblings' (*gulloth*) of water." (Judg. i. 15). And sweetly do these two springs, the upper and the nether, bubble and gurgle forth, and trickle



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down, each from the top of a re-entering angle in the hill-side, forming a steep little dell, which, clad with vines and olives, runs down into the main valley. A level path, half-way up the hill-side, winds round the two valleys (they are not more than half a mile apart), and we had some lovely peeps at the Mediterranean and the plain of Philistia between openings in the hills, as they shone in the distance. Night had fallen before we returned, tired and hungry, to our quarters.



HEBRON.

From Hebron we make our next march to Solomon's Pools. We are now so completely in the beaten track of travellers, that one feels disposed to shut up journal writing, and refer to Porter's Handbook. Our route lay through the heart of Judah, once studded with its fenced cities, towns, and villages, whose desolate heaps crown

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every knoll and encumber every valley. About two miles north of Hebron, just after quitting the garden-like vale of Eschol, with its fair terraced vineyards and olive-trees, we turned a little to the eastward to visit Rameh, the ancient Mamre, now left without a tree, save one or two decrepit old olives, and for the most part a heap of undistinguishable ruins, scattered among barley-fields. There is one exception in the basement of the magnificent basilica erected by Constantine on the spot where Abraham's Oak once stood, which had become an object of idolatrous worship. Of this massive edifice a few courses of huge stones, many of them fifteen feet long, alone remain—the lower tiers of two of the enclosing walls, 290 and 160 feet long respectively. In one corner of the building is an ancient drop-well, carefully lined with hard limestone, and still containing water; probably far older than the church, and perhaps reaching back to the time of Abraham himself. What memories does this bleak desolate spot recall, from the days when the father of the faithful sat there in his tent-door, looking out, not on bare stony fields, but on green glades, beneath the ancient terebinths, to that time of terrible retribution on his posterity, when the Romans sold the captive Jews by thousands beneath their own sacred oak! Mamre is not a plain; indeed, the Hebrew word אֵלוֹן, "elon," *oak*, is mistranslated in our version throughout, and the oaks of Mamre stood in a sligthly hollowed basin, surrounded by low rocky hills. We mounted to the top of the northern slope, where Abraham probably stood, and there we noted how he could easily have seen the smoke of the cities of the plain in the circle ("ciccar") of Jordan, as it rose like the smoke of a furnace, though he could not see the plain itself. Still the eastern hills were visible, and a gauzy cloud of blue haze intervened, overhanging the mysterious Ghor.

The rain, which had kept off for the last two days, now

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began to descend, and poured forth in torrents during the remainder of our ride. The road was rough and broken, dilapidated like all else in this land, since the days when the chariots of Jewish royalty passed up the valleys. Yet there were traces, here and there, of the work of Roman engineers, although effectually undone by the hoofs of fourteen centuries wearing and misplacing every stone of the ancient pavement. English birds—goldfinches, buntings, woodlarks, and linnets, together with the Greek partridge—seemed now the only inhabitants of the hillsides, restored to pristine barrenness, but not to primæval forest, and clad with dwarf oak, bay, lentisk, and broom, instead of terraced vines, olive, and fig-trees. No human habitation relieved the solitude, till we descended a gentle slope to a strip of greensward by the El Burâk—Solomon's Pools; three vast reservoirs, which in line successively fill the bottom of the valley, and supply Bethlehem, as once they did Jerusalem. A great square Turkish castle stands near the head of the upper pool, inhabited by half-a-dozen irregular troops, who act as police; and under the shelter of its walls our tents were pitched in front of the reservoir. The pools are partially excavated in the bed of the valley, and built of squared stone, the bottom of the upper one being higher than the top of the next, and so with the third. In length they vary from 380 to 580 feet, in breadth from 236 (the two upper) to 207 (the lower), and in depth from 25 to 50 feet. The upper pool was quite full, and the second nearly so, at the time of our visit; but the third leaked half-way up. They would do credit to the engineering skill of modern times, and there seems no reason whatever for doubting the correctness of the tradition which ascribes them to Solomon. Flocks of wild duck,—gadwall, pochard, and shoveller—were enjoying themselves on their surface, and supply the guard with many a supper during the winter, though our camp and numbers so alarmed them that we only obtained a single

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pochard. I received in Jerusalem a fine wild swan (*Cygnus musicus*) which was shot here.

We descended to the little channel above the cisterns, which, by an arched conduit, supplies them from a hidden spring above; and then at once proceeded down the narrow winding glen, watered by the rill which trickles down its centre, to visit Solomon's Gardens at Urtas. The steep rocky sides are bare and brown, though once planted with all manner of trees, from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop from the desert. After passing the little village of Urtas, probably the ancient *Etam*, perched on the rocky hill-side, we entered upon the gardens, which run down for more than two miles in all, but seldom containing more than 300 yards in width of level ground. An attempt has here been made to induce the Jews to cultivate once more their own land, and the grounds are now the farm of Mr. Meshullam, a converted Jew, and an excellent and intelligent man. He has had to contend with many difficulties, and been exposed to constant petty depredations; but the place promises to become an useful rallying-point for the Protestant Jews, and has already shown the capabilities of this neglected soil. Various travellers have assisted the scheme by purchasing a little plot. One is held by Lady Dufferin, and Prince Alfred has bought and terraced a piece of the adjoining hill-side, which is already planted with vines. The whole of the bottom is cultivated as a market garden for Jerusalem, productive but unpicturesque, and well stocked with standard apricot, peach, almond, fig, and pomegranate trees. A good house has been built by the tenant, and, among other improvements, he has introduced the use of the wheelbarrow, supposed to be the first wheel vehicle in the country since the Roman days, and an object of wonder to all the neighbourhood.

In the easternmost plot, which has only recently been taken in, a very interesting discovery has been made. Portions of building had been discovered while planting,

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and an English traveller left a sum of money to pay for excavations. A strongly-built reservoir of twenty yards square has been cleared out in the centre of the narrow valley. It had once been faced with marble, several slabs of which were found among the rubbish, and two or three still remained attached by clamps to the walls. Several broken shafts, and two quite perfect, of pure white marble, had been also exhumed, and were lying on the surface, as well as three very richly-carved capitals, also white marble, of a style like those of the substructure of the Temple, but more elaborate. The foliage and pattern is partly palm-leaf, varying in each capital, and somewhat approaches Corinthian, but is heavier in design, though very delicate in execution. Unfortunately, the weather prevented B. from photographing them. Probably these shafts and capitals supported a roof or canopy over the great centre bath. From this a small channel conveyed the water into another smaller private bath, to which there was a descent from the garden by steps, and here the marble slabs which lined it remain *in situ*. Beyond it another bath of intermediate size has been partially cleared, with a pipe connecting it with the second. It is remarkable that the shape and arrangements of the private bath are exactly such as are required for the Jewish ceremonial purifications, and possibly we have here the only remaining relic of the luxurious splendour of the founder of Solomon's Gardens.

Next day we started to visit Frank Mountain (Beth Haccerem, Herodium), the traditional burial-place of Herod the Great,* and the supposed cave of Adullam. The peak has evidently been artificially smoothed and rounded, but possesses no ruins, except the remains of an enclosing wall, reminding us much of that of Masada, with four round towers. In this enclosure was laid the dishonoured body of the monster Herod. No other ruins

* There is some reason to believe that Herod was buried, not at Herodium, but in the Tombs of the Kings at Jerusalem.

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can be seen, and the name of Frank Mountain and the tradition that it was the last stronghold of the Crusaders, seem utterly without foundation. We had hoped to enjoy the panorama, of which many travellers have spoken with enthusiasm, but the descending clouds concealed every feature of the distant landscape.

Tekûa, the ancient Tekoa, we recognised by the large Greek font of rose-coloured limestone, described by Porter, standing among broken columns by the ruins of a Greek church. Besides the church, we saw the remains of a square tower or fortress, and many of the Jewish so-called "bevelled" stones. The remains covered several acres, and we had here a more extensive view eastward than the weather had permitted us to obtain from Jebel Fureidis Bleak, indeed, looked the home of the herdsman of Tekoa —savage and severe the scenery which has clothed his denunciations with their wild and stern imagery.

Having left orders that our tents should be pitched on our old ground outside Jerusalem, we rode next day to Bethlehem, where we spent the day, and reached the Holy City at sunset. We lunched at the Latin Convent of Bethlehem; and, amid the din of rival purveyors at the door of the Greek church, laid in a stock of Bethlehem ware—carved scallop-shells and olive-wood beads. We once more admired the handsome faces of men and women, and the wondrous beauty of the children, so fair and European-like. Bethlehem is a Christian town, and doubtless owes the beauty of its inhabitants to the Norman blood of the Crusaders' colony. The dress of the women is peculiar and striking, very much more becoming than that of their Nazareth sisters; consisting of a long blue under-garment with sleeves, over which is a bright-red sleeveless jacket and short skirt; the head-dress consisting of a large piece of white calico, drawn tightly over a frame, like a brimless hat, and folded beneath the petticoat behind.

But I need say nothing of Bethlehem, with its hallowed

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and hallowing associations and its holy places—the latter having, perhaps, more authenticity than some in Jerusalem. They are known to every Eastern traveller, and to every reader of Eastern travels. The turf of its olive-yards, the well-tilled gardens and clean vineyards, bespeak at once the industry of a Christian population. The lovely scarlet anemone was coming into flower, and showing signs of spring; pretty little annuals—a pink lychnis (*L. cœli-rosa*), saponarias, blue pimpernels, and red valerians—carpeted with a sheet of colour the soil under the olive-trees. These cheerful glades, in the freshness of a balmy spring morning, seemed to breathe of that peace, the proclamation of which to the world echoed first over those hills and vales.

From Bethlehem we turned a little to the right to visit the sepulchre of Rachel, a modern wely, with a little dome, but a site which is unquestioned, and preserved by unbroken tradition. "They journeyed from Bethel, and there was but a little way to come to Ephrath. . . . And Rachel died, and was buried in the way to Ephrath, which is Bethlehem" (Gen. xxxv. 16, 19). Passing the tomb, and afterwards the grey convent of Mar Elias, with its apocryphal traditions of Elijah, another short hour brought us to the Jaffa Gate of Jerusalem.

For the following ten days Jerusalem was our head-quarters, and our tents remained constant on our old camping-ground, watched over, as before, by the military dog of the guard-house. Much of our time was occupied in business arrangements, in packing our collections for England, and in refitting. In fact, the old ship had to go into dock (not always dry-dock, for it rained half the time), and undergo a regular overhaul. Carpenters, shoemakers, tentmakers, tailors, tinkers, gunsmiths, were all in request. There was scarcely a pair of boots left amongst the party —our tents were tattered, so were our coats—our kettles were leaky, our guns were bulged or dented — straps

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were broken or missing, bridles mended with twine, and the commissariat nearly exhausted. We had returned to civilisation, and visits to and from our friends, and evening parties, were a pleasant change, for a time, after our Bedouin life.

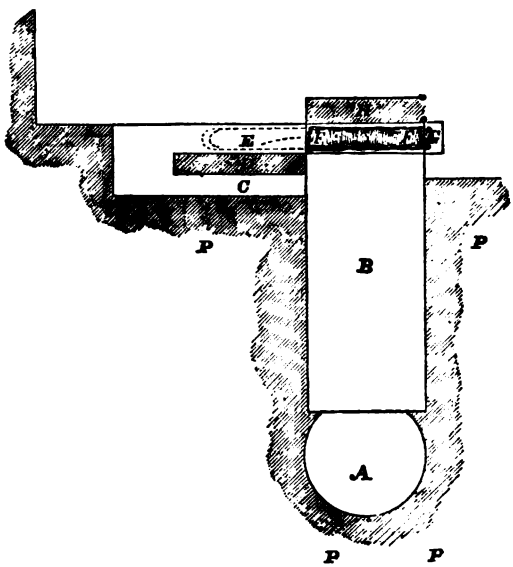
We enjoyed two quiet Sundays in Jerusalem, and on the 14th I had the privilege of preaching at the opening of the English evening service for the season, as I had also been permitted to do on a similar occasion six years before. During the autumn and early winter, when there are no visitors, the service is conducted in the English language in the morning only.

Our spare time was occupied chiefly in visiting the tombs in the neighbourhood, at Mar Elias and elsewhere; but especially the recent excavations of M. de Saulcy, in the so-called Tombs of the Kings. They had been fully described by every preceding writer; but so much of the rubbish had been cleared away, that the original plan was more clearly exposed, and the stairs, long buried under the soil, which had led down to the open courtyard in front of the sepulchre, were, for the first time, brought into view. The slab which covered the staircase, down to the new tomb opened by M. de Saulcy, was laid in the corner of an inner tomb, and ingeniously concealed, so as to appear a portion of the natural rock. No wonder it had eluded Roman and Saracen alike. The principal sarcophagus, with its inscription and its contents, we did not see, as they had been promptly and secretly conveyed to Paris just before our first visit; but one empty sarcophagus had been left. The secret stairs led to a chamber hollowed in the rock, with nine niches for full-sized coffins.

The excavations enabled us to see clearly, what we had not so fully appreciated on our former visits—the ingenious contrivance for "sealing and making sure" the entrance to the outer chamber, from which the labyrinth of tombs branches in all directions.

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The accompanying plan will explain the access to the tombs :—




PLAN OF ENTRANCE TO THE TOMB OF THE KINGS, JERUSALEM.

PPP, The vestibule of the tombs, which extends over the whole space represented in the plan, excepting the well-mouth, marked A. BC., &c., are all underground, covered by a pavement level with P. B, Passage, three feet high, leading to the rock tombs. C, Continuation of the same. D, Block of native rock *in situ*. E, Continuation of passage, very narrow. FF, A circular slab, like a milestone, fitting into a deep socket, G, and perfectly sealing the entrance. This stone is three feet thick, and four feet in diameter. H, A massive stone door, swinging on two pivots, opening into the chambers beyond. Now, to enter under the slab which

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covers B, without being drowned in cistern at A, required no little dexterity, for the slab over-lapped part of A, and there was only a space of a foot between the slab and the water. This gymnastic feat being accomplished, the intruder must creep along C, then turn into E, and then by levers roll back toward him FF from its socket G, and then returning by C, he would find the door H facing him. This door was so hung in its socket that though it could be pushed open after the removal of FF, yet it swung back again, unless fastened open; and there was no possibility of opening it from the inside. If it closed, the fate of the explorer was sealed for ever.

In this case, the whole of the labyrinthic apparatus is perfect; but there are several other tombs in which the circular stone remains, though mutilated. When we look at this sepulchre, how simple, yet how full of meaning, is the expression, "The angel rolled back the stone."

We regretted to see that some curiosity-hunters had already begun to chip and carry away large fragments, and soon, it is to be feared, it will be hopelessly mutilated.

On February 15th we started early on horseback for Jaffa, to accompany on his way our good friend Medlycott, who was now to leave us, and make the first break in our delightful party. A ride over ruined rocky paths, some of the worst in the country brought us to Kureit-el-Enab, the ancient Kirjath Jearim, in a pleasant valley of olive-groves, abounding in jays and hawks. We dismounted to visit the old gothic church, said to have been built by the English Crusaders, and still quite perfect, though desecrated by the Moslem villagers to the uses of a cow-shed. Aisles, pillars, and some old frescoes still remain, till Christianity shall have her own again. Soon after passing this, we ascended a rounded ridge, when the Mediterranean and the Plain of Sharon burst upon our view, and we rapidly descended towards the plain, keeping at the bottom of picturesque rocky ravines, clothed with dwarf

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oak, arbutus, and other shrubs, and with many a plantation of olive and carob-trees, the young foliage of which gave life and lightness to the landscape. Flocks of goats were browsing in the valleys and on the hill-sides, and altogether the country had a civilised and homely look. About two P.M. we had reached the plain, and on a bit of greensward, with a carpet of flowers springing up, we lunched close to a small khan, whence we were supplied with wine and coffee. Here we were probably at the entrance of the Valley of Ajalon. The plain was fairly cultivated, and drained by periodical watercourses. A drenching rain soon came on, and we reached Ramleh* after dusk, through gardens and hedges of prickly pear, and were hospitably received at the Franciscan Convent, and treated to as good a dinner as Lenten rules would permit. Next morning we were up with the dawn, and, after a very frugal breakfast, started for Jaffa, which we reached through the greasy plunging mud of Sharon, by ten o'clock, in a pouring rain. The sea was dashing over the walls, and the weather did not tempt us to remain.

The gardens which surround Jaffa have much extended since my former visit, and it is evidently a thriving and increasing town, with its broad belt of two or three miles of date palms and orange groves, the latter now laden with fruit. As we wound through the pleasant sandy lanes, the rain had lifted and the air was almost oppressively perfumed with the scent of the trees. I was fortunate enough to secure a fine specimen of the peregrine falcon, the first we had obtained. The plain outside abounded with larks of four species—calandra, sky, crested, and wood-larks; quails, common buntings, starlings, and the Sardinian black starling. Ring and Kentish plovers were running

* Ramleh has been popularly identified with Arimathea, but without any satisfactory evidence. Robinson (ii. 239) has proved that the identification cannot be supported on etymological grounds, and that Ramah (Arimathea) must have been on the hills east of Lydda.

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round the pools, and many herons, white egrets, and squacco herons, were feeding in the more distant lagoons.

There is no clergyman now in Jaffa. At Ramleh, however, there are still thriving schools, and an encouraging congregation under the Church Missionary Society, but they are only ministered to by a schoolmaster catechist. Religious antipathies seem to be early developed here, for some little boys pelted me for a Christian dog as I quietly rode through the narrow streets to the convent, whereupon others cried out, "I am Roumi and Inglez," *i.e.* an English Protestant. Upon this a general fight seemed likely to ensue, had I not interfered, and aided in driving off the small Moslems. The monks, less uncompromising in their antipathies, kindly overlooked the rules of Lent on behalf of drenched heretics, and provided us with a good dinner of mutton broth and stewed chicken.

The same symptoms of improvement we observed in agriculture round Jaffa were visible as we approached Jerusalem. Villas, gardens, and young olive groves are spreading outside, where six years ago there were only rubbish heaps; and the great Russian hospice is drawing a suburb along the Jaffa road. Lower down, below the pools of Gihon, on the Bethlehem road, Sir M. Montefiore has built a neat range of small houses for poor Jews, and both Greeks and Jews have been enclosing and cultivating largely on the slopes. The gardens, which formerly were merely cabbage plots on Mount Zion, straggling down to the Valley of Hinnom, now extend beyond. The vine and olive, the natural staple of the land, are being planted, and a quantity of barley and some wheat have been sown. The almond-tree has now (Feb. 20) been in blossom for a fortnight, the peach-tree for a week, and the apricots are just budding into bloom. The pomegranate and fig-trees show as yet no signs of summer being nigh. The barley, wheat, and sesame were sown just after Christmas, and, after the rains, are now four inches high. The cauliflowers are in season,

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and of enormous size, the carrots are small and coarse, and the turnips very small and poor. The onions and garlic have been dibbled out for a fortnight, and are strong. The oranges and lemons are, of course, the only fruits yet in season. The curse is upon the land, but it is the curse of poverty; not on its soil, but on its indolent, degraded, and oppressed inhabitants.

*February 22nd.*—At length our followers are dragged from the enervating influences of the city, and we turn northwards once more, prepared to cross to Gilead and Bashan from Galilee or the upper Jordan. We retrace our steps by Bethel, halting for luncheon under an old cave, once a reservoir, festooned with maiden-hair fern, and pitch our tents at Ain Haramiyèh, the Robber's Fountain. The landscape has marvellously improved since we traversed the same road before Christmas; the then bare hills are now green with young corn, the terraces are no longer bands of brown and ochre, but stripes of darker or paler green. The vines and fig-trees are still bare, but when they are in leaf these valleys will rival the park of Carmel. The ground is now carpeted with anemone, lychnis, cyclamen, and other spring flowers, and preserves, like the neighbourhood of Hebron, its ancient character; a fact best explained when we are told that the villagers of the hills are Christians.



Another cloudless day smiled on our ride to Nablous, through a country yet more beautified by spring than the vales of Benjamin yesterday. The flowers were even more abundant; the scarlet anemone, cyclamen, and, above all, the little pink lychnis, combined to spread a red carpet over the land, while patches of blue pimpernel and veronica, with tufts of yellow ranunculus, prettily variegated the pattern, and the green barley formed a rich turf under the olive-trees. Through the length of the once bare plain of Mukhna (Shechem), many a yoke of dwarf oxen were lazily dragging the simple wooden plough, guided by a still more

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lazy Bedouin with one hand, while his other plied the goad, and women with asses were bringing sacks of wheat from the hills for seed. Though the barley was four inches high, the wheat was only just being sown. The ground is scratched with a wooden plough to a depth of not more than six inches, and so light is the soil, filled with small stones, that no harrowing is required—the corn is scattered, and at once raked roughly in. The earth is red, or red brown, very friable, and having the appearance of great richness, which its produce does not belie; for no manure is used beyond the anemones and stubble which are ploughed in. There is not a hedge or a tree along the open valleys, which, therefore, even in spring, look somewhat bare. Near Nablous were some patches of beans already in full blossom, the perfume of which reminded us all of home.

We visited the tomb of Joseph, and Jacob's Well, now full of water, and then rode through the long narrow town of Nablous to our camping-ground.

Before going on to Jenin, we made a second pilgrimage to Gerizim. The artery between Northern and Southern Palestine could be seen to full advantage, narrow, long, and well-wooded, watered by its gushing rills, with its orchards of orange, palm, and fig; but conspicuous above the rest were apricots, almonds, and peaches, now one beautiful sheet of pink or white blossom, creeping up the southern mountain's side, while olive groves clad Ebal's lower slopes, and the smooth-leaved cactus almost covered its rocky sides above.

On our return to camp, sat, at a respectful distance, upwards of thirty lepers, seeking alms. On the preceding evening some of these unfortunates had beset our tents, when we promised them that, if they would depart, we would remember them in the morning. They had accordingly collected the whole fraternity, and awaited the fulfilment of our word. The lepers are in many of the



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towns of Palestine a sort of corporation, and here and at Jerusalem hold in that capacity property, the bequest of the charitable, under regularly-appointed trustees. Some are reputed to be rich, but all live in the same abject way, in kennels, outside the walls, intermarrying and handing down their curse, like Gehazi, from generation to generation.

As we had visited Samaria on our way south, we took a shorter but much worse road right across the hills by Beit Imrin, Jeba, Jerba, and Kubatiyeh. The country was bare, but not uncultivated in the hollows, and frequently relieved by large patches of olive groves trying to creep up the hills. On the way we met a long train of laden camels, with horses and mules, accompanied by a guard of soldiers, the household and effects of the new Pasha of Jerusalem. There were several fair young ladies, with veils of the thinnest muslin, riding cross-legged, three of them with babies in their arms, and each followed by a very carefully-veiled negress, riding in the same fashion. All of them were smoking or twisting cigarettes, in spite of their veils; and one set of jewelled fingers was neatly manipulating the tobacco across the baby rolled in swaddling cloths in front. Among the camel-drivers behind were two men who came up to us and gave me a cordial greeting. They were old acquaintances from El Bussah, who had been unfortunate enough to be picked up by the soldiers, and impressed, with their animals, to drive without payment to Jerusalem, after the wretched system of "corvée,"* by which all men and animals are, without remuneration, at the mercy of officials in this country. We ourselves had one day been thus served at Jerusalem, when the soldiers seized our mules to carry forage to Hebron, but not being subjects of the Porte, we went instantly to the Consul, who sent a summary message by his dragoman to the Pasha, when the

* The ἀγγαρεύω of Matt. v. 41; xxvii. 32.

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seizure was first denied, and then disowned; but within half an hour the mules were restored to their pickets.

We were now among the passes so often defended by the "horns" of Joseph—by the ten thousands of Ephraim, and the thousands of Manasseh; in the rich land where Joseph enjoyed "the chief things of the ancient mountains, and the precious things of the lasting hills," and where his glory, unlike that of the fierce lion of Judah in the rocky south, was like the firstling of the peaceful bullock. All the villages on the route, Beit Imrin, Jeba (some ancient Geba), Jerba, and Kubatiyeh, are pleasantly situated among luxuriant olive groves, which swarm with jays, owls, and woodpeckers, but are without ruins or ancient history, and not as yet identified with Scriptural localities. The hill fortress of Sanûr, a little north of Jeba, is an interesting spot, from its position on an isolated rocky hill overlooking the entrance to a plain, and from its having successfully resisted the attacks of the notorious Jezzar Pasha. It was afterwards taken and destroyed, and remained a ruin when Dr. Robinson visited it, but has since been rebuilt, though the olive groves which the Turks cut are not yet restored. Its feudal sheikhs, once the terror of the district, are now humbled and poverty-stricken; and the traveller need not fear to canter alone among their valleys. From Sanûr we rode across the Merj el Ghuruk, "meadow of sinking," a singular basin, of some extent, without any exit for the drainage from the surrounding hills, which collects in winter into a wide shallow lake, in which we saw avocets and the elegant stilted plover (*Himantopus melanopterus*) daintily stepping in the water. S. obtained also the marsh harrier, and several other birds, sweeping over the lagoon. On revisiting the spot in April I found the water still remaining, and the stilt and other species of waders, as the "ziczac," or spur-wing plover, and the little ringed dotterel, breeding in the marsh.



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It was sunset when we reached Jenin, and found our camp all in order for our arrival. In the morning, we rode quietly across the plain of Esdraelon, passing through Jezreel and Shunem, and thence directly to Nazareth, by a track more suitable for the snipe we disturbed than for



GIRL AT NAZARETH.

wearied horses, and selected a camp by the town well, near the Greek Church of the Virgin. We afterwards frequently rested at the same place, the one locality in Nazareth of which there is no doubt that it has remained unchanged from the days of our Lord. Often must He in childhood

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have trodden the path down to that fountain with His blessed mother, though the city itself was above its present site. From morn to eve troops of maidens and matrons were wending their way from the town, with their large narrow-bottomed water-jars on their heads, holding them by the handle, and carrying them on the side when empty, neatly poising them with the two hands when full. Many of the mothers had their little children trotting by their sides, who submitted to their morning ablutions at the fountain, or paddled about, washing their feet and legs in the waste water. It was a pleasant sight; and many of the women were clean and intelligent-looking, with their rolls of silver coins fringing their open smiling faces, for all were Christians here. (See p. 404.)

In this quaint head-dress, evidently of ancient design, consists a woman's wealth. It is her *peculium*, which her husband may never touch, and which descends to her daughter. There are few who cannot show at least fifty pieces round their face. How poor must one have been, who, like the women in our Lord's parable, owned only ten such pieces fastened to her head-gear! How she would miss one piece that was lost, both as ornament and as money; how she would talk of it at the well, and how soon her neighbours would hear of her loss; then also how she would light her lamp, even at mid-day, and search through her windowless house, filled with all the goods and chattels of the family, from the plough to the hens that roosted on it at night.

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## CHAPTER XVIII.

*Departure from Nazareth—Ride by Mount Tabor—Beauties of Spring —Deer — Agyle Agha's Camp — Basaltic Ridges — Ard-el-Hamma — Bedouin Camps—First View of the Sea of Galilee—Tiberias—Jewish Sabbath — Costumes — Gennesaret by Moonlight — Mode of Fishing — Shoals of Fish — Cinereous Vulture — Mission-Work and Difficulties— Rabbinical Learning — Jewish University — Mineral Hot Baths—Boat on the Lake — Entrance of the Jordan — Buffaloes — Birds — Storm on the Lake—A Night at Sea—Friends at Tiberias—Midnight Walk— Camp at Mejdel (Magdala) — Geological Formation of the District — Basalt — View — Flowers — Butterflies — Shells — Ain Mudawara (the Round Fountain)— Its Fishes—Survey of the Shore—Ain Tin—Khan Minyeh — Papyrus — Ain Tabigah — Tell Hûm — Naked Fishermen— Upper Ghor—Bethsaida or Julias—Feeding the Five Thousand—Identification of Ancient Sites—Josephus—Fishes—Bethsaida and Chorazin.*

LEAVING Nazareth for Tiberias, our course lay at first along the ridge, and afterwards at the base, of a range of hills skirting the north of Mount Tabor, of which we had a fine view, clad with sparse, but always vigorous and green, wood, chiefly oak and ilex (*Quercus ægilops* and *Q. pseudo-coccifera*). From the crest of the ridge we had the best view of Nazareth, as it lay on the slope facing us, underneath the brow of the hill on which the old city was built. Returning spring and fine weather had marvellously improved the appearance both of hills and town since our last visit. Before us, on the left, rose snowy Hermon, with a belt of fleecy clouds round his waist, a fine contrast to round green Tabor on the other side; and the vast plain of Esdraelon, treeless and green, lay spread on our right as far as distant Carmel, whose brown outline was very clear, with Megiddo standing on the further edge of

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the plain, and Zerin (Jezreel), under Mount Gilboa, peeping out on the other side of Tabor. It is not the size of this mount which attracts, but its rounded shape, wooded sides, and almost absolute isolation. Turning a little northwards, but still some miles to the south of the usual Tiberias road, we entered the glades of an open oak forest, the first we had seen in Palestine. The trees were only budding, yet there was a great charm in meeting at last with real timber. The ground was well clad with dwarf shrubs—lentisk, wild almond, bay, and arbutus—and carpeted with brilliant patches of anemone and other red flowers, bunches of lovely cyclamen, composite flowers in endless variety, not omitting a blue iris and a species of periwinkle (*Vinca herbacea*). We pleasantly wandered for an hour or two through the forest, descending always towards the east, having many a snap shot at partridge or woodpecker, and catching butterflies which now began to people the glades (*Parnassius apollinus*, *Gonepteryx cleopatræ*, orange tips, and many South European species), till we reached Kefr Jemr, where we lost the forest, and found ourselves on a ridge of basalt, bare, but finely turfed. The soil was now deep black instead of red, and streams of basalt and trap ran down from the north in close succession, overlying the limestone, which henceforth only appeared in the hollows. The limestone strata about Nazareth and here dipped generally from 4° to 8° S.E.

As we crossed a basaltic plateau near Shara (Agyle's camping-place), covered with green corn and clumps of dead thistles, we started a deer from its form not twenty yards ahead of us. As usually happens in such cases, no one had a ball ready. The animal had no horns, and we could not be certain of its species, whether red or fallow, though we had little doubt it was the latter. We never obtained the fallow deer, but the animal is well known to the natives.

In three hours and a-half from Nazareth we reached

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Agyle's camp at Shara. Agyle, an Egyptian by birth, has been for upwards of thirty years the mainstay of order in this district. From time to time he is appointed Governor of Tabor. Then, when the country is quiet, the Turks with characteristic jealousy think they can do without him. Agyle retires to exile, or to the wilderness. Troubles ensue, perhaps fomented by his emissaries—he is recalled, order is re-established, and the cycle recommences.

Long, low black tents were irregularly spread on the hill-sides, not very close together; brood mares were picketed here and there; large herds of small black cattle, camels, sheep, and goats were grazing in all directions on luxuriant pasturage. We had not sat long when Agyle, accompanied by a train of followers, made his appearance from a tent at a little distance, plainly habited in the ordinary dress of a Bedouin Sheikh. He was a large, stoutly-built man, over six feet high, with rather flat features, nose not prominent, short, smooth, black beard, and a remarkably placid and gentle expression of countenance. A quiet impassibility seemed stamped on his face. After the customary compliments we presented Mr. Zeller's letter. He took it, looked at the address as though he could read, and handed it to his secretary. This official opened and read the letter, and then, handing it to our catechist, requested him to read it aloud. This was strictly according to etiquette with a letter of introduction, to show the confidence that existed between the parties. The Agha then inquired our plans and wishes. We explained that we desired his protection on the other side Jordan and round the lake. Any number of guards were at our service, and we were perfectly safe in rambling about the lake. We ventured to suggest that two guards would be enough, as his name would be a sufficient protection.

Having declined his hospitable and pressing invitations, from Agyle's camp we turned northwards direct to Tiberias,

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across a series of basaltic ridges, bare of trees, but covered with fresh verdure. In an hour we descended from one of these ridges into the Ard el Hamma, a wide basin enclosed by hills running north-west and south-east, about two miles wide, and several miles long, flat and fertile, laid down to corn, but without a shrub or a bush in its whole extent. We here met several women, wholly enveloped in enormous faggots of tall thistle stems, carefully collected for fuel, a most precious commodity in these parts. The surrounding slopes were studded with the long black tents of the Bedouin, not collected in canvas villages, but scattered singly, a strong proof of security and peace; while countless flocks and herds grazed the wide amphitheatre. Nothing tells more plainly of the insecurity which has for ages cursed the land than the utter absence of isolated habitations, or of any dwellings in the plains. No matter how wide, how rich, how well cultivated a plain may be, like Acre or Esdraelon, its tame monotony is never relieved by a single village. These are all hidden in the nooks of the mountains; for no fellâhin or cultivators would venture to dwell where any night they might be harried by a party of Bedouin troopers, and to this risk they gladly prefer an hour or two's weary climb added to their daily toil; while no traveller would dream of encamping even for a night in the open plain.

The walls of the basin of Ard el Hamma were basalt, but the bottom limestone, covered with fragments of lava and pumice. The geological configuration of the district could here be easily traced, a series of long ridges running from north to south, once liquid currents of volcanic matter, which had overrun the limestone hills, becoming smoother and slower in their course as they cooled, and most of them exhausted before reaching the shores of the lake It was easy to see where the current had finally ceased. In one place, a mile south of Tiberias, it suddenly broke off in a dyke about a hundred feet high; on descending

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which we came upon the old limestone cliffs which enclose the plain that fringes the lake. There is no indication whatever of the volcanic origin of the lake itself. The whole of the surrounding rocks are sedimentary, occasionally overflowed by lava streams from the north and north-east, which here and there, as at Tell Hûm, have toppled over into the water.

For nearly three hours we had ridden on, with Hermon in front, sparkling through its light cloud mantle, but still no sight of the Sea of Galilee. One ridge after another had been surmounted, when on a sudden the calm blue basin, slumbering in placid sweetness beneath its surrounding wall of hills, burst upon us, and we were looking down on the hallowed scenes of our Lord's ministry. We were on the brow of a very steep hill. Below us was a narrow plain, sloping to the sea, the beach of which we could trace to its northern extremity. At our feet lay the city of Tiberias, the only remaining town on its shores, enclosed by crumbling fortifications with shattered but once massive round bastions. Along that fringe, could we have known where to find them, lay the remains of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum. Opposite to us were the heights of the country of the Gadarenes, and the scene of the feeding of the 5,000. On some one of the slopes beneath us the Sermon on the Mount was delivered. The first gaze on the Sea of Galilee, lighted up with the bright sunshine of a spring afternoon, was one of the moments of life not soon or easily forgotten. It was different from my expectations; our view was so commanding. In some respects it recalled in miniature the first view of the Lake of Geneva, from the crest of the Jura, as it is approached by the old Besançon road—Hermon taking the place of Mont Blanc; the plain of Gennesaret recalling the Pays de Vaud; and the steep banks opposite the bold coast of Savoy. All looked small for the theatre of such great events, but all the incidents

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seemed brought together as in a diorama. There was a calm peacefulness in the look of these shores on the west, with the paths by the water's edge, which made them the fitting theatre for the delivery of the message of peace and reconciliation.

We soon descended the zigzag path to the city of



TIBERIAS.

Tiberias. The northern portion, once the Mohammedan quarter, is almost wholly in ruins, having been overthrown in the great earthquake of 1837. Within the walls there was here a large open space, where we could descry our tents being erected, and two other European tents standing

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near them. We stepped across a prostrate marble column, forming the threshold of the dilapidated and gateless portals, and arrived at our camp. It faced the lake, with a sea-wall and a crumbling bastion built into it in front of us, and a group of fine palm-trees forming a foreground. Behind, in the arches of the old castle, our horses had found good stabling, and we were welcomed from the other tents by two Jewish missionaries, a clergyman and medical man, on circuit from Jerusalem to visit the Jews here. An hour or two of daylight remained, and we hurried down for a stroll on the beach of the sacred lake. Fish were leaping in the calm water, and numbers of birds, chiefly grebes of three species, and many gulls, were on its surface. It was a promising ornithological field.

We then walked across the city through the Jews' quarter. The Sabbath had begun, for it was Friday evening, and the sun had set. The synagogue services were going on. Contrary to the usual state of things, the women's portion was as well filled as the men's, and by the light of many bright lamps the Psalms were being read with much discordant noise and incessant bowings. Tiberias is almost exclusively a Jewish town. The houses, with their open doors, looked clean and bright inside for the Sabbath; the people were dressed in their best, the women, somewhat like the Jewesses of Algiers, with rich silk frocks and gold lace fronts, but with elegant long sleeves, and a white kefiyeh over the head. They were generally handsome, and some of the girls very beautiful and fair. The men wore shabby broad-brim hats, and long silk dressing-gowns with a girdle. The dressing-gowns were all of the brightest colours, pea-green, or yellow, with purple stripe, being the favourite fashions; and a long curl hung down on each side of the face.

I never beheld a more lovely picture than the rise of the moon this evening exactly opposite us, over the cliffs of Fik (Apheca), the country of the Gergesenes, sending her

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soft beams across the silver sea to the group of palm-trees in our front, which formed a wondrous setting. Byron might have been on this spot when he penned the lines—

> "And the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea,
> When the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Galilee."

*February 27th.*—The sunrise was as majestic as the moon had been lovely, and before the morning rays had gilded the lake, we set off to visit the plain of Gennesaret, and reconnoitre for a camping-ground away from the town. It was a delightful walk, as for three miles we kept along the narrow strip of beach, sometimes receding into a sloping field, sometimes contracting into a mere rugged path, which unites the slopes of Tiberias with the fertile El Ghuweir, the central point of the life and works of our Redeemer. Just before reaching Mejdel, we crossed a little open valley, the Ain-el-Barideh, with a few rich corn-fields and gardens straggling among the ruins of a village, and some large and more ancient foundations by several copious fountains, probably identified with the Dalmanutha of the New Testament. (Mark viii. 10.) The steep cliffs then come close down to the shore, with a path over a low shoulder; and thence recede, leaving a wide marshy plain, at the corner of which, by the water's edge, is the squalid and filthy collection of hovels called Mejdel (Migdol or Magdala), with a crumbling and not very ancient watch-tower, once perhaps the key of the entrance to the plain. This is all that remains of a spot, whence is derived a name familiar and loved through Christendom.

We found it would not be safe to encamp in the low swampy ground, but selected a little plateau about 500 feet up, on the south side of the plain, where we should have space and plentiful pasturage, far removed from the malaria of the marsh. While walking along we had an opportunity of watching the mode of fishing as it is now

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carried on. An old Arab sat on a low cliff, and threw poisoned crumbs of bread as far as he could reach, which the fish seized, and turning over dead, were washed ashore, and collected for the market. The shoals were marvellous—black masses of many hundred yards long, with the black fins projecting out of the water as thickly as they could pack. No wonder that any net should break which enclosed such a shoal. Yet, though the lake swarms with fish—as I could not have believed water could swarm—there are but two boats existing on its whole extent, besides a ferry boat. We secured this morning specimens of two species (*Chromis niloticus*, Hasselq. and *Hemichromis sacer*, Gthr., the former already obtained by the Dead Sea), but saw several other kinds. In every way we were repaid for our excursion. Scenery, fish, birds, butterflies, flowers, shells—in all we gathered a harvest. U. bore home a Bonelli's eagle in triumph, and we secured several grebes and gulls, having had to be our own retrievers, and to take no less than three swims in the lake to fetch out our game. But as the heat was becoming oppressive, we found the occasional change of element most grateful.

In the afternoon we returned in larger force to lay siege to a vulture's eyrie we had descried near Ain el Barideh. We were only ten feet below the cave when out flew a noble cinereous vulture (*Vultur monachus*, L.), the first we had seen. S. climbed up, and soon came forth exhibiting one great egg, the first oological capture of the season, and the only thoroughly identified egg of this king of the vultures which we obtained. The parent bird kept wheeling about us for a quarter of an hour afterwards, and gave us every opportunity of carefully identifying the species.

I afterwards spent a couple of hours in the missionary tent. It being their Sabbath, the Jews had leisure, and crowds of them resorted thither, drawn chiefly by the

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opportunity of obtaining medicines (as there is not a single professor of the healing art at Tiberias), but partly also by curiosity. While the doctor dispensed for ague and ophthalmia, Mr. Fleishaker continued to address the people, sometimes in German, sometimes in Arabic. The Polish Jews, very numerous here, were willing to listen, and several of them brought money to purchase German New Testaments; but the native Jews, with whom were mingled a few Moslems, were occasionally very violent in their expressions. They would listen to a few sentences, and then, so soon as Christ was declared to have borne our sins, they would stop their ears, and shriek out, like their fathers of old, "He hath spoken blasphemy, blasphemy." Mr. F. took it all very patiently, and from dawn to dusk, except during a two hours' rest, continued his address, with occasional discussions, standing at the tent door, while the doctor sat within. Some half-dozen inquirers were sitting reading inside, while an ever-changing group stood without, some interested, others mocking and jeering. The children kept crying out, "This is our land, and shall be ours again: why should Christians defile it?" The Rabbis had taken the alarm, and issued an anathema against any one who should visit the tent; but, as the Jews are a stiff-necked race, and will not be driven, the anathema produced rather a favourable effect.

On the Sunday both camps combined for English service, after which Mr. F. held a Hebrew service in his tent, to which a crowd came and listened with interest. It is difficult to believe that this shattered place is the theological University of the Jews, that it has been the depository of Rabbinical learning ever since the destruction of Jerusalem, and that here the Talmud was completed. Tiberias is, in truth, with all its surroundings, an apt type of the decayed and scattered people, with their musty and crumbling learning. The schools of the Rabbis are held in the various little synagogues, but there are

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several private houses where lectures are given; and the whole University, with its students gathered from north and west, and attaching themselves to their several Rabbis, recalls the traditions of the schools and halls of Oxford or Salamanca in the Middle Ages. We should have liked to see the pupils sitting at the feet of some of these modern Gamaliels, but did not venture to intrude so far on their privacy.

We afterwards walked along the shore towards the south, and visited the old Roman baths (the Hammath of Josh. xix. 35), now sadly decayed, and patched with fragments of Roman marble sculptures. Crowds of patients were enjoying their ablutions; and the hot sulphurous water, bursting from four different springs at a temperature of 140° Fahr., is highly prized as a curative for the rheumatisms so common in the hill country. Thence a walk of three miles brought us nearly to the southern end of the lake, where we saw the Jordan emerging quietly in the middle of a flat marshy plain, left by the enclosing ridges, which still run parallel to each other. On the west side, where we stood, were the indistinct ruins of Kerak (Tarichea); while opposite, in the same flat plain, we could see the still populous village of Semakh. No feature marked the exit of the Jordan, as tame and obscure here in its second birth as in its final entrance to its grave beyond Jericho.

*February 29th.*—We early visited the fish market, for the fishermen here, as elsewhere, toil all night; but though they reckon fourteen species of fishes as inhabiting the lake, they reject most of them as uneatable. There had been but one boat out, and the trays of fish were spread in the streets, having been bought, by the retailers, in basketsfull. It was cheap and abundant, but of only four species—the two we had already obtained, and two barbels (*Barbus longiceps*, Cuv., and *Labeobarbus canis*, Cuv.), very bony, and all of them poor eating, even in

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comparison with Mediterranean fish. The houses are placed without order or arrangement, as though they had been pitched down from a sand cloud, but for the most part looked clean within, as striving to falsify the proverb that "the king of the fleas holds his court at Tiberias."

Having secured our fishes, and seen the camp in motion for the plain of Gennesaret, we bargained with the fishermen to take us in their boat for the day to survey the upper end of the lake. The sun beat fiercely down, and one after another of the party landed, unwilling to endure the heat, till I was left the last. We had just put B. ashore near Mejdel, when, rounding the point, a fresh breeze sprang up from the western shore. We spread sail, and ran to the north. Suddenly, as we passed a slight opening in the hills, the breeze increased, and the little boat dashed merrily up to the head of the lake. I put in for a few minutes to visit the pretty stream and mill of Ain et Tabighah, identified by many with Bethsaida, and afterwards landed at the projecting point of Tell Hûm—strewn with fragments of capitals, friezes, and sarcophagi—the old Capernaum. Thence we put across, and landed under a clump of palm-trees, which on the east side marks the entrance of the Jordan into the lake. Its banks were low and grassy, and the stream rapid and muddy in contrast with the clear blue water below. In the marshy ground were some herds of buffaloes, standing half-buried in the mud, the descendants of the bulls of Bashan; and near the shore were the wattled huts and tents of large parties of Ghawarîneh, who have here a fine and fertile pasturage. Tobacco fields, and patches of millet, cucumber, rice, maize, and sesame were scattered unfenced over the plain. I found these Arabs civil and obliging, and they conducted me to the ruins of two villages near the shore, Mesadiyeh and Araj, at neither of which were there any decipherable remains. We were very near the scene of the miracle of the feeding the 5,000, which was probably on the grassy slope about a



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mile behind. We put out again for Mejdel, and I obtained two or three of the great crested grebe, and a magnificent specimen of the royal eagle gull (*Larus ichthyaëtos*, Pall.), by far the most magnificent species of its kind in the world. We touched at two or three points on the eastern shore, where I saw there was but a very narrow strip of beach below the limestone cliffs which rise steeply behind. But now the wind continued to increase, and the further we were from a lee shore the better. The boat would not beat, and, with its latteen sail close to the wind, made very little way. We were nearly in the centre of the lake, so far as we could judge by the distant lights on shore, for it was now pitch dark, and, finding we made only leeway, had to take in the sail and ply the oars. My boatmen, two young Jews and a Moslem, wished now to run to the south, and wait at anchor for the morning, rather than pull any longer. I insisted, however, on their trying to make the western shore. Vividly now came home to my mind, as I squatted down under the shelter of the little poop, with the waves beating over our bows, the story of the disciples all night "toiling in rowing, for the wind was contrary." (Mark vi. 48.)

It was eleven o'clock before we reached Tiberias, hungry and cold; but I would not willingly have missed that practical Bible lesson, and that illustration of a trifling Scriptural incident and expression. Seeing a light still burning in the Mission-tent, I called there. My friends would not allow me to walk alone to Gennesaret, and insisted on sending to the Governor for two soldiers to accompany me. Soon two good-humoured Bashibazouks appeared, and, heavily laden with my bundles of gulls and grebes, I had a weary walk over the rocky ground in the dark, and, when we reached the plain, missed the path up to our tents, which we did not recover till our signal guns were heard and answered. My comrades, who had seen us through their glasses "toiling in rowing," did not expect

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me till the morning; but Giacomo—prudent soul!—had kept back a portion of soup, which was soon heated; while I dismissed my ragged guard with a backshîsh, which made us popular with the garrison of Tiberias ever after.

*March* 1—8.—These eight days were fully occupied in exploring the neighbourhood of the western coast of the Lake of Galilee, chiefly with a view to its natural history. Other objects were not neglected, for it would have been almost sacrilege to devote a week about Gennesaret to fishing, nesting, and collecting, without remembering, comparing, and exploring the many hallowed associations of this consecrated district. The weather was fine, with only one or two showers; and it would be difficult to picture a more lovely position and prospect than our camp afforded. The sloping ledge on which our tents were pitched rose 500 feet above the sea, projecting northwards into the plain with a very steep descent; while beetling cliffs, 800 feet behind us, afforded a home to scores of griffons, to lanner falcons, and to ravens, and once—but that was two thousand years ago—to the most formidable band of robbers that ever infested the country. In front, spread out at our feet, lay the green marshy plain of Gennesaret (El Ghuweir), with the mud hovels of Mejdel, the only remaining dwellings on that once busy scene of industry. At the further extremity, at the water's edge, we could just make out Khan Minyêh, supposed by some to be the site of Capernaum.

Over it, and over the basalt streams which form its background, towers the long face of snowy Hermon, in beautiful relief against the deep blue sky. To the north of the plain, in front, the limestone is all covered with basalt or trap, which has run down there into the sea, in a wide-spread, and probably shallow, stream, rather than in a stiff column; for it slopes very gently, though ruggedly, down. There seem to have been three principal streams of basalt here from the north—this one of Tell Hûm the third,



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which is arrested on the plain of Hattin; and the second, which has run between them, and largely encroached on the plain before us, but which is seamed and furrowed by several wadys, which penetrate the limestone beneath, and



PLAIN OF GENNESARET.

open out some fine rocky gorges. On our right we command a view of two-thirds of the lake—pale blue, with its glassy surface here and there gently stirred by some unseen gust from a mountain gorge, on both sides of which the waters repose in crystal-like calmness, mirroring the great

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sea-birds, eagle-gulls, and cormorants, which lazily flap their heavy wings over it. Here and there one may see a dark patch, revealing the presence of one of those marvellous shoals of fish, the most striking phenomenon of the lake. Ain Tabighah (Bethsaida) and Tell Hûm can be descried in front, embayed in the shore, which gently curves to the Jordan's mouth at the furthest extremity. On the other side, rich green slopes gradually rise, till lost in the distance towards the north-east, where the high plateau of Bashan reveals only its steep front, from the Wady of Fik (Aphek), the conjectured scene of the destruction of the herd of swine; as it is the recorded site of the catastrophe which buried a Syrian army (1 Kings xx. 30);* and the furrowed and wrinkled cliffs appear to descend sheer into the deep water, till our view of the south end of the lake is cut short by the corner of the mountain on which we are perched.

The acoustic properties of our enclosed position deserve to be noticed. We could hear the voices of the women at Mejdel 590 feet below us, and half a mile to the right. The Sermon on the Mount was probably delivered in this immediate neighbourhood, and it is difficult, without actually visiting the locality, to understand how many spots there are which exactly suit the conditions of the history. For instance, had it been on this border of the plain, our Lord might have climbed a few yards up the steep bank, and sat down on one of the many round boulders which project on its face, and then a vast multitude, ranged as in an amphitheatre below Him, could have heard every word, while His disciples sat closer round at His feet on the slope. One loves to draw such pictures of the imagination in these hallowed spots.

The lilies of the field are all out, a few tulips (*Tulipa gesneriana*) covers the rocks, but the scarlet anemone

* "Aphek, which did furnish both death and grave-stones to 27,000 Syrians."—FULLER.

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(*Anemone coronaria*, L.) now dominates everywhere, and a small blue bulbous iris, almost rivalling it in abundance and brilliancy of colour. There have been many claimants for the distinctive honour of "the lilies of the field;" but while it seems most natural to view the term as a generic expression, yet if one special flower was more likely than another to catch the eye of the Lord as He spoke, no one familiar with the flora of Palestine in spring-time can hesitate in assigning the place to the anemone.

While the flowers of the plain, with the exception of the anemone, differed from those of the hills, the butterflies, which now for the first time in our travels were abundant, curiously enough were for the most part identical with those of England, many of which reappear here after being supplanted by cognate species in Eastern and Southern Europe. Thus the Painted Lady (*Cynthia cardui*), the large and small cabbage whites (*Pontia brassica* and *P. rapi*), swallow-tail (*Papilio machaon*), clouded orange (*Colias edusa*), were mingled with several Nubian and Egyptian species, and our own orange tip (*Anthocharis cardaminis*) take the place of the South European *A. eupheno*. The land-shells were few, but the fresh-water shells innumerable in individuals, though limited in numbers of species. In fact, the gravel of the whole beach is composed almost exclusively of fluviatile shells, whole or comminuted, with a very trifling admixture of sand.

Besides the tower at Mejdel, and some undistinguishable heaps, and a few walls at Khan Minyêh, the only noticeable remains in the Ghuweir are those of the Fountain of Ain Mudawarah, at its western extremity. But the plain is watered and rendered very marshy by several streams; Wady Hamâm, "Ravine of Pigeons" (well so named), draining from Hattin and the east of the Buttauf, Wady Mudawarah, and Wady el Amud, close to the mouth of which is Ain Miniyeh. The first and last of these scoop

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deep savage gorges in the limestone cliffs before entering the plain, and in their course are the traces of ancient baths or reservoirs. The basin of Ain Mudawarah is unlike any other we have seen. In the centre of a well-built circular reservoir, about thirty yards in diameter, is a plenteous spring. The walls are about eight feet high, and the water was now three feet deep, and occasionally a little more. The stream gushes through a little opening at the east side, over stones covered with black melanopsis shells, and, being immediately joined by several other streamlets, flows down to the lake in a deep channel fringed with oleanders and brambles. There are only the faintest traces of other ruins near, and no local tradition to explain this elaborate relic of antique civilisation. We rode down every morning to take our warm bath in this charming spot. The basin swarms with fish of several sorts, and is the spawning-bed of the bream, or *Chromis nilotica*. But its most remarkable inhabitants are numbers of the cat-fish (*Clarias macracanthus*, Gthr.), the "κορακῖνος" of Josephus, which conceal themselves in the sand and mud at the bottom, and reach, in some of the specimens we obtained, the length of a yard. Several wild fig-trees hung in fantastic shapes over the sides of the bath, and slender oleanders bowed their pink tufts of blossom to the breeze, while the gorgeous blue and red kingfisher (*Halcyon smyrnensis*, L.) sat motionless, watching for its prey, and francolins and quails called incessantly in the marsh and bean fields.

A little way above the fountain pushes down one of the basaltic streams of which I have spoken. Its formation is here admirably illustrated. The base of the low ridge is hard crystalline limestone, with a dip of 4° 5′ S.E. Upon the top of this has been poured the columnar basalt, like the black dorsal fin of a fish when viewed sideways. But the basalt has not reached the end of the limestone ridge, and abruptly stops in cracked and splintered fragments.

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The whole slope in front of it is strewn with cinders, boulders, and lumps of columnar basalt, which have gradually become detached from the edge of the stream, and have rolled down.

I may mention here a little excursion which I made a month later (on 31st March) from this spot, as it completes our survey of the western shores of the lake. Taking with me a mounted guide from Mejdel, I rode across to Khan Minyêh, the ruins at which spot are assigned by Dr. Robinson to Capernaum, but which Colonel Wilson, I believe rightly, has assigned to Bethsaida of Galilee.* The Khan, an early Saracenic structure, though now in ruins, contains some perfect chambers, which are used as cattle-sheds by the Arabs; and in some of these I found the nests and eggs of the common kestrel, and of the pretty rufous swallow (*Hirundo rufula*, Tem.). A few yards nearer the shore, a large fountain bursts from the rocks, pouring forth a copious supply of the sweetest water (strangely slandered by some writers, who can never have tasted it) under the shade of three vigorous fig-trees,† from which it obtains its name.

The stream pours into the plain about ninety-five feet lower down, where it forms a luxuriant marsh, close to the edge of the shore, skirted with oleanders, but composed almost entirely of the Egyptian papyrus (*Papyrus antiquorum*, L.), which we here met with for the first time, growing in the greatest luxuriance, and attaining the length of sixteen feet, with its triangular stem three inches in diameter, and crowned with its graceful feathery tufts. This thicket was the home of (besides the Smyrna kingfisher) the great white egret (*Herodias alba*), the little egret, the bittern, the little bittern, and the purple galli-

* *Recovery of Jerusalem*, p. 387.

† Dr. Bonar can surely never have visited the true locality, for he emarks, "It gets the name of Ain et Tin from some fig-trees which probably grew near it, but have now disappeared."—*Land of Promise*, p. 437.

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nule (*Porphyrio hyacinthus*), all of which I put up in a few minutes. On the other side of it, near the water, are the traces, rather than the remains, of an extensive collection of buildings, an ancient city, now wholly ploughed over. The place lost none of its interest to me from its disputed identification. Whatever it be, many times must our Redeemer have trodden the path by that fountain, and probably often those walls below it re-echoed the voice of Him who spake as never man spake. Beneath that cliff He doubtless often read the law, and expounded it to the crowds of a once busy city, the woe of which has indeed been most literally fulfilled.

Passing north from Ain et Tin, the path is cut through the limestone-rock round the edge of the bluff,* which here also descends sheer to the water's edge, *wholly interrupting any passage by the shore*, and leaving no beach. We rode up this, and immediately descended to the beach again, where, keeping to the water's edge, we reached Ain Tabighah in less than half an hour; marked by a bright purling stream, still utilised to turn the wheel of a corn-mill, which, covered with maiden-hair fern, and shrubs growing in all directions out of its dilapidated walls and arches, forms a most picturesque object. There are a few Roman traces here, perhaps in the aqueduct, certainly in a circular reservoir behind. The water of the numerous fountains here was warm and brackish. Here, too, is a small fishing-boat, which supplies the market of Safed—the only one, besides that of Tiberias, on the whole lake. The miller came out as I was looking round, and I inquired if he had any fish, hoping to find some new species to add to my collection. He replied, "Yes," and ran towards what looked to be a little stack of rushes, but

* This path is actually the channel of an old aqueduct, conveying the water from Ain Tabighah to the Plain. Its connexion was first traced by Sir C. Wilson, R.E., of the Palestine Exploration Fund, subsequently to the publication of the earlier editions of this work.

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which was in reality the home of the fisherman, whose net was spread on the shore to dry. Out of the rushes emerged a brawny, stark-naked man, who began to prepare his net for a cast. This mode of fishing is by swimming out a little way with the net, casting it, and then returning to shore to draw it in. The Government taxes the boats so exorbitantly, that it is the only way in which the poor can afford to fish. I explained to him I had not time to wait for fish being caught, and rode on to Tell Hûm, two miles beyond, a desolate spot on a projecting point, overgrown with rank nettles and thistles, of enormous size, which covered the prostrate blocks, and rendered it difficult to pass among them. My guide had a superstitious dread of the place, and left me to wander alone. Several sarcophagi, of white marble, fragments of marble shafts—some of them double columns—friezes, pilasters, capitals, and portions of elaborate carvings, most of them in a debased style, strew the ground for three or four acres continuously, besides a few large fragments of walls, extending to some distance beyond.

What is called the White Synagogue is the most important of these ruins. There can now be no question that this was a synagogue, and not a church or basilica, from a comparison of its character and proportions with other synagogues with Hebrew inscriptions over their main entrances in other parts of Galilee. If Tell Hûm be Capernaum, this is without a doubt the synagogue built by the Roman centurion (Luke vii., 4, 5.), and one of the most sacred places on earth. As Sir C. Wilson remarks, "It was in this building that our Lord gave the well-known discourse in John vi.; and it was not without a certain strange feeling that, on turning over a large block, we found the pot of manna engraved on its face, and remembered the words, 'I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead.'"—(*Recovery of Jerusalem*, p. 345).

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Not a living thing could be seen near Tell Hûm. That shore was swarming with fish as ever, but no boat disturbed it. I sat under the shade of a wild fig-tree, on the only portion of what may be called *beach*, near the ruins, where perhaps St. Peter and the sons of Zebedee may have also sat, sorted their fish, and dried their nets. Perhaps I was on that hallowed spot whence went forth the commission to those fishermen to evangelise the whole earth. And, as if to teach how entirely the Gospel is a spiritual and not a localised worship, behold the utter desolation of its earthly cradle! Thus musing, I was startled by the apparition of another naked man, with only a white woollen skull-cap, emerging from a thicket of oleanders, now in all the splendour of their full bloom. He was a fisherman passing along the shore; and the surprise was mutual. As I rode on afterwards, I observed that all the men on this part of the coast were quite naked, and wondered whether it were so of old, and whether Peter was found thus when he girt his fisher's coat about him (John xxi. 7). It is, perhaps, one of the hottest spots in the world, and these naked fishermen move as naturally in the water as on land; but the custom bespeaks a barbarism which can scarcely have been tolerated in former times.

After crossing several little rocky rills we soon reached the Upper Ghor, or flat plain, about four miles wide, of the richest alluvial mud, where the Jordan enters the lake. The west side was covered with fellâhin huts, the east with Bedouin tents; the only object which breaks the dead level of the prospect being the clump of palm-trees. We rode through several fields of tobacco, and patches of cucumbers and melons. No oleanders or shrubs here mark the course of the Jordan, which, turbid and muddy, rolls rapidly through low oozy banks to the lake. More than a gunshot wide at its mouth, it rapidly contracts higher up. White storks, herons, spurwing plover, and gull-billed terns were abundant. I shot a specimen of the great crested grebe

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in full plumage, after which an Arab boy swam out, and brought it back against stream with wonderful agility, bargaining all the while as to the amount of his backshîsh. About two miles up was the ford to the "tell" of the ancient Bethsaida, not very deep, but across a rapid stream with muddy bottom. On a rising ground, a mile back from the river, stood, at the edge of a low spur from the northward, a miserable Ghawârineh village, worse than that of Er Riha, among heaps of shapeless stones—the ancient Julias; but no traces of sarcophagi or carved stones were to be seen, probably because the ancient buildings had all been constructed of the hard black basalt (hammer-dressed), of which the heaps were composed. There was abundant grass, and abundant space here for the multitudes to have sat down, while the disciples distributed the miraculously-supplied provision; and doubtless it was by the ford we had just used that they crossed over from the other side. I could see that the eastern cliffs were composed, like the western, of sedimentary rocks, covered in places by the basalt. From Bethsaida we had to ride quickly back, overtaken by the darkness, for I had already spent twelve hours in this lonely but deeply interesting excursion.

I had now repeatedly visited the sites on the western shores of the lake, the identification of which with the several cities where most of our Lord's mighty works were done, is a question of no little difficulty. Each writer has propounded a theory of his own; and I am not ashamed to confess that I have seen cause to modify, and, in some points, to change the opinions expressed in former editions of this book, owing to the important discoveries and careful topographical researches of the officers of the Palestine Exploration Fund.

We have only two ancient authorities to guide us as to the geographical position of Capernaum, Chorazin, and Bethsaida—the New Testament and Josephus. The land

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of Gennesaret, according to both, was situated on the western side of the lake,* for thither our Lord passed over when he had been at the east side. Josephus describes it as thirty furlongs in length, and twenty in breadth, the exact extent of the Ghuweir, so fruitful that all sorts of trees will grow upon it, and enjoying perpetual spring.† Not the slightest question can arise as to the identification of Gennesaret with the modern El Ghuweir. Dr. Robinson has clearly shown‡ that Capernaum and Bethsaida were in, or close to, this plain. After the death of John the Baptist, our Lord withdrew by water to a solitary place at the north-east end of the lake. Here he fed the 5,000, and then desired His disciples to pass over, according to St. Mark,§ to Bethsaida; according to St. John,‖ they went towards Capernaum. When our Lord entered the boat, immediately, says St. John,¶ it was at the land whither they went; while, according to SS. Matthew and Mark,** they came into the land of Gennesaret. The argument for the position of Capernaum in the plain of Gennesaret has been summed up very clearly by Lightfoot.†† Josephus, after describing in glowing language the fertility and climate of Gennesaret, goes on to say—"It is watered by a most fertile fountain, which the people of the country call Capharnaum. Some have thought this a vein of the Nile, since it produces a fish like the *coracinus* in the lake near Alexandria."‡‡

Will Tell Hûm answer the conditions of the geographical

* Matt. xiv. 34; Mark vi. 53.

† Jos. Bell. Jud. iii. (ix. 8 ed. Hudson); x. 8. Whiston's Translat.

‡ Robinson, Res. iii. 349.

§ Mark vi. 45. Εἰς τὸ πέραν πρὸς Βηθσαϊδάν.

‖ John vi. 17. Πέραν τῆς θαλάσσης εἰς Καπερναούμ.

¶ John vi. 21. ** Matt. xiv. 34; Mark vi. 53.

†† Lightfoot, Chorograph. Cent. ch. lxxx.

‡‡ Πηγῇ διάρδεται γονιμωτάτῃ. Καφαρναοὺμ αὐτὴν οἱ ἐπιχώριοι καλοῦσιν. Ταύτην φλέβα τοῦ Νείλου τινὲς ἔδοξαν, ἐπεὶ γεννᾷ τῷ κατὰ τὴν Ἀλεξανδρέων λίμνην κορακίνῳ παραπλήσιον. Jos. Bell. Jud. iii. ix. 8 (x. 8. Whiston's Translat.).

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indications of the Evangelist or Josephus? One great argument relied on by its advocates is philological; Hûm being supposed to be the contracted form for Tell-na-hûm, "Tell" being naturally substituted for "Kefr," when the spot ceased to be an inhabited *village*. The next argument is founded on the extent of ruins at Tell Hûm, not equalled elsewhere near the lake. Josephus calls it *a village*,* and it is remarkable, and an argument of no little weight, that extensive as are the ruins, there is no trace of walls or fortifications, while there is a basilica and the famous White Synagogue, 75 by 57 feet, and, outside, tombs of considerable size, which have been whitewashed, "whited sepulchres."

But, on the other hand, Tell Hûm does not at first sight meet the conditions of the Evangelists, for it cannot be said to be in the land of Gennesaret; nor of Josephus, for there is no fountain at Tell Hûm, and to place, with Dr. Thomson,† the inhabited Capernaum at Tell Hûm and the fountain Capharnaum of Josephus at Ain Tabighah, more than a mile to the southward, involves us in some difficulty.

Khan Minîyeh or Ain et Tin, the site selected by Dr. Robinson, in one respect better meets the requirements of the inspired text, for it is in the land of Gennesaret, on its northern edge. But I conceive that beyond this point the argument fails entirely. The words of Josephus are clear: the plain is watered through its course (διάρδεται) by the fountain Capharnaum.

The argument which most strongly led me formerly to support the claims of Ain Mudawarah to be Capernaum was the statement of Josephus, that Capharnaum produced the κορακῖνος, a fish like that of the lake near Alexandria. The fact is, that the remarkable siluroid the catfish, or coracine, (κορακῖνος) (*Clarias macracanthus*, Gunthr.)

* Εἰς κώμην Κεφαρνώμην λεγομένην. Jos. Vita. † 72.

† Thomson, *Land and Book*, p. 354.

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identical with the catfish of the ponds of Lower Egypt, does abound to a remarkable degree in the Round Fountain to this day. As I mentioned above, we obtained specimens a yard long, and some of them are deposited in the British Museum. The loose sandy bottom of this fountain is peculiarly adapted for this singular fish, which buries itself in the sediment, leaving only its feelers exposed.* It is doubtless found elsewhere in the lake itself, for I have a specimen obtained at the south end beyond the baths of Tiberias, but it was not to be seen on the surface like other fish; while here in the clear shallow water it may, when disturbed, be at once detected swimming in numbers along the bottom. But we did not find it at Ain et Tin, where the fountain could neither supply it with cover nor food; nor could we discover it at Ain Tabighah, where the water is hot and brackish. It is somewhat amusing to refer to the speculations of various writers about the fountain and the coracine, not one of whom seems ever to have thought of looking into the facts of the case. Dr. Robinson actually seizes upon the statement of Josephus as an argument against the Round Fountain. "More decisive, however, is the circumstance that the fountain Kapharnaum was held to be a vein of the Nile, because it produced a fish like the *coracinus* of that river. This might well be the popular belief as to a large fountain on the very shore, to which the lake in some seasons sets quite up" [?] "so that fish could pass and repass without difficulty. Not so, however, with the Round Fountain, which is a mile and a half from the shore, and which could neither itself have in it fish fit for use, nor could fish of any size pass between it and the lake."—*Robinson, Res.* iii. 351.

If the worthy doctor's arguments be worth anything, we can only exclaim, So much the worse for the facts! Dr.

* The κορακῖνος was well known and distinguished by the ancients. Κορακῖνον ἐπώνυμον αἴθοπι χροιῇ. Opp. Hal. i. 133.

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Thomson follows suit in the same tone. Speaking of "the *fable* about the fish *coracinus*," he proceeds: "We may admit that this fish was actually found in the fountain of Capernaum, and that this is a valid reason why the Round Fountain near the south end of Gennesaret could not be it!"—*Land and Book*, p. 354. Dr. Bonar,* in combating the claims of Ain et Tin, assumes the coracine to be "a fish quite different from any to be found in the lake," which does not necessarily follow if it were a remarkable and abundant production of the fountain, for Josephus could never mean to imply that the fish could not or did not pass to the lake, when evidence to the contrary must have been before his eyes. Dr. Bonar's note, while demolishing most satisfactorily the claims of Ain et Tin, does not invalidate the claims of either Ain Tabighah or Ain Mudawarah.

No doubt there are difficulties whatever sites we adopt. But the recent identification of Chorazin with Kerazeh by Sir C. Wilson, R.E., has settled that locality beyond dispute. Pococke heard the name in A.D. 1740 and identified it; but it had been overlooked by subsequent travellers. We visited the spot, but did not hear the name from our guides, who were not residents by the lake. The ruins are situated two miles and a half north of Tell Hûm away from the lake, on the Wady Kerazeh, called lower down Wady Tell Hûm. The buildings are of basalt, the black blocks of which stud the whole country round, and amongst them is a fine ruined synagogue and many houses still in a tolerably perfect state with their doorways and windows. In places the ancient road from Tell Hûm to Kerazeh may be traced.

Having thus identified Chorazin, we next turn to the site of Capernaum. The difficulties against Tell Hûm, when we turn to the details of Josephus, seemed to me insuperable, and would have still so remained had not

* Bonar, *Land of Promise*, p. 438.

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Sir C. Wilson discovered the aqueduct channel from Ain Tabighah into the Lake of Gennesaret. This at once resolves the question. We have here a round fountain; it is γονιμωτάτη (*i.e.*, most fruitful), and it waters the plain through this artificial method. True we did not find the coracine in it, but that is only a negative argument, and there is no reason why it may not have lived there. Then the five fountains which feed the reservoirs are abundant, and the large one is the most copious spring in Galilee. Admitting—as I think we must, after the discovery of the aqueduct—that this is the fountain of Kapharnaum of Josephus, where can we place the village itself? There is no trace of any ruins at Ain Tabighah, and we are, therefore, almost shut up to Tell Hûm, assuming that Josephus spoke loosely and generally of Gennesaret, so as to include the low lying plain north of Ain Tin.

Having thus accepted these two sites, there remains only Bethsaida, which we must then place at Khan Minîyeh with Ain Tin, where there are evident traces of an ancient city, though a small one.

We may observe that from Matt. xiv. 35 and Mark vi. 55, our Lord appears to have healed many *on His way from the shore to Capernaum.* This would naturally occur, when, after the boats had been run ashore at Ain Tabighah, the fountain and port of Capernaum, Jesus walked along the shore to His own city—Capernaum being placed at Tell Hûm.*

Wherever the cities stood, the absence of remains and the obliteration of their very names more utterly than of those of Sodom and Gomorrah, testify to a fulfilment of that prophetic woe, which, though not denounced against the walls and stones, but against those who dwelt in them,

* "Peter's wife's mother lay sick of a fever" at Capernaum. Country fever is to this day very prevalent in this seething plain and on its borders.



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is illustrated by their erasure from the face of the earth—"cast down to hell," lost, and forgotten, though consecrated by the presence and mighty works of the Divine Saviour. Capernaum in its oblivion preaches to Christendom a sermon more forcible than the columns of Tyre or the stones of Jerusalem.

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## CHAPTER XIX.

*Plain of Gennesaret — Wady Sellamah — Wady Leimûn — Fine Gorge — Caves — Birds — Wady Hamâm — Bird-nesting — Rope-climbing — Wild Animals — Kulat Ibn Maân — Robbers' Caves — Friendly Neighbourhood — Arab Fray — Funeral — Hattin — Crusaders' Defeat — Cheerful Village — Children — Departure of U. and S. — Our Dragoman deserts us — Visit to Agyle Agha — Arab Feast — Presentation Ceremonies — Wady Bireh — Castle of Belfort — Geology of the Ghor — Bridge across the Jordan — Sinuosity of the River — The Yarmuk (Hieromax) — Inundation of Basalt — Sulphurous Springs — Amatha — Um Keis — Ruins of Gadara — Field of Tombs — Stone Doors — Scene of the Miracle of the Healing of the Demoniac, not Gadara, but Gergesa — Its Situation — Route from Gadara — Loveliness of the Country — Oaks of Bashan — Cultivation — Alarms of Husbandmen — Taiyibeh — Dinner with Village Sheikh — Arrival at Tibneh.*

OUR excursions from our camp on Gennesaret were not confined to the borders of the lake. Rounding the spur which projects over Ain Mudawarah, we one day rode up the Wady Sellamah, which drains a large extent of country, the plain of Rameh, and opens out close to the Wady Amûd. Unlike the others, it has no deep gorge. At its entrance, on a platform above the plain, is a deserted village, Shûsheh, built perhaps of the materials of old Capernaum, and below are the ruins of a mill and of a bridge, the favourite resort of three kinds of kingfishers. Riding up its course (track there is none), we found ourselves in what might have been an English rural district. The impetuous brook ran between sandy banks fringed by a thicket of oleander and a prickly genista, both in full blossom, with luxuriant turf and corn patches gently sloping down on both sides. All was green, all cutivated or meadow. Yet no signs of



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human habitations. The Bedouin alone cultivates it, sows his corn and leaves it till harvest-time, unless when he comes with some hundreds of cattle, pitches his tent for a few days, and clears the pasture from some meadow patch. A solitary Bedouin lying on the bank, who warned us off his corn, was the only human being we met in our day's ramble.

Very different was the adjoining Wady Leimûn, through which flows the Amûd from Safed southwards. A narrow gorge with limestone cliffs from 500 to 700 feet high, into which the sun never penetrates, walls the rapid brook on each side so closely that we often had to ride in the bed of the stream. The cliffs are perforated with caves at all heights, wholly inaccessible to man, the secure resting-places of hundreds of noble griffons, some lammergeyers, lanner falcons, and several species of eagle. But no description can give an adequate idea of the myriads of rock pigeons (*Columba schimperi*, Bp.). In absolute clouds they dashed to and fro in the ravine, whirling round with a rush and a whirr that could be felt like a gust of wind. It was amusing to watch them upset the dignity and the equilibrium of the majestic griffon as they swept past him. The enormous bird, quietly sailing alone, was quite turned on his back by the sudden rush of wings and wind. One tall isolated pillar stood out, an island in the ravine, tenanted by griffons on all sides. Two pair of them remained on the peak quietly scrutinising us as we rode below, a fine subject for the pencil. Rich and rare plants, gorgeous arums (*Arum spectabile*), *Onosma syriacum*, and others, grew on the rocks quite out of reach. The wall-creeper showed his crimson shoulders as he ran up the cliffs, far above shot, while the Alpine and Galilean swifts screamed overhead. Our day in this ravine well repaid us, though so terrific were the precipices that it was quite impossible to reach any of the nests with which it swarmed.

We were more successful, however, in the Wady Hamâm, at the south-west end of the plain, the entrance from Hattin

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and the Buttauf, where we spent three days in exploration. The cliffs, though reaching the height of 1,500 feet, rise like terraces, with enormous masses of *débris*, and the wady is half a mile wide. By the aid of Giacomo, who proved himself an expert rope-climber, we reaped a good harvest of griffons' eggs; some of the party being let down by ropes, while those above were guided in working them by signals from others below in the valley. It required the aid of a party of a dozen to capture these nests. The idea of scaling these cliffs with ropes was quite new to some Arabs who were herding cattle above, and who could not, excepting one little girl, be induced to render any assistance. She proved herself most nimble and efficient in telegraphing. The child had an ornament of a style I never saw before—instead of nose-rings, a turquoise pin-head was fastened through the flesh, flat to the nose, on each side of her nostrils.

We never met with so many wild animals as on one of these days. First of all, a wild boar got out of some scrub close to us, as we were ascending the valley. U. sent a ball into him, but he carried it off. Then a deer was started below, ran up the cliff, and wound along the ledge, passing close to us. Then a large ichneumon almost crossed my feet, and ran into a cleft; and while endeavouring to trace him, I was amazed to see a brown Syrian bear clumsily but rapidly clamber down the rocks and cross the ravine. He was, however, far too cautious to get within hailing distance of any of the riflemen. While working the ropes above, we could see the gazelles tripping lightly at the bottom of the valley, quite out of reach and sight of our companions at the foot of the cliff. L., who was below, also saw an otter, which came out of the water, and stood and looked at him for a minute with surprise. Five great griffons were shot by S. and U., the preparation of whose highly-scented skins was no light task for the taxidermists.

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While capturing the griffons' nests, we were re-enacting a celebrated siege in Jewish history. Close to us, at the head of the cliffs which form the limits of the celebrated Plain of Hattin, were the ruins of Irbid, the ancient Arbela, marked principally by the remains of a synagogue, of which some marble shafts and fragments of entablature, like those at Tell Hûm, are still to be seen, and were afterwards visited by us.* The long series of chambers and galleries in the face of the precipice are called by the Arabs Kulat Ibn Maân, and are very fully described by Josephus. These cliffs were the home of a set of bandits, who resided here with their families, and for years set the power of Herod the Great at defiance. At length, when all other attempts at scaling the fortress had failed, he let down soldiers at this very spot in boxes, by chains, who attacked the robbers with long hooks, and succeeded in rooting them all out.† The exploit was familiar to us by an engraving of the *Penny Magazine* of old; and little did we then dream that we should one day storm these very caves in a similar way ourselves. We could not but regret that Herod had neglected to leave his chains and grappling-irons for our use. The rock-galleries, though now only tenanted by griffons, are very complete and perfect, and beautifully built. Long galleries wind backwards and forwards in the cliff-side, their walls being built of dressed stone, flush with the precipice, and often opening into spacious chambers. Tier after tier rise one after another, with projecting windows, connected by narrow staircases, carried sometimes upon arches, and in the upper portions rarely broken away. In many of the upper chambers, to which we were let down, the dust of ages had accumulated, undisturbed by any foot save that of the birds of the air;

* Hosea mentions the place apparently as a strong fortress, "All thy fortresses shall be spoiled, as Shalman spoiled Beth-arbel in the day of battle." Hosea x. 14. Possibly the prophet here refers to the refuges in the rocks below.

† Ant. Jud. xiv. 15, 4; Bell. Jud. i. 16, 2—4.

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and here we rested during the heat of the day, with the plain and lake set as in a frame before us.* We obtained a full oological harvest, as in three days we captured fourteen nests of griffons. The lammergeyers escaped us, having already reared their young; and none of the other denizens had yet begun to devote themselves to family cares. U. and S. here at length obtained several specimens of the Galilean swift.

We found ourselves perfectly safe in this rather lawless district, under the name and protection of Agyle Agha. Our guards were quite overpowered with the hospitality of the neighbourhood, and dined out every evening at some camp or village. It being Ramadan, when no true Moslem can touch food or water from sunrise to sunset, late dinners were in fashion; and our valiant spearmen used to ride home about midnight, singing at the top of their voices, and then, picketing their horses, would throw themselves down on the grass to sleep, as neither they nor the muleteers ever dreamt of a tent. The girls from Mejdel used to bring us milk, eggs, chickens, and fish every morning; so that, though we could get neither mutton nor goats' flesh, we were well supplied.

I watched one morning an Arab funeral just below us. The body was brought outside the village, stripped, laid on a board, and, while the women washed it, and stuffed the eyes, ears, mouth, and nose with cotton-wool, the men dug a grave. It was then buried, without further ceremony or covering, and the whole party, having yelled two or three times, "There is one God, and Mohammed is His prophet," filled up the grave under a bush, and returned. Poor creatures! dark and ignorant they live, and so they die. They seem to have no fears and little hope for the future, beyond a notion that all the Moslems will get to Paradise at last, and none others.

* These caverns have been visited and described by Burckhardt, Irby, and Wilson, and seen by Robinson and Thomson.

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*March 9th.*—We turned towards Nazareth, having an interesting though very sultry ride up the savage chasm of Wady Hamâm, by the Robbers' Cave, the ruins of Arbela, and thence, leaving the horns of Hattin on our left, to Hattin itself—a mud village in a wide plain, its outskirts planted with olive and fig-yards, and open patches of



HATTIN.

green corn; the fig-tree just now pushing its tender leaves, and telling us "that summer was nigh." We could not but remember with a sigh that on this plain, between the village of Lubieh and the "horns,"—two mounds, scarcely peaks, side by side, with a slope between them—was fought, in A.D. 1187, the battle of Hattin, the

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last blow that crushed the army of the Crusaders, and finally extinguished Christian rule in Palestine.

The people of Hattin were a marked contrast to those of Mejdel—bright and almost clean. Instead of the filthy, undersized haggard women, in monotonous dark blue rags, to be seen in Arab villages, bright faces and bright colours met us here. The costume was peculiar, all the women, girls, and boys being dressed in long tight gowns, or cassocks, of scarlet silk, with diagonal yellow stripes, and generally a bright red and blue or yellow jacket over them; while their cheeks were encircled by dollars and piastres, after the Nazareth fashion, and some of the more wealthy wore necklaces of gold coins, with a doubloon for pendant in front. It was a holiday, and the inhabitants were congregated in booths of oleander twigs on the housetops; while outside the village some score of swings among the olive-trees were occupied and surrounded by crowds of merry girls, like English school-children let loose, who salaamed us as we passed.

From Hattin we crossed over a bare hilly country, not so rugged as Judæa, but still, excepting in the olive-clad valleys, with more rock than soil, till we reached Kefr Kenna, the Cana of most topographers, with whom I thoroughly agree, but eight miles S.E. of Dr. Robinson's Cana Jileel. On the way, the numerous wine-presses cut in the rocks, as well as the occasional cisterns and chiselled channels for collecting the rain-water, bore testimony to its ancient cultivation. A short hour's walk hence brought us to Nazareth, where we camped as before under the olive-trees near the fountain.

*March 10th.*—A dissolution of partnership occupied us this morning, for we were to lose S. and U., who were about to return to Europe, and make an irreparable break in our little band. In them we lost the most energetic collectors and sportsmen of our party. For the last time their little trim Iceland tent stood by the camp fire, and

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no longer was U. to pay his morning visits to the traps, or S. to cheer as he dispensed soup and jokes at our dinner table. While in the hopeless bewilderment of balancing accounts, kept in French, Austrian, Turkish, or English currencies, as might happen, we were interrupted by Giacomo coming to inquire if we really intended to proceed across Jordan with Mr. Zeller in the morning. Finding we were determined to go on, he informed us that, though brave, he did not choose to have his throat cut, and should not accompany us. He was amazed when we told him he might stay at Tiberias, and wait our return. We felt it was a bold step to dispense with a dragoman, but it would have been worse to have let the Greek fancy himself indispensable; and, with Mr. Zeller and our trusty muleteers, we determined to make the experiment. Provisions for three weeks had to be laid in; and, as Nazareth is not a well-stocked market, it was past noon before we started under a broiling sun for Agyle's camp.

Our road lay round Mount Tabor, which we passed to the north, skirting its base, cantering along the green carpet of Esdraelon, till we reached the Wady Bireh, where on a grassy slope, with a running brook just below it, we found the chieftain's camp.

It presented a lively scene as evening approached, shepherds and goatherds driving in their flocks from pasture, camels lazily chewing the cud, or winding in long, single file from the sides of Tabor, while Arab mares with their foals stood picketed about. We were received in the usual open tent, the Agha standing outside till we were seated on carpets and cushions, and a large retinue of high and low degree surrounding us. Mr. Zeller, of course, acted as chief and spokesman. We were invited to dinner, but no business conversation ensued, though business was being carefully transacted, as the Agha vouchsafed one half of his face with a pleasant smile to

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us, and the other half with a keen glance to his secretary on the other side, who was receiving rents and counting dollars on a handkerchief at his elbow. Our tents were being mounted on a slope across the brook, and as soon as they were ready we withdrew, till about eight o'clock, when a negro with a lantern came to summon us to dinner. This was a single course, consisting of the sheep which had been killed on our arrival, boiled in fragments over rice saturated with butter. The mess was served in an enormous wooden bowl, which it required four men to carry, while the host, according to etiquette, sat apart, and did not partake. It would have delighted a Rembrandt to paint the scene, as we sat in a circle under the open black tent, in a moonless but clear night, tearing the meat and scooping up the rice with our fingers; while a tall Bedouin stood over us with a little oil lamp, the light of which just revealed the crowd of curious faces peering at us through the darkness. Round another huge bowl further on feasted the guests of lower degree. When we had eaten, or rather gorged, and water had been poured over our greasy hands, coffee was served, and the business of the evening commenced. Mr. Zeller's catechist made a long speech, intended rather for the bystanders than for Agyle, complimenting him on our parts, expressing our desire he might never forget us, and to that end presenting him with a gold watch and chain we had brought for him. This he received with a bow, and handed to his secretary, without even casting a glance at it. Then Mr. Z. added a supplement, pointing out the importance of a safe and secure road being provided for travellers from the Hauran through Bashan, and how, if he succeeded in ensuring this, he would have the good-will of the Western Powers, and their good offices at the Porte. We soon afterwards retired, leaving Mr. Zeller to settle in private the business of letters, guard, and safe conduct.

*March 11th.*—We rose before the sun, packed, break-

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fasted on the grass while the tents were being struck, mounted, rode across the brook to bid a short adieu to the Agha, and then, escorted by three of his mounted retainers—fine tall-looking fellows, thorough Bedouin in type and figure—followed the course of the Wady Bireh to the Ghor. It was three hours and a half to the Jisr Mejâmiah, the only existing bridge south of the Lake of Galilee, and a very interesting ride. The stream, though confined within very narrow banks, and descending rapidly, winds and zigzags three times the direct length of its course, making the sharpest possible angles, as it sways from side to side against the nullahs with which the steep hills are seamed, and which alternate like the teeth of two cog-wheels. The little stream swarms with fish (*Scaphiodon capoëta*, Guldenst.), and is almost hidden by thick rows of oleander.

On a lofty green-clad hill to the south-east towers Koukab-el-Hawa, the ruined Crusaders' castle of Belvoir, one of their most renowned fortresses, and commanding the most extensive panorama in Northern Palestine. We were compelled to defer our visit to this castle, which is not only one of the finest sites, but one of the finest ruins in the country, with its deep excavated fosse quite perfect, and resembling the castle of Belfort, Kulat-es-Shukif, on the river Litany.

Mile after mile, as we wound down the valley, the verdure was most luxuriant, and the soil of wondrous fertility, yet neither cultivation, habitation, nor man was to be seen, save once, when, in strange harmony with the desolation of the region, we saw an Arab funeral procession winding over the hill above us, slowly proceeding to some ancient place of tribal sepulture. The body was borne on a bier, and followed by men on camels, horseback, or foot, without order or any outward signs of mourning. The Bedouin will carry their dead great distances to their hereditary burying-places, which are often far away from

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the present haunts of the tribe. Some of the Sheikhs of the tribes of the Ghor preserve their family tombs at the town of Nazareth. It is a strange mistake, into which some tourists of our day have fallen, to fancy that the Oriental attaches no reverence to his place of sepulture because he does not surround it with a trim fence.

The valley is all limestone, except just when it terminates on the flat plain of the Ghor, where a very thin



BRIDGE OVER JORDAN.

stream of basalt covers the whole of the limestone on the north side, and a portion of it on the south. The lava had evidently been exhausted when it flowed thus far, and the stream had cut its way again through it, leaving the fragment on the right. The section of the limestone and basalt is well exposed in the face towards the Ghor, the former showing much perturbation, and a dip south-east, while the basalt has more evenly covered the surface, and

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filled up the interstices, plainly showing that the present formation of the valley was antecedent to the irruption of the volcanic matter.

The Ghor itself is here a treeless, but fertile, alluvial deposit, barely six miles wide. Looking down it, we might fancy we could see almost to Jericho, as nothing interrupted the green expanse, till it melted in the distant horizon, shut in by the mountains. The tributary streams, which dash down the mountains on both sides till they reach the plain, thence meander sluggishly between mud banks till they join the Jordan. The portion of the plain across which we rode to the bridges was cultivated in corn, now pushing fast into ear, by the fellâhin of the Sakk'r, who scratch it, sow the seed, and then return for its harvest.

When we reached the Jisr Majâmiah (incorrectly stated by Porter to be ruined), we halted under the walls of a fine old khan, on the west side, for luncheon. The bridge is evidently later than the Roman era, and has happily escaped the ruin of all the ancient bridges. On it we met two or three Beni Sakk'r, a portion of whose tribe were camped to the east of it, and who gave us a friendly welcome, while a group of strolling gipsies forced themselves into the circle, and performed their mountebank tricks, as at home, with a drum and a sort of rude guitar. They were all men, with features like the English gipsies, but almost black. I noticed that one of them, who personified a woman, wore the female dress not of the country, but of Hindoostan.

The Jordan is here an impetuous torrent, dashing over basaltic boulders, and with a few shrubs on its banks. The bridge has no parapet, and consists of a single pointed arch. The whole ground was like a Turkey carpet in colour, the flowers being mostly changed from those of Gennesaret. The anemone gave place to a very brilliant ranunculus, of exactly the same colour, but a little smaller

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(*R. asiaticus*, L.); there were many very fine red tulips; and among the numberless annuals the most conspicuous were the chrysanthemum of our gardens, a large blue lupin, and several sorts of pheasants' eye (*Adonis*), red and yellow, one of the red ones having blossoms as large as the anemone.

We followed up the left bank of the Jordan for two miles, putting up herons, spurwing plover, and quails continually, while the noble eagle-gull and vultures sailed overhead. There is no exaggeration in the sinuosity of the Jordan, as represented in the maps. It wriggles here, there, and everywhere; and it is difficult to understand how so rapid a stream, with low banks, and those chiefly a gravel alluvium, should be so tortuous. On our way we rode through an encampment of the Beni Sakk'r, one of whom brought us out a great bowl of buttermilk, a delicious draught on this sultry day. When we reached the junction of the Yarmuk, the ancient Hieromax, we turned up, keeping close to its gorge till we arrived at Um Keis (Gadara).

We had been told that the Yarmuk was a geological puzzle dashing down a deep gorge with limestone on one side and a wall of basalt on the other, and these sometimes changing sides. But, after following its course for several miles, and viewing it from above, it does not appear very difficult. At Um Keis we had gained the plateau of Bashan, a lofty table-land of sedimentary rock, intersected by deep gullies and watercourses everywhere, and bounded on the north and east by a range of volcanic hills and extinct craters. Over the limestone flow streams of volcanic origin. But the gorge of the Hieromax had been formed, and the river had run in its present course, or nearly so, long before the irruptions. The liquid volcanic matter, as it poured forth, naturally found its level, and choked the valley of the Hieromax, filling it, and overflowing, but in much diminished streams, to the plateau

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on the south side. The inundation commenced about three miles east of Um Keis, and above that point the ravine is only limestone. In some places, above the hot springs, we could detect the old course left scooped in the limestone, before the basaltic irruptions compelled the river to work out a new passage. This in time has been accomplished by the persevering stream, working sometimes through the sedimentary rocks, sometimes through the basalt, and revealing the limestone cliffs once more, often with a thin coating of basalt, and sometimes entirely denuded.

No sooner had we left the Ghor, and commenced the ascent of the plateau, than the whole character of the scenery changed. Gradually the dôm and nubk-trees gave way to terebinth, and these next to oaks, the oaks of Bashan, not here in forest, but in straggling clumps and isolated trees. They relieved and gave a freshness to the landscape, and were the first signs we observed of that contrast between the east and western sides, which forces itself upon the traveller's notice at every step. The trees were inhabited by different birds from those with which we had recently been familiar; northern and woodland acquaintances met our eyes, woodpeckers, ring doves, and hoopoes cautiously retreated before us, and I shot a merlin on the edge of the ravine.

I had been anxious to visit the hot sulphurous springs, of which no less than nine occur in the gorge of the Yarmuk, chiefly on its north side, and similar in the character of the water to the hot baths near Tiberias. With some difficulty I descended to the foot of the ravine, and found one of the springs, to which I was guided by the rising cloud of steam on the other side of the river. It was in a ruined circular basin, and close behind it were the traces of Roman buildings, doubtless the ancient baths, but no vestige of a town. I was told by my guide that lower down there is a much finer fountain, with the

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vaulted baths still remaining; but we had no time to visit it. The water was not so hot as in the Hammâm of Tiberias, and I could just endure to keep my hand in it. The stones were covered with a whitish yellow incrustation of sulphur. These are the baths of Amatha mentioned by Eusebius.

At length we have reached the ruins of desolate Gadara. The panorama from the edge of the plateau is glorious. We look down on the sea of Galilee, with Tiberias and the plain of Gennesaret distinctly visible, the Ghor in front of us hedged by a bank of hills, and Tabor's round wooded top peeping behind them, while the white Hermon on the side, a ridge rather than a peak, fringes the north, with a low range of crater-shaped hills to the right, and the plateau extending from the deep gulley of the Yarmuk beneath us to the dim and distant Lejah.

The remains of Gadara are more than usually perfect, of great extent. First we came on a large square pool, and a great heap of ruin just beyond it. What it was it is impossible to say; but columns, pedestals, capitals, and especially fine Ionic friezes lie piled in strange confusion. Extending due east from this is a range of narrow ruins, 300 yards long, consisting apparently of a series of beautifully-built massive arches or crypt-like cells, perhaps a market or bazaar. To the north of this from the reservoir, a street runs east, finely paved with large blocks of basalt. It cannot be less than half a mile long. The ruts worn by chariot-wheels are distinctly visible, and it has been bordered by a long colonnade. The prostrate columns still lie at pretty regular intervals, and many of the bases are standing. Near the centre of this colonnade is a large heap of ruin, with several fine Corinthian capitals three feet and more in diameter. They form a sort of knoll, and a group of oak-trees have risen among the ruins. This is supposed to mark the site of the Greek cathedral. The street still continues till it reaches the amphitheatre, not a very large one, but in a fine state of preservation—



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vomitoria, stairs, dens for wild beasts, and staircases below, all beautifully built of dressed stone. Truly those Romans "built for immortality," though time has oft mocked their ambition. There seems to have been no colonnade in front of the building. We entered one of the doorways from the area, and passed through the vaults quite round the structure.

From this amphitheatre the street continues, still perfect, in a straight line, till it arrives at another theatre, in much less perfect preservation, on the side of a rocky eminence, with the tiers of seats overhanging with a perilous steepness, which must have made a "rush" a very hazardous proceeding. The theatre is small, yet the upper benches are forty feet above the area.

Beyond this we seem to reach the end of the Roman-Jewish city, and find ourselves in a wide open space, with a dell which I can only call a field of tombs. Their number and preservation is marvellous. The latter they probably owe to their material, *basalt*. Several acres are thickly strewn with sarcophagi and sarcophagus lids, most of them fairly sculptured, and always with different designs—flowers, wreaths, heads, human figures, &c. But whence came they? They seem to have been all dragged out of the caves with which the whole district is thickly perforated. At every step one comes across either a natural limestone cavern or an artificial cave. These are now used as dwellings or stables by the tribes who live here for a part of the year, and who must have ejected the sarcophagi, save where, as often happens, they have been utilised *in situ* for mangers. We must have visited about fifty of these caverns. One large oak-tree stands solitary in this field of tombs. Just at its roots we descended by a flight of steps to a large cavern-tomb. At the foot of the steps is the doorway, of finely-dressed basalt. Over the door of one tomb was the inscription, ΓΑΙΟΥ ΑΝΝΙΟΥ ΓΑΑΥΙΦ.

All the lids were alike in shape—pyramidical, with two

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square holes at each side, by which they were wedged on to the coffins. Immense numbers of tomb doors were strewn about, broken or entire. Some were plain, but most of them ornamented by panels, or by imitation iron cramps, bands, and nail-heads, exactly like a modern church door, cut in the basalt, with fashionable knockers and handles also carved. We were delighted to find two caverns in which the doors remained on their hinges, and which we could open and shut at pleasure. The hinge is merely a pivot—part of the door itself let into a socket cut at the top and bottom of the doorway. These doors were both panelled with such mouldings as would be used by a modern carpenter, with an ornamental band down the centre, knocker, handle, and keyhole. In this branch of domestic architecture we have certainly made no advance on the designs of our predecessors 2,000 years ago.

One of the guards gave me a brass coin of Herod the Great, which he had found among the ruins of the theatre;* and we gathered many fragments of what had once been elaborately-worked pottery. We had intended to go on and camp at Hebras, the principal village of the district, but it was dark before we had finished our explorations, and tents were therefore pitched on the slope looking down towards the Hieromax, near a Bedouin camp of the S'choor el Ghor. These people did not seem the fiends they are painted on the other side. They offered themselves, and were accepted, as guards for the night; and milk and fresh butter from the kine of Bashan were abundant and cheap.

It is a popular mistake that Um Keis is the scene of the healing of the demoniac, and the destruction of the herd of swine. There are tombs, indeed,† and a steep

* A facsimile of this coin is figured in Smith's Dictionary of the Bible, "Herod."

† I have often met in the outskirts of Caiffa a maniac who dwells in similar tombs.



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place, κρημνόν. But then it does not run down to the *sea*, but to the little river. St. Mark (v. 2) tells us our Lord was met *immediately* on his coming out of the ship. This place is three and a-half hours distant from its shores. It is important also to observe that St. Matthew (viii. 28) reads, not Gadarenes, but *Gergesenes*, and St. Luke states that the country of the Gadarenes was over against Galilee (viii. 26). I should feel, therefore, disposed fully to endorse the suggestion of Dr. Thomson,* that St. Matthew, writing for those intimately acquainted with the topography of the country in detail, names the obscure and exact locality, *Gergesa*, while SS. Mark and Luke, writing for those at a distance, simply name the country of Gadara, as being a place of importance, and the acknowledged capital of the district.† At the mouth of the Wady Semakh, directly opposite Gennesaret, are ruins, called "*Kerza*," or "*Gersa*." I visited the spot myself from a boat, and observed the remains of a village and a khan. There is here no precipice running sheer to the sea, but a narrow belt of beach, while the bluff behind is so steep, and the shore so narrow, that a herd of swine, rushing frantically down, must certainly have been overwhelmed in the sea before they could have recovered themselves.‡ While the tombs at Gadara are peculiarly interesting and remarkable, yet the whole region is perforated everywhere by these rock-chambers of the dead.

We made a very early start from Gadara, and rapidly descended a steep ravine, a feeder of the Wady Arab. As I cannot find that any traveller has described this route, I give the distances in time:—Um Keis to Et Taiyibeh, a small village, five hours, passing only one small collection

* *Land and Book*, p. 376.

† This is borne out by the statement of Josephus, *Bell. Jud.* i. viii. 5.

‡ Origen, after stating that Gadara was not the scene of the miracle, for there was thence no steep place into the sea, says that Gergesa is an ancient city on the shores of the lake, by which is a steep place which runs down to it. Vol. i. p. 239, ed. Lomm.

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of mud huts, Faûara, on the way; Taiyibeh to the little village of Jenîna, one hour; Jenîna to the town of Tîbneh, the capital of the district of El Kûrah, two hours; Tîbneh to Souf, five hours; Souf to Gerash, one hour. The geology of the whole region is limestone of the early cretaceous age, without a trace of igneous irruption, but exhibiting much local and irregular disturbance and dislocation.

The places I have named all stand on the vast plateau of Bashan, or of Northern Gilead, if we are correct in extending the limits of Gilead to the Yarmuk. But though, when viewed from an eminence, the whole country seems a boundless elevated plain, covered with forest, it was by no means over a plateau that we had to ride. Rising, as the country does, suddenly from the deep valley of the Jordan, it is naturally, along its whole western border, deeply furrowed by the many streams which drain the district. Our ride was up and down deep concealed glens, which we only perceived when on their brink, and mounting from which, on the other side, a short canter soon brought us to the edge of the next.

The country was surpassingly beautiful in its verdant richness and variety; added to which was the zest with which we traversed untrodden ground in safety and security. We first descended the ravine of a little streamlet, which soon grew to a respectable size, its banks clothed with sparse oaks and rich herbage. The cheery call of the cuckoo and the hoopoe greeted us for the first time this spring, and resounded from side to side. Then our track meandered along the banks of a brook, with a dense fringe of oleanders, "willows by the watercourses" shading it from the sun, and preventing summer evaporation, while they wasted their perfume on the desert air, without a human inhabitant near. Lovely knolls and dells, in their brightest robes of spring, opened out at every turn, gently rising to the wooded plateau above. Then we rose to the

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higher ground, and cantered through a noble forest of oaks. Perhaps we were in the woods of Mahanaim. Somewhere a little to the east of us was fought the battle with rebellious Absalom, and by such an oak as these was he caught. How we realised the statement, "The battle was there scattered over the face of all the country, and the wood devoured more people that day than the sword devoured" (2 Sam. xviii. 8), in picturing the broken lines and a rout through such an open forest. As I rode under a grand old oak-tree, I too lost my hat and turban, which were caught by a bough. The oaks were just now putting forth their catkins and tender leaves.

Then we rode for a mile or two over luxuriant green corn, of which this district exports considerable quantities. Long rows of fellâhin women were hoeing out the thistles as we passed; and parties of men were ploughing and preparing for cotton-planting, while their long firelocks were piled, military fashion, in the centre of the field, to be rushed to on the slightest alarm. As I turned aside after a bird, and approached the little arsenal, I was promptly warned back by the husbandmen, alarmed lest I should rob them of their sole defence.

Thence we would ride for some time through a rich forest of scattered olive-trees, left untrained and uncared-for, but often with corn in the open glades. Then we would cross another little wady, and wind up its steep side, till we reached again a rolling plain of thin forest or a fertile expanse of corn. This was repeated throughout the eight hours during which we enjoyed the magnificent scenery. No one can fairly judge of Israel's heritage who has not seen the luxuriant exuberance of Gilead, as well as the hard rocks of Judæa, which only yield *their* abundance to reward constant toil and care. Yet to-day, as of old, the constant incursions of those swarms of Midian, the Beni Sakk'r, the Beni Hassan, and the other terrors of

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the desert, render all property and agricultural labour a perilous and hazardous investment.

We met long trains of laden camels and asses, four caravans in all, coming with wheat from the Hauran, to be shipped at Acre for Europe, and obtained from them much information as to the topography, and the present camping-grounds of the different Bedouin tribes, with the disappointing intelligence that Sheikh Ali, of the Beni Sakk'r, was far away in the Belka.

At one o'clock we reached the wretched half-ruined village of El Taiyibeh, to the Sheikh of which we had a letter from Agyle. The inhabitants were all mustered on the house-tops to see the strange arrival. Agyle's horsemen led the way, through tortuous mudpaths and dung-hills, to a court-yard, larger but not less dilapidated than the rest, the boundaries of which were ill-defined heaps of ruins and walls of earth, curving in and out, the openings in which alone revealed them to be human habitations. At the further end, however, was a stone-built square tower, the Sheikh's house, and a broken staircase to its top. Here were gathered the ancients of the place; and, mounting the steps, we found the Sheikh at his devotions, which being concluded, the letter was presented. Half-a-dozen sacks were spread, on which we sat, vainly seeking a little shade beneath the parapet. The view from it was fine, revealing the descent of the Ghor to the west, and the highlands of Bashan apparently an uninterrupted plateau on the north, east, and south, for the wadys do not show. Six or seven villagers sat facing us, and for half-an-hour we scrutinised each other. Words were few, and pipes many. We overheard one explaining to the others, that the Inglez were very proper sort of people, and to be respected, for whatever the Sultan wished they performed "*alla ras*," "on their heads." After we had quenched our thirst repeatedly from an earthen pitcher, coffee appeared, the precursor of dinner, the preparation

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of which had caused our weary waiting. But Mr. Zeller had all the patience of an Arab diplomatist, and never moved too soon.

We could endure the vertical rays no longer, and begged to be allowed to descend from the keep to the roof below, where we were partially screened by the tower. The sacks were at once brought down, and spread under the walls, thus saving us, in some degree, from the filth and fleas. The faces of our entertainers were a physiological study, none of them Bedouin, yet not the degraded fellâhin type of Western Palestine—probably the old Syrian—with good and rather aquiline noses; the Sheikh himself what we could picture a Philistine of old, six feet three inches high, with broad and massive features, a large hooked but flattened nose, high cheek-bones, deep-set, small piercing eyes, that looked through and through one, and a thick, grizzly black beard. A ferocious-looking fellow he seemed as he scrutinised us; but when he began to speak, and to play the host, his repulsive expression relaxed into that of the keen yet friendly savage. His dinner was, for the place, sumptuous. A pile of thin hot barley-cakes was set on a board in the midst, and, alongside, a frying-pan full of eggs, hissing hot; a bowl of buttermilk, and another of excellent fresh butter. We ate in proper fashion, making sops of our barley-cakes, and catching up with them pieces of eggs or lumps of butter, the bread serving for knife and fork, as well as food. When we had done ample justice to the good cheer, our host and his retainers cleared off the fragments. Coffee, the finest Mocha, without sugar, was served in the smallest of cups, of which, the establishment only affording two, we had to make use of by turns. When we rose, the Sheikh courteously escorted us some little way from the village, explaining its ruined condition by the fact of the Beni Sakk'r having sacked and destroyed it two years ago.

One hour's ride across glens as romantic as those of the

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morning brought us to the village of Jenîna, where we took a guide, our horsemen being at fault; and, following a tall fellow, clad only in a short shirt and carrying a long gun, in two hours more we were at Tibneh. Everywhere the road repeats itself—one dell after another, and then a fine piece of flat riding on the table-land, which extends as far as Jebel Ajlûn.

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## CHAPTER XX.

*Description of Tibneh — City Square — Princely Sheikh — The Town Hall — Reception — Coffee-making — Primitive Lamp — Politics and Wars of Tibneh — El Kureh — Panorama from our Camp — Native Christians — The Sheikh's House — Our Visit — Barbaric Splendour — Presents — Forest of Ajlûn — Its Beauty — Contrast of Eastern and Western Palestine — Reverend Guards — A Bedouin Raid — Fellâhin Pursuers — Doubiah — 'Abbân — Suf — Sheikh Yusuf — Certificates of Character — Difficulties — Extortion and Insults — Position of our Camp — Threatened Attack — Military Manœuvres — Diplomatic Skill of Mr. Z. — Threats — Escape — Sheikh Yusuf our Guard — Alone in the Forest — Detour to the East — Fertile Plain — Beni Hassan Freebooters — Mahneh the ancient Mahanaim — Its possible Site — Return to Taiyibeh — Descent to the Ghor — Bedouin on the Move — Fishes — Hûleh Lily — Arrival at Caiffa — B.'s Departure — Tribes of the Ghor — Hhawareh — Hinâdeh — S'hoor-el-Ghor — Sakk'r — Sardiyeh — 'Abba'at — Ghawârineh — Ta'âmireh — Rashaydeh — Jehâlin — Beni Sakk'r — Beni Hassan — Adwân — Beni Hamedi — Origin of the Beni Sakk'r — Political Prospects of Palestine.*

TIBNEH is really a town, and able to turn out five hundred fighting-men, well-armed, who can hold their own against Adwân or Beni Sakk'r. A fine natural fortress, an isolated, round, mamelon-shaped hill, rises a little above the plateau, from which it is divided by deep valleys on three sides. These valleys, sombre with olive-groves, are the wealth of the place, whose half-ruined walls can be seen at a great distance. We wound round the hill to find an access, followed by the mules, and entered, over dung-hills, through what might have been the back premises of an ill-kept Irish farm-house. The houses—all of mud, with flat, mud-plastered, wattled roofs—were thrown about broadcast. But at length we threaded our way to the

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grand square, on the flat summit of the hill, having buildings only on three sides. The Sheikh's house, which occupied one side, was really a handsome stone edifice of two stories, with a lofty arched gateway, and windows arched and surrounded with ornamental carvings in both stories. Sheikh Yusuf Schreibeh is the greatest man south of Damascus, and his house proclaims it. A horseman had gone in advance with the letter, that we might be properly received; and, as we entered the square, a crowd were sitting round it on the ground, many of whom instantly rose, took our horses, relieved us of our guns, and led the way into the public town-hall, adjoining the Sheikh's house.

We had been entertained before in village fashion; now we enjoyed the higher dignity and luxury of a town. I was reminded in many respects of our reception in the towns of the Sahara. The spacious hall was spanned by three arches, across which were thrown beams and the stout wattles which supported the mud roof. A very large arched doorway and a few small windows afforded a dim light; and the setting sun cast a brilliant ray from one little window near the top at the west to another facing it on the east. The spaces between the arches formed recesses in which our arms and accoutrements were placed, and carpets were spread for us in front. The floor was of mud; but in the centre was a low stone altar, five feet square, the great public kitchen. Round it were half-a-dozen cooks, a faggot was blazing brightly, trays of little cups stood by, and a huge mortar of black wood, square outside and richly ornamented with brass, with a mighty pestle four feet long, lay at one end. Men were roasting coffee, a few grains at a time, in spoons with handles a yard long; while behind, at the other end of the hall, were arranged some fifty of the principal men of the place, among whom our escort, judiciously mingled, were recounting in undertones, as became the dignity of

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the place and occasion, our greatness and importance, and thereby enhancing their own.

At length the Sheikh appeared, dressed like the others, though in garments of richer materials. But it was needless that he should be marked by his dress—the master of 500 warriors stalked forth every inch a king. His royal step was a study for an actor. He stood before us; we rose, begged him to be seated; the usual compliments and inquiries passed; and then, though the coffee was nearly ready, he went to the fire, began to fan the sticks, boil the water, and go through the form of preparing everything for his honoured guests with his own hand. As soon as the berries were roasted, the great pestle was wielded with masterly dexterity, and the coffee was served first to us and then to the local magnates, the Sheikh handing us the first cup and refusing to be seated. Soon after, lemonade, in tumblers of coloured Bohemian glass, was served to us; and the ceremony ended by a procession to our tents in the centre of the square, headed by the magnificently-stepping Sheikh.

By this time it was dark, and we had watched with interest the lamplighting in the public hall. A tall pedestal set on a tripod five feet high supported a shallow tin bowl, filled with oil, round which strips of rag were arranged, a piece of hot charcoal was put in to warm it, and then the wicks were lighted with a brand from the fire. It yielded a glaring yet sombre light, and the whole surroundings of the scene were such as might have been in the days of our Anglo-Saxon forefathers, with their rude plenty, the thane and his earldom in their hall.

Tibneh is important as being the only place east of Jordan which still holds its own against the Bedouin (except Es Salt, which pays a handsome backshîsh to the Adwân), and which professes allegiance to the Turkish Government. It was once strongly fortified, but it was thought prudent to demolish the walls in a great degree,

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lest the Turks should send a garrison, which Sheikh Schreibeh observed would be much worse than an occasional Bedouin raid. It has no antiquity, but the natural position of the place is such that it must always have been more or less inhabited; and no cavalry can attack it against the smallest body of defenders. About every ten years Tibneh has to fight for its independence, and in the last battle, eight years since, the Sheikh lost his eldest son, and received three wounds. Since then they have been at peace. Besides the town itself, a large number of villages in the country round—in fact, the whole district of Kûreh—owes allegiance to Sheikh Yusuf, and he is the head of a sort of fellâhin (or agricultural) federation, who always combine to defend each other against the surrounding hordes. We had subsequent opportunities of becoming better acquainted with this most interesting and isolated canton of industrious fellâhin.

We found that our chief could give us no assistance in reaching Gerash, our great object, as he was not on friendly terms with his southern neighbours; but he promised that the Sheikh of a neighbouring village, who was a sort of Moslem bishop, should accompany us to Sûf, an hour from Gerash, and thought his religious influence might carry us safely through.

*Sunday.*—From the brow close to our tent we have a splendid panorama. The central Ghor is spread at our feet. Sweeping the horizon with our glass, we can recognise some peaks near Jerusalem—Gerizim, Ebal, Carmel beyond, Gilboa, and Jebel Duhy. Then the plain of Esdraelon opens out, with Beisan (Bethshean) on one side, and Belvoir on the other—Tabor, a peep of the Sea of Galilee, Hermon's snowy side, with Lebanon's white tops behind and beyond, seventy miles off; then the plateau of the Lejah, with its row of volcanic peaks on the horizon, sloping down to the vast level of Bashan, and to

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the wooded hills over which Tibneh nestles. The deep gorges can scarcely be detected even close under us, and Ajlûn, the highest point of Gilead, shuts in the view to the south.

We had service, as usual, after which L. found full employment in the crowd of sick folk of all kinds who surrounded the tent—blind, halt, and maimed, of all varieties, and of many years' standing, as well as the more manageable ailments of whooping-cough, ring-worm, and ophthalmia. Mr. Zeller found some lone Christians, even here, of the Greek Church, without a priest or any ordinances, who gladly welcomed a *khassis* (priest) *Inglez*, and to whom he read Psalms and Gospels, and expounded truths they had never heard. Occasionally a travelling Greek priest might pass by; but for two years they had never seen one, nor had they the slightest knowledge of their religion, though eager for instruction. None of them could read, but they recognised some expressions in the Psalms used in the Greek ritual, and were glad to have books which the mollah might read to them.

In the course of the afternoon the Sheikh appeared with all his retinue to invite us to a formal visit. We followed him to his reception room. Furniture there was none, but piles of Turkey carpets, with silk cushions, on the mud floor; the walls were rudely coloured in red and white triangular pattern; and there were a few shelves for garments. There were some richly-carved wainscot chests, which would have delighted an amateur of old oak; and the unglazed windows were hung with satin curtains, blue and red, on great rusty nails and pegs of rough sticks. We were seated at once at the upper end, having pulled off our boots, the Sheikh and his friends standing near the door, till at length we succeeded in persuading him to be seated, but only on the threshold. We were served with delicious cool sherbet and pipes. The mouthpiece handed to me was the finest and largest piece of amber I

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ever saw, set with a double circle of diamonds in silver, and must have been of great value. It was a fine illustration of barbaric wealth and splendour, where the floor was mud and the dinner service a wooden bowl! At length the tedious ceremony came to an end, the conversation having somewhat flagged. In the course of it Sheikh Yusuf remarked, that though the Bedouin did rob field and fold, he liked them better than his friends the Turks, for they *sometimes* kept an oath. We were followed to our tents by a servant bearing a present of three leopard skins, shot in the neighbourhood.

Next day we left Tibneh. Our course lay over the highest tract of Gilead, Jebel Ajlûn, leaving the peak to our right, and descending into the upper waters of the Jabbok. We had a magnificent ride through forests of Turkey and evergreen oak, interspersed with open glades here and there, and crowned with noble pine-trees (*Pinus carica*, Don.) on the higher parts. Everywhere the ground was covered with rich herbage and lovely flowers; wood pigeons (*Columba palumbus*, L.) rose in clouds from the oaks, and jays and woodpeckers screamed in every glade. There seem to be five varieties of oak, two deciduous and three evergreen, but they may all be reduced to two species (*Quercus pseudo-coccifera* and *Q. ægilops*). The latter predominated, and generally the different species were grouped in separate clumps, giving the whole the effect of one vast park. The trees were often of great size, and in the outskirts of the glades of noble proportions, with wide-spreading branches. Still, unlike the district of Kûreh, there was here no trace of cultivation, only very rarely a few goats and cattle pasturing in the open ground. To compare Western with Eastern Palestine is to compare nakedness with luxuriance. Yet probably the present state of Bashan and Gilead is just what Western Canaan was in the days of Abraham. Subsequently the Canaanites must have extensively cleared it, even before the

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occupation by the chosen people, and, while the slopes and terraces were clad with olive-groves, the amount of rainfall was not affected. The terraces have crumbled away; wars and neglect have destroyed the groves, until it would be difficult to find any two neighbouring districts more strangely contrasted than the east and west of Jordan; and this difference is simply caused by the greater amount of rainfall on the east side, attracted by the forests, which have perished off the opposite hills. The area of drainage is about the same on each side, the ravines and wadys as numerous; but few of the streams are perennial on the west, *all* are so on the east. Every stream draining from Moab and Gilead is filled with fish and fresh-water shells. I never found living fresh-water shells but in two streams on the west side. In other words, the brooks there are now but winter torrents. This simple cause has made east and west to differ, till Gilead, it has been remarked, as far surpasses Western Palestine as Devonshire surpasses Cornwall. The whole is wonderfully diversified and impressive.* Every crest afforded a Pisgah; everywhere wonder increased at the evident Providence which drew Israel from these boundless parks and downs to the rocky defiles of Benjamin and Judah. For, humanly speaking, on that step depended the future of Israel, whether they were to be roving Bedouin, or to be God's channel of regeneration to the human race. It was here that "The Lord had made him ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the increase of the fields; and He made him to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock; butter of

* Buckingham observes that Mr. Bankes frequently remarked that in all his travels he had seen nothing equal to it, except some nooks of Portugal, and adds, "We were perpetually exclaiming at every turn, How rich! how picturesque! how magnificent! how beautiful! and we both conceived the scenery alone to be quite worth all the hazard and privation of a journey to the eastward of Jordan."—*Buckingham's Travels*, p. 408.

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kine, and milk of sheep, with fat of lambs, and rams of the breed of Bashan, and goats, with the fat of kidneys of wheat; and thou didst drink the pure blood of the grape." (Deut. xxxii. 13, 14.)

Winding our way in long file through tangled thicket, under spreading oak, or across open glade, with many a lichen-clad trunk, the hoary relics of the primeval forest, the ride was ever varying, ever lovely. Except the various oaks, and an occasional arbutus, I noticed no other timber till we reached the higher zone of the pine forests. We were in the heart of Mount Ajlûn, "the place of deer," but also the notorious home of bandits. Yet we had no armed guard. Our worthy host at Tibneh declined to send any horsemen, and we depended solely on our episcopal guide and another Moslem cleric of high degree, both unarmed. They were well-dressed, intelligent-looking men, with the white puffed turban of the Imaum, splendidly mounted on two of the finest Arab mares I ever saw—dark bay, with long black tails and exquisite little heads. One of the priests boasted of being a lineal descendant of the Khalif Omar. By way of arms, they carried only long pipe-stems, which, on any alarm of danger, they would shoulder in most martial fashion, and no doubt the weapon thus exhibited was as effective as any other. They were almost the only natives with whom we had to do who were too high bred to bargain for remuneration beforehand.

I was rather sharply reminded of the nature of the country, when, having dismounted, and wounded with a charge of buckshot a gazelle of the larger species (*Antelope corinna*), I pursued it some little way, and was on the point of securing the poor limping animal, one of our guard galloped up, seized me by the shoulder, and gave me a rating in most voluble Arabic, pushing me back to the convoy, and compelling me to run my fleetest till I overtook my horse. Vexed as I felt for the moment, I



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soon was grateful for his promptitude. A few minutes afterwards we heard several shots in rapid succession on a hill to our left. All arms were unslung, the mules hurried together to the front, the holy men shouldered their chibouks, and the armed party formed in line behind. On reaching an open, we saw a squad of ten horsemen driving off some goats. It was a party of Beni Hassan. Some of our men galloped ahead, shouting lustily. Voices yelled replies from the dense forest to the right, and soon two wild-looking fellâhin, clad in shirts, with long guns, rushed breathlessly from the covert, and crossed our path in pursuit, our guard having proclaimed the course the free-booters had taken. A few seconds after, two more emerged from the wood in front, and others were heard behind us. We hoped that, from the pace of the pursuers, the robbers must soon leave their booty, or fight for it, as no goats could be driven long at the rate these wild fellâhin were dashing across the forest.

An hour and a-half south of Tibneh we came upon a ruined village, *Doubiah*, destroyed by Ibrahim Pasha, and never since re-occupied. On the slope below it was a fine underground cistern, to which we descended by a sort of well-hole, and found ourselves in a small cavern, with abundance of delicious ice-cold water. Two hours and a half later we came upon an open, with a fine natural and permanent pond, *Birket 'Abbîn*, where we watered our beasts and lunched. Some goatherds were also here with their flocks, and it was hence the robbers had carried off the goats we had seen driven across the hills. Abbîn is marked in the maps as a village, but we could only find faint traces of ruins on the hill-side. It is also marked too far to the eastward in all the maps, but the whole cartography of trans-Jordanic Palestine is mere guess-work, and misleads instead of directing the traveller.

We kept in military order for the rest of the day, baggage in the centre, as several times the keen eyes of our

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men detected skulkers in the forest, who, though they could not have attacked so strong a party, would at once have snapped up any straggling mule.

Arrived at Sûf, we found its Sheikh was away, and in his absence the people refused to give us either guide or guard to Gerash; so we had to camp on a piece of flat ground just outside the village, and to consider our plans. Our holy men declined to accompany us any further, and local guides were indispensable. Soon appeared the deputy of the village, Sheikh Yusuf, one of the most unmitigated scoundrels of my acquaintance, and offered his services as the recognised guide to Gerash, tendering a bundle of certificates extending over twenty-five years. These afforded us some amusement. Not many visitors have been to Gerash, but among them had been, at different times, two old Oxford friends of my own, each of whom had certified that Yusuf was a rogue and extortioner, and warned their successors to beware of him. The people began to get insolent, crowded round our tents, and had to be kept out by force. Mr. Z., who understood their language and their remarks, became uneasy, and at once we sent off all the horses and mules to a house in the town for security. When asked for our letter from Tibneh, we handed it to the principal men, who, so soon as they had read it, flung it contemptuously on the ground, and trod on it. It was plain we could not get to Gerash, and there might be some difficulty in getting away at all, especially as B., who was suffering from a slight sunstroke, had been very ill all day, and had all the symptoms of incipient fever. However, we engaged six of the least villanous-looking of the villagers to be guards for the night, our own people keeping watch also.

We were planning how we might push on to Es Salt (Ramoth Gilead) in the morning, and thence cross the Jordan, when Yusuf appeared again, late in the evening, and informed us that, whether we went forward or



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returned, we must pay him a backshîsh, and also another large sum for the Adwân. We now discovered, to our great mortification, that the messenger whom we had sent with a letter to the Sheikh Diab of the Adwân, and also a second whom we had despatched to Es Salt, to prepare for our favourable reception, had both been stopped. It was plain, then, we must return towards Tibneh at dawn; and, in no very easy frame of mind, we retired to rest, trusting to a watchful Providence to guide us safely through our difficulties.

To get safely out of the wood, was the problem of next day. Long before sunrise, we had left our uneasy couches, and the mules were ready. But with the dawn, a large crowd of perhaps one hundred and fifty men and boys had assembled, a few of them armed, and we were plainly told we should not leave the place, either to go or return, without further payment. Our muleteers lost their heads with fright at the threats and tumult, and spent two precious hours in packing the tents and loading the mules. Even Mr. Z.'s national phlegm was tried to the uttermost; but he proved himself a cool and imperturbable diplomatist, while the rest of the party were fully occupied in keeping the baggage-animals together, and preventing the petty pilfering attempted on all sides.

The village was situated on the steep side of a hill running down to the Wady Deir, an affluent of the Zerka (Jabbok). Behind it the hill rose steep and rocky, having only a narrow roadway between the rocks and the mud walls of the place. To the west of this little defile opened out immediately a wide grassy platform, which sloped, without interruption, down to the brook. But we had passed this platform, and had camped on a similar but much smaller space at the east end of the village, towards Gerash, the situation of which we had seen from the top of the hill, on the previous afternoon. We were thus in a sort of trap; for to escape we must pass

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through the narrow roadway before getting into the open space.

We made a hasty breaksfast as we stood holding our horses, doing our utmost to repress the hot blood of our servants and muleteers at the insults and pilfering to which they were exposed. We were drawn up near the opening of the narrow defile, our mules in advance, while the horsemen protected their rear. Mr. Z. sat, pistol in hand, on a stone behind, surrounded by the chiefs of the place, and his trusty dragoman, mounted and holding his master's horse by his side. An armed man coolly walked up, and seizing a laden mule, hurried off with it. B. and one of our muleteers dashed after him. He struck the muleteer, who seized his beast and returned the blow; when the thief drew his dagger, and made a plunge, but providentially missed his ribs. Khadour, our man, suddenly wrested B.'s gun from him, and would have shot the Sûfian dead, had not B. and I grappled with him, and forced the gun from him. A woman, meanwhile, had picked a quarrel with our servant-lad Isa, and a threatening crowd round him compelled him to give up a Spanish dollar—all the money he possessed in the world. Sheikh Yusuf had demanded £5 as a fee to let us go, which we paid; then he demanded a further backshish of £3. 10*s.* for himself, and £20 for his feudal chiefs, the Adwân; then he refused to let us go without supplying a large guard at £1 a head. It was manifest he was determined to extract our last piastre, and probably pillage us at the end. Meanwhile, some of the ancients took aside our two reverend guides, and told them, "You have brought these Franghi here, and we do not intend to let them go without taking all their money: we will fight for it, and you will be the very first we shall shoot, for without you they cannot get out of the forest."

Still Mr. Z. continued to temporize and parley with the Sheikhs, while the populace were growing more and more

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excited and eager for the fray and plunder. Guns were being brought up fast from the village, and the people in front, alongside the path, were collecting stones. Four men very near us got posted behind a rock, with their long firelocks, resting on it, levelled at us, and themselves safe behind the breastwork; and to our dismay we saw the messenger whom we had paid to take our letter to Es Salt among them. But I was delighted at the steadiness of our party. Scarcely any one was flurried, and most kept their heads as cool as if they had been unaware of the long guns pointed at them on all sides. Our German servant Wilhelm was admirable. He quietly drew the shot from the double barrel he carried, and dropped a conical bullet down one barrel, and five pistol balls down the other; Khadour, our second muleteer, rose to the warrior at once; Odi, Mr. Z.'s dragoman, the Protestant headman of Nazareth, seemed in a moment transformed into the wild Bedouin, with his kefieh thrown back, his right hand holding his gun aloft, while his left rested on his pistols, as he stood erect in his stirrups, watching every movement of the enemy with an eagle glance, and ready, as he afterwards said, to send a ball through the Sheikh's head the moment the first shot was fired. I devoted myself to the four fellows behind the rock; and B. and young B—t sat as quietly as possible on their horses close to the mules, pipes in their mouths, and their pieces ready for the foremost assailants. We saw that, humanly speaking, all depended on our getting through the narrow road to the other side of the village before a trigger was drawn, and the word was passed in Italian to the muleteers in front, to let the mules go on as if unintentionally, a step or two at a time, while we backed up to them till they got through to the pass. This manœuvre was not detected, and while it was going on, Mr. Z. continued imperturbable, occasionally getting up in the warmth of conversation and backing a few paces, while his henchman

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with his horse and myself kept backing just in his rear. In this fashion we had got half-way abreast of the village, when I saw it must soon come to fighting our way through, and called out to Mr. Z. to accede to their demands and make a dash for it, or we should have bloodshed in a few minutes. By this time we had so manœuvred that we had interposed ourselves between the mules and the greater part of our assailants. Mr. Z. flung down some gold—sprang on his horse; B. with a sudden charge and a shout started the mules, and in few seconds we were on the open platform on the west. The movement took the villagers by surprise, and as their chiefs were close to us and somewhat separated from them, they did not dare to fire. But in a minute they all overtook us; to have attempted flight would have been madness, and we pulled up unconcernedly, as though the move had been unintentional. We were now on open ground, where we could have made a running fight, and Mr. Z., continuing the conference, as though surprised at the interruption, agreed to give £12 more to the Sheikh, and 10*s.* a head for a guard of five horsemen to Tibneh.

But now they implored us to turn and go to Gerash. "Why should we pay so much money for nothing?" "Surely when we had come so far we would not turn back?" "They would not ask for another piastre," and much more to the same effect. However, we were not to be led into the trap again, and doubtless they would have taken a favourable opportunity to strip and rob us of all we had—money we had none. Thankful were we to get the cavalcade pushed safely through the crowd, with the ruffian Yusuf and four of his men now our guards instead of our plunderers. But it did not escape us that various armed footmen were passing from the village into the forest on the other side of the dell, and we carefully noted the route they took. Fortunately we had the advantage of knowing the road, and were more than a match for a

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dozen of them, as we knew they would not willingly shed blood in the forest for fear of consequences. It was mortifying to turn our backs a second time on Gilead and Moab, but we had done all that prudent men could, and had failed both from south and north.

Accompanied by our villanous guard, on whom we kept a sharp look-out, we pushed on through the lovely forest, Sheikh Yusuf incessantly beseeching us to go back and visit Gerash. Had we been horsemen without baggage, we might have made a detour, and done so; but we had no wish to risk our equipment and collections. When we had got well into the forest of Ajlûn, our Sûf friends left us, saying they had passed the limits of their territory; and, though they had promised to conduct us to Tibneh, we were not sorry to be rid of them. We watched them out of sight, and then took counsel with the holy men, who were still with us, about our course. It was agreed it would not do to return to Tibneh and proclaim our failure: and, besides, the men of Sûf had, no doubt, prepared an ambush on the road, probably on the western side, to which we had seen them betake themselves. We therefore, struck boldly to the eastward, leaving the highest part of Jebel Ajlûn on our left, and hoping soon to find a more open country.

If my aneroid was to be trusted, we were now 3,500 feet above the Ghor, and yet by no means on the highest point of the range. Pressed as we were, L. had time to dismount and gather some cones of the pines, which seemed different from those of Lebanon, and proved to be the *Pinus carica*, Don. We got no birds, as our guns were charged with shot unsuitable for collecting, and we had no wish to attract attention. But I had discovered a curious piece of ornithology the night before. Some one had brought to our tents, for sale, a live wood-pigeon (*Columba palumbus*, L.), used as a decoy. The bird was perched on a long stick, with its eyelids sewn together with fine

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thread, which is loosened when the bird is fed. Thus blinded, it dares not leave its perch, which is placed on a high tree, but keeps timidly flapping its wings. The wild pigeons are attracted by it, and are shot down in scores by the natives, in ambush, who, as the wood-pigeon swarms in myriads through the forest, reap a rich harvest by their cruel decoy.

All the strata here seem to dip more or less to the south-west, generally five degrees.

We urged on our mules, and passing without a halt between Jebel Ajlûn and Jebel Kafkafka, proceeded for several hours, north by compass, in the country of the Beni Obeid; then, making a sweep to the west, we succeeded in reaching Et Taiyibeh just as the sun went down. The ride well repaid us. We had magnificent views over the east as far as Jebel Hauran. Great was our astonishment to find, as we turned our glasses on Bosrah, that all the vast blank space on the map which lies between Gilead and Bozrah, instead of being a desert, was one boundless corn or grass plain, covered with crops. It is, in fact, the granary of North Arabia. Here was the wealth of Roman Syria, and the source of its population; and here the swarming Midianites, like the Beni Sakk'r of to-day, pastured their thousands of camels.

Still, though lovely and novel, the day was not without its alarms, and bandits were too plentiful for our comfort. Once we came across two of the Beni Hassan, making off with two fine heifers and some goats, doubtless part of yesterday's foray. They were astonished and alarmed to see us, and hastily hid their guns in the grass, telling us they were only fellâhin. After a little catechising on the position of the various tribes in the neighbourhood, we let them go by with their cattle, to their evident relief. Ever and anon an alarm would be raised. A distant shot would put all on the *qui vive*, and every one carried his gun erect from his saddle-bow, that it might flash in the sunlight.

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Sometimes one, sometimes two or three, and once six men, were detected lurking in the forest, and we would gallop ahead to some little rising ground, till we saw the mules safely past. Jebel Ajlûn is the headquarters of free-booters, and no wonder. Robin Hood never had a territory more admirably adapted for his purpose—miles of forest, with abundance of open glades; yet all a perfect labyrinth. It is very easy to understand why the Turks have never subdued Ajlûn, and why their dominion stops at its northern limit. It would require an army to force its passes without military roads, which are not within the reach of the Ottoman genius.

The whole country is well watered, and we passed five fine natural ponds — "*Birket*," — surrounded by open ground stocked with horned cattle. By the side of one of these, called by our guides *Mahneh*, we sat down and lunched, resting our cavalcade for half an hour. It struck me that this was probably the site of the ancient *Mahanaim*. The highest point of Jebel Ajlûn bore hence S.E. by S., distant, perhaps, six or seven miles. We searched for ruins, and though on the side of the hill there were the traces of many buildings, yet all were grass-grown and beneath the soil, excepting the mounds of some decidedly modern Arab dwellings, the only style of ruin we saw in this part of the country. The "birket" is at the bottom of a sort of gently sloping amphitheatre, and the traces of buildings occupy several acres, partly covered with wood on the north and east sides. They are sufficiently extensive to have belonged to a considerable place; but there is no trace of a wall, such as must have been there when David sat in the gate and wept for his son Absalom. Of any later or Roman buildings there is not a vestige. Still, considering how very faint and insignificant are almost all the ante-Roman remains across Jordan, I should not feel any doubt about the identity of this spot with Mahanaim, were it not that it is so far north of the Jabbok, the

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boundary of Gad, within whose limits Mahanaim lay (Josh. xxi. 38), and that from the history of Jacob's journey in Gen. xxxi., xxxii., Mahanaim appears to have been between Mount Gilead and the Jabbok.

On the other hand, Mahneh is on the borders of Bashan (see Josh. xiii. 30), and though to the north, it is also to the east of the Jabbok, and therefore outside of the line where the river was the boundary of Gilead and Bashan. It is probable also that in Genesis the "Mount of Gilead" may be used in a general signification—not confined to Jebel Osha, but including also Ajlûn, which was certainly a portion of Gilead. Considering the geography of the region, it would have been more natural for Jacob to take this course in his flight from Laban, than to have gone south to Jebel Osha, and then turned northwards again to cross the deep ravine of the Jabbok. There is, therefore, I conceive, every probability that the name of Mahanaim has been preserved in Mahneh, and that these grass-grown mounds represent all that is left of the capital of Ishbosheth* and the refuge of David.

About four o'clock we emerged from the evergeen oak forest, and came upon the park-like scenery of Bashan, open, and beautifully studded with deciduous oaks, singly or in clumps. Here we were comparatively safe; passing the village of El Mesar, we turned due west, and arrived at Taiyibeh at 6.30, where our friends received us kindly; and, with heartfelt thanksgiving for preservation from dangers seen and unseen throughout the day, we lay down for a sound and peaceful sleep, with four of the villagers armed as guards outside our tents.

*March 16th.*—We made good use of our time in securing souvenirs of Gilead while the mules were being laden, and obtained a pair of great spotted cuckoos (*Oxylophus glandarius*), a new chat, and other birds. Our course was quite different from the one we had taken in coming from Gadara.

* 2 Sam. ii. 8.

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Following a westerly route, we rapidly descended by an excellent path through an open country dotted with oak-trees (all deciduous), and intersected by wadys, to the great plain of the Ghor, by the Wady Taiyibeh, and then, crossing the Kuseir and the Arab, rode up for several miles till we reached the bridge, three hours and a-half quick riding from Taiyibeh.

It was interesting to note the rapid change in the character of the vegetation and the birds as we descended. First, we lost the oaks, next the olives, while the *Pistachia terebinthus* and zizyphus took their place. Then the latter alone remained; till, on fording the little stream Kuseir, we were on the rich flat plain, treeless and tropical, with the rankest and most luxuriant herbage, and a hot burning air gently moving over it from the south.

On the slope close to the foot of the hill, we rode through a camp of the S'hoor-el-Ghor, whose flocks and herds were indeed in clover for the time. We had, shortly before, met a party of Beni Sakk'r, with long strings of camels moving up to the plateau of Um Keis for change of pasture; and just before coming to the bridge we met another caravan of 266 camels in one string, with about as many asses and a few horsemen, returning empty to Der'a (*Edrei*), in the Hauran, after carrying corn to the coast. A few of the camels bore planks of deal, a scarce commodity in those parts. Bedouin and fellâhin were mingled in the motley convoy, as they listlessly crept along, secure in their numbers from attack.

At the bridge we rested. B—t and I got out our nets for fishing, and B. took a photograph. Thence some of us rode up the Wady Bireh, to try for the fish we had seen in its pools, and the others took the direct road to Nazareth. After a successful haul of fish, we turned up from the wady, had a bowl of milk and a nap under an Arab tent of the Hhawârah tribe; and then, briskly trotting on for two hours without drawing rein, reached Nazareth

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before eight P.M., just after our mules, having accomplished sixty-five miles, with heavy baggage, in two days —very smart travelling for this roadless country. Thus ingloriously ended the siege of Gerash, and our second eastward expedition.

We had reaped a rich harvest during the day. An iris, the most gorgeous I ever beheld, white and purple (*Iris Susiana*, L.), unfolded its glories under the bushes,* and we gathered the seyal (*Acacia seyal*), with its golden-haired tufts of blossom, and many other plants, a large serpent (*Zamenis dahlii*, Schl.), a creel of fine fish for dinner and for preservation, two additional species of birds, and a game-bag full of partridge. These spoils, and, far more, a packet of home letters awaiting us, in some degree consoled us for our humiliating return.

After a day's rest at Nazareth we rode to Caiffa, encamped under some olive-trees to the west of the town, and had a hearty welcome from Mr. Sandwith, the Consul. The following day we saw our friend Bowman, whom sunstroke compelled to leave us, safely on board the steamer, and returned to our solitary tents with that sense of loneliness into which only those can thoroughly enter, who in a strange land find themselves separated from the friend and comrade of months of adventure. Four of our seven had departed westward, and we looked to the land as henceforth but a scene of labour, unrelieved by the cheerful and happy companionship which had made the last five months one continuous picnic party.

We still worked indefatigably in collecting, and with good success. The next day was Sunday, and the sirocco brought with it such a sensation of suffocating oppression,

* Dr. Thomson has somewhat capriciously named this iris "the Hûleh lily," though it is very scarce there, and chiefly found on the hills. He has without question assumed it to be the lily of our Lord's parable. It is a tuberous iris, the very finest of its genus, purple violet, mottled with white. From its habitat it might well be the "lily among thorns" of Cant. ii. 2. See *Land and Book*, p. 256.

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though we scarcely moved from our tents, that we could not but rejoice, for their own sakes, that U. and B. had escaped it.

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## NOTE.

Having now for a time bid adieu to the Ghor, it may not be amiss to give here a summary of the different Bedouin tribes which occupy that region, especially as the topography of the tribes has entirely changed since Burckhardt and even Dr. Robinson wrote.

Taking first the west side of the Lake of Galilee, down to Beisan (Bethshean), are two quiet, but very numerous clans or tribes, over which Agyle Agha rules, the Hhawârah and Hinâdeh. These are in good fellowship with the fellâhin villages, protect them from attacks, and receive a certain proportion of the crops, often advancing money for cultivation and seed.

Then come the Sakk'r, relations of the Beni Sakk'r, and almost as warlike and restless. They are a numerous and very rich clan in a narrow district, and have scarcely pasture enough for their herds, which renders them always ready for a foray.

Next come the S'hoor-el-Ghor (غور), who extend on both sides the river, higher up on the east side, and on the west into the rich plain which drains the vale of Shechem. They are a very large tribe in population, but not in wealth, and are not considered formidable, owing to their want of organization, having several independent sheikhs, and being divided by the Jordan. Notwithstanding this, they are of ill repute, and lose no opportunity of plunder which presents itself, being treacherous and vindictive even for Arabs. South of them come in succession two unimportant tribes, the Sardîyes and the 'Aba'at, who have little intercourse

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with the fellâhin or cultivators, and are influenced, the former by the Sakk'r, and the latter by the Adwân, their neighbours across the river.

Lastly come our old friends the Ghawârineh, at Jericho, a tribe much mingled with the fellâhin, and who, though fast friends of mine, are in very bad odour, and supply all the robbers from Jericho to Jerusalem, *i.e.*, they claim the legal right of robbing every one who has not paid them blackmail. Their district is not large, but their position is most important, as comprising the ford of Jordan, from Jerusalem to Es Salt. The Ghawârineh are not found here alone, as one section occupies the Safieh, and a third holds a considerable portion of the plains of Acre. These two latter sections dwell not in tents, but chiefly in huts, built of wattled matting, and roofed in the same manner, meaner than an African kraal, and put up and taken down in a few minutes. Their reed roofs, however, afford a better protection against the sun's heat than the black cloth of a tent.

On the west side of the Dead Sea are the great tribe of the Ta'âmireh, extending inland to Bethlehem; the Rashaytdeh, a small insignificant tribe at Engedi and its neighbourhood; and then our old friends the Jehâlin, reaching as far as Jebel Usdum.

On the east side of Jordan, commencing with the country of Gadara, from the Sea of Galilee, the Ghor is chiefly occupied by the S'hoor-el-Ghor, extending further to the north than they do on the west side.

Overlapping them, and extending from the plateau to the richer portion of the river's bank, are that section of the Beni Sakk'r (not the Sakk'r, though related to them) who are ruled by Sheikh Gerouân-el-Melham. They are a fraction who seceded a few years ago from the main body of the tribe under Sheikhs Abdallah and Ali, on account of want of pasturage and an indisposition to obey the strict rule of those chiefs. Though but a fragment of that

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immense clan, they can muster 1,000 cavalry, and always join their brethren when a raid or war is on the move. They have obtained their present possessions gradually, and in great measure by driving out the fellâhin, destroying their villages, and reducing their rich corn-fields to pasturage. Latterly, however, they have also encroached much on the S'hoor and Beni Hassan. Behind them are the Beni Obeid, extending to the Hauran, and apparently a decaying tribe.

The Beni Hassan adjoin them on the south, and were once the most powerful trans-Jordanic clan after the Beni Sakk'r. But of late years fortune has not smiled on them, and they have suffered terribly in wars with the Beni Sakk'r and the Adwân. Last year, too, the Turkish troops from Damascus fell on them, in vengeance for offences committed by other tribes, and massacred a great number, besides carrying off nearly the whole of their camels and herds. Consequently they have largely reinforced the robber-bands of Jebel Ajlûn, and many of them live by cattle-stealing whenever they have the chance. Thus they are gradually wearing out the few fellâhin villages north of the Jabbok, and have lost much of their old territory in the Ghor.

Next to them come the Adwân, a small but very haughty and tenacious tribe, who hold the country about Es Salt (Ramoth Gilead), Gerash, Ammân (Rabbah), and Heshban. They are reputed to be of the noblest blood in Arabia, and can trace their descent for 1,600 years at least. Yet they can bring only 300 cavalry into the field, and of these scarcely more than one-half are of pure Adwân blood. Their policy has always been not to intermeddle in the feuds of their neighbours, but rigorously to hold to their right of excluding every one from their own territory, making even the peaceful transit of another tribe across their lands the pretext for relentless war. Their country is a natural "quadrilateral," and of great defensive

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strength. They are very avaricious, and considered the most perfidious, as the Beni Sakk'r are the most truthful, of all the Bedouin. It is unfortunate for travellers that their little territory comprises the four most interesting trans-Jordanic sites. Formerly they were on good terms with our Consul at Jerusalem, and used to give escorts on payment of from 500 to 1,000 piastres per head; but after several cases of extortion, the European Consulates were compelled to break with them, and their charges have risen to from £80 to £200 for simple safe conduct through their territory.

South of the Adwân, occupying the east of the Dead Sea to the Wady Kerak, are the Beni Hamêdi, an inhospitable tribe, among whom no European before the Duc de Luynes ever succeeded in travelling, unless in disguise. They are broken up into fractions, are almost sedentary, and spending several weeks among them under the wing of the Beni Sakk'r in 1872, I had no cause to complain of them. Behind the Beni Hamêdi, the Adwân, and Beni Hassan, and down the Belka beyond and behind Kerak, lies the vast pasture ground of the Benī Sakk'r, who also claim and hold large tracts in the centre of North Arabia. They completely flank all these tribes as far as the Hauran, in that vast rich plain, none of which is desert, moving constantly with countless flocks, herds, and camels. They have for centuries been a very strong tribe, but from some unexplained cause have increased in the last fifty years to an unexampled pitch of prosperity and wealth, both in population and cattle. They do not themselves know how many thousand horsemen they can bring into action; but their restlessness is accounted for by the difficulty of finding pasturage. "The land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together, for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together." (Gen. xiii. 6.) If they were not well governed internally by their two great Sheikhs, they would be more of a terror



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than even now to the fellâhin of Syria. When, in 1863, they encamped in the Ghor, just before their raid on the plain of Esdraelon, their tents, like the Midianites', covered the ground for miles, far as the eye could reach from the Mount of Beisan, and in a week there was not a green blade to be seen, where before the arrival of these locusts one stood knee-deep in the rank herbage.

There is a curious tradition relative to the Beni Sakk'r (Sons of the Falcon), that about 1,200 years since they left their cradle in the centre of Arabia: that their forefathers lived there in a district very like that of the M'zab in the African Sahara, where there were no springs, but where the water was collected into enormous tanks by walls built across the wadys; and by these means gardens, palm groves, and orange orchards were fertilised. A prophet arose, and foretold that some unusual rains would burst the walls of the reservoirs, and flood and destroy the oases. Many believed him, and fled northward to the Belkha, where the Beni Sakk'r now hold their chief position. The prophecy was fulfilled; the tanks burst, and the country was destroyed. But the Beni Sakk'r claim, and still exercise once in every two or three years, the right of pasturage in that very district, passing through a vast extent of country to reach it. An Italian, who has lately penetrated Central Arabia in Bedouin guise, told me in Jerusalem that he had visited this district, and found the ruins of enormous walls and traces of former population, while the system of irrigation could be distinctly perceived, in a region now utterly desolate, and where no trees can possibly exist.

A few years ago the whole Ghor was in the hands of the fellâhin, and much of it cultivated for corn. Now the whole of it is in the hands of the Bedouin, who eschew all agriculture, excepting in a few spots cultivated here and there by their slaves; and with the Bedouin come lawlessness, and the uprooting of all Turkish authority. No

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government is now acknowledged on the east side; and unless the Porte acts with greater firmness and caution than is its wont, it will lose the last vestige of authority on the right bank also, and a wide strip of the most fertile land in all Palestine will be desolated and given up to the Nomads. The same thing is now going on over the plain of Sharon, where, both in the north and south, land is going out of cultivation, and whole villages rapidly disappearing from the face of the earth. Since the year 1838, no less than twenty villages there have been thus erased from the map, and the stationary population extirpated. Very rapidly the Bedouin are encroaching wherever horse can be ridden; and the government is utterly powerless to resist them or to defend its subjects. As the Philistines swept the plains in the days of Saul, and "the people did hide themselves in caves, and in thickets, and in rocks, and in high places, and in pits," so it is again. Either an European protectorate or union with Egypt seems requisite to save Palestine from gradual dissolution, unless, which seems hopeless, the Arabs can be induced to cultivate the soil.



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## CHAPTER XXI.

*Carmel in Spring—Its Trees and Flowering Shrubs—Flowers and Birds—Plain of Acre—A Nomad School—Return to Nazareth—Tiberias—Camp at the Round Fountain—Spring Birds of Gennesaret—Ascent of Tabor—Ride to Beisan (Bethshean)—Ruins—Khan—Citadel—Theatre Panoramic View—Recollections of the Past—Present Degradation of Beisan—Gilboa—Nablous—Samaritan Synagogue—Service—Ramallah—Misfortunes of Abou Dahûk—Solitary Life at Jericho—Nocturnal Visit of Adwân—Summer Birds of Jericho—Gorge of the Wady Kelt—Return to Jerusalem—Visits to the Synagogues—Expedition of the Duc de Luynes—Adwân Sheikhs.*

THE last week of March was devoted to a thorough exploration of all the nooks and dells of Mount Carmel and its neighbourhood, in company with Mr. Sandwith, than whom we could not have had a better guide.

We reaped a rich harvest in natural history, claimed the hospitality of villagers, especially on the southern and eastern sides of the Mount, visited bat-caves, and climbed vultures' and eagles' nests; caught snakes and lizards, now drawn from their crevices by returning summer; and, day after day, crammed our botany-boxes to repletion.

Carmel in spring is very different from Carmel in December rains. There is little, indeed, which we should call forest, excepting in the pine district on the highest parts, and in a few deep wadys on the north and north-east sides. But though it is studded with the ruins of deserted villages, and with Jewish wine-presses and cisterns, there is no cultivation, excepting the fine olive groves and terraced vineyards of Esfia at the one end, and the scanty gardens of the monks at the other. On

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the north side there are a few patches of olive groves, but only close to the foot of the hill. The greater portion is scrub and shrubbery; rather bare near Caiffa, where the wood has been all cleared for making charcoal, as also round the convent, and on the sea face; but elsewhere dense and impenetrable. Besides the pines, the timber-trees are chiefly oak, evergreen and deciduous; some of them noble trees. There are also chestnuts, and a few relics of all the native sylva of Palestine.

But the grand characteristics of the "excellency of Carmel" is the wonderful profusion of flowering shrubs, which were now in all their glory. I never saw such a mass of perfumed blossom. The arbutus (*Arbutus andrachne*, L.), with its brilliant red bark, grew to the size of a respectable tree; the myrtle; the scented bay (*Laurus nobilis*, L.); a kind of guelder-rose (*Viburnum tinus*, L.); a sort of sweet-scented evergreen, like the laurustinus; an elder; the locust or carob-tree (*Ceratonia siliqua*, L.); the wild olive; the terebinth; the *Pistachia lentiscus;* a large tree-broom, with golden-yellow blossom; the Judas-tree (*Cercis siliquastrum*), with its leaves just budding, but the whole plant one mass of bunches of brilliant red laburnum-shaped bloom; a fine hoary-leafed hawthorn (*Cratægus azarolus*, L.); the service apple (*Sorbus aucuparia*, L.); the *Phyllyræa;* and the storax-tree (*Styrax officinalis*), the most abundant of all, one sheet of pure white blossom, rivalling the orange in its beauty and its perfume;—all these in flower together wafted their fragrance in volumes through the air.

Then the ground, wherever there was a fragment of open space, was covered with tall red hollyhocks, pink convolvulus, valerians, a beautiful large red linum, a gladiolus, a gigantic mottled arum, red tulips, ranunculuses (large and red); pheasant's-eye (*Adonis*), of endless varieties, as large and abundant as the anemone; tufts of exquisite cyclamen, a mass of bloom under every tree;

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five species of orchids—the curious *Ophrys atrata*, with its bee-like lip, another like the spider-orchis, and a third like the man-orchis; while four species of *Onosma*, and especially the brilliant yellow *Onosma syriacum*, hung from every rock. It was the garden of Eden run wild; yet all this beauty scarcely lasts a month.

The birds were not many in kind, except the great birds of prey. Vultures and eagles of all sorts, wood-pigeons, black-headed jays, and shrikes of three species (*Lanius lahtora*, *L. rufus*, and *L. nubicus*) were the chief; and the butterflies varied little from the ordinary South European type. We obtained here the pallid harrier (*Circus pallidus*, Temp.); and I shot, to my great surprise, a pair of sun-birds, in a dell on the south side.

One day Mr. Sandwith rode with me to a Ghawârineh camp near a marsh in the plain of Acre. We found, to our surprise, that the schoolmaster was "abroad" here, and endeavoured to enlist him in our attempt to set the boys to collect for us.

He was a mild-looking man, with the white turban which marked his semi-priestly office, and listened very gravely while we pointed out to him the duty of teaching his pupils snake-catching and bird-nesting. He soon became communicative on his profession. He was an under priest from Zib, and came to this camp for several months at a time to teach the youth. His pay was (in accordance with the Revised Code of the Committee of Council), *by results*, 150 piastres, about thirty shillings, for each finished scholar he turned out, and the education was complete when a boy could read the Koran and write Arabic; so that these poor people pay about as much as is paid in our national schools. Besides his pay, the master is boarded gratis at the pupils' houses in turn. His schoolroom, an oblong structure of mats, with a flat roof of the same, about five feet high, and measuring twenty feet by twelve, would not have satisfied

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the stern conditions of Mr. Lingen and "My Lords." The roof was supported by boughs of oleander, and two doorways opposite each other in the centre of the building provided ventilation. On one side of the door were huddled together sixteen pupils, squatted on the ground, reading at the top of their voices from MS. copies of the Koran, while the other half of the room was occupied by the Dominie, stretched at full length on his back, and a handkerchief over his face to keep off the flies, from beneath which issued ominous threats, whenever he detected a mistake amidst the din. Strange mingling of barbarism and civilisation in that wickerwork schoolhouse, with its breechless, naked pupils, and their MS. Korans.

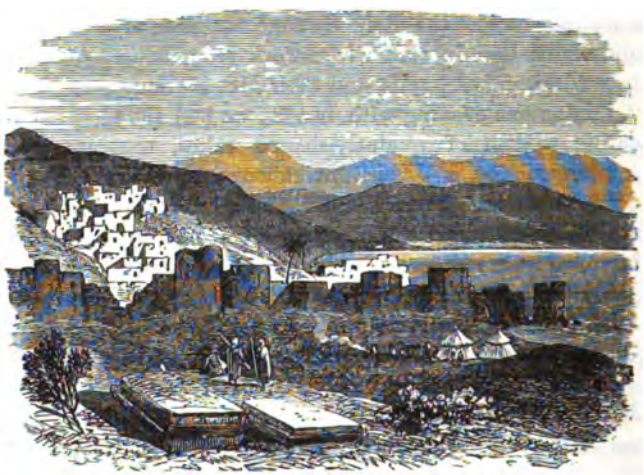
Dining one evening with Mr. S., we had the pleasure of eating a dish of quaintly-shaped cakes, sent in as a compliment by a Jewish neighbour; and so joined in commemorating Queen Esther and the Feast of Purim, still kept to recall the delivery of Israel from Haman's intended massacre twenty-three centuries ago.

We had been keeping our lonely Easter at the Consulate, and after service walked up towards the convent. On the way we met an English party who had just arrived —Messrs. Egerton-Warburton, Cochrane, Barneby, and Bateman. They turned back with us to their tents. For me it was a fortunate meeting. We had many tastes and objects in common; and very soon it was proposed that we should travel in society—an arrangement which enabled me to accomplish perhaps the most interesting and delightful portion of the whole expedition.

The next morning we bade adieu to our excellent friend, Mr. Sandwith, stranded on that lonely spot, without a fellow-countryman, and scarcely an European to speak to; and rode leisurely to Nazareth, having sent on our baggage-train in advance. The ford of the Kishon under the Mohrakha was now very shallow, and we soon entered the woods to the north-west of Esdraelon, adding the honey-

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buzzard and many summer birds to our list. I disturbed a large Syrian wild cat, which stood and looked at me for a few seconds, while I was too much occupied in watching it to think of firing till too late. On arriving at our tents, we found two notes of invitation from Mr. Zeller, and from some ladies of our acquaintance staying at the convent—an "*embarras de richesse*" of civilisation. The two parties ultimately combined in Mr. Z.'s drawing-room, and, after enjoying a delightful evening, we retired to our



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tents, and stepped out of patent-leather boots into our sheepskins and barbarism.

We afterwards rode for the third time from Nazareth to Tiberias, taking the shortest and least interesting route, but which we had not tried before—through Kefr Kenna and Subieh ("beans"). We reached our destination in time to enjoy our favourite walk to Mejdel, and a bathe in the lake, which had fallen three feet since we left it only a month before. Our friends the eagle gulls had all gone,

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only the grebes remained, dotting here and there the calm surface of the glassy lake. The stork, however, "knoweth her appointed times," and on Easter Day we had for the first time seen these birds in thousands passing over to the northward. The next day the whole of the plain of Gennesaret was covered with them in every direction, and in two days more not one remained; they had all moved to their more northern nesting-places. The beautiful russet swallow (*Hirundo rufula*) had also returned, and was skimming over lake and plain till sunset.

We encamped just over the Round Fountain (Ain Mudawarah), but high enough on the basaltic ridge to escape the malaria of the plain; and the ornithology and botany of the district gave us abundant employment for the next four days. Again, for the fourth time, we came upon the large solitary wolf, but were as unsuccessful in our chase as before. In the robber caves of Kulat Ibn Mâan, we reaped a rich harvest, oological and ornithological, our greatest success being the discovery of the nests and eggs of the sociable Galilean swift (*Cypselus affinis*), which approximates in many of its habits to the edible swallow of the East. We also found the nest of the sunbird, and scaled several nests of the different vultures. The whole flora of the district had changed in a month; the flowers had nearly all passed away, and rank green herbage had supplanted the Turkey-carpeting of colour which had enchanted us before. Savi's warbler (*Lusciniopsis savii*, Bp., *L. fluviatilis*, Cetti's warbler (*Cettia sericea*, Bp.), and many other rare species, skulked by the side of the streams and among the papyrus; but, though heard continually, were most difficult to obtain.

The next week we moved southward and pitched in Wady Bîreh, between Tabor and Beisan. The road thither from Tiberias, along the plateau of Ard el Hamma, through a rich expanse of barley, just bursting into ear, was one of the most uninteresting in Palestine, till we touched the

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east of Tabor, and entered a lovely wild park, with all the oaks now in full leaf, and many summer birds enlivening the scene. Here we obtained the gorgeous roller and bee-eater (*Coracias garrula*, L., and *Merops apiaster*, L.) just returning in numbers from the south.

The next morning we set off at daybreak, to climb to the summit of Tabor, only 1,300 feet from its base, and 1,865 feet from the sea-level, with its singular oblong platform at the top, strewn with ruins, in the midst of which stands the new convent, erected in accordance with the ecclesiastical tradition, which has erroneously fixed on this as the site of the Transfiguration. Here Barak marshalled his 10,000 men, and looked down upon that vast plain, which he was soon to wrest from the iron oppression of Jabin, king of Canaan. The prospect well repaid us—limited towards the north-west, but comprising the whole plain of Esdraelon, one unbroken sheet of green—especially the upper part of the Jordan valley, with the bold wall of the mountains of Gilead standing out behind it, mantled with dark forests, and spreading into the wider and paler plateau of Bashan to the northwards, till, over the depression of the Sea of Galilee, its northern end just distinguishable, the eye rested on the peaks of Hermon.

Finding it impossible to obtain guards from Agyle Agha for the descent of the Ghor to Jericho, and hopeless to attempt the expedition without an escort, I arranged, after another day's delay, to leave L. and B—t for a month with the greater part of our train, to work the natural history of Tabor and Galilee, while I, with the smaller tent, Hadj Khadour, and one boy, Elias, took only my horse, two mules, and an ass, and accompanied Mr. Egerton-Warburton's party south, in the hope of further exploring the eastern regions. Agyle Agha kindly promised to protect and advise L. and B—t meanwhile, and to assist them in carrying out their objects.

At sunrise we started for Beisan, sending the mules

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direct to Jenin. Our course, for road there was none, lay across a long series of rolling plains, reminding us of the Sussex downs in their general appearance, though the soil was rich and loamy. The ride to Beisan (Bethshean of old, and the Scythopolis of later antiquity) occupied four hours. We saw not a tree; and the rolling downs, as we inclined eastward, developed into wadys, which convey occasional streams to the Jordan. We came to one inhabited and apparently flourishing village, Kefrah, with some ancient ruins of large stones, bearing the so-called Jewish bevel, one of these ruins having belonged to an edifice of some size; also several ruined villages, whose grass-grown sites were marked afar by a deeper green than clothes the rest of the downs, one of them a spot of no little interest, called Marusseh. That desolate mound is on the way from the plain of Jezreel to the Jordan, the ancient Meroz. "Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the Lord against the mighty." (Judges v. 23.) The curse has been fulfilled. In the rich plain of Isaachar the place has perished, and left but a name.

The whole of the rocks are limestone, with many boulders and fragments of basalt sprinkled over them, and in one place we crossed a continuous basaltic dyke. Generally, however, the igneous formation was extremely superficial.

Half a mile north of Beisan stand the ruins of a noble Saracenic khan, with many of its arches and its courtyard perfect. Three of the four columns, which supported a canopy over a marble fountain in its centre, are still standing. The whole is built of large dressed blocks of black basalt and white crystalline limestone alternating, and has a very beautiful effect. After riding through these ruins, we descended into a little valley, the Nahr Jâlûd, where a perennial stream of sweet water was fringed with

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canes and oleanders in full bloom. This we crossed by a fine Roman bridge of a single arch, much decayed. Constructed, however, of hard black basalt, it has been able to withstand, in some degree, the ravages of time, and the carelessness of Moslems. Higher up the same stream we saw another bridge of three arches, and, lower down, the buttresses and spring of the arch of a third, these latter both built of limestone, and very finely worked.

Just beyond, and separated by a narrow ridge, is a second stream, also perennial, and on the peninsula formed by these two, with a bold steep brow overlooking the Ghor, stood the citadel of ancient Bethshean—a sort of Gibraltar or Constantine on a small scale—of remarkable natural strength, and inaccessible to horsemen. No wonder that it was long ere Israel could wrest it from the possession of the Canaanites. The eastern face rises like a steep cone, most incorrectly stated by Robinson to be "black, and apparently volcanic," and by Porter, "probably once a crater." Certainly there are many blocks of basalt lying about, but if any person walks round to the east side of the hill, he will see that it is simply a limestone bluff.

We could easily recognise the spot where Burckhardt must have stood when he saw but one column standing; though from other positions we could count more than twenty. But Sheikh Ibrahim's visit was evidently a very hurried one. Having tied our horses to some standing columns at the foot of the Acropolis, we climbed to a mediæval ruin, under the shade of which we ate our luncheon, sheltered from the glare of the noonday sun, and looking down on the extraordinary bridge which, with its high-peaked arch, seems once to have carried a wall or a fortification across the ravine. A black kite came down to share our meal, which we shot, as also the ortolan bunting, being the first of either these migrants which we had seen.

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Climbing to the summit, we enjoyed the finest panorama, next to Gerizim, which Central Palestine affords, and spent half an hour in examining it with delight. Spread at our feet, yet far below us, the vast plain of Jordan stretched north and south as far as the eye could reach, and in its centre we might trace the strangely tortuous course of the river, marked by a ribbon of dark shrubs and oleanders, through the otherwise treeless plain. Facing us, nearly ten miles to the north, was the gorge of the Hieromax; nearly opposite was a long narrow plateau, raised a few hundred feet above the Ghor, on the edge of which the glass enabled us to descry the ruins of *Tubaket Fahil*, the ancient Pella. Gradually sloping back to the crest of its lofty plateau, picturesquely dotted with oaks, but nowhere in a forest mass, and scarred by the ravine of the Yâbis and the Seklab, stretched the whole front of Gilead; to the south-east the lofty Castle of Kefrenjy towered, and behind it rose the higher summits of pine-clad Ajlûn, the scene of our well-remembered ride from Sûf, until they sloped down to the deep valley of the Jabbok. Beyond this, through a thin haze, we could detect the blue outline of the supposed Nebo, and the mountains of Moab in a long ridge fringing the Dead Sea, the view of which was shut out by the spur of Kurn Surtabeh, projecting from the west. I could thus console myself, that though baulked of my projected ride down the Ghor, I had traversed most of it, and seen the whole of it, excepting six miles to the north of Surtabeh, and was quite satisfied I had lost nothing of the slightest interest.

The Ghor, clothed with a rich robe of clovers and lucernes, was everywhere dotted with the black parallelograms which mark the Bedouin camps, the only habitations of man till the wretched village of Jericho is reached. Turning again from north to west, the noble Crusading ruin of Belvoir stood beetling on the highest point overhanging the plain by Wady Bireh; and just behind it rose

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snow-streaked Hermon, then Jebel Duhy (Little Hermon), between which and Gilboa the plain of Esdraelon gently sloped towards us, showing the reach along which Jehu drove his chariot from the ford in our front up to Jezreel. To the south a range of sparsely-wooded hills embayed the valleys and the Ghor as far as Kurn Surtabeh.

How clearly the details of the sad end of Saul were recalled, as we stood on this spot! There was the slope of Gilboa, on which his army was encamped before the battle. Round that hill he slunk by night, conscience-stricken, to visit the witch of Endor. Hither, as being a Canaanitish fortress, the Philistines most naturally brought the trophies of the royal slain, and hung them up just by this wall. Across the ford by the Yâbis, and across that plain below us, the gallant men of Jabesh Gilead hurried on their long night's march to stop the indignity offered to Israel, and to take down the bodies of their king and his sons.

Descending from the ancient fortress, where the ruins of the more modern citadel were, in large measure, composed of beautiful marble columns, and some capitals built horizontally in tiers or lying across the massive walls, we next came to the remains of a very perfect amphitheatre, with all the vomitories and corridors intact, though not of very large size. We noticed the oval recesses half-way up the galleries mentioned by Irby and Mangles.

Then crossing the third stream (a very small one, with water slightly sulphurous), we visited the ruins of a fine Greek church, since perverted into a mosque with a Cuphic inscription inserted over an inner doorway, but now nearly roofless, excepting two or three arches and a small tower. Here there is a fourth little stream, and the modern village, a collection of earth and stone-built kennels, circular and flat-roofed, about twelve feet in diameter, and each having one aperture about three feet square. They were the very worst among all the miserable hovels of this wretched land.

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It is scarcely conceivable how any human beings can inhabit such sties: but such is the contrast, nowhere more startling than here, between ancient civilisation and modern degradation. These people are Egyptian immigrants, and are grievously oppressed by the neighbouring Bedouin. To us they were civil and obliging, no doubt in awe of Agyle's horsemen. I noticed a clump of palms, the last lingering relics, and also a quantity of the medicinal aloe (*Gasteria farsaniana*, H. and Ehr.), growing wild on the slope, from the ruins to the Jordan valley, another relic, doubtless, of past cultivation.

Beisan, though rarely visited by travellers, is well worth an effort to reach it, and no one will ever regret the two days it will cost to make the detour from the ordinary route. Our road thence to Jenin, our night's resting-place, was somewhat circuitous, up the plain of Esdraelon, where we were often nearly bogged in the sluggish streams which feed the Jalûd, and which are drawn artificially over the corn land. Innumerable white storks were striding about in every direction, and the spur-wing plover frequently rose from the rushes. We passed many camps of the Sakk'r, who were, fortunately for us, on good terms with the Agha.

At length, instead of doubling Gilboa by Zerin, we found a steep path which led us up by the village of Nûris to the Dervish colony of Wezar on its highest peak. Storks in thousands had settled for the night on the hill, resting during their northward migration, and from fatigue, or confidence in man, scarcely troubled themselves to fly off as we passed. Here we had a magnificent view over the plain of Esdraelon, though not comprising any features not previously observed from other points. The path from Nûris to Wezar is most precipitous, scarcely practicable for horses; and the inhabitants are exclusively Dervishes, who seem to have taken possession of the place, which is said to have formerly been deserted. We descended by

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the village of Arubboneh, where the black kites were already busily engaged in heaping their huge nests on a few large trees to the south of the dwellings, and reached our camp at Jenîn long after sunset, the ride having occupied twelve hours, exclusive of stoppages.

The next day we revisited Sebustiyeh, going over the ruins of Samaria more carefully than before, and reached Nablous in time to visit the Samaritan synagogue. It was the preparation for the Passover, and we had the good fortune to be present at the service,—very interesting, as in outward form more like the ancient Jewish worship than any other now in use. At the same time there was a perfunctory heartlessness in the whole, very different from the fervent outpouring of heart and voice in the old Jewish service. In their daily worship, as in their Passover and great Day of Atonement, the Samaritan ceremonies seem but a wretched superficial caricature of the Hebrew; and all that relates to a priesthood and a sacrifice, in their bearing on Mosaic dispensation, is wholly lost by the Samaritans. Thus in their Passover, the idea of a sacrifice and of a consecrated family feast, the very essence of the Hebrew rite, are entirely absent; nor does there seem to be a single point in the external rites to remind us of them. Nothing remains to connect the two ceremonies but the name, and the fact that the victims are lambs. The service was attended only by the men and boys, and every one, on entering, vested himself in a sleeved white surplice, which reached to the feet. These surplices were placed in rows near the door. "Bring forth vestments for all the worshippers of Baal." (2 Kings x. 22.) Among the congregation was the Chief Rabbi of the Russian Karaite Jews (the sect who reject the traditions of the Talmud), who had come here to study the Samaritan Pentateuch. He also wore a linen ephod, but with a broad red velvet phylactery, on which were embroidered, in gold, verses in the modern Hebrew character.

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The two priests alone stood on the daïs in front of the satin embroidered curtain, which veils the recess in which the holy books are deposited. Each Samaritan, as soon as he had vested himself, knelt with his face towards this, till his forehead nearly touched the ground. For half an hour the congregation, with their crimson turbans (the badge of their sect), continued to drop in, in the most irreverent manner, chatting as they robed themselves, though the service was proceeding. This consisted of alternate prayers by the priest, with loud amens and hallelujah responses chanted, and chapters of the Pentateuch chanted by all the congregation, in a minor key, with inconceivable rapidity, but far more musical and harmonious than the Moslem chants. We could fancy these were the old Temple strains, when all the people praised the Lord with a loud voice. Ten chapters of Exodus were recited at this service.*

*April 8th.*—I gladly embraced the opportunity of again ascending Mount Gerizim in the company of my friends, and feasting my eyes once more on the grand panorama. Curiously enough, we found among the ruins the body of a large badger, of the same species as our European, but of a paler colour. It was too much decomposed to permit of our preserving it, though we made a brave attempt, at the expense of our olfactory nerves. We were completely discomfited, and afforded E. W. a subject for a laughable sketch. The beautiful rock thrush (*Petrocincla saxatilis*) was spread in small flocks over the hills; and the habits of these brilliant birds, as they hopped from rock to rock, showing their bright red tails, gave them the appearance of gigantic redstarts. We never found them again till we ascended the hills of Galilee.

Pushing on past Bethel and Beeroth, we encamped at the Christian village of Ramallah, where Mr. Z. hoped to

* For a full and most graphic account of the Samaritan service on the Day of Atonement, see the interesting paper of Mr. Grove in Vacation Tourists, 1861, "Nablous and the Samaritans."



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find work to do. The sun set as we reached it, but Mr. Z. soon gathered a little congregation round him and addressed them. He found many inquirers. It was strange to see in the group of Oriental costumes a woman in European dress, with wide straw hat, and her boy in a suit of unpicturesque corduroy. They proved to be Spanish Jews, converts, who had settled here out of the way of petty persecution, and spoke English. There is in the village a very neat Greek church, and a new Greek hospice. Christianity had here, as elsewhere, stamped the place and its substantial houses with a neatness and cleanliness to which the best of Moslem villages are strangers.

Next day we reached Jerusalem by a road new to me, by El Jib (Gibeon) and Nebi Samwil (Mizpeh).

Sad calamities had overtaken our old friends the Jehâlin. Only a few days after our departure, Mohammed Isa, and his great band, whom we had met at Beersheba, had conbined with the Kâ'abineh, and fallen on Abou Dahûk in the dead of night; killed fifteen of his followers, among them the chief of our guard, wounded thirty-eight, and carried off every horse, sheep, camel, and tent the old warrior possessed. The poor old man was wandering about Jerusalem, a hanger-on at the gate of the Pasha, and with no property left in the world save the rags which covered him. There was no possibility now of reaching Engedi, which my friends had hoped to accomplish, as the country east of Hebron was overrun by brigands.

After spending a quiet Sunday in Jerusalem, where the Bishop of Victoria, probably the first English bishop who, as such, had visited the Holy City since the Crusades, officiated, I made provision, the next day, for a ten-days' sojourn alone at Ain Sultân, our old Jericho quarters, in order to compare the summer fauna and flora of the Ghor with that of winter.

I had neither outfit nor servant; so, having left my money and valuables in the care of my friends, I purchased

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a tin-pot, coffee-pot, plate, and cup, laid in a store of biscuit and cheese, ham, coffee, sugar, and figs, and set off with my muleteer Khadour, and boy Elias, accompanied by my old friend Jemeel of the Ghawârineh.

We had scarcely got up our little tent in the thickets near the Jordan, when some Arabs brought in a young ibex they had caught. In the fond hope of rearing it, I at once purchased it; but the little creature was very wild, and after having been carefully tended for ten days, fared no better than my pet gazelle, which, so soon as it had become tame and familiar, and given promise of surviving the perils of travel, strangled itself in a moment of fright, among the tent cords.

My first night in solitude was not a very comfortable one. My servants and guard had long since wrapped themselves in their cloaks and were asleep outside, while I sat within, preparing my specimens by the light of a lamp, when I was startled by the approaching tramp of men and camels. I went out; Jemeel started to his feet, and challenged the new comers. "Who are you?" "Adwân." "What do you want?" "We are haramîyeh" (robbers). This was not a very reassuring reply from four fellows armed to the teeth, while our whole arsenal consisted of my fowling-piece and revolver. However, we put the best face on the matter, and asked them if they were going to rob us, meanwhile passing the tobacco-bag liberally round. They bade us not be alarmed, as they were going to camp by us, and proceed to Jerusalem in the morning. At once they began to tie their camels, and sat down in front of the tent. Khadour meantime busily blew the embers, and plied the coffee-pot, determined they should not have cause to complain of our hospitality. They were not uncommunicative, and presently informed us that they had, during the day, stolen thirteen camels of the Beni Sakk'r, with which, after nightfall, they had crossed the Jordan, and should take them to Jerusalem for sale in the



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morning. As I sat and did the honours in front of the tent, Jemeel continued to pass in and out, bringing me my gun four times to be loaded and capped, as though our armoury were well supplied, and taking care to remove the caps each time. I did not at first comprehend his *ruse*, till a look from him explained his object. At length I retired, in no very comfortable frame of mind, leaving my retinue outside, and committed myself to God's good keeping in that lonely wilderness. I have often been further from civilisation, but generally with a companion. Here there was a painful intensity in the solitude, enhanced by the beauty of the spot and my strange neighbours. I was not rendered more comfortable when, through the canvas walls, I heard the Adwân reckoning up that we had four guns of two barrels each, besides my pistol, which would go off for ever; and then admiring the mules. Thankful indeed was I, when, about four o'clock, I heard them unloose their camels and move off without our animals, and I turned on my side to continue my slumbers rather more soundly than before.

*April* 12*th*—19*th*.—The week was spent in laborious but successful exploration of the "ciccar" of Jordan. All our old haunts were revisited, the neighbouring Arabs were enlisted, and a rich harvest of birds, plants, and especially of eggs, rewarded my rambles. The nest of the bulbul (*Ixus xanthopygius*), sunbird (*Nectarinia oseæ*), fantail (*Drymœca gracilis*), *Crateropus chalybeus*, and many others enriched my collection in abundance, and repaid me for my scratches. Any defence more formidable in their own line than the thorns of a Jericho thicket it is impossible to conceive. My clothes were literally torn to rags; and delicious it was, when scratched and bleeding, to return at sunset, and lie down flat in the clear brook from Elisha's fountain, to me a truly "healing stream."

I observed, that while so many of the resident birds are peculiar, the summer migrants of the Ghor are all identical

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with those of the surrounding country; a fact which points to the extreme length of time during which the local climate has been exceptional and the deep depression existed, to enable the establishment in it of so many peculiar or isolated forms of life.

The Jordan was now fuller than usual, quite over its ordinary banks, for it was "the time of barley harvest," and the snows of Hermon were rapidly disappearing; but still it was not nearly so high as after the heavy rains of December. The bulbul's melody resounded on its banks, enriched now by the notes of the nightingale, the same as our own (*Philomela luscinia*), which had just returned from its winter quarters. The salt plain, to the height of 250 or 300 feet above the Dead Sea level, was as barren as ever, but all above that altitude was now green, and covered with a variety of lucernes and large *astragalus*, on which innumerable clouds of turtle-doves were feeding. The common turtle-dove had just returned, and stocked every tree and thicket. At every step they fluttered up from the herbage in front—they perched on every tree and bush—they had overspread the whole face of the land. So universal, so simultaneous, so conspicuous their migration, that the prophet might well place the turtle at the head of those birds which "observe the time of their coming." (Jer. viii. 7.) The barer portions of the plain were now occupied by small bands of the Houbara bustard (*Houbara undulata*, Jac.), whose eggs I sought in vain, though Jemeel, who knew them well, described them admirably; nor was I more successful in finding the nests of the sand-grouse. We were probably too early for either of these birds.

My friends came down from Jerusalem, and on April 18th C. and I devoted the day to an excursion up the gorge of the Wady Kelt, into which we had so often looked down from above. The day was intensely hot, the thermometer under the hot blast of the sirocco rising to 102°, and we

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rode as far as we could, but when we reached the crumbling aqueduct of Herod's Jericho, had to send back our horses. Here was a fine old sycomore fig-tree, perhaps a lineal descendant, and nearly the last, of that into which Zacchæus climbed. With the decay of the aqueduct desolation has resumed its sway, and, except on the banks of the stream, the vegetation is sparse and of a desert character. In the steep soft banks flocks of lovely rollers (*Coracias garrula*, L.) were scooping their nests, and expanding to the sun their bright blue wings as they flew out, screaming at our approach.

The dens of the robbers are said to be in its sides, but we only met one Bedouin, a wild, half-naked, well-armed savage, who turned back with us, allured by backshîsh, to assist in bird-nesting. The vegetation at the bottom of the gully was chiefly tall cane, a few oleanders, and the beautiful "retem," with its bunches of delicate pink blossoms, scenting the air. Every little pool was full of fish, and the bushes of birds, for wherever there is water there is, too, a prodigality of life. For several miles we traced the ancient aqueducts running on both sides the gorge, by which all the supply had been carefully utilised for the irrigation of barren tracts several hundred feet above the present bed of the torrent. Two ancient bridges had carried the aqueducts across the valley, one with a single, the other with a double, set of arches. A deep pool under a thick canopy of cane and retem tempted us to try a bath and a swim; but I had a warning of the sun's power, for on coming out of the water, though my head was only exposed for a minute or two to the rays from above, I fell down dizzy, and for several days afterwards suffered from severe headache. We returned quite satisfied that the gorge of the Kelt ought to be included in the tourist's route; and could only regret that Mr. Grove's arguments would not allow us to identify it with the Cherith, especially as we had taken two ravens' nests with eggs in its sides.

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Next morning we rode across the plain to the end of the Dead Sea, and thence to Ain Feshkhah. There was a strong wind from the south, and off the little island the sea was three feet higher than when we visited the same spot in winter; while, a few miles to the west, at Ain Feshkhah, the level was two feet lower than at the former period, showing the tremendous force of the wind; for, no doubt, the sea was really lower than in winter.

At Ain Feshkhah my friends turned up to Marsaba, while I returned alone with Jemeel to my solitary tent; not, however, without rich gatherings in natural history, including two species of a beautiful little porcupine-mouse (*Acomys dimidiatus*, and *Acanthomys cahirinus*, Gray), and some grakles as well as a young gazelle.

Three days afterwards I rode up to Jerusalem by a route, not, however, a road, north of the Wady Kelt, to visit Anâta, the ancient Anathoth, and to search in vain after Gallim and Madmenah.

*April* 22*nd* was the first day of the Jewish Passover, and we visited seven of the synagogues during their hours of worship; four of the Sephardin or Talmudic Jews, two of the Ashkenaz or Polish, and one of the Karaites, who reject the traditions, and hold simply to the law of Moses. The services in all were very much alike, consisting of prayers intoned with many responses, psalms chanted, and Scripture read,—all, of course, in Hebrew. Every worshipper, as he entered, threw over his head and shoulders the light white scarf, with broad blue or black ends (those of the Rabbis having embroidered phylacteries), the modern abridgment of the linen ephod, still preserved in its entirety by the Samaritans.

There was a large elevated platform in the centre of each synagogue, which accommodated eight or ten men, on the desks of which lay copies of the law. Any who chose might step up among the Rabbis and read a passage—and, among others, in one of the synagogues, the Jewish drago-

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man who was taking us round seized a scarf, threw it over his shoulder, and, stepping up, read a few lines, and then left the place with us. The women were, in all cases, confined to a thickly-latticed compartment at one end, which was always insufficient for their accommodation, and the doors were crowded by them, the aged women wearing enormous shawl turbans, but none ever entering the area of the synagogue. Nothing could be more painfully irreverent than the manner of gabbling the intoned prayers, though the often-repeated amens, hallelujahs, and hosannas, loudly shouted by the congregation, had a touching effect. In reading the psalms, which, like the prayers, were chanted standing, all the people held books, and swayed themselves from side to side in a manner almost ludicrous. Though many besides the Rabbis read portions of the law, we did not observe any attempting to expound. So was it of old, when in the synagogue of Nazareth, "as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath-day, and stood up for to read . . . and He closed the book, and gave it again to the minister, and sat down." (Luke iv. 16, 20.)

In every synagogue was the embroidered silk curtain, behind which is kept the sacred roll, with the crown of Judah carved and gilt above the cupboard; but besides this, near the door of each was a large bookcase, containing a well-supplied library of Hebrew literature, chiefly folios, for the use of the congregation. Among the elders we recognised several of the originals who have sat for their portraits in Holman Hunt's wonderful picture of "The Finding in the Temple." The architecture of most of the buildings was of the humblest character; the four Sephardim synagogues all opening into one courtyard, and being more like separate rooms in one house than distinct places of worship.

The next morning I received an invitation to call on the Duc de Luynes, who had just returned from his visit to the east side, along with the Adwân Sheikhs, and I was de-

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lighted with the courteous urbanity, no less than with the energy and antiquarian lore, of this rare old gentleman, a fine example of the true old French noblesse. He had traversed, at the age of more than seventy, a district never penetrated since the time of Irby and Mangles. I afterwards spent a great part of the day with M. Lartet fils, his geological companion, whose elaborate report has since been given to the world. He was most frank and cordial,



ADWÂNS.

showed me his maps, and freely gave me all the information I asked for respecting the district on the east side of the Dead Sea. So far as we had time to compare notes, I found that I had his valuable authority with me in the general views I had formed respecting the geology of the country; and that he, too, had found Lynch a faithful and accurate observer.

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In the afternoon I had an interview with the two Adwân Sheikhs, Goblan and Abd'l Asiz, the latter a grizzled old grey-beard, with eagle eyes and a most sinister expression of countenance. Goblan who has been much disfigured by a bullet passing through his mouth and cheek, always keeps his mouth covered; and, though he is said to have more red-handed murders to answer for than any man in the country, is by no means so ferocious in expression. He is the warrior, as Abd'l Asiz is the jurist, of his tribe, and is much the younger of the two. Both were alike grimy and filthy in appearance.

I proposed to them that we should accompany them back to their mountains; but, though they evidently wished to have a return party, we could not come to any terms. The Duke had loaded them with magnificent presents, and they held their services just now at no cheap rate.

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## CHAPTER XXII.

*Negotiations with the Adwân—Descent to the Ghor—Crossing the Jordan—Nimrîn—Bethnimrah and Bethabarah—The Crossing of Elijah and Elisha—Spot where Elijah was taken up—Keferein—Probably identical with Abel Shittim—Plains of Shittim—Camp of Israel—Beth Jesimoth—Faithfulness of the Adwân—Nocturnal Visitors—Ride to Arak el Emir—Views of the Western Side—Ravine of Seir—Oleanders—Wild Boars—Arak el Emir—Ruins of Hyrcanus' Palace—Colossal Sculptures—Stables and Halls in the Cliff—Beauty and Richness of the Country—The ancient Jazer—Naûr—Wady Heshban—Saracenic Castle—Ruins of Hunah—Mountains of Moab—Abarim—Nebo—Position of Pisgah not Jebel Attarus—Glorious Panorama from the top of Pisgah—Heshbon—Ruins and Fishpools—Ma'în—Elealah.*

A DAY was wasted in diplomacy with the Adwâns before we arranged the terms for Mr. Egerton-Warburton's party and myself. At length we closed for 8,000 piastres, two double-barrels, four sheep, with coffee and tobacco to our guards; half the money to be paid at once, and half on our arrival at their further frontier. 1,500 piastres were to be returned to me at once, as restitution in part for the robbery at Sûf by their dependents. For this sum we were to have safe conduct through all the Adwân territory, including Heshbân, Ammân, Gerash, and Arak el Emir.

In a few hours we left Jerusalem, and on arriving at our old camping-ground by the Prophet's Fountain, we found the Adwân Sheikhs waiting for us and our coffee.

It was a clear cloudless morning, with a light breeze from the north-east; sultry indeed, but a great relief after the oppressive sirocco of the previous week; when, after a breakfast at six A.M., we mounted for our trans-Jordanic

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expedition. We rode up the Ghor, several miles above the pilgrims' bathing-place, crossed the depression of the Nawaimeh, and another wady, till we must have been considerably above the place where Israel crossed to take possession of the land; and the oases of Jericho and of the plains of Moab were somewhat to the southward of us.

The Jordan here is nearly in the centre of its valley. After crossing the lower plain, we descended some forty feet to the narrow strip of depressed ground, the channel, in fact, of the winter floods, a dense thicket of tamarisk, white poplar, willow, and various other deciduous trees, with an undergrowth of many species of smaller shrubs. This level had evidently been overflowed within the last three months, and the lower boughs of the trees were a complete tangle of straw and rubbish. Doves and nightingales swarmed in the branches. A winding path brought us down to the brink of the rapidly-rolling river, on which we came by a sudden turn. It is impossible ever to forget the strange scene which here burst upon us. Above and below, an impenetrable tangle of forest shut in the river on both sides, the limbs of the trees hanging over, and their branches dipping into the water. Here a little open glade was left, and a small clearing of a few yards on the opposite side.

On both sides the space was thronged by about fifty tall, wild-looking Bedouin, all stark naked, swimming and riding a number of bare-backed horses. For a moment my heart beat quick as two naked men seized my horse, and a third snatched my gun from me. I felt as if set upon by naked savages. C. was ahead of me, and I watched him and his horse led into the water by a naked Bedouin, who had taken off the bridle and held his steed by the halter, while another hung on to his tail, and a third kept on the leeside of the saddle. The stream, rushing with tremendous force, was about fifteen feet deep. Meantime, my saddle-bags were carried off and

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CROSSING THE JORDAN.

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placed on a man's head; and having taken off my outer garment, I committed myself and horse to the torrent, his halter being held by a mounted guide. The ford was very difficult and oblique; but the leader's horse was evidently experienced, while an expert swimmer kept to leeward of my saddle, and held my leg close to my horse. Following a little way with the stream, we landed on the other side. In a trice the saddle was taken off, and, before I knew why, I saw another wild savage dashing with the animal back into the stream. Soon we had all landed, and now the scene was of the wildest and strangest beauty. It was such as one might expect to see in a picture of Indians crossing an American river, or of the war in New Zealand, graced by the accompaniments of almost tropical vegetation. The baggage-mules were being discharged on the opposite bank, and all small articles were seized by the naked Adwân, who placed them on their heads, dashed across on horseback, pitched down their burdens, and plunged in again. Twenty or thirty men, with their horses wildly neighing and snorting, were thus dashing about, while we stood rather anxiously watching the fate of bedding and portmanteaus; and Antonio, the dragoman, carefully kept a tally on the opposite bank. We agreed that such a spectacle was sufficient to repay all the negotiations and trouble of reaching the Jordan.

The most difficult business was getting the mules and canteen-boxes over. Each mule had a box lashed on its back, and was taken in tow between two horses, and at length all were safely landed. But for some time the donkeys baffled all efforts. They had to be pitched in, and then led and pushed by expert swimmers. My ass broke away twice, was carried down stream, and landed again on the western bank. At length the last man and donkey had crossed; and we sat down under the tamarisk-trees till our baggage was reloaded, and the fifty chickens, which had broken from their coops, were collected.

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Chickens, charcoal, corn, and all supplies, had been laid in for ten days' provision. The whole passage of the Jordan occupied two hours and a-half, and at last we were again in the saddle, having meantime obtained several doves, and a little wild pig, just caught by one of our guards, squeaking in my saddle-bag.

Our escort led the way, some thirty horsemen, most of them armed with long spears, and a few rejoicing in showy French guns, the parting gift of the Duc de Luynes, at which they were never tired of gazing. We found the thicket of trees to be of much greater extent on the east than on the west side, and passed for half a mile in single file by a narrow path, along which doubtless these Adwân had returned with plunder from many a foray. We then mounted into the second plateau, corresponding in elevation with that on the west side, where we put up a fine bustard, while hundreds of sand-grouse passed overhead out of shot.

With a few of our escort I here turned a little to the northward, to the banks of the Wady Sha'ib, just below which we had crossed, and in a quarter of an hour after leaving the thicket of trees by the river bank, reached Nimrîn ("the panther"), doubtless the Beth-Nimrah of Numb. xxxii. 36, and Josh. xiii. 27, built by the tribe of Gad, and lying "in the valley," *i.e.*, of the Jordan. In Numb. xxxii. 3 it is called simply Nimrah. The stream was full of water, with fishes and shells, and a spring bubbled forth, wasted and untended, making a luxuriant tangle of zizyphus, dôm-trees, and a beautiful caper (*Capparis ægyptiaca?*), which ran along the ground like a cotoneaster, and was covered with delicate white blossoms. But cultivation there was none. The buildings may have been extensive, but the ruins are now shapeless, and generally choked by the prickly vegetation, excepting on the north side, where a few irregular lines of foundations could be seen. There were no traces of Roman work, or

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of bevelled stones. This place is probably the "Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing" (John i. 28), and in the neighbourhood where our Redeemer vouchsafed to be baptized of him in order to "fulfil all righteousness."* There is abundance of water, and the place lies close to the well-frequented ford and the highway from Jerusalem and Jericho to Ramoth Gilead.

By this ford, too, did Elijah most probably pass, when he had vainly endeavoured to prevent his faithful Elisha from accompanying him, as for the last time he hastened towards the mountains of his native Gilead, thence to be carried up to his eternal home. Up to that bold peak of Quaratania behind, the sons of the prophets had climbed, and there "they stood to view," and watch, as master and scholar walked across the plain, till they descended to the wooded bank. There was no delay, as the stricken waters made a path for them dryshod; and thence, talking as they went, they would naturally follow the road towards the mountains. Not long had they walked, still absorbed in converse, when the chariot and horses of fire appeared, and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. Not long, for when Elisha returned, alone in the body, but gifted with a double portion of the spirit, the sons of the prophets had not yet relinquished their post of observation. Still had they gazed on, waiting till their father should return, when they soon recognised Elisha, coming back in all the power and spirit of Elijah. It could not therefore have been far from this spot that heaven and earth were brought so near together (2 Kings ii.).

Is there not, too, a peculiar appropriateness in this identification, if He who was to come "in the spirit and power of Elias," appeared, completed His mission, and discharged His function of herald of the Kingdom, by the

* The name Bethabara seems to be closely connected with Bethnimrah by the LXX. version, which instead of Βηθνιμιρά reads Βαιθαναβιά (Josh. xiii. 27).

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baptism of Christ, close to the very spot where His prototype had disappeared?

Leaving Nimrîn, and riding in a S.E. direction for three or four miles across a comparatively barren flat, we entered on a fertile, well-watered plain, very little elevated above it, which extends to the foot of the mountains of Moab, covered with a zizyphus, false balsam-tree, and innumerable other shrubs, and with many patches of barley, already waving their golden heads ripe for the sickle. The whole district recalled the Ghor of Safieh, swarming with turtle-doves of the three species, with gorgeous rollers and lovely bee-eaters. The most characteristic plants were the caper mentioned above, and the strange osher, or true Sodom apple (*Calotropis procera*, R.B.), which we had only hitherto met with at Engedi and Safieh. I know not why the vegetation should be more tropical than at Jericho, but so it is.

After two and a-half miles' ride from the Jordan, we reached some shapeless ruin called Keferein, a little to the south of the ford; and there, by the side of a little gushing rivulet, overhung with prickly bushes, we encamped, with abundance of luxuriant fodder for our animals.

The heat was intense, but as we arrived early in the afternoon, we made an effort to explore the immediate neighbourhood, which abounded in rich birds and plants. Little artificial channels conducted the water among the thickets. The cultivation was in irregular patches, like the Safieh, and a small party of semi-nomad dependants of the Adwân had erected their huts and were reaping and threshing their barley about half a mile from our camp. The remains of Keferein, which has hitherto been unidentified with any historical site, are very like those of ancient Jericho, extending on to a gravelly rocky slope above the watered oasis, and comprising a small isolated rock or peak of insignificant size, which seems to have been the

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KEFERRIN. PLAINS OF MOAB

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stronghold of the ancient city. The traces of building were like those of Sumrah on the other side. Had it not been for the name, I should have felt disposed to look for Bethabara here, as the waters are far more abundant than at Nimrîn, and the ruins indicate a place of greater population and importance. While attempting to penetrate the wilderness of thorns, we came every five minutes upon some little stream, conveying plenty and fertility in its course.

We were, in fact, in the plain of Shittim, and on climbing a little eminence near, we could see the rich wilderness of garden, extending in unbroken verdure right into the corner at the north-east end of the Dead Sea, under the angle formed by the projection of the mountains of Moab, where the Wady Suweimeh enters the lake. It is now called the Ghor es Seisaban. Though we were not able to examine and traverse its whole extent, yet after surveying it from Keferein, and then looking down upon it from the hills near Heshban, I have no hesitation in describing it as by far the largest and richest oasis in the whole Ghor.* Safieh may compete with it in tropical luxuriance, but not in extent. Among the tangled wilderness, chiefly near its western edge, still grow many of the acacia-trees, "shittim" (*Acacia sayal*), from which the district derived its appropriate name of Abel-ha-Shittim, "the meadow or moist place of the acacias."

Here in these sultry groves Israel was seduced by the Moabites into the licentious rites of Baal-Peor.† Upon this rich plain Balaam looked down from the top of Peor,‡ from Pisgah, "from the bare hill on the top of the rocks, and from the cultivated field of Zophim," "that looketh on the face of the waste."

* On the Botanical Riches of the plains of Shittim, see also Burckhardt, p. 392.

† Numb. xxv. 1. ‡ Ibid. xxiii. 14–28.



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"He watch'd till morning's ray
On lake and meadow lay,
And willow-shaded streams that silent sweep
Amid their bannered lines,
Where, by their genial signs,
The desert-wearied tribes in sight of Canaan sleep."

"He saw in that vast encampment among the acacia groves, 'How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel.' Like the watercourses of the mountains, like gardens by the side of his own great river Euphrates, with their aromatic shrubs and their wide-spreading cedars, the lines of the camp were spread out before him." Their tents were pitched from Abel-Shittim* in the north, that is, from Keferein, "the meadow of the acacias," from this very spot, which with its watered and marshy glades is the northern limits of the rich Ghor, to Beth Jeshimoth on the southern desert expanse עֲרָבוֹת, *'arboth*, Numb. xxii. 1. Beth Jeshimoth probably is represented by the ruins of Rameh, pointed out to us by Goblan, a faint mound standing some distance out from the rich oasis which shelters itself under the eastern hills.

Here not many months after did Moses give his last blessing to the people he had led so long; hence he ascended those grey heights that towered beyond, and gained at length a glimpse of that land he was never himself to tread. Here were those tribes marshalled by his successor. In front of these green pastures their hosts were drawn out in the early morning, just before their last halt at the river's brink.†

The situation of Keferein, at the northern margin of the oasis, and its marshy verdure, seem unmistakably to identify it with the Abel-Shittim of Numbers. I regretted that we were not able to visit Er Rameh, in which I would recognise Beth Joshimoth, although we had afterwards a

* Numb. xxxiii. 49. † Josh. iii. 1.

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nearer view of it from the hills.* I could not ascertain from Sheikh Goblan that he was aware of the existence of any ruins further south than Ramah, such as the Beth Jisimuth named by Swartz; and there is so much danger of ruins being discovered to oblige the traveller, bearing any name he inquires for, that I was cautious not to seek after it by that name.

We found Sheikh Goblan an admirable cicerone. He was far too enlightened to suspect us of treasure-hunting, and with a keen appreciation himself of the beauties of a landscape, and a thorough knowledge of the country, he omitted no opportunity of pointing out to us everything he knew, whether in the way of scenery or ancient sites. I had not been an hour in his company without feeling perfectly satisfied that I was under the guidance of one on whose fidelity and intelligence I might implicitly rely.

It was a wild scene as we looked out from our tents in the starlight, and saw the tall spears struck all around, gleaming faintly over the prostrate figures of our escort, and the many groups of horses and mules dimly discernible in the distance.

Our journey next day was a very short one—to the ruins called Arak el Emir, a fine castle (many of the sculptures of which still remain) built by Hyrcanus, son of Joseph Tobias.† We rode up the valley of the Wady Keferein, and then crossed a ridge into the Wady Seir, making a ride of four hours and a quarter. The geological formation was all limestone, and many layers of flint. The dip of the strata everywhere was at an angle of from five to fifteen degrees towards S.W. But there were many dislocations, and strangely-contorted strata, more so than we had elsewhere seen, though all with the same general inclination;

* On a subsequent visit I carefully examined these ruins, but could find nothing worthy of notice—merely shapeless mounds.

† Josephus, *Ant. Jud.* xii. 4, 11.



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and with no trace of trap or igneous rock, though the hills were often tilted up.

In proof of the temperature being higher than on the other side, I may add that while the barley was scarcely ripe at Jericho, it was here already thrashed out, and our muleteers purchased from the neighbouring fellâhin some sacks already in fine order. One of our guards also brought me a cucumber, the first of the season, and insisted on my eating it on the spot, which civility, rather than prudence, compelled me to do.

As we ascended from the oppressive atmosphere of the Ghor, the character of the vegetation changed, but not so rapidly as on the other side. The zizyphus and caper crept higher up the hills, the false balsam was still found in the wadys, and the sages, salvias, and other labiate plants did not descend so low.

The ruins to the westward were very fine, for the atmosphere was unusually clear; and when we had risen some height, and were crossing a ridge, the northern half of the Dead Sea, the plain of Jericho, and the Ghor up to Surtabeh, were spread like a map at our feet. Standing here, at the end of the mountains of Moab, the hills of Judæa did not look nearly so high as these eastern ones did when we gazed on them from Judæa; and probably there may be a difference of nearly a thousand feet in their elevation. The hills of Judah have the same pink hue so familiar to all travellers, and we could distinguish the gorge of the Kelt and the road up to Jerusalem. But, southwards of this, the west coast of the Ded Sea looks very different from the east. At a glance we could see the errors of the maps; for, instead of the straight tall line of mountain which forms the eastern wall, the shore line was indented with bays and headlands, and the flats of Ain Feshkhah, Ain Terabeh, and Ain Jidy stood out clearly, like fringes of green carpeting below.

The hills we mounted were neither so rocky nor so

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HUNTING BOARS IN MOAB.

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barren as those of the other side, and were much more in a state of nature. They have evidently never been terraced, but were only pastured over by Reuben and Gad; consequently the soil has not been washed down, and the vegetation is abundant, with frequent scattered shrubs and a few trees. The undulations of the hills were very beautiful, and we followed for miles the course of a bright, dashing stream, overshadowed by a belt of tall canes and gorgeous oleanders—a vast sheet of rosy bloom. The oleander here becomes almost a timber-tree, as thick as a man's body, and sometimes twenty-five feet high, with its tall, slim boughs borne down, like a weeping willow, by the weight of its blossom. It was a pretty sight, as we wound up the Wady Seir, to see our numerous Bedouin guard, with their spears or long guns, thrown out in skirmishing order, galloping on all sides, peering into the thickets, mounting every knoll, and keenly looking out for foes or game, wasting their powder at every partridge they put up. At Keferein, the little *Caccabis heyi* absolutely swarmed, and we ran many of the young ones down on foot. Here the Greek partridge, undisturbed and unprotected by game laws was equally abundant, in spite of the swarms of hawks and falcons which hovered overhead, long since, by the ignorant zeal of game preservers, extirpated in more civilised climes.

At one place four huge wild boars broke from the oleanders below us, and rushed up the opposite hill, followed by two families of over twenty little pigs, which ran with wonderful speed. The escort were wild with excitement, and raised their battle yell, as one after another dashed headlong down to cross the brook. We had some difficulty in pushing through the brake; and soon afterwards C. brought down a pig in triumph, while the rest escaped from our breathless horses up the mountain side.

Some of our guard, having discovered our "fantasia" for eggs, searched with success for nests; and altogether

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we agreed we had fallen amongst a by no means disagreeable set of savages.

Before crossing the ridge which separates the two wadys that combine to form the Seir, we had a delicious bathe, and on mounting had a fine view of Heshban in the mountains, and Jebel Osha (Mount Gilead) at the other extremity of the landscape.

A short day's work brought us to Arak el Emir. It stands in a small open area, surrounded by hills, with an oleander-fringed stream running through the midst, and fine scarped cliffs protecting it on two sides. Hyrcanus could not have selected a better spot either for strength and security, or for natural beauty. Passing by the ruin, we went on half a mile to a level open space, where we chose our encampment, and then descended to the stream for luncheon. We found ourselves in a deeply shaded labyrinth of oleanders, mingled with large oriental plane-trees, much finer than any we had elsewhere seen. No need for turbans here in the shade, as we lay down by the water's edge, and luxuriated in the cool freshness of the ground. Seeing swarms of fish, we extemporised hooks and lines with crooked pins, and the fishes being unsophisticated we caught a great number, among which was a species new to us (*Discognathus rufus*, Heckel).

We afterwards went to visit Hyrcanus' castle, a noble relic of antiquity. The remains of a massive wall may be traced with a deep fosse, enclosing an enceinte of about twelve acres, in the centre of which stands the castle. There is a large entrance gateway, with a raised causeway leading from it direct to the fortress. This gateway is built of stones of very large size with the Jewish bevel, and the face of each stone rough ashlar dressed, with perpendicular beadings running up the courses. The frieze of this portal is Ionic, and is formed of enormous slabs of stone. One which we measured was twenty feet by ten.

The castle itself has been about 150 feet by 60 feet in

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extent, with a colonnade in front, and there are many fragments of pillars, some fluted and others plain, strewn about. Only a portion of the front wall has stood the test of more than 2,000 years, but this is in wonderful preservation. It is composed of great slabs. One *in situ* measured fifteen feet by ten feet high; another, prostrate, was twenty feet long. These stones have been bound together, not by lime or clamps, but by numerous square knobs or bolts left in the different sides of the stone, which fitted tightly into corresponding sockets cut to receive them in the next block.* Many loopholes for archery provided for the defence of the place. Some of the stone is almost marble, other slabs are a mass of fossils, ammonites and *Exogyra densata*, Conr. About twenty feet from the basement runs a beading of Doric ornaments, and above this a colossal frieze some twelve feet high, formed of enormous slabs, with lions sculptured in *alto relievo* of colossal size.† Josephus especially mentions the castle being built of white stone to the very roof, and animals of prodigious magnitude engraven on it.‡ Over these has been a Doric entablature and frieze, but this has been thrown down, as also have been many of the lions. It seems probable that earthquakes alone have caused their overthrow, for though the stones are only twenty-two inches thick, and the wall consists but of single slabs, yet they are so wedged and bound together by these knobs and sockets, especially at the angles, that human agency could scarcely have overturned without destroying them. The building must have been a

* Similar mortice and tenon masonry was also found by Pierotti at the S.E. angle of the Haram, in the foundation, in what he considers to be masonry of the age of Solomon.

† The artist has evidently copied, not from nature, but from sculpture; for he has represented in relief the marble supports left in statues to support the weight of the animals.

‡ Οἰκοδόμησε δὲ βάριν ἰσχυρὰν, ἐκ λίθου λευκοῦ κατασκευάσας ἅπασαν μέχρι καὶ τῆς στέγης ἐγγλύψας Ζῶα παμμεγεθέστατα, Περιήγαγε δὲ αὐτῇ εὖριπον μέγαν καὶ βαθύν. *Ant. Jud.* xii. 4, 11.

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strange medley architecturally, for we noticed many Ionic cornices and Egyptian capitals of the Ptolemaic order with the palm leaf.

Passing from this interesting record of Jewish history, we went half a mile northwards, up to the rock-dwellings and stables of Hyrcanus. The ancient road to these is marked by a double row of square stones, three feet apart, and each perforated, as if for a running bar or rail. When we had reached the cliff, on the basement, among many other once inhabited caves, we examined one, which had been a noble square hall, with roof artificially hollowed out, and a plain cornice running round it. By the side of the square doorway, outside, was a mutilated Hebrew inscription, in the old or Samaritan character, which we copied.

A zigzag slope, above this, leads to a long range of caves. On the first floor, if I may so term it, is a great cave, with stabling for a hundred horses, the mangers running round it, all cut out of the solid rock. Passing in front of this, on a narrow ledge, we came to a series of artificial chambers and rock-dwellings, several of them connected, and the interior ones quite dark. One suite of dark apartments, in one of which was a deep well, was only accessible by a trap-door, the hole for which had been hewn deeply through the rock from above.

As we proceeded along the ledge, we had in two places to creep along a beading of a few inches in depth, where the rock has been artificially scarped, to prevent the passage of horses or armed men. At the western end of the cliff are some enormous slabs, cut down at right angles to it, and deeply indented with square chequers, several score in number. The use or meaning of these I leave to others to conjecture. The caves are exactly described by Josephus. "He also made caves of many furlongs in length, by hollowing a rock that was over against him, and then he made large rooms in it, some for feasting, and some for sleeping and living in. But still he made the entrances at the

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mouths of the caves so narrow, that no more than one person could enter by them at once." After all these elaborate devices, Hyrcanus lived not long to enjoy his isolated palace. At the end of a seven years' life of suspicions and alarms, he committed suicide on the approach of Antiochus Epiphanes, who seized his palace and possessions.

Besides our antiquarian afternoon, we had a most successful natural history exploration in these caverns, having taken, amongst us, the nests of two vultures, of the large Egyptian owl, lesser kestrel, and our first nest of the russet swallow, besides the bulbul's, in the castle. We also captured specimens of a (to us) new species of bat, a new lizard, and gathered some curious plants, and three very fine species of beetles (*Buprestidæ*). Altogether, as it was one of the longest, so it was, in every respect, one of the most interesting days we had enjoyed in our travels.

Starting next morning with the dawn from our camp at Arak el Emir, we left the Wady Seir, with its oleanders, on our right, and climbed the shoulder of a steep ridge, descending on the other side, by a course south-east by east, into the head of another branch of the Seir. In half an hour we reached the ancient site of Seir, a favourite tenting-ground of the Adwân, and where a party of the tribe were encamped, by whom we had been supplied with milk on the preceding evening. We were now on the direct road from El Salt to Heshban; but, as we intended to turn further west to visit Nebo, we took a circuitous route, where indeed there was no tract, towards the Wady Eshteh. Here and there, but rarely, were the traces of a few ancient terraces, probably vineyards;* but, for the most part, the virgin soil seemed to have been undisturbed, held on the steep slopes, now as of old, by the roots of the oaks which grow scattered over the hills. We cast a passing

* "I will bewail with the weeping of Jazer the vine of Sibmah," Isaiah xvi. 9; see also Jer. xlviii. 32.

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glance at the site which Abd el Asiz pointed out as the town of Seir (صير), probably the ancient Jaazer or Jazer. In the first place, Jaazer was taken by Israel on their way from Heshban to Bashan (Numb. xxi. 32), in which route Seir would naturally lie. It was in the borders of Gad (Josh. xiii. 25), and was visited by Joab on his way from the Jordan to Gilead, which would correspond very well with the present site. There is a difficulty in the expression, the sea (or pool) of Jazer (Jer. xlviii. 32). We saw no pool there; but it is possible there may have been a "birket," or artificial basin, of which more careful investigation might reveal the traces.

At the bottom of the Wady Eshteh we crossed another purling brook, shaded by fig-trees and oleanders of smaller size, for we had now risen several hundred feet. The hills here were bare, but scarcely bleak, and the vegetation soon became precisely the same as on the hills of Samaria and Judæa. Having mounted another ridge by a very steep path, we crossed it at a right angle, after following its crest eastward for some way, and descended into the Wady Na'ûr. These hills were very fertile. Large patches of barley, rich and green, no want of water or rain, and oaks of various kinds, and terebinths, first scattered, then becoming thicker in park-like groups, and at length quite a forest of fine timber. We turned at a rapid pace to the westward, till we approached the edge of the plateau of Gilead, and had a splendid view of the Promised Land across Jordan. The indented, embayed western shores of the Dead Sea stood out distinctly, in striking contrast to the straight eastern mountain line at which we had been accustomed to gaze. We were absolutely looking down on the hill country of Judæa, and the keen, cool wind made us feel that we had risen several thousand feet from the "ciccar." After we had descended from the forest, we followed up the course of the little perennial stream, by the banks of which were rich corn and pasture pieces, and then

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urned south, crossing the watershed to the Wady Heshban. Turning a few yards up this, by some old ruined watercourses, we halted, and our servants began to pitch the tents on a pretty sheltered flat, three and a quarter hours from Arak el Emir. We were now some twenty miles inward from the Jordan. The strata no longer dipped S.W., but were perfectly horizontal, the hills all rounded and water-worn, and the wadys gave no signs of unconformable or contorted stratification. Aqueous agency seemed to have been the only power at work since the deposition of the limestone.

After breathing our horses, we lost no time in remounting for Heshban. Goblan met us here, and we turned up to the S.W. to examine the ruins of Es Hûnah, a place not marked in the maps. On the hill above it stands a large fortified khan and fortress, probably of Saracenic origin, somewhat resembling the great Castle of Kefrenjy, and still used in times of war as a retreat for the cattle and a place of safety for depositing corn. It commands an extensive westward view, overlooking the Ghor and the little mound of Er Rameh beneath it, while the Mount of Olives can be easily seen by the naked eye. I recognised in this castle the building which I had observed from the roof of the parsonage on Mount Zion, and which the people of Jerusalem took to be close to Heshban, or a part of it. Hûnah is a little lower down, about half a mile to the S.E. Its ruins consist of a fortified enceinte, loopholed, with many arched chambers, and a little citadel standing in the centre, all apparently of Saracenic work, but built out of the materials of more ancient edifices, as is shown by large stones with curious sculptures inserted in the walls. One of these over a doorway was covered with grotesque fretwork, of no known order of architecture, like the devices of some child's sampler. In rambling among the ruins we found in one cavernous chamber the partially decayed bodies of two women, with their blue rags hanging about

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them. The poor creatures had evidently been lately murdered and thrown in; but "they were only women," and our escort looked with callous indifference as though they were beneath the regard of a warrior.

We were now just above the re-entering angle of the Ghor es Seisaban, and thence turning to the S.E. we rode at a rapid pace for several miles, steadily ascending on to the bleak plateau of the Mountains of Moab, the range of Nebo, in the "Abarim" of the Pentateuch. Though the ascent was rapid it was not rugged, and the prospect from the summit was superb. Along the ridge we rode, or rather along a succession of bare turf-clad eminences, so linked together that the depressions between them were mere hollows rather than valleys; and to the most elevated of these, about three miles S.W. of Heshban, our escort gave the name of "Nebbah."* We found, however, that the name was rather of the range than of the particular "tell," as the same name was given to the lower projecting knoll in front, where ruins could be traced, and where the view, more extensive in front, embraced no prospect eastward.

Jebel Attarus has sometimes been taken for Nebo, but without any good reason. It is not "over against Jericho." It is much too far to the eastward to command any view of the plains of Shittim, and therefore Balaam could not have looked down from it upon Israel, and it is too distant from those plains to be the spot to which Moses would have gone up from the camp. The name of Pisgah, or "the height," occurs four times in the Pentateuch: in Numb. xxi. 20, it is described as "looking towards Jeshimon"; in Deut. xxxiv. 1, as "over against Jericho," in the former of which passages Jeshimon is probably used for the barren plain of the Ghor, and connected with Beth-Jeshimoth (Numb. xxxiii. 49); but in Numb. xxiii. 14, we find that "the

* Our guides named some ruins east of us Maîn, a mistake which was easily discovered on my subsequent visit to Moab (see *Land of Moab*).

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field of Zophim" was on its top, certainly signifying tolerably level and cultivated land.

On these brows overlooking the mouth of the Jordan, over against Jericho, every condition is met, both for the Pisgah of Balaam and of Moses. Here we halted, and gazed on a prospect on which it has been permitted to few European eyes to feast. The day was clear, and revealed to us (whether or not we were standing on the exact spot) at least the very same landscape as that on which "Moses the servant of the Lord" closed his mortal eye. Yet the first feeling was that of admiration at the divine power which drew Israel from the wondrously fertile country eastward and northward, determined to force the rugged hills of Palestine,* not richer than the Gilead they had already won.

We had not a barometer with us (for, warned by previous experience, we had reduced our baggage and apparatus to the smallest possible dimensions), and therefore cannot even approximately give the altitude of this brow; but it cannot be less than 4,000 feet above the Ghôr, so completely does it overlook the heights of Hebron and of central Judæa. To the southward peered Attarus and Shihân, with vague vistas beyond. To the eastward, as we turned round, the ridge seemed gently to slope for two or three miles, when a few small, ruin-clad "tells," or hillocks, broke the monotony of the outline; and then, sweeping forth, rolled in one vast unbroken expanse the goodly Belka—one boundless plain, stretching far into Arabia, till lost in the horizon—one waving ocean of corn and grass. Well may the Arabs boast, "Thou canst not find a country like the Belka." Well may such an illimitable wealth of soil pour forth its teeming myriads of flocks and herds, the riches of that mighty sheepmaster,† the king of Moab of old, as to-day of the Anezi and the Beni

* This sentiment is magnificently expressed by Stanley, *Sinai and Palestine*, p. 325.

† 2 Kings iii. 4.

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Sakk'r. Who can say how much these vast plains, pastured over during the latter years of the sojourn of Israel in the wilderness, when they had come round Mount Hor from Kadesh, aided in the accomplishment of the blessing, that "He suffered not their cattle to decrease?" Food and water for man required and called forth a miraculous provision; such was not needed here for their cattle.

Not a tree nor a bush, not a house, could be seen; but the glass revealed the black tents of the Beni Sakk'r, dotted in clusters, far and near, testifying that the population, though nomad, and far short of the teeming multitudes of the Roman cities, must still be very great.

Riding forward to the next brow, the lower Nebbeh, the eye turned westwards: in front of us, two or three lines of terraces reduced the height of the plateau as it descended to the Dead Sea, the western outline of which we could trace in its full extent from Enghedi to Feshkah. It lay like a long strip of molten metal, with the sun mirrored on its surface, waving and undulating in its further edge, unseen in its eastern limits, as though poured from some deep cavern beneath our feet. There a break in the ridge, and a green spot below, marked Engedi, the nest once of the Kenite, now of the wild goat. The fortress of Masada and jagged Shukif projected in front of the mountain-line; but still, far below us, and lower, too, than the ridge of Hebron, which we could trace, as it lifted gradually from the south-west, as far as Bethlehem and Jerusalem. The buildings of Jerusalem we could not see,* though all the familiar points in the neighbourhood were at once identified. *There* was the Mount of Olives, with the church at its top, the gap in the hills leading up from Jericho, and the rounded heights of Benjamin on its other side. Still turning northward, the eye was riveted by the deep Ghor, with the rich green islets of Ain Sultân and Ain Dûk—the twin

* This must have been from a slight haze, as the point where we stood is certainly visible from the roof of the English Church.

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oases, nestling, as it were, under the wall of Quarantania. There—closer, still beneath us—had Israel's last camp extended, in front of the green fringe which peeped forth from under the terraces in our foreground. The dark sinuous bed of Jordan, clearly defined near its mouth, was soon lost in deep haze. Then, looking over it, the eye rested on Gerizim's rounded top; and, further still, opened the plain of Esdraelon, the shoulder of Carmel, or some other intervening height, just showing to the right of Gerizim; while the faint and distant bluish haze beyond it suggested the sea, the utmost sea. It seemed as if but a whiff were needed to brush off the haze and reveal it clearly, but the haze was that of distance rather than of water. Northwards, again, rose the distinct outline of unmistakable Tabor, aided by which we could identify Gilboa and Jebel Duhy. Snowy Hermon's top was mantled with cloud, and Lebanon's highest range must have been shut behind it; but in front, due north of us, stretched in long line the dark forests of Gilead, bold and undulating, with the steep sides of mountains here and there whitened by cliffs; terminating in Jebel Osha, or Mount Gilead, behind Es Salt.*

We did indeed congratulate each other on the privilege of having gazed on this superb panorama, which will live in memory's eye. "And the Lord showed him all the land of Gilead, unto Dan, and all Naphtali, and the land of Ephraim, and Manasseh, and all the land of Judah, unto the utmost sea, and the south, and the plain of the valley of Jericho, the city of palm-trees, unto Zoar." (Deut. xxxiv. 1–3.)

But our guide was growing impatient. Two miles behind us was a green knoll, with rugged heaps of stones, rising above the surrounding plateau, and a little retired from its brow. "Heshban!" cries our swarthy guard, brandishing

* My subsequent visit to Moab has enabled me to correct both details and also nomenclature, in our ride over Nebo, in which, owing to our very hasty visit, several errors occur in former editions.

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his long spear; and, spurring our horses, we gallop eagerly to the bourn of our travels. In a gently sloping verdant depression to our left was a camp of about fifty long tents; and as the Bedouin saw us gallop along the crest, they came crowding out, and hurried on to reach us. "Who are they? Adwân?" "No! Teba'â," is the reply, "and not a good set. Yallah, yallah!" (Come on, come on.) We had just shot a stork, which Hassan, one of the servants, was carrying, and as we looked round in our stride, we saw him furiously urging his horse, and dashing my luckless stork round his head against the crowd, who evidently wished to detain him. However, there was no time to be lost, thought our guard, and on we dashed, without drawing rein, till we reached the knoll, the site of Sihon's capital.

Moab is here a vast table-land, on the brow of which, to the west, the crest is a little elevated, and to the eastward of it a slight depression of three or four miles in extent, beyond which the rounded hills rise 200 feet, and gently slope away to the east. In the centre of this depression is a small hill, of perhaps 200 feet high, but entirely isolated, with a little stream running past it on the east. This is Heshbon. The hill is one heap of shapeless ruin, while all the neighbouring slopes are full of caves, which have once been occupied, turned into use as habitations. The citadel hill has also a shoulder and a spur to the south, likewise covered with ruins. The summit of the hill is flattened; and here is a level platform, with Doric columns broken from their pedestals, and the foundations of a forum, or public building of the Roman period, arranged exactly like the Forum at Pompeii. The whole city must have had the circuit of about a mile. Some portions of the walls are standing—a few tiers of worn stones, and the space is thickly strewn with piles of Doric shafts, capitals of columns, broken entablatures, and large stones, with the broad bevelled edge. In one edifice, of which a

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large portion remains, near the foot of the hill, Jewish stones, Roman arches, Doric pillars, and Saracenic arches, are all strangely mingled.

Before the city, to the east, are the remains of water-courses, and an enormous cistern, or fishpond, perhaps alluded to in Canticles, "Thine eyes are like the fishpools in Heshbon, by the gate of Bath-rabbim" (vii. 4); and the old wells were so numerous, that we had to ride with great care to avoid them.

We now turned northwards along a beautiful road (all the roads east of Jordan are good, for they are mere earth-pans and little worn), till about a mile and a-half north of Heshban we mounted another green ruin-clad knoll, *El A'al*, the Elealah of Scripture. It is truly desolate, and a place of alarm. "The shouting for thy summer-fruits and for thy harvest is fallen." (Is. xvi. 9.) One solitary Doric column stands out ghost-like on its slope, the rest are all prostrate; but heaps of carved cornices and capitals tell of its prosperity even so late as the Roman times. Since then it appears to have been utterly deserted, for there are no Saracenic traces, and its summit is used as a burial-place for the neighbouring Sheikhs. Over a recent tomb black tufts of ostrich feathers, extended on long strings, were fluttering in the wind. Hard by was a rude enclosure of loosely-heaped stones, inside of which about fifty wooden ploughs were heaped—the grave-yard being the depôt for the agricultural implements of the tribe, during their absence for months in the interior. Water was plentiful, and old cisterns and wells frequent. Strange that while springs are so scarce in the west, and fed only by winter-torrents, here, even where wood is absent, on these highlands of Moab it is still "a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills."

We were now once more in the Adwân territory, and our guard lost the nervous feelings a man might have who



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has been following his game on to his neighbour's preserves. *We* had seen Heshbon, and looked down from Nebo, and felt indeed rewarded. Night was approaching, but the route was easy, and turning westward, we galloped without a halt for an hour. The day had closed when we descended into a snug little open plot at the Ras Ain Heshban, where, in the face of a cave out of which gushed a most abundant spring, our welcome camp had been pitched. Too excited to sleep, journal and letter-writing kept us up till midnight.

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## Note to Third Edition.

For fuller details of the country east of Jordan, and the natural history of those highlands, I refer to the "Land of Moab," the result of my visit in the year 1872. Several errors in earlier editions respecting the site of Nebo are corrected in that work. An American traveller has severely criticised my statements, ignoring, at the same time, the corrections in the "Land of Moab," *with which he was acquainted.* It is satisfactory, however, to find that his map, which was drawn by a competent American officer of engineers, agrees with mine even to the extent of differing in one instance from the accompanying letter-press. Much has been made of the so-called "Identification of Mount Pisgah," which is simply moving the platform from Nebbeh to Ziára, or Zia'gha, about three-quarters of a mile. The views from both had been already described by me.

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## CHAPTER XXIII.

*Ruined Villages between Heshbon and Amman—Countless Flocks—Valley of Amman (Rabbah)—Its Ruins—Description of the Site—The Ancient Citadel—Cathedrals, Temples, Theatres—Perfect Byzantine Church—Fulfilment of Prophecy—Es Salt—Ramoth Gilead—Lovely Valley—Christians at Es Salt — Ruined Castle — Independence of Es Salt — Mount Gilead—Tomb of Hosea—Magnificent View—Park-like Beauty of Gilead—The Jabbok—Its Ford—Esau and Jacob—Gypsies—Ravages of the Bedouin—Gerash (Gerasa)—Its Streets and Buildings—Wonderful Perfection of its Remains—Restitution from Suf—Adieu to the Adwân—Ajlun—Kulat er Rubud—The Ydbis—Jabesh-Gilead—El Fahil (Pella)—Beit Idis—Christian Blacksmith—El Kurah—Isolated Agricultural District — Peacefulness — A False Alarm — General Panic — Fertility of the Eastern Ghor — Numerous Streams — Palm-tree—Birds — Arab Horsemen—Their Salutations—The Bridge of the Jordan.*

MAY 1ST.—Camp at Ras Ain Heshban to Amman (Rabbath Ammon) four hours and a quarter steady riding, about eighteen miles (and fifteen in a direct line). For the first time in our tour we travelled on Sunday, as the Adwân would not allow us to sleep a second night in the same camp so near the frontier.

The road was not dull, but comparatively uninteresting. For the first half-hour we rode up a narrow glen, rocky and rough, with fine terebinth-trees, the largest we saw in Palestine, stretching their gnarled and twisted boughs over the path. It was very like a Scottish glen, or a piece of Northumbrian scenery. The Wady rapidly dwindled to nothing, being principally fed by the copious spring which gushed from under the rocks by our last night's camp. In the ravine was an old hermit's cave, with an



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arched doorway in the side of the cliff, the steps to which are worn away. The name given to it by Sheikh Goblan was M'Alagha. The cell was occupied by a pair of Egyptian vultures, whose eggs were brought us by Abd-el-Asiz's son. Half-an-hour's ride brought us to the upper end of the valley, where was a ruined town, Na'ûr. We now entered upon a wild undulating plateau, the hollows of which were covered with the richest grass, while the knolls were clad with stunted shrubs, chiefly *Poterium spinosum*, L., in general appearance very like heather.

About fifty minutes afterwards we turned to the right to a green round knoll, covered with shapeless ruins, and the remains of wells. From the top of this we had a fine view of the Belka and of the Ghor, with the hills of Judæa and Samaria, though not equal to the panorama of yesterday. This site is erroneously fixed in Van de Valde's map too far to the eastward.

Still continuing a north-east course over downs and pastures, in one hour and a-half we came to a narrow but shallow valley, the commencement of the Wady Amman, after passing the corner of a pine-forest, the trees of which were a fir (*Pinus carica*, Don), a species very closely allied to *P. halepensis*, on an elevation composed of a soft red sandstone. From this point we continued gradually to descend. No more trees relieved the monotony of the route. The limestone strata were all horizontal, irregularly contorted in places, but only for a short distance, as by some local disturbance; and both sides of the valley were curiously streaked by long ridges of stone-heaps, sloping down to the bottom at almost irregular intervals, as if they had marked the ebbings of some retreating tide. These ridges seem to be the remains of ancient vineyards, such as now cover the lower slopes of Hermon, the stones from the surface being heaped into these parallels on which the vines were trailed, to preserve the grapes from damp, and to aid in ripening them.

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AMMAN (RABBATH AMMON).

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We rode through five large Arab camps, and every hill-side and valley was filled with thousands of sheep, goats, oxen, asses, and camels, and many picketed horses. Never before or since have I beheld such a collection of pastoral wealth. The valley wound in a snake-like course, a dry torrent-bed at first, but the oozy gravel gradually became a little stream, till at Rabbah it formed a copious rivulet, swarming with shoals of large fish (*Scaphiodion capoèta*), which might have amply supplied the lenten fare of a monastery.

After four hours we came upon a copious fountain, with the remains of walls, and just beyond it a bridge of three arches of solid Roman work, but now useless, as the stream has changed its course, and flows alongside of it.

Just before reaching Amman, the gorge takes a sudden turn to the north, and then swells into a narrow plain, covered with luxuriant grass, and embosomed in low round hills. The fish-stocked stream, with shells studding every stone and pebble, winds in the midst, a narrow channel, receiving occasional affluents in its course, and making Rabbath most truly a "city of waters." It is paved at the bottom, and its little quays of fine masonry run uninterruptedly on both sides for a distance of about a mile and a-half.

A beautiful Grecian temple, square outside, round within, with massive walls of the most elaborate Corinthian architecture, and with richly-carved cornices and mouldings, is the first building on the left, as we turn into this level space. The roof of the temple has been a dome of finely-dressed stone, of which several tiers remain. One hundred and fifty yards beyond we halted, and in the dense meadow by the water-side, a rich feast for our horses and mules, our tents were pitched. Before noon we had lunched and got out to examine the ruins. In number, in beauty of situation, and in isolation, they were by far the most striking and interesting I had yet seen in Syria. Yet it

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was not old Rabbah, but *Philadelphia*, the Roman city, among whose prostrate marbles we groped our way. All is Græco-Roman, and all, probably, except the citadel, subsequent to the Christian era.

To explain the position of the "city of waters," and of the citadel which held out against Joab so long after he had taken the lower city, would require a plan; and the only sketch we were able to make in our hurried survey, though it marks the relative position of the ruins, gives no idea of the proportions or of the intervening spaces. When the narrow valley had suddenly turned the corner of a knoll, it expanded into a smooth turfed plain for half a mile, completely shut in by low hills on each side. The front was blocked by a round and steep, but flat-topped mamelon pushed forward, on which was the fortress, and the stream flowed rapidly past it on the east, through a valley contracted at once to a width of 500 paces. The citadel was faced by another little valley running at a right angle into the main one, and was connected by a narrow neck with the heights on the left. On the other side of this neck another gully started, which deepened at once into a steep ravine, and joined the main stream half a mile beyond, thus almost isolating the citadel.

Close to the water's edge, a little way beyond our tents, stood the walls of a large basilica, or Greek church. The apse and side aisles are perfect, and the wall has been covered with frescoes, of which the only traces are the holes for fixing the plaster. The Ionic pillars of the aisles strew the area, some of white marble, some of cipolino, and one of polished granite. The elevation of the chancel is distinctly traceable. The east end faces the river, and outwardly forms a bastion of great height and enormous strength, rising from the edge of the stream. Almost adjoining this basilica, but not facing east, is another still larger church, the walls of which are intact, as well as the narrow tall tower at the north end, to the top of which we

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mounted by the inside staircase. This was evidently the minaret added when the church was changed into a mosque, in the early Saracenic period, before the utter desolation of Ammon. All round these churches the ground is covered with masses of stone shafts, capitals, friezes, Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian, in bewildering confusion.

Just beyond the first basilica, and in a line with it, are the ruins of an enormous public building. Its river face consists of two enormous round bastions with flat curtain-walls between them, built of large stones with the Judæo-Roman bevel, and a deeply-arched massive postern, with four successive arches of different heights, one within the other, opening to the edge of the paved stream.* Inside the only portion of the building intact is the east wall, a portion of which spans, by semicircular arch, the bed of a torrent which joins the main stream. This inner wall is deeply embayed with niches, and many pilasters and Corinthian friezes above them. There is one large centre apse or niche, with a scalloped roof. Here there seems to have been a great public walk or platform, while statues must have occupied the niches. There is no trace of a roof except an arcade supported by enormous Ionic (?) columns, the shafts of four of which are still standing.

Nowhere else had we seen the vestiges of public magnificence and wealth in such marked contrast with the relapse into savage desolation. On the top of the ruin the body of a stork, which had been entangled by the leg and perished miserably, swayed to and fro in the wind. Here and there our Bedouin guard were lounging about or peering over the top of a niche; and the stream dashed rapidly over the fragments of sculptured marble which strewed its artificial bed.

In front of the upper platform or terrace, further from

* For a view of this ruin see Mr. Tipping's admirable sketch in Dr. Smith's Dictionary of the Bible, Art. "Rabbah."

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the stream, has been a smaller promenade at a lower level, just over the arch whose triple semicircle of finely-dressed stone spans the torrent bed, about fifty feet below the top of the bastions. About fifty yards further down, a neat semicircular bridge, still perfect, spans the stream, and once united the highway to the great theatre with the public promenade we have described.

Beyond the bastions, the plain expands again between the stream and the citadel, and on the left are the ruins of a gorgeous Corinthian temple of very florid style, bearing traces of Egyptian (Ptolemaic) design. The adytum of the temple and the rich sculptured frieze are almost perfect, and on the western outside face are three doorways, the centre one in the later Egyptian style, most elaborately decorated. Several of the columns remain inside—one partly composed of a broken Doric shaft from some earlier edifice, while the others are monoliths of great size.

Following down the valley a few yards, we came upon a few erect and many prostrate columns, which once enclosed a large open square, perhaps the forum; and then turning to our right, and crossing the brook, while shoals of fish dashed between the stepping-stones, we were in another large open space of the surrounding colonnade, of which eleven gaunt columns, eight of them still bearing their Corinthian capitals, raise their lonely tops erect in the wilderness. At the further end of this sumptuous façade was the lofty *scena*, or back wall, of the Odeum, or smaller theatre, the enceinte entire; but the interior choked with ruins and broken columns. Still the tiers of seats, the stage, and the rich Corinthian decorations may be traced. In front of us, leaning on the southern hill, into which it is partly excavated, rose the grand theatre, one of the largest and most magnificent structures in Syria. The arena was forty-five paces in diameter, and above it rose a crescent of forty-three tiers of seats, with the lofty portico behind them. The effect as we stood facing it was

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truly grand; nor was the impression weakened as we climbed its many steps, noted the neatly-carved elbows of the benches, and then, standing under the sculptured roof of the chamber at the top, gazed over the columns beneath us at the ruined citadel opposite. Just in front of this theatre the Roman paved street was quite perfect, with the wheel-ruts distinctly visible.

As we pursued our way down the stream, the ruins became smaller and more insignificant, probably for the most part private dwellings, till we traced the remains of the city wall across the valley. Yet, every here and there, a column cropped out of the *débris*.

Having crossed the stream in front of the amphitheatre, we now ascended the steep side of the citadel, still in most parts inaccessible, and found it divided into two platforms. The first was oblong, stretching to the northern extremity of the hill, and having no ruins but those of its steep walls remaining. The southern and much larger area was on a higher level, several acres in extent, nearly square, quite flat, and strewn with a hopeless mass of ruins of every age and character except Jewish. There is one principal group of six enormous columns, of which the bases only are standing, while the prostrate shafts are five feet in diameter. Beyond this is a circular stone-built open reservoir, about sixty feet in diameter, with stone steps winding round it inside. Its depth at present—for it is probably more than half filled with rubbish—is from twenty-five to thirty feet.

Just to the south of this stands the most interesting building we visited here, and which seems to have escaped the notice of previous travellers. Outside it forms a large square block of masonry, its sides heaped with *débris*, and the flat covering of the arched roof still nearly entire, as if it were a blockhouse or casemate. We climbed to the top, and found the centre alone roofless, and a perfect Greek church of the late Byzantine type beneath us. By a broken

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inner staircase we scrambled through a hole into the interior. Though square outside, it is a perfect Greek cross within, measuring seventy feet each way, and was probably intended to serve as a fortress in the last resort, for the corners are formed into large vaulted chambers, with hollow walls of great thickness, the hollows forming secret passages. There have been two doors, north and south, and the chambers of the north side may have been the vestries of the church, since they have doorways into the south transept; but the secret passages have been carefully concealed. To the two chambers on the north there has been no access but by secret staircases from the roofs, except a narrow, concealed way into one of the hollow walls by one of the niches, through which only the thinnest of men could squeeze, and which was perhaps intended for passing food to any one within. But the interior architecture of the church, if not in the purest taste, is marvellously elaborate. It is faced with 120 small round-topped niches, each shallow, and the panels filled with carvings of endless variety. No two are alike, either in the sculpture of the arch-heads or of the panels. Flowers, leaves, and fruits are the predominant designs, forming quite a pattern-book for Gothic decoration. The upper story is filled with niches of similar plan, but much larger, extending to the roof. Eight panels of leaves and pines, all in different patterns, occupy the faces towards the centre, and many others the limbs of the cross. The whole reminded us somewhat of the ancient church at Athens, though that is much poorer and on a smaller scale. The state of preservation of this building is truly marvellous.*

To the west of it are the remains of another large building, with *pointed* arches; and just after this we come to the neck of land, which, though much lower in level, unites

* This building has since been examined by Capt. Conder, R.E., who considers it to be not a church, but a Sassanian structure, built by Chosroes.

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in some degree the citadel with the opposite hill. It has been deeply scarped and strongly fortified, and is the only accessible point. Here probably Uriah was slain, and here David made his final assault against the citadel of Ammon. Near this spot, the walls, whose revetement is the naked rock, still stand, from twenty to thirty-five feet in height; and a little beyond was the gate of the fortress. By this we climbed down, and at the foot of the hill, close under the citadel, came to the ancient reservoir of the lower city, still full of water, and shaded by ancient fig-trees, laden with nearly ripe fruit.

As at Heshban, so at Amman, the ruins, magnificent and extensive though they be, reveal, if we except the walls of the citadel, nothing of Rabbah. It is only the Roman Philadelphia that has left its story in its stones, and nowhere else have I seen any sculpture more elaborate or delicate. "Rabbah of the Ammonites shall be a desolate heap."* It has been "delivered into the hand of brutish men, and skilful to destroy."† We remarked nothing of the filth and squalor, which has been described by others. At this season the flocks and herds were all on the surrounding wolds, and the spring was too far advanced to drive them to seek shelter at night. Lonely desolation in this rich country was the striking characteristic.

When I looked about midnight, the gaunt ruins were dimly reflected by the glimmering watchfires which flickered round three sides of the camp, and the starlight just revealed the sleeping forms, grouped under their spears by their picketed horses, or crouching like little heaps of clothing round the embers. All was silent, save the occasional snorting of a horse, the tinkling of the mule-bells, and the ripple of the stream. "I will deliver thee to the men of the east for a possession, and they shall set their palaces in thee, and make their dwellings in thee; they shall eat thy fruit, and they shall drink thy milk. And I

* Jer. xlix. 2. † Ezek. xxi. 31.

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will make Rabbah a stable for camels, and the Ammonites a couching-place for flocks" (Ezek. xxv. 4, 5). What pen, unguided by the foreknowlege of Omniscience, indited that? I asked myself, as I closed the book and extinguished the light.

Amman to Es Salt (Ramoth Gilead) five hours and three-quarters. Salt to Sîhân three hours and a-half.

The night had been cold, and for the first time since leaving Beersheeba on February 1st, we found ice in our basins in the morning. But the sun soon dissipated the hoarfrost. We took care not to leave Rabbah without various interesting souvenirs, in the shape of valuable additions to our egg-cabinets. The ruins swarmed with jackdaws, not the race (*Corvus collaris*, Drummond) which inhabits the Ghor, but the common jackdaw of England, the same which we had taken on Mount Gerizim; and the great spotted cuckoo (*Oxylophus glandarius*, L.) had been depositing its eggs in the nest of the hooded crow. But shooting and nesting were at an end when the mules were loaded, as we had a hard day's travel before us. We rode up the wady, having the citadel to our right, and, leaving the stream to find its way to the Jabbok by a more circuitous route, soon we rose into a bare plateau without a tree, and with a wide prospect eastwards. Bare, but not barren, for a large portion of it was laid down for barley, and the rest was well peopled by flocks and herds. Still not a house nor a sign of settled population, for in the vast country between Kerak and Salt there remains not an inhabited house, still less a village.

Goblan, who appreciated a fine view with all the zest of an artist, led us aside, two hours from Amman, to the top of a green hill, that we might enjoy the prospect. We found there the desolate heaps of some town of Gad, now forgotten, and known by the name of Er Meshami. We next passed the mounds of Jebeiyah. As we rode along the plain we came upon a solitary half-naked man, plough-

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ing with a yoke of oxen. Our escort halted, had a long council among themselves, and then a violent altercation with the man. It seemed the sections of the tribe had agreed to divide this plateau among them, and the slave, who belonged to Diab-el-Hamoud's section, was ploughing on the wrong side. The dispute ended by their sending a message to Diab, that they were escorting Franghi just



MOUNTED ADWÂN.

now, but that when they returned they would settle with him.

We passed various green sites of ancient towns—Um Jaûzeh, with a copious spring, Safût, and another, and in three hours and a-half reached the forest of Gilead. Trees, first in clumps, then in masses, pushed towards the plain, which now became an undulating plateau with forest on

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the knolls, and green corn in all the glades. But we were only skirting it, and soon re-entered the green corn plains, still with the richest soil, and not destitute of water. The ruins of villages were thick and close, and still more numerous the wells and fountains, all desolate and without inhabitant.

Soon after passing El Fuheis, where there is much cultivation, not by the Adwân, but by the citizens of Salt, we descended the gorge of the Ezra, and at once all was changed. We crossed another ridge; the hill-sides were terraced, and clad with vineyards, which, lower down, gave place to olive-groves; while the bottom was filled with rich gardens, thick with trees laden with green fruit—figs, apricots, medlars, plums, peaches, and walnuts —and with pomegranates covered with scarlet blossom. We were approaching Ramoth Gilead, and bright springs gushed from the rocks on the side of the steep path, clad with festoons of maiden-hair fern, and nourished beds of onions, melons, and cucumbers under the shade of the fruit-trees. A turn in the valley brought us in sight of the first town we had seen east of Jordan. Salt lies on two sides of a projecting hill, half-way up, crowned by a ruined citadel, but otherwise featureless and unattractive, not unlike a M'zab town in the Sahara.

Half a mile from the town we halted under a great rock by the wayside, out of which trickled strings of water-drops, which united in a copious fountain below. We tied up the horses, and, beneath the shade of a noble walnut, lunched, and filled our cups from the cool droppings of the living rock. We had parted from our baggage an hour before, as it was to go on to Sîhân by a more direct route, under the charge of Goblan; while Abd el Asiz (the leopard) and another horseman accompanied us.

As soon as we entered Salt, crowds came round us, and a venerable old man pushed forward, said he was a Christian, and hoped his brethren would accept his hospitality.

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This time forbade. Another and another, in like manner, urged their hospitality. Our dragoman had to go and buy provisions, and three of the horses needed to be shod; so C. and I were left in the street with our old Sheikh. Leopard though he be in the forest, he was a very lamb in the city, and became very uneasy, and almost terrified, in his manner, knowing, doubtless, how many a grudge was owed him in the town. He implored, urged, and even



SHEIKH OF ES SALT.

threatened us, to accompany him outside; but we refused to leave without our companions; and, at length, the old Sheikh and his spearman slunk on ahead alone. Meanwhile the curiosity of the population became highly amusing. The boys pressed forward, touched our boots, examined spurs, gaiters, guns; and had we not been in the saddle, would doubtless have endeavoured to carry

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their investigations further. Our accoutrements struck them with amazement—above all, the percussion-caps, which they could not make out. One pleasant-looking old Arab drew me aside, and in a low voice told me he was a Protestant, and inquired if I knew Bishop Gobat. He then asked me to take a letter to him, and hurried away to write one. Another came forward, and claimed me as an old acquaintance, slipping my own card into my hand unseen. He was the Bedouin I had met at service at Nablous, five months before, and we greeted as old friends, and brethren in the common faith. I wished we could have accepted his invitation to his house, but time pressed. However, we had a little conversation, so far as my limited knowledge of Arabic would carry me. We had been struck by the superior intelligence of two boys in the crowd, and by their ingenuous, open countenances; and my companion had observed that, had it not been for their dress, we might have taken them for English lads. They proved to be my friend's sons; and so much had religion and education elevated them, that they seemed of a different race from those around them. They delighted in exercising their small knowledge of the English tongue; and one of them, after scrutinizing a broken pipe in my holster, ran off, and presently returned with a new one, of native manufacture, of which he, with timid glee, begged my acceptance. I shall cherish it as a souvenir of the little Arab Christian of Ramoth Gilead. Bishop Gobat once had a school here; but persecution closed it, and his arm, as he says, is not long enough to stretch across Jordan.

Several times we had to move to avoid the crowd, till our horses were shod; and, accompanied by my Protestant friend, we wound up the steep hill, and visited the ruined fortress on the top. Ramoth Gilead must always have been the key of Gilead—at the head of the only easy road from the Jordan, opening immediately on to the rich plateau of the interior, and with this isolated cone rising

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close above it, fortified, from very early times, by art as well as by nature. Of the fortress, only a tall fragment of wall remains, and a pointed archway, with a sort of large dial plate, carved deeply in stone, above it, surrounded by a rose-work decoration. It appears to be all modern Turkish work. From this we passed on to the plateau, over which the road from the Jordan valley passes; and here, probably, was the battle fought where Ahab fell, for nowhere else could chariots have come into play.

Salt appears to be a flourishing place. There were several shops containing native and Manchester cottons, and articles of native woollen manufacture; others seemed well supplied with groceries, herbs, greens, and a rude assortment of ironmongery. It is, and has been for several generations, perfectly independent of the Sultan, and is governed by a council, in which the native Christians have representatives. These are chiefly of the Greek Church. With the neighbouring Bedouin the relations of Salt are somewhat defiant, but they pay at present a heavy annual tribute to the Adwân, to secure them from molestation from the Beni Sakk'r and others, though they do not allow even their protectors to remain a night in the town, or to enter it armed. There are several guest-houses, one of which faced the square in which we stood, and where all strangers are entertained at the public charge. Their whole municipal economy is fashioned on the model of that of the M'zab republic in the Sahara. We did not see any remains of antiquity, except a large foundation of massive stones south of the market-place. The mosque looked old, but we deemed it prudent not to ask to visit it.*

* Since this was written, Salt has submitted to the Turks for the sake of trade, and receives an Osmanli garrison. Its submission has been rewarded by the making of roads and establishing a ferry across the Jordan.



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From Salt an hour and a quarter brought us by a lovely ride up a forest hill to the peak called Jebel Osha, the ancient Mount Gilead, said to be Hosea's tomb. Just behind the brow is the wely covering the traditional sepulchre. The guardian invited us to enter, as Christians as well as Moslems pray there. The tomb was railed off from the rest of the mosque, and was *only* thirty-six feet long, as the Moslems believe all the old prophets to have been giants. Before the building was a large cistern and a magnificent evergreen oak. From a projecting platform of rock in front, there burst on our view what is justly held to be the most magnificent prospect in Palestine. It is not so extensive as the panorama from Nebo, but more beautiful in detail in the foreground, though wanting entirely the background of the Hauran and Belka, which are shut out by the forests behind.

We stood on a little table of rock pushed forward into the Ghor, and Central Palestine lay stretched as on a map before us. To the south the view was limited by the oasis of Jericho and the Mount of Temptation. The grey hills of Jerusalem and Gibeah peered dimly over it. Immediately beneath us the corn fields cultivated by the people of Salt sloped gently and gradually away, on a middle terrace, into a lower wooded range which descended to the Ghor. The whole plain of the Jordan stretched from left to right, from Jericho to Beisan and nearly to Tiberias, with the meandering line of the river in its centre, whose waters could be seen at some of their windings, sparkling like studded diamonds in the sunlight. Its green fringe of trees was everywhere traceable; and here and there a wider oasis, still unexplored by Europeans, spread from its banks. Almost opposite, in the distance, were the round tops of Ebal and Gerizim. To the northwards we could see Gilboa and Tabor, with Beisan below the former, pressing on its projected headland into the valley, while snow-streaked Hermon bounded our northern horizon.

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The loveliness and verdure of the foreground, the rich red and grey of the background, could not be surpassed. Long did we gaze, going leisurely through every detail with maps and glasses.

C. and I then went down to examine the face of the cliff, and discovered three large and partly artificial caves immediately below us. A portion of the rock was one mass of fossils, of which we secured some fine specimens, chiefly ammonites (*Am. syriacus*, Conr. and A. *sp.?*); and then, while exploring a cave, two Alpine swifts (*Cypselus melba*, L.) flew out, and we found their nest in a crevice. It is, as every collector knows, a rare nest to take, and, working at the aperture, we could just feel the two eggs with our fingers, when we found that our companions were out of sight, and we were obliged to follow them and leave the treasure.

We rapidly descended the north-east side of Mount Gilead, past the green mounds of Jilâd, said to be the birthplace of Elijah, and where we saw some rock tombs, which I have since regretted we did not stay to examine. An hour and a-half brought us to the ruins of 'Allân, and another short hour to the likewise deserted village of Shihân, where was our camp. No words can convey an adequate idea of the beauty of this ride, unequalled in Syria. A lovely natural park, all the glades of which were covered with rich crops of wheat and barley, and trees and shrubs grouped in graceful variety, charmed us into entire forgetfulness of time and distance. The dark forests of Ajlûn across the Jabbok, the glades, the peep every now and then at a turn of the Ghor beneath us, and Palestine beyond, the occasional glimpses of the Hauran, formed a diorama of perfect loveliness. The sun had set when we reached our camp, snugly ensconced behind the ruins of a once flourishing but now desolate town, and under the shade of a group of wild olives, by the side of a copious spring. Our guards, who had been nesting



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all day, brought in a rich harvest of eggs; and, wearied and delighted, we turned in at midnight.

Shihân to Reimûn five hours and three quarters. The ride, though not equal in richness of park-like scenery to that of yesterday, was still very beautiful. Riding from our camp, stumbling over broken oil-presses and mill-



GROUP OF ADWÂNS AND HORSES.

stones,* we came to the village fountain, wasting its freshness on the deserted soil, and then began to mount the ridge which separated us from the Jabbok. Our guard formed a picturesque foreground, as they scattered themselves in skirmishing order, some twenty horsemen, to look out, not for foes, but for vultures' nests, in which

* These old millstones, which abound throughout the country, have lately been described by an American explorer as "Baal-disks," and gravely assumed to be relics of the ancient idolatry.

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they were pretty successful. Crossing the sparsedly-wooded ridge, we descended the very steep ravine, often with lines of cliff, at the foot of which dashes the Jabbok, completely hidden by the dense mass of oleander which fringes its banks. By a winding path, leading our horses, we reached the ford, the only practicable one for some distance, and even here the strong current reached the horses' girths.

We turned when a little way up, and the opposite side was in view far above and below us. Here Jacob wrestled with the Lord in prayer. Here he stood and saw on those hills the 400 spearmen of Esau, and watched his family and cattle climbing in groups before him—Esau's band, not less wild than those fierce horsemen of ours, who, armed and clad like them, were sportively brandishing their spears, and curveting in mock fight. When we reached the opposite crest, we found ourselves again in the forest, with its glades and hollows. We were now in Ajlûn, but the character of the country was still like Gilead, save that we had lost the false balsam and wild olive (*Balanites ægyptiaca* and *Eleagnus angustifolius*), and on the higher tops the pine predominated over the holm oak and arbutus. The crest of the ridge was sandstone, of which we had hitherto seen only a fragment near Ammân.

In the midst of the oak forests we often came upon a slight basin with the richest alluvial soil, studded with ancient olive trees and patches of green barley. Still no settled habitations could be seen, till suddenly we came upon a copious fountain gushing from the hill-side, with patches of onions and tobacco near it; and then, having rounded a knoll which screened it from view, found the village of Burmeh, the first inhabited place since Es Salt. As we entered we met a group of genuine gypsies with drums and tomtoms, on which they discoursed loud and hideous music, until silenced by backshîsh.

Re-entering the forest we rode through the ruins of Dibbin, said to be a Christian village, but now a desolate

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heap of mouldering walls. "What has destroyed this place?" we asked. "Oh, we sacked it!" "But where are the people?" "God knows—dead probably." And so the Bedouin are laying waste village after village. We drank of its pretty spring, and then descended through a lovely piece of forest to one of the affluents of the Jabbok, which we crossed amidst a thicket of oleander, under the shade of a magnificent old walnut-tree that spanned the brook. Up the hill-side through the olive-groves, we rode to the village of Reimûn, a wretched collection of mud hovels, just an hour west of Gerash, and divided by another ridge from Sûf. Our camp was pitched in an olive grove, a few yards from the village, and a little rill meandered through the grass between the tents. There was a ruined mosque on one side, and a large spreading walnut-tree on the other. We gave our escort a goat for supper, and they kindled a large fire under the walnut-tree. It was a picture for a Rembrandt, to have seen that group under the tree, the watchfire just revealing their swarthy faces as they tore the fragments of the goat, or sleepily smoking their long pipes. The finest timber tree in this district is the *Celtis australis* of India.

*May 4th.*—We started early, to spend the day at Gerash, riding by two ruined villages, El Jittah and Tekitty, through forest and corn-patches, tilled by cultivators from a great distance, who come for a few weeks to sow and to reap, camping out for the time. On all sides, we were surrounded by distant tiers of sparsedly-wooded hills; but the country became barren as we approached Gerash, which occupies a portion of both banks of a little stream in the centre of a wide, open valley.

The labyrinth of ruins burst upon us at once, as we rose over a little slope, the features of which first caught the eye being the great amphitheatre on one side, and the Temple of the Sun on the other. We could not have had a finer day for the ruins. The deep blue sky brought out the rich

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golden hue of the gaunt columns in the wilderness with grand effect. We occupied the whole day in exploring them; and, fine as we had thought Ammân, Gerash far exceeds it in the number and splendour of its remains, and is, probably, the most perfect Roman city left above ground. Baalbec and Palmyra surpass it in the size, but not in the number and perfection of their buildings. The walls are distinctly visible in many places, almost of their original height, inclosing a square of about a mile, with the little stream, buried in oleanders, running through the centre. The streets remain, the principal one simply a double row of columns, a mile in length, richly carved, fronting temple and palace in rapid succession. The long colonnades of Corinthian shafts mark the lines on each side of the pavement, and side streets cross at right angles. For one thousand years it has been a silent wilderness, yet all can be traced. Even the sockets for the gates still remain in the arches of the gateways. But earthquakes have shattered and overthrown many of the columns, leaving, however, hundreds still standing, while the hand of the destroyer has utterly laid waste the private dwellings, which were in the east part of the city. There are upwards of twenty principal ruins; and it is marvellous that, while every one is familiar with Baalbec and Palmyra, so little is known of Gerash, except by eastern travellers. If a provincial city of imperial Rome could exhibit such magnificence, what must the great cities themselves have been in their glory?

Goblan accompanied us, with a mounted escort of more than twenty men, for, as we were on debateable land, and on the frontier of three great tribes, it was needful to be on the watch; and his men were thrown out on all sides, as we rambled unmolested through temple, theatre, and arch. Gerash has been so fully described by Burckhardt and Buckingham, that it is needless here to go into details of the various buildings, all essentially Roman in

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their character, with some of the edifices Ionic, but the principal and finest Corinthian in their design. The road, skirted by occasional tombs and monuments, could be traced both to the north and south, the ancient highway from Damascus. Perhaps the most curious relic was the great circus between the triumphal arch and the southern gate, with its conduits still remaining, which conveyed water into it from the stream for the performance of mock sea-fights. Besides the baths, the Christian cathedral is the only important building east of the river, as if the Christians had purposely withdrawn their worship from the neighbourhood of the gorgeous temples which they had suffered to remain, without, as elsewhere, appropriating them. A nearer examination of these ruins would probably not enchant an architectural critic. He would say at once that most of the façades were debased in style, and that unity of design was absent in the grand colonnade. But the varied and unequal columns do not mar the general effect. However, the great Temple of the Sun, at the north-west end of the city, is surely above criticism, with its noble façade and gateway, and the magnificent group of eleven columns, which are all that remain entire together. The cloistered court round this temple, with the same general ground plan as the temple of Jerusalem, is easily to be traced. The stones of the shafts assume in the sunlight the same rich pink which adds such a charm to the columns of Baalbec and Palmyra.

Goblan, ever vigilant, allowed us to remain undisturbed till the sun got low, when we rode quickly back.

We found Abd el Asiz in high glee. He had been to Sûf with a strong party, and had recovered our money, as well as a little trifle for costs for himself as my attorney. He had also levied, as a fine, the Sheikh's best cow, and ludicrous it was to see the black cow driven to camp as a trophy in advance of the troop of cavalry. But he had carried his grim joke further, and brought Sheikh Yusuf

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and his friends, under compulsion, to be our guards to Pella, whither the Adwân could not themselves accompany us. Among them, Hadj Khadour recognised the very man who had drawn a knife on him.

We found also a levée of unhappy villagers seeking medical relief. Sulphate of zinc we had for opthalmia, but beyond that our medicine chest did not extend, and objects



THE LEOPARD—ABD EL ASIZ.

piteous with dropsy, and pining infants, were brought round us, with vain entreaties for help. One poor woman, with a skeleton baby dying of disease of the mesentric gland, clung to me, and would not be refused. At least, if we had no medicine, surely I could give her a charm—all Franghi could use incantations! Strange to say, she was a Christian, of whom there were many in the village,

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though in the deepest ignorance, for all they know is from the visit of a Greek priest once a year to baptise and marry. Our hearts bled for these poor oppressed fellâhin, for whom we could do nothing to help either body or soul, as my Arabic did not reach so far as to talk on religion.

In the evening we heard a political discussion round the watchfire on the Danish war, and were much amused at being interrogated by these wild savages, as to whether England and France were likely to join in resisting Austria, and whether Russia would be drawn in. They learn European politics from Mecca, and were anxiously speculating on the probability of a European war, which would leave them at liberty to expel the Turks from Syria, and set up Abd el Kader as Khalif of Arabia, their favourite dream at present. We suggested to them that if they relied on the French against Turkey they might find themselves in the position of the horse who enlisted the man to help him against the stag—a fable which they well understood.

*May 5th.*—Remûm (Ajlûn) to Beit Idis, above Pella, eight hours.

The morning was a stirring one, for we were to bid adieu to our Adwân hosts, and arrange for safe conduct through Ajlûn of evil renown. It was explained that we were to be escorted through the forest by five Sûf horseman, and one man from the Kûrah (the district of Tibneh); but that, arrived at the Yâbis (Jabesh) the Sûfians must retire, and the Kûrah man would take us to Pella, and find an escort of natives to the bridge. This was as good an arrangement as could be made, for the latter part of the journey was safe enough, and the country open.

It was a wild scene when the sixty or seventy horses, which had been picketed here and there under the olive-trees, were gathered together, and the party mustered to accompany us to the edge of the forest, the limits of their territory. All armed to the teeth, and dressed liked them, we must ourselves have looked as Bedouin as the rest.

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After an hour's ride we came to a halt, and our spearmen bade us a second adieu. We parted from the Adwân with regret. They had fulfilled their contract to the letter, had shown themselves thoroughly to be trusted, had never raised a question about terms or backshîsh, had taken pains to show us everything on the route, had assisted us to collect, and had proved themselves in every respect what they claim to be—the nobles of the desert.

After an affectionate farewell, we took a course much to the westward of either my former routes, less picturesque, but less dangerous and more open, passing through several villages. Our second hour was through real forest, by winding paths and under spreading oaks, where many a turban was knocked off, or mule's burden dislodged. We left the village of Ain Jenneh with its fine olive-groves to our right, and then by a zigzag path descended into a more open valley, riding through the decaying town or village of Ajlûn, with abundant water, the only object of interest being a ruined mosque, with a fine old tower built by Saladin. The people were civil, and allowed us to inspect the mosque, into the walls of which were built several Roman scupltures and fragments of inscriptions.

As the valley winds down, the Castle of Kulat er Rubud forms a fine object in front. We took a rather circuitous route, as some of the escort wished to call at the flourishing village of Anjara, where again the olive-groves were very rich. After riding through this, we came close to the town of Kefrenjy, but did not enter it, though we were pressed to partake of its hospitality. We then climbed the opposite side of the valley, where towers Kulat er Rebud, also built by Saladin, and a landmark visible far and wide on the other side. It is uninhabited, though in fair repair, and surrounded by a deep moat, cut out of the solid rock. There were several Arabic inscriptions in the walls. In many respects it seemed a counterpart of the castle near

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Heshban. The view was magnificent, much the same as that from Mount Gilead, but not quite so extensive.

Descending again (for our whole day's journey was across deep ravines), we crossed the Wady el Hemar, and in three hours more, another steep climb and steeper descent brought us to the Yâbis (Jabesh). This was a lovely valley, not inferior in its way to the magnificent forest scenery through which we had been winding. Straggling old olives, patches of barley, and rich pasture, filled the glen, but no other trace of man, save old ruins, featureless and shapeless.

On the southern brow we came on a knoll of indistinct ruins with no hewn stones distinguishable, which was called by our Kûrah man Er Maklub, "the overthrown." Anxious to visit the site of Jabesh Gilead, we inquired particularly for the *Ed Deir* of Dr. Robinson, but he did not know the name. Determined, however, to ascertain the site, we trusted to Dr. Robinson's description, of which we had a faint recollection; and, fortunately, proceeding on the south side of the wady, came upon an isolated round-topped hill, just such a one as is ordinarily seized upon for a Gilead village, whose top was strewn with ruins, much larger than those of Maklub, and with some broken columns among them. This was the spot conjecturally identified as Jabesh Gilead. It stands where Jabesh ought to do, and full in sight of Bethshean. There were, however, no traces of walls, or of any important Roman station. But if this be not Jabesh Gilead, where else could it have been?

We forded the little *Yâbis* close to the ruins of two ancient mills, whose little aqueducts still pour forth their wasted supply. Beyond this point the Sûf people could not go, and bade us good-bye. Considering that they had before tried to rob and murder us, they had behaved very well; and I could not but laugh at Sheikh Yusuf, when at parting he kissed my hand and said, "Ah,

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Howadji, your coming back has cost Sûf a mighty sum of money; but still I am glad to see you!" It is to be hoped he has learnt a lesson, and will not rob Englishmen in future.

We were now with our guides on our own resources, in an open country. We climbed the next steep ascent, winding to the right close to Judeita and Kefr Awan, neither of which would meet the conditions of Jabesh. Thence we struck across for a mile or two to Kefr Abil, another suggested site, which has some dressed stones, and an ancient oil-press, but does not appear to have been a place of importance during the Roman epoch. On the whole, I should incline to Dr. Robinson's conjecture of Ed D'eir in preference to this. The inhabitants were civil, but the appearance of the place did not tempt us to camp.

We had intended to camp at Fahil (Pella), but our guide objected, telling us there was no water, which was untrue, his real objection being fear of the Arabs of the Ghor, who were prowling about in its vicinity. We consequently turned up again a little to the north-east, about two miles, and, after a very heavy day, halted at the village of Beit Idis, where the tents were raised by a "birket" of dirty water in an olive-grove. The people had never seen Europeans before, but were civil and well-behaved. The boys were at once set to work to find us rollers' and woodpeckers' eggs, and boasted of the numbers they would produce in the morning. The village farrier was also in requisition. He was a Syrian Christian, the only one in the village, and a noble, intelligent-looking grey beard. In most of the Gilead villages the smith is a Christian; and, as we know that trades here are generally hereditary, it seems probable that on the occupation of the country, when conversion or death was often the alternative proposed to the conquered, the smith, being almost the only artificer indispensable to the Bedouin,

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was more leniently treated, and allowed to retain his faith.

One scarcely realises the contrast between the Bedouin and the fellâhin, unless when suddenly passing, as we have been doing, from a purely nomad to a purely agricultural district. This part of northern Gilead, the foreground of the plateau, with Tibneh for its metropolis, is hemmed in on all sides by Arabs, the Adwân and Beni Hassan on the south, the Beni Sakk'r to the north and east, and the whole Ghor frontage occupied by the S'hoor; yet by combination and courage the people so far hold their own, and have baffled the encroaching attempts of their restless neighbours. The whole is studded with villages, containing from 500 to 1,000 inhabitants each, few of which are marked in the maps, and which are utterly unknown beyond their own neighbourhood. In each there are generally a few Christians—ignorant indeed, but willing to learn, while the Moslems have not the bigotry of the towns. This district is called El Kûrah, and I conceive, from the marked difference in physiognomy and the much fairer complexion of the people, that they have no Bedouin blood, and are probably lineal descendants of the ancient Syrians.

The villages all look to Sheikh Yusuf Schreibeh, of Tibneh, as their feudal head and superior. They are, for security against cavalry raids, invariably situated on the knoll of a hill-top; and the configuration of the country is admirably adapted for defence. It is a flat plateau, furrowed and scarred by deep ravines, the crests of these never precipitous, but gently rounded, and the sides often furrowed by smaller nullahs; with little wood, and that generally scrub, or open olive-groves. There are many brows, or isolated hillocks, where a village can be planted safe from predatory horsemen, or at least from surprise. The villages are almost as thick as in the south of England, but how unpicturesque!—the houses, of mud and stone,

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huddled close together, never more than six feet high, with flat roofs, and little crooked lanes between the hovels, which are crushed together in a square mass, with a low wall or bank surrounding the whole, and the accumulated filth of generations pitched down the slope just outside, except where the village well, generally on the hill-side, below the wall, has an open clean space about it. Such is a Kûrah village. How naturally would an Old Testament writer have spoken of "Tibneh and her towns," and how well such a district illustrates the expression!

*May 6th.*—We had ten hours' ride before us, and started early. We turned due west on the high plateau, to look down upon Fahil, but had no time to descend to the ruins of Pella, which we could distinctly see close below us, on the foreground of a lower platform, rising close to the Ghor, and facing Beisan. Turning then north, we got up and down several wadys, and passed through several villages unknown to fame, while the top of the plateau and the bottoms of the valleys were alike covered with crops of ripe barley or green wheat, and the sides clad with olive or carob-trees. We had no guard with us, but the guide who accompanied us from Gerash, and an old man from Beit Idis, a venerable mollah, whose dress consisted only of a dirty white woollen turban, bound with green to show his claim as a shereef, and a short cotton shirt, barely covering his hips. Shoes or trousers he had none; and in his hand he carried a small wand. Old as he was, he had not lost his youthful sportiveness, but indulged us with various capers and dervish dances as he preceded our cavalcade.

On the brow of the third wady, we saw across the ravine a large village, Kefr Meyah, on the opposite crest, and soon after perceived a strange commotion in the place. A few horsemen were galloping frantically round and round, with long spears; women and children were screaming, running away to the hill beyond; flocks and herds

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were being driven by boys in all directions; while crowds of men, with the barrels of their long guns flashing in the sunlight, were grouped on the tops of the houses. Others were hurrying in from all directions. Our dervish ran on ahead, crossed the valley, and mounted, waving his hand, and crying, "Tayib, tayib." Presently two horsemen spurred down, with their lances set, spoke a few words with him, and galloped up again. It seemed we had been taken at a distance for a band of Adwân, coming to make a raid on the village. In our Bedouin dress, with our arms, mustering some twenty horses, it was no wonder that we had been taken for rovers. Only two months previously, our friend Goblan, and a party of his free-booters, had made a descent, and carried off many of the cows of the village, escaping unharmed with their booty. No wonder that no Adwân dare come peacefully into the Kûrah, and that they did not pass the frontier.

The panic had scarcely subsided when we got up to the place. The men were still grimly clutching their long firelocks, which every one, down to the boy of twelve years possessed; and even some of the women were valiantly holding the guns, and taking their place in the line of defence. I rode in amongst the foremost. "So you take us for Adwân? Did you ever see an Adwân with a red beard, or these boots?" We had a hearty laugh, and the old Sheikh came forward with a formal invitation on the part of the village that we would halt and take coffee with them. Time pressed, and we were obliged to be discourteous enough to decline. As we rode down the other side, the men, with their reaping-hooks or ploughshares—but of course with their guns slung on their shoulders—were hurrying back to their peaceful avocations in the fields. What a country to live in, with the plough in one hand and the firelock in the other! In the valley below we were looking in a tree for a bird we had shot, when a man rushed up in frantic haste, and, angrily

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warning us off, climbed up and took his belt and purse from a branch. The poor fellow had hid it there during the alarm of the morning, and thought we had espied it. Others in the same field were disinterring their sickles and shoes, which they had hidden in the earth.

We gradually descended into the Ghor by the south side of the Wady Taiyibeh, and passed the ruins of Merkib and the village of Arbain, the only inhabited place left in the whole eastern Ghor, after fording several little fresh streams buried in oleanders, with here and there a palm-tree, and swarming with fish and fresh-water shells. The dull sultry atmosphere of the Jordan valley was indeed a change from the cool morning breeze of the highlands.

For two hours and a half we rode up the Ghor, through a maze of zizyphus bush, which encumbers a soil of almost incredible richness, watered every mile by some little perennial brook, but without trace of inhabitant or cultivation. Now and then we saw a clump of palm-trees, the ruined heap of some old village, or a piece of a broken watercourse, to tell us that once the hand of civilisation was here. Myriads of turtledoves, chiefly *Turtur auritus*, peopled these thickets. We put them up absolutely by scores from every bush. The nests of the marsh sparrow (*Passer salicarius*, Temm.) bore down the branches by their weight, and the chirping of the sparrows was literally deafening. It is scarcely conceivable how such multitudes can be fed, but the bushes and weeds were laden with berries and seeds.

At length, by the ruined village of Arad, we emerged from the bush into the open plain which fringes the river. When we crossed it in March it had been knee-deep in clover and lucerne; now it was one sheet of a beautiful but most prickly centaurea. The tents which then had studded the plain were all gone, and we met not an Arab till, about half an hour from the bridge, a party of wild horsemen emerged from the river's bank, one with a sword,



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the others with long spears, and rode madly down on us. Pulling up their horses on their haunches within half a spear's length, they demanded our business. Our dragoman replied that we were Franghi, travelling on our own affairs. They then said they had taken us for Hawâra (a hostile tribe), and saluted us courteously. After performing sundry warlike evolutions, to try our nerves, galloping among us, with their spears quivering a few feet from our faces, yelling and prancing round us, they retired, and in a few minutes disappeared among the oleanders of the Jordan.

It was two o'clock when we reached the bridge, and we felt as we crossed it that we had re-entered upon civilisation. It seemed a step homewards, such as we had not taken since we left England.

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## CHAPTER XXIV.

*Halt at Agyle's Camp — Return to Nazareth — Greek Christian Wedding —Gennesaret in Summer—Arab Natural History—Fish of the Lake— Connexion with Africa—Safed — Jews — Small Paper Currency— Geology — Kedes (Kedesh Naphtali) — Natural Riches of the Country — Beth-Rehob — The Upper Jordan — Tell Kady (Dan) — Sources of the Jordan, upper and lower—Banias (Cæsarea Philippi)—Booths on the Houses — Sacred Reminiscences (Castle of Banias) — Birket er Ram (Lake Phiala) — Marshes of the Huleh — Ghawârineh—Cotton Cultivation — Sukeik (Selucia) — Herons — Impenetrable Swamp — Water Lily —Papyrus—Druse Labourers—Buffaloes—The Lake of Huleh (Waters of Merom) — Harvest Time — Parched Corn — Note on Palestine Agriculture and Crops.*

AT the bridge Mejamia we met a guard of Agyle's, who told us the Agha was camped to the south-east of Tabor; and, having bid good-bye to my friends, who were going on to Tiberias for a day, and having desired Hadj to follow me with the mule on the way to Nazareth, I trotted on alone towards Agyle's camp. Strange seemed the liberty of being able to ride alone, and take a course across country in safety. By dint of many inquiries, I reached the encampment about dark, and invited myself as a guest. In broken Arabic I recounted my eastern adventures, and then learnt to my dismay that L. and B—t had left Tabor "two-thirds of a moon" since, nor was it known where they were. After enjoying the primitive hospitality of the Agha, I rode off next morning alone, before sunrise, to Nazareth, wending my way through the woods on the north of Tabor, and shooting several birds. By the old familiar hills I descended to Nazareth before breakfast, and met the



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hearty welcome of my excellent friends, Mr. and Mrs. Zeller. Hadj arrived, and erected my tent in the afternoon, and our party also returned from Tiberias to spend the Sunday here. L. and B—t had gone on to Banias, under Mount Hermon, and thitherward we must travel on Monday.

*May 8th.*—Agyle mustered all his men, and joined the Muzellim of Nazareth this morning on an expedition to eject the Sakk'r, who had come up like Midianites on to the plain of Esdraelon, and pitched their camps among the green corn of the unhappy villagers.

We saw a Greek Christian wedding this morning, after leaving the church near the Fountain. The bridegroom came first, surrounded by twenty or thirty of his male friends, dressed in their best, who kept singing and clapping hands in a circle round him, as they conducted him to the town. Immediately behind followed the bride, mounted crosslegged on a mule, with a boy seated behind her, apparently to keep her in the saddle, for she was closely and completely veiled, with an enormous coronet-like head-dress beneath the veil. She, too, was surrounded by about twenty young women, unveiled, in the holiday costume, who sang responsive verses alternately with the male party in front, clapping time with their hands, while two or three tambours in the rear gave the tune. Probably this simple procession was much like the Jewish weddings of old, the virgins accompanying the bride behind the bridegroom to his house. So Mary and Joseph may have been conducted along this very path.

After our own service, where we had a congregation of English, American, and Prussian travellers, we went to Mr. Z.'s Arabic service in his oratory. It was well attended, and Arabic hymns were heartily sung to familiar English tunes, in the neatly-fitted chapel. Among the congregation were well-dressed tradesmen in gaudy colours, swarthy Bedouin, and the poorest of fellâhin, all seated on the ground, listening in rapt attention, as Mr. Z.

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explained the uses of the approaching Whitsuntide, and urged preparation for the reception of the Holy Spirit.

The next three weeks were devoted to the exploration of the district between the Sea of Galilee and the southern spurs of Hermon. In company with my friends, Messrs. E.-W., C., and party, I proceeded leisurely to Banias (Cæsarea Philippi), where we found L. and B—t hard at work. Having rejoined my old comrades, we took another route by the Huleh to Gennesaret, and then returned to Banias by a third, thus leaving no part of the country uninvestigated. Our notes, though very copious, were too exclusively devoted to natural history to be of much interest here. I shall therefore endeavour to compress into a few pages the general results of our observations.

Taking the upper road from Nazareth to Gennesaret, we had fine illustrations of the geology of the district. The hollow between Lubieh and Kurn Hattin had been partially filled by a stream of basalt, the spent droppings of which had exhausted themselves on the plain, whilst the main current had wound round the saddleback of Kurn Hattin, leaving the limestone cap untouched. The fountain of all these igneous streams appears in a bold mass of basalt, three miles east of Safed.

The plain of Gennesaret at the end of May is very different from the Gennesaret of early spring. Huge thistles and tall prickly centaureas, with every other vegetable engine for the conversion of clothes into rags, have taken the place of the lovely floral carpet of February. The oleander, in its full blaze of glorious beauty, must be excepted, and a magnificent lilac-coloured convolvulus (*Ipomœa palmata*, Forsk.), which hangs in long festoons of blossom from the prickly shrubs of the plain.

We here met with some original Arab views of natural history. Hadj, our muleteer, had heard us expressing our wonder as to what had become of the ducks, grebes, and gulls, which had all disappeared from the lake; and one

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morning he came with radiant face to tell us he had discovered all about them, and that a friend of his was coming with a basket of 100 grebes' eggs. We were on the tiptoe of expectation, when the basket was opened, and disclosed a quantity of large fresh-water mussels (*Unio terminalis*, Bourg.). The surrounding crowd all united in testifying these to be the eggs of "baht," and on our exhibiting signs of incredulity, appealed to our ignorance. "If these are not 'baht's' eggs, where are the eggs? You cannot find them. Do you not see the 'bahts' go down under water, and what else do they go for than to lay their eggs?" We found this belief universal, and that the Norwegian fable of the barnacle goose has been reproduced almost in the same form in Syria.

We added a few more specimens to our collection of the fish of the lake. Of the ten species obtained by us, all were African; three were new to science, no less than four belonged to the genus *Chromis*, an *African* tropical genus, and of which the Sea of Galilee is by far the most northerly known limit. It is most unusual to find any genus so richly represented in its most outlying provinces. Again, one (*Hemichromis sacer*, Gunthr.) belongs to a genus first established on a species from the Gaboon, and of which seven species have been brought by Dr. Kirk, Dr. Livingstone's companion, from South-Eastern Africa. No geographically intermediate species are known. Do not these most interesting and unexpected discoveries point to some ancient geological epoch, when the long chain of fresh-water lakes extended from Hermon to the Zambesi, and the Jordan was an African river flowing into the Dead Sea, then a lake connected with the African lakes by the Red Sea, also a lake?

Further explorations of the Wady Leimun leading up towards Safed, but without any practicable road, revealed to us long series of ancient cave-dwellings, as extensive as those of the robbers in the Wady Hamam, but far more

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difficult of access, and of no architectural pretensions. They are unknown, and without history, and probably date from a remote antiquity, like the caves of the Horites.

On one occasion we rode up to Safed from Tell Hûm, by way of Bir Kerâzeh and Khan Jubb Yusuf—the former a spring, with an insignificant ruin of a few stones above it, and nothing but the name to associate it with Chorazin;* the other strangely selected by tradition, in the teeth of geography, as the well into which Joseph was cast by his brethren. There is here a ruined khan, and a deep but narrow well close by it in a courtyard.

Proceeding towards Safed, said to be alluded to by our Lord, as "the city set upon a hill, which cannot be hid," —and certainly, if it had then existed, visible from the shores of the lake,—we very soon lost the basalt, and crossed a limestone district, bare, but well cultivated wherever there was soil. Safed is clustered all round the sides of a limestone peak, 3,335 feet above the lake. On the summit of the hill are the ruins of a large fortress, with deep moat and a triple line of walls, utterly destroyed by the earthquake of January 1, 1837, and separated from the town by a narrow belt of gardens, and orchards. On the west face of the hill rises the Jewish quarter (a set of terraces), and on the east and south faces are the Moslem quarters. From the top of the ruins we enjoyed a glorious view, especially to the north-east, unfolding to us the plateau of Bashan, from the distinctly-marked gorge of the Yarmuk, with the outline of the Lejah (Trachonitis), and its many extinct craters, showing their black cones against the horizon. At our feet was spread out the Lake of Galilee, looking so near that it seemed one might almost have leaped into it, yet ten miles distant; Tiberias

* The synagogue, and some other ruins of Kerâzeh, have, since the date of our visit, been fully explored and described by Major Wilson, R.E.

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was distinctly seen beyond the plain of Gennesaret, and to the south we commanded a sight of Hattin, Tabor, Gilboa, and even Carmel.

Safed is a sacred Jewish city, and once a seat of Rabbinical learning. I was the bearer of despatches for the Austrian, Prussian, and English consular agents (all Jews), and thus had an opportunity of seeing the interior of their houses. Though all outside was squalid and filthy, yet the cleanliness of these German-Jewish houses was absolutely Dutch. The trim old dames, in their antique costume, disused in Germany for more than a century, sitting knitting in the courtyards, with their blue stockings and quaint caps, were a painter's study. There is here what is probably the smallest paper currency in the world. I collected bank-notes, printed entirely in Hebrew, and circulating only among the Jews of Tiberias and Safed, of the value of twopence, a penny, three-farthings, a halfpenny, and even a farthing respectively.

In passing from Safed northwards, the traveller bids adieu to the hallowed Sea of Galilee, calmly sleeping in its mountain nest. Here, too, the first view is gained of Lake Huleh (Merom)—a Sea of Galilee in miniature, corresponding with it in its distant, but by no means in its nearer, features. Between the villages of Delâta and Alma there is a large basaltic dyke, the first plutonic trace after leaving the neighbourhood of the lake. Two or three miles further north is a large patch of basalt, two miles in diameter; and a smaller dyke, a mile or two to the eastward. None of these formations reach nearly to the height of the surrounding stratified hills, but have partially filled old valleys or depressed plains, and are of no great depth. We searched in vain for traces of craters. There are, indeed, two deep pools, or basins; but, neither by shape nor position, can they be taken for craters. Only at Tell Khureibeh is the stratification much disturbed, dipping there 7° west.

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We frequently made Kedes (Kedesh Naphtali)* our head-quarters for a day or two. The ruins of the home of Barak are fully described by Porter, and are very interesting. We observed four double sarcophagi, for two bodies, with a single lid, hewn out of one stone—a form we did not elsewhere meet with. There are some fine old tombs, and the remains of ancient buildings; a synagogue, and large family tombs; sarcophagi, placed not in caves, but on a pedestal of massive masonry. They were probably Jewish; for, though covered with wreaths, we could not make out any figures. But, oh! the wretchedness of the nights at Kedes, at the end of May, with a hot sirocco, thermometer 93° in the shade, and clouds of hot, penetrating dust! The air was thick with mosquitoes; our faces were swollen, our ankles and wrists in torture, so that we thought nothing of the minor miseries of earwigs and horse-flies crawling all over our bodies under our shirts, and lively fleas hopping by scores out of the dust on to the table, and up our sleeves. There was little inducement to remain on our beds, and our nights were short as our days were long.

Kedesh Naphtali, when freed by Barak from foreign foes, must have comprised within its borders everything that could make it a flourishing town. Situated on an eastern slope, behind it rise the bare but herbage-clad hills, where flocks and herds camped for the greater part of the year. The town stood on a knoll, where it could not easily be surprised. Just below it gushed forth a copious spring, caught in various ancient reservoirs, for the use of man and beast. Then, down a gentle slope, there were several hundred acres of olive-groves; and beyond these, a rich alluvial plain, of perhaps 2,000 acres, which supplied abundance of corn and vegetables. This plain extends to the rugged brow of the steep hills which descends to the marshes of Huleh; and, doubtless, Kedesh

* See Josh. xxii. 22; Judges iv. 6, 10, 11.

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of old, like Kedes to-day, possessed there its strip of marsh land of incomparable fertility, which was tilled by the townsmen for barley and lentils, though never inhabited by permanent residents. Thus they had every kind of produce at their very doors; and this would be the case with all that long string of towns which studded the goodly heritage of Naphtali, "satisfied with favour, and full with the blessing of the Lord," (Deut. xxxiii. 23), from Chinnereth northward to Dan.

As we rode along the plain which has been mentioned, east of the olive-yards, we were struck by the use of the landmarks. About 200 acres were laid down to cucumbers, an important summer crop here; and as hedges or walls are unknown, the allotments are marked by stones set up, every villager thus knowing his own freehold. How needful, with this simple system, that there should have been a curse on the man that removed his neighbour's landmark!

The next village to Kedes, Mais, is a favourite camping-place for travellers, delightful for its freshness and careful cultivation, and its mulberry-trees and vineyards, more like Lebanon than Palestine. The inhabitants are Metâwileh in type very different from their neighbours, and more like the Osmanlis. On the way there is stuck on a steep hill a wretched village of huts with sloping roofs; a colony of Algerian Arabs, refugees, who still wear the Algerian burnous, and build the "gourbis" of Mount Atlas. They cordially responded to me when addressed in the patois of North Africa.

Riding thence across a narrow and richly-cultivated valley, we soon entered a rocky wilderness of hills, bare perhaps in winter, but now bright and charming. For the first time we met with the roebuck, which twice started off so close to us that it could not be mistaken. The trees were festooned with woodbine (*Lonicera implexa*), and the bees hummed busily in the Oriental plane-trees;

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we were entering another botanical zone. The old castle of Tibnin, the Crusaders' Toron, a sister fortress to those of Kurn and Shukif, rose grandly on a peak to the left; and on emerging from the forest glades, a noble prospect burst upon the sight. The whole of Lake Huleh, the rich plain and marsh to its north, and the upper plain of Jordan (the Hasbany), were spread before us, backed by Hermon, with Banias, Tell Kadi (Dan), and many places of lesser note nestled at its foot or on its sides. Beneath us was the great battle-field where Joshua defeated Jabin and his mighty host of confederates, and won the northern inheritance of Israel.

Continuing along the heights we came to Hunin, conjectured by Dr. Robinson to be the site of *Beth-rehob* (Judges xviii. 28); the castle has once been of great strength, with its moat hewn out of the rock, and exhibits traces of every kind of work, from the old bevelled stones downwards; but it is now a complete ruin, patched up into cowsheds by the villagers. Then leaving Abil (Abel-Bethmaachah) on our left,* we descended into the upper plain of the Jordan.

Here we were on the basaltic current again, which has poured in, filled the northern end of the plain, and gradually expanded, till exhausted near the great marsh. It has been of great service in raising this portion of the Ghor, which is well watered and covered by crops of wheat which were ripe on May 12th. A bridge (Jisr el Ghujar) spans the Jordan, or rather the Hasbany, here a turbulent mountain torrent of the brightest blue, as it dashes among great volcanic boulders, hemmed in by walls of basalt, very different from the brown steady volume that rolls between mud banks below. It is a lovely spot; the banks overhung with oleanders, honeysuckle, clematis, wild rose, and Oriental plane. Their

* We afterwards visited Abil, which is an exclusively Christian village, without finding any ancient remains.

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perfume charged the atmosphere, and the bulbul and nightingale vied in rival song in the branches above, audible over the noise of the torrent below.

A ride of three miles from the bridge brought us to Tell Kadi ("the mound of the judge"), which thus, in the significance of its name, still preserves the ancient Dan ("Judge"). On the higher part of the mound to the south, tradition places the temple of the golden calf, and ruined foundations can still be traced. Nature's gifts are here poured forth in lavish profusion, but man has deserted it. Yet it would be difficult to find a more lovely situation than this, where "the men of Laish dwelt quiet and secure." "We have seen the land, and behold it is very good. . . . A place where there is no want of anything that is in the earth" (Judg. xviii. 9, 10). At the edge of the wide plain, below a long succession of olive-yards and oak-glades which slope down from Banias, rises an artificial-looking mound of limestone rock, flat-topped, eighty feet high, and half a mile in diameter. Its western side is covered with an almost impenetrable thicket of reeds, oaks, and oleanders, which entirely conceal the shapeless ruins, and are nurtured by "the lower springs" of Jordan; a wonderful fountain like a large bubbling basin, the largest spring in Syria, and said to be the largest single fountain in the world, where the drainage of the southern side of Hermon, pent up between a soft and a hard stratum, seems to have found a collective exit. Full-grown at birth, at once larger than the Hasbany which it joins, the river dashes through an oleander thicket.

On the eastern side of the mound, overhanging another bright feeder of the Jordan, are a holm oak and a terebinth side by side, two noble trees, which shade the graves of Arab saints and the luncheons of European travellers. This terebinth is, I believe, the largest of its kind in Syria, and the other tree is more comely than the so-called Abraham's Oak at Hebron. Their branches are hung with rags,

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and votive offerings of all sorts of rubbish, as Israel of old set up their altars under the great trees and in the groves of the high places. Such is all that remains of Dan. The curse of Bethel seems to rest equally on the sister site of Egyptian Idolatry.

A very short ascent through fine olive-groves and groups of noble oaks brought us to Banias. The situation is indeed magnificent. With tall limestone cliffs to the north and east, a rugged torrent of basalt to the south, and a gentle wooded slope for its western front, Banias is almost hidden till the traveller is among the ruins. These are not remarkable, the best preserved being the old Roman bridge over the impetuous stream which has hewn out its channel in the black basalt to the south. Everywhere there is a wild medley of cascades, mulberry-trees, fig-trees, dashing torrents, festoons of vines, bubbling fountains, reeds, and ruins, and the mingled music of birds and waters.

Dean Stanley calls it a Syrian Tivoli, and certainly there is much in the rocks, caverns, cascades, and the natural beauty of the scenery to recall the Roman Tibur. Behind the village, in front of a great natural cavern, a river bursts forth from the earth, the "upper source" of the Jordan. Inscriptions and niches in the face of the cliff tell of the old idol worship of Baal and of Pan.

The village itself is squalid enough, like all Syrian villages, but at present its inhabitants seemed to be keeping the feast of tabernacles after an aerial fashion. On the top of each house was erected a sort of wicker-work cage of oleander boughs, thick enough to be a screen from the rays of the sun and from observation. These booths are in universal use through the country for sleeping in during summer; but here they did not rest, as elsewhere, upon the flat roof, but were erected on a fragile scaffolding some six feet above it, and were reached by climbing up a pole and entering through a trap-door in the floor. At a

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distance they look more like airy dove-cots than baskets full of human beings.

Lovely as is the situation, the inhabitants of Banias look wretched, pallid, and yellow, and the very infant at the breast has ague stamped on its face. Many of the women have fine features, but are haggard and worn from the effects of the deadly miasma which rises in autumn from the marshes of Huleh. The people are a quiet, harmless set, neither carrying arms nor inflicting on others the necessity for carrying them. Law and order reign. There is actually a village policeman, and a Kadi from Damascus, from whom we had a visit, as well as from the village sheikh, and the proprietor of the olive-grove in which we camped, and who invited us to stay under his shade as long as we pleased.

L. and B—t had been here for some time, and we made Banias our head-quarters for a few days longer, being well rewarded by a harvest of specimens both of fauna and flora, in the collection of which we were heartily assisted by the villagers.

But there is one thing that impresses Banias more deeply on the heart than its beauty, its ruins, or its natural history. Into the coasts of Cæsarea Philippi our Redeemer came. Among these rocks St. Peter confessed His divinity —that confession which was the "Rock of the Church." Six days at least did he sojourn here. From hence he took the chosen three up into that mountain of Hermon behind, and was transfigured before them. Here was set that wondrous seal to the resurrection of the body, as well as to His Godhead. Here his work of teaching was nearly finished. Hence He set His face for the last time to go up to Jerusalem, and here unfolded His coming passion. Perhaps it was on the open space in the pathway that leads up to the mountain (the only one up from Banias) that He healed the demoniac boy, and taught His disciples the power of faith. We loved to think so, when we walked

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up that hilly path on Sunday, and there read the Gospel story.

More than once we visited Kulat es Subeibeh, the noble castle of Banias. We were at once struck by its strong resemblance, both in situation, in plan, and in actual style, to the castles of Kurn and Shukif. The latter can be distinctly seen from it. Here, as in Kulat Kurn, we have the rock-hewn fosse, and the ancient Phœnician substructure of bevelled stones with Roman arches, and Crusading or Saracenic chambers and arches over all. These castles are almost in a line, protecting the northern frontier, and were probably originally Phœnician strongholds, then Jewish frontier fortresses, and made use of for the like purpose in after ages by the successive rulers of the land. The castle is difficult of access, and is in many parts in admirable preservation. Some noble cisterns still contain a large supply of water, and several Saracenic halls and long corridors are quite perfect. The building is over 1,000 feet long and about 200 wide, having at the east end, like Kurn, a separate and inner citadel, strongly fortified, and which still remains in good preservation.

May 16th was devoted to a most interesting excursion to Birket er Ram, the Lake Phiala of Josephus, east of Banias. Our track lay up the north side of a deep glen. The hills on the left were lofty, but, excepting the massive ruin of the castle, not picturesque; and we had occasional glimpses of Hermon, ribbed down all the ravines with snow, while the higher and exposed portions were already bare. The nearer view in its present transition state was by no means striking or grand, like its distant majesty in winter. The absence of all bold peaks or granite points, as well as of timber (except of the smaller size low down), renders Hermon far inferior in grandeur to mountains of equal height in the Alps or Pyrenees. And yet it rises from its base nearly 10,000 feet. We passed the flourishing village of Ain Kûnyeh. Our course was on limestone rocks, com-

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paratively bare, though relieved by many patches of mulberry and olive-groves. Close to us on our right, a mountain torrent tore down on a rugged bed, while the opposite side of the ravine was a mighty lava current, black and rugged, but with soil of great fertility, clad with a mass of trees and brushwood.

In about three hours we came upon a bare but well-watered plateau, all basalt. We here crossed the stream up the gorge of which we had crept, and passed a wretched Bedouin village—Mezra'ah. From this we immediately descended into a wide shallow basin, in the centre of which was a deep oval lake—Phiala. We walked round it in twenty minutes. The enclosing hills were bare, except on the south, which was clad with large flowering shrubs and small trees. There was no marsh, but rich verdure, with many lumps of black scoria on it, fringed it to the water's edge. We were in the centre of an enormous extinct volcano, and the problem of the lava stream was solved at once. To the east side of this basin the *limestone* hills rose bold and lofty, but on the other three sides a mass of scoria, lava, and basaltic blocks had partially decomposed into a rich black earth. From this crater the liquid had poured forth, long subsequent to the deposition of the sedimentary rocks, and unable to spread except to the west, had rolled down the valley by the side of which we had ascended, and finding its level, had worked its way into the plain of Huleh, as far as the other side of the channel of the Jordan, which, like its feeder here, had again scooped out its path through the mass. Standing on a neighbouring point, whence we could overlook the Huleh, the deposit was as easily traced as would be the flow of a cup of viscous fluid upset on an uneven surface. This crater not only explains the lava currents, but also the frequent volcanic cinders, and large masses of sponge-like scoria, which strew the ground for many miles round.

However satisfactory the geological solutions, in natural

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history we were not successful. Not a new plant, not a waterfowl did we see. Frogs (*Rana esculenta*, L.) by thousands upon thousands swarmed in and round the lake, and their croak was deafening. On every stone and along the edge they sat in serried ranks, bolting into the water before us as we stepped, while hundreds of water snakes (*Tropidonotus hydrus*, Pall.) wriggled on the gravel, but not a stork or heron to rule them. A fringe of rushes and water-weeds lined the slimy pool, which was shallow for a few feet, and then became suddenly deep. The water was icy cold, and swarmed with leeches, which were adhering in numbers to every stone. Immense numbers of warblers and red-backed shrikes were breeding on the southern slopes, and in three or four hours we obtained about twenty nests, chiefly the Orphean warbler, and lesser whitethroat (*Sylvia orphea* and *S. curruca*), as well as *Emberiza cæsia*, Cretzs.

From Banias we also explored the east side of the Huleh, for a distance of four hours down, keeping as close to the marsh as we could, till we reached the ruins of Sukeik. Track there was none, as we rode through a rich park-like corn district, where the holm oaks, though standing singly, were close enough to give at a distance the impression of forest. But soon we had to cross the Nahr Banias by a scarcely practicable ford, and then floundered for several miles over the swampy plain. It was studded with temporary villages, collections of mat-huts, such as are used by the Ghawârineh on the plain of Acre, less costly, but infinitely more filthy, than the black tent, and not so frequently moved. The site of an old encampment consequently preserves for days that peculiar smell of Arab dirt, which is never forgotten by those who have once been offended by it. We rode for miles through patches of nearly ripe wheat, alternating with larger tracks in which the cotton-plants were just peeping above ground. The effects of the great struggle in America had reached even



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to distant Syria. The Jews of Damascus have advanced considerable sums to the fellâhin on mortgage of the anticipated crop; and so great has been the impulse given to cultivation, that land, which has remained untilled probably since the Saracen inroads, is being broken up; and scores of wooden ploughs were at work, drawn by ungainly buffaloes, on land so swampy that it was scarcely possible to walk over it.

We stopped at one of the basket villages, and seeing large herds of cows, rode up to the only black tent (the Sheikh's), and asked for a drink of "leben." He surlily refused, much to the chagrin, as we could see, of his girl-wife, the only pretty woman we met among the fellâhin Arabs. However, an old man came forward and offered us some, though, unlike a true Bedouin, he had no objection to take a piastre for it. The Bedouin will sell fresh milk, "haleeb," but not "leben," or soured curds. These people were almost black, stunted, and dwarfed by the unwholesome heat of the plain, yet their children looked less fever-stricken than those of Banias.

As we proceeded we saw many herons, grey, purple, white, buff-backed, and squacco, and shot numbers of pratincoles, as well as both species of cuckoo, and the bright golden oriole (*Oriolus galbula*, L.). When we had ridden for three hours, a low spur projecting into the plain afforded us a good halting-spot, under the shade of some fine old oak-trees, peopled by clouds of turtledoves; and while resting there a young Arab from a neighbouring camp brought us, unasked, a great iron pot full of rich new buffalo's milk, for which he would accept no payment, but sat down and joined us in eating our barley-cakes and hard-boiled eggs. There were some traces of ruins, faint, but extensive, on this platform, to which he gave the name of Sukeik, and which may very possibly be the remains of Seleucia, a town on the borders of the Huleh on the east, mentioned by Josephus (Bell. Jud. iv. 1, 1), and not yet

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identified. These remains are insignificant for those of a place of importance, but they are the only ones we found on the east side, though I must confess our search was not exhaustive.

Several Arabs joined us here, and were very civil, though we were quite alone. We could not agree with Porter's remark, that the Arabs of Huleh are, "in expression, as sinister as the buffaloes they tend." It was, indeed, delightful to enjoy the luxury of being free from guards, and from the necessity of carrying arms. As one of our visitors remarked, "There are no robbers here; only, what is worse, buffaloes, that run at strangers, and do not mind guns."

The western side of the marsh and lake we examined at our leisure, day after day, from our camp at Kedes, as the pestilential character of the plain was too evident to permit us to pitch tents in the lower ground. Riding across the well-cultivated plateau east of Kedes, we descended daily by the steep and perilous path which leads down from Nebi Yûsha, where Moslem tradition says Joseph was sold by his brethren to the Midianites, and where there is a khan for the use of the few travellers who pass this way. In one hour and a half from our camp we could reach the bottom, and then half an hour's canter brought us to the edge of the marsh, three miles north of the lake. Birds there were in abundance—herons, white and grey, purple and buff-backed, bitterns great and little (*Botaurus stellaris* and *Ardeola minuta*), purple gallinules (*Porphyrio hyacinthus*), marbled ducks by hundreds (*Anas angustirostris*, Temm.), and whatever else loves a jungle and a swamp, with frogs for dinner.

The whole marsh is marked in the maps as impassable, and most truly it is so. I never anywhere else have met with a swamp so vast and so utterly impenetrable. First there is an ordinary bog, which takes one up to the knees in water, then, after half a mile, a belt of deeper swamp,



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where the yellow water-lily (*Nuphar lutea*, D.C.) flourishes. Then a belt of tall reeds; the open water covered with white water-lily (*Nymphæa alba*, L.), and beyond again an impenetrable wilderness of papyrus (*Papyrus antiquorum*), in the beautiful forest of which Dr. Thomson has not recognised the celebrated material of Egypt, though he has well described it under its Arabic name, "babeer." (*Land and Book*, 259.) The papyrus extends right across to the east side. A false step off its roots will take the intruder over head in suffocating peat mud. We spent a long time in attempting to effect an entrance, and at last gave it up, satisfied that the marsh birds were not to be had. In fact the whole is simply a floating bog of several miles square—a very thin crust of vegetation over an unknown depth of water, and if the weight of the explorer breaks through this, suffocation is imminent. Some of the Arabs, who were tilling the plain for cotton, assured us that even a wild boar never got through it. We shot two bitterns, but, in endeavouring to retrieve them, I slipped from the root on which I was standing, and was drawn down in a moment, only saving myself from drowning by my gun, which had providentially caught across a papyrus stem.

As we sat down to rest in the plain, some of the labourers came and joined us. Among them were several Druses, who informed us the English were much more like Druses than Christians. This is a prevalent idea in this country, and, no doubt, arises in a great measure from the unhappy fact that Christianity is, in their minds, inseparably connected with image and picture worship. Added to this, the Jesuits, in order to thwart our missionaries, take good care to represent us to the native Christians as mere Deists, which the Druses are. We tried to explain that we were "Christians of the book," but they incredulously shook their heads, rubbing their forefingers together, and exclaimed, "sowa sowa" (all alike).

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In order to reach the open water of the lake, we had to make a circuit, and ride round to the head water of a stream, a deep, sluggish feeder of the swamp—Ain Mellâheh, a picturesque spot, a deep pool fringed with tamarisk, papyrus, and reeds, with a ruin at the end, where the stream bursts forth, overhung by luxuriant fig-trees, which afforded a dense and delicious shade. This was our favourite noonday halt.

Here we were delighted to find myriads of the two fresh-water shells (*Melanopsis costata* and *Neretina jordani*), which form the shingle of the Sea of Galilee, but were not found there alive. They adhered to the under surface of the water-lilies, and to the stems of the papyrus. Herds of ill-looking buffaloes were wallowing in the mud, or standing with only their noses out of water. The buffalo, probably the bull of Bashan, takes the place of all other cattle in the Ghor. It is exclusively used for the plough, and its milk is rich and delicious, as we often tested in the great iron bowls we quaffed, which were brought to us day after day from the encampment.

Doubling round Ain Mellâheh, we followed the western edge of the lake to the exit of the Jordan. The nearer view of the lake disenchants it of many of its more distant charms. Unlike Galilee, it is fringed with belts of lilies, papyrus, and water-weeds of all sorts. Without its sacred associations, it wants the clear beauty of "deep Galilee," though in many respects a miniature of it. A large, triangular sheet of water, at the lower end of the vast swampy plain, it has neither the bold outlines nor the deep colouring of the holy lake. The base of the triangle is at the north end, where the impenetrable mass of reed and papyrus suddenly breaks into a lake. This edge is wholly inaccessible, but it would well repay the trouble of carrying a boat for its examination. The course of the Jordan can be clearly traced from the heights by the open water down its centre, and on many open pools we could

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make out flocks of duck, great white egret, and all other rarities, hopelessly out of reach.

The western edge is fringed for the most part by a bank about six feet high, below which is a narrow strip of deep shingle formed chiefly of the *débris* of shells, and the bank waving with wheat to its very edge. The lake had been five feet deeper in winter, and its ordinary height might be told by the fringe of oleanders, which grow stilted like mangroves, with several feet of root at present high in the air. The water was shallow at this side, for acres of yellow water-lilies floated on the surface, and a few patches of the white nymphæa grew behind papyrus tufts.

On three mounds near the banks are ruins situated exactly like Egyptian villages, Hurraweh, Almaniyeh, and Marutiyeh, but it may be doubted whether the Huleh was ever permanently inhabited to any great extent. More probably it was cultivated, as at present, by the inhabitants of the thickset towns on the healthier heights above.

The lake at the south end contracts to a point, and concentrates its waters in a dull heavy rush into the narrow bed of the Jordan, which rapidly pours a deep impetuous stream between the green treeless bands to the Sea of Galilee. But the whole plain, the western side of which is here four miles wide, is fully tilled, and this was the height of the harvest season. Long rows of black tents, and many groups of huts, afforded shelter to the reapers, camped out like Boaz and his people in the fields of Bethlehem, who all loudly, but good-humouredly, demanded backshish for the good luck of the harvest, according to the custom of our own harvest fields in England.

Many fires were lighted on the shingle by the shores of the lake, fed by the clumps of papyrus roots torn up and washed ashore; and groups of Arabs, who had laid aside their sickles, for the sun was setting, were clustered round them. We watched with interest the preparation of their

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evening meal. A few sheaves of wheat had been brought down from the fields above; these were tossed on the fire, and as soon as the straw was consumed, the charred heads were dexterously swept from the embers on to a cloak spread on the ground. The women of the party then beat the ears and tossed them into the air, until they were thoroughly winnowed, when the wheat was eaten without further preparation. We were invited to partake, and found the dish by no means unpalatable. The green ears had become half-charred by the roasting, and there was a pleasant mingling of milky wheat and a fresh crust flavour as we chewed the parched corn. We were delighted to have seen the preparation, and to have partaken of parched corn, so often mentioned in the Old Testament Scriptures.

These Huleh Arabs seemed an industrious race. Some were true Bedouin, others Ghawârineh, and more were from the villages on the hills, living here in mat huts for two or three weeks, till they had gathered in their harvest.

We observed that, a little to the south of the Huleh, a low spur of limestone hills projects nearly across the Ghor from the westward, just as also south of Lake Gennesaret. Perhaps these projections may have some connexion with the formation of the basins above them, as the waters receded from their ancient level.

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## NOTE.

The principal grain crops of Palestine are barley, wheat, lentils, maize, and millet. Of the latter there is very little, and it is all gathered in by the end of May. The maize is then only just beginning to shoot. In the hotter parts of the Jordan valley the barley harvest is over by the end of March, and throughout the country the

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wheat harvest is at its height at the end of May, excepting in the highlands of Galilee, where it is about a fortnight later.

There seems to be but one variety of barley grown. Of wheat we noticed three, all bearded: one with a very short beard; a second, the most generally cultivated, with very long beard, as long as our barley, short and thick set in the ear, and very short in the straw, rarely over eighteen inches or two feet in length. A third variety, longer and coarser in the straw, has a black beard, and black or brown husk. It is a coarse sample, much thicker in the bran than the other varieties, but a better yield. The barley crops are fair, sometimes heavy, and the samples beautifully bright, and superior to many of our best malting qualities. But the wheat crops are very poor and light, and would disgust an English farmer. One may ride and walk through the standing corn without the slightest objection made, or harm done. No wonder it is thin, when white crops are raised from the same soil year after year, and no sort of manure ever put into the ground. From ten to fifteen bushels per acre is, so far as we could calculate from the Arab measures, considered a very good yield. Lentils (*Ervum lens*) are a very general crop, grown especially under the olives, and on the poor stony soils, yielding but a small return. Its cultivation dates back to the time of the early patriarchs (Gen. xxv. 34). It is everywhere off the ground by the end of May, and in the warmer districts in April. Horse-beans are grown to some extent in the heavier soils, and are ground down to mix with barley meal for bread, but the yield is very light when compared with English crops.

Besides these crops, many of the richer plots of land are planted with tobacco, which is dibbled in from seed beds in the beginning of May, and is about six inches high by the first of June. The plants are set about a yard

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apart each way. The cucumber is also an item in agriculture, and is carefully tended, the neglect of manure being in some degree compensated by liberal supplies of muddy water, let in by trenches every two or three days. The cucumbers are not dibbled, but sown in ridges four feet apart, each pinch of seed sending up six or eight plants, at distances of three feet in the trench.

Cotton, too, is becoming a very important item in all the rich, low, alluvial lands; and, like the cucumber, is sown in ridges, but closer; both these crops being set at the beginning of May, and on land off which barley has been taken, the cotton may be sown as late as the end of May.

Of artificial grasses there are none, and haymaking is unknown in the country; but vast quantities of rich herbage are utterly wasted, as in March there is far more than the cattle can consume, while by the end of May huge thistles and several species of great prickly centaureas have completely choked the scorched and withered blades.

Is it matter for surprise, that under such a wretched system, or rather absence of system, the land should have gone back from its ancient fertility?

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## CHAPTER XXV.

*From the Huleh to the Litany (Leontes) — Watering the Cattle — Bridge Khardeli—Kulat es Shukif (Belfort)—Jedeideh—Beauty of the Leontes Gorge — Burghuz — Italian Scenery — Hasbeiya — Christian Schools—Needlewomen—El Kuweh—Natural Bridge of the Litany—Wild Ravine — Birds of the Rocks — Gigantic Tree, The Oak of Libbeiya — Thelthathah — Ionic Temple — Rasheiya — Goats — The Dew of Hermon — Ascent of the Mountain — The "Apple" of Scripture not the Apple, Orange, or Citron, probably the Apricot — Vineyards of Hermon — Plants and Birds — Subarctic Forms accounted for — View from the top of Hermon—Ruined Temple of Baal — Costumes of Rasheiya — Temple at Rukleh—Thunderstorm—Damascus—Gardens—Interiors—Mosque.*

ON the 28th of May we left the swamps of the Huleh, and began to turn our faces northwards, making our first day's journey to Kulat es Shukif, the old Crusading castle of Belfort, overhanging the chasm of the Litany (Leontes). The heights to the west of Abil afforded a fine prospect as we looked down on the upper plain of the Huleh, the origin of that long valley which had been the axis of our six months' wanderings. Hermon, in naked, massive grandeur, stood beyond it, with woods and villages nestled round its base; while right across, to the north of us, stretched a low saddle-back ridge—a link uniting Hermon, the extremity of the anti-Lebanon, with the Lebanon range. The southern crests of Lebanon rose still ribbed with snow, and diverging to the north-west; while the other range expanded to the north-east; the two embracing the widening plain of the Buka'a, or Cœle Syria, as far as "the entering in of Hamath." We were standing exactly where the watersheds of the Mediterranean and

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the Jordan separate; and the little rills, right and left, ran respectively to the east and the west. Then the openings of the Lebanon here and there revealed cultivation, with its many-chequered shades of green, stretching far up into the recesses of the mountains. The chasm of the Leontes was completely hidden, though the stronghold of Belfort, perched on beetling cliffs on the other side, seemed close to us.

The day was oppressively hot, and in a little valley we came upon a lonely well, round which were gathered some twenty or thirty herds of goats, each two or three hundred in number, waiting to be watered in turn, and tended by boys and women. The animals lay round their respective guardians in good order, panting with heat, and eagerly watching till their turn should come for the cooling draught. The water was slowly drawn in skin buckets, and poured into a row of ancient sarcophagi, which served as troughs. As soon as his turn came, each shepherd started up, and his goats made a rush round him, speedily emptied the slowly-filled troughs, and then passed to the other side; while those who had watered their cattle, sat and chatted, smoked, flirted, or wrangled, as the case might be. "The places for drawing water" are still the rendezvous for the gossips and youngsters of the neighbourhood.

Having sent on our convoy, and relying on our maps and instincts to find the way, we wandered some six miles beyond the bridge that leads to Shukif, and did not discover our mistake till set right by a Druse, whom we met with his plough. We had no cause to regret our long circuit, for we enjoyed many an Alpine peep. It was pleasant to see the brightly-clad, fair-complexioned Syrians, Druse or Christian, at work in their fields, without arms; and to be greeted with a curtsey and a cheerful salaam by the clean-looking, unveiled damsels and matrons, with their children and water-jars, so different from the bundles of filthy dark blue rags which pass for women among the

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Bedouin. And then the torrent roared in the gorge 1,500 feet below us, milk-white and swollen with the melting snow, overhung with semi-tropical oleanders, fig-trees, and Oriental planes; while the upper cliffs were clad with northern vegetation—two zones of climate being thus visible at once.

From the bridge (Jisr Khardeli), an old, dilapidated structure of three arches, without a parapet, we ascended, on the first made-road we had trodden in Syria, up a zig-zag course, till at the height of 1,600 feet, we reached our camp, under the shadow of the ancient castle of Shukif. Here we had the good fortune to be joined by two fellow-countrymen, Messrs. Young and Prance, who had come, like ourselves, to spend a quiet Sunday here, and whose continued society heightened the enjoyment of the subsequent part of our tour. We remained two days at this spot, and enjoyed the extensive views which the castle affords, and which have been described by many travellers. But no description can convey an adequate idea of the grandeur of position of the castle itself, on the brink of a cliff 1,500 feet high, running sheer down to the river, which soon makes a sudden turn from a due-south to a due-west course, but everywhere has to thread its way at the bottom of a stupendous fissure. The castle, though repaired and enlarged by the Crusaders, was evidently not built by them, and, like Kurn and Subeibeh, exhibits remains of the stone-work of long previous epochs. Subeibeh and Tibneh, its sister fortresses, were in view, as well as a long reach of the Mediterranean from Tyre almost to Sidon. We searched the deep glen, in the recesses of which we found many a Lebanon and northern plant unknown to the south; while not only the bracken fern and the oleander, side by side, but many incongruous birds, marked this as the dividing line between the highlands and the lowlands. The heat was overpowering, and the thermometer rose to 105° in the shade.

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*May* 31*st*.—From Khardeli we endeavoured to follow up by the course of the Leontes as far as Burghuz. To keep the line of the deep channel of the river, or even to keep it in sight, we found impracticable, from the rugged nature of the ground. We turned eastward, and climbed a steep hill, crowned by the Christian village of Jedeideh. The houses, though flat-roofed, like those of the south, were substantially built, and much larger than the ordinary hovels of the country. They all rejoiced in unglazed windows, and some were two stories high. Stone took the place of mud in their construction—neatly hammer-dressed mountain limestone, from a quarry close by. The people were fair, and almost Grecian in their type of face. There seemed to be a sprinkling of a richer class, and some houses boasted door-handles, with brass ornaments, and at one was suspended a thin flat bar of iron by way of door-bell. A substantially-built church, with bell-turret, stood at the end of the village; and its outskirts were stocked with white mulberry and apricot trees, as well as the usual olives.

Near the village of Dibbin we came again to the edge of the chasm, and three hours more brought us to the bridge of Burghuz. The channel, though 1,000 feet deep, was so narrow, that the opposite ridge was within gunshot. Looking down the giddy abyss, we could see the cliff on our side partially clothed with myrtle, bay, and caper hanging from the fissures, while the opposite side was perforated with many shallow caves, the inaccessible eyries of vultures, eagles, and lanner falcons, which were sailing in multitudes around. The lower part had many ledges clad with shrubs, the strongholds of the Syrian bear, though inaccessible even to goats. Far beneath dashed the milk-white river, a silvery line in a ruby setting of oleander, roaring, doubtless, fiercely, but too distant to be heard at the height on which we stood. This *cleft* of the Leontes was the only true Alpine scenery we had met with

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in Palestine, and in any country, and amidst any mountains, would attract admiration.

As we neared the bridge, the wall of rock on our side suddenly broke down into an open space, down which wound a road, half-buried in old Oriental plane-trees, festooned with wild vines. A very sweet and snow-white multiflora rose covered the banks with a sheet of blossom, and the scented white clematis wove many a garland round the branches of the bay and myrtle trees above the oleander fringe. The bank above the bridge on the other side rapidly rose, till it became as steep and precipitous as ever, and the channel was narrowed to a tremendous cleft, splitting the slope of the mountain through which it cut. On this steep was perched the romantic-looking village of Burghuz, one tier of houses overhanging and threatening another,—a site selected for security rather than for convenience.

After a short repose during the noonday heat, we struck, by a rocky and difficult path, across the low spur of hills which separated us from the upper Jordan valley, called here the Hasbany. For months past we had been looking from the south on the compact and rounded front of Hermon. Now for the first time we had a side view, and saw a range rather than a single peak. It is, in fact, the southern group of the anti-Lebanon, the culminating, though the extreme, point, while the Lebanon range seemed almost linked with its western spurs.

Very soon we seemed to have descended from the Alps into Italy. There was the quiet repose and all the characteristics of one of Poussin's pictures. The level valley was a forest of fruit-trees, the pale green of the mulberry contrasting sweetly with the dark blue foliage of the olive; and groups of tall poplars marked the course of the Hasbany. The vine straggled luxuriantly wherever there was space for it among the trees; and a busy population in picturesque costume was everywhere employed—the

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men with their mattocks, or their ploughs and oxen, the women and children gathering mulberry-leaves for their silkworms. It was Lombardy rather than Palestine. But we are now on the borders of the land, and the curse which seems to rest on most of it extends not to these Christian valleys.

From the castle of Shukif to the bridge of Burghuz, and again on the higher parts of the lower hills, and up the valley above Hasbeiya, a thin stratum of sandstone overlies the limestone, extending as far north as Libbeiya, but denuded in the lower ground. The Lebanon range, as exposed in the gorge of the Litany, dipped from 5° to 9° west. This was, of course, on the Mediterranean watershed; and, near its crest, some of the exposed sections were almost vertical, and much contorted. If the dip continue regularly (which I am not able to affirm), may it not be that we have here the axis of elevation? Supposing an elevating force to have acted along the partition of the watershed, it would account for the dip towards the west, and also for the eastward dip of the Ghor.

The little town of Hasbeiya is planted on the side of a sort of amphitheatre, almost buried in the luxuriance of its olive-yards, orchards, and vineyards; which run, terrace upon terrace, far up the mountain on both sides of the steep valley. In what sad contrast with the quiet beauty of nature around us were the harrowing memories of the frightful massacre not many months before! The great palace of the Emir is now half ruined, and occupied by a Turkish governor. The Christian population has returned, and many houses have been rebuilt, together with a large Greek church, with side aisles. Among all the picturesque buildings, the flat roofs of which rise terrace over terrace, a large American Protestant church has just been finished, with a tall gable roof; and, in the hugeness of its deformity, it can only be compared to a chimney-pot

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hat making its appearance amidst the graceful variety of Oriental head-dresses.

We found a group of neatly-dressed women and girls awaiting our arrival at our tents, with white quilted caps for sale, the staple of the place. The fair, intelligent-looking girls told of the North, and of Christian influences. Most of them were Protestants, and had been educated at the English school here, an offshoot of Mrs. Thompson's, at Beyrout, though they do not learn the English language, which here would be useless. We produced our dilapidated wardrobes, and half-a-dozen of them at once set to work, under the lee of the tents, to repair our tattered outfit, after a rough and ready fashion, at the cost of a few pence and some packets of needles, which afforded great delight.

*June 1st.*—From Hasbeiya we proceeded north, by a rather uninteresting road across the Teim (the name given to the Jordan, or Hasbany, in its upper part), to visit El Kûweh, the celebrated natural bridge over the Litany, six miles above Burghuz. Dean Stanley has described the remarkable geographical view which this ride affords of the Lebanon and anti-Lebanon, and the valley between them, as far as the Lake of Gennesaret.

As we approached El Kûweh, we looked across the hidden chasm unsuspectingly, but, on a sudden, found ourselves on the brink of a very deep descent, when we had to dismount and wearily lead our horses. It was not till we were on the bridge itself that we recognised the grandeur of the scene—called magnificent by even the impassive Dr. Robinson. The bridge itself is formed by a number of huge rocks, which have rolled down from the narrow chasm above, leaving a channel for the stream a hundred feet below them. Many other masses of cliffs are jammed in the gorge, in every possible position; among them fig-trees, plane-trees, and many shrubs shoot forth, rather like trees practising gymnastics, than quietly hold-

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ing up their heads in their proper place in nature. As I hung over, and looked down through the thick boughs of a fig-tree, a group of rock-doves were enjoying their noonday rest on a crag fifty feet below, little suspecting a human eye was on them, till I dropped figs upon their backs. The blue thrush (*Monticola cyanea*) hopped from corner to corner, equally unconscious of my presence; and long files of rock-swallows (*Cotyle rupestris*) were skimming backwards and forwards under the bridge, and threading the maze of labyrinth below me, like skilled performers in some intricate dance. Every chink was fresh with ferns—*Filix mas*, *Asplenium trichomanes* and *Adiantum nigrum*, *Gymnogramma leptophylla*, *Cheilanthes fragrans*, *Pteris longifolia*, *Aspidium dilatatum*. The maiden-hair graced the rocks, and combined with the cool freshness to carry the fancy back to scenes where wood, water, and ferns are less rare than in Palestine. Above the narrow cleft, which is two hundred feet deep, the gorge expands a little, leaving a sloping ledge of green turf, broken by detached fragments of rock. Here the Syrian and the chestnut-breasted nuthatches, flitted in small parties, from side to side; and the crimson-shouldered wall-creeper ran busily up the face of the precipice.

When we mounted again, the castle of Belfort was the central object in the southward view. Northwards, the Lebanon looked bare, though Sunnin, furrowed with broad snow-tracks down its side, gave an idea of height, which the unrelieved bareness of the range would not otherwise have suggested. The deep chasm of the Leontes cuts through the Lebanon in a manner for which the physical configuration of the country will not account, slicing through the mountains, instead of rounding them, while the divided portions cling closely together over the furious but secluded stream. Still it pursues an obstinate course through the mightiest obstacles, like some canal engineered by a bold Brunel of the Titanic world.



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From El Kûweh, half an hour brought us to Yahmûr, a village surrounded by vineyards, and where there is a shaft sunk through the rock, and a bitumen-pit worked by a windlass. The bitumen here is very soft, of the consistency of stiff coal-tar, and is a monopoly farmed from the Government at Damascus. It is doubtless the *pitch* of Scripture, and seems to be a sort of congealed petroleum. The Arabs tell us its grows; and doubtless these wells, of which there are also many at Hasbeiya, act as taps, and drain it gradually from the subterranean fissures in which it is compressed. It solidifies on exposure to the atmosphere. The rock which overlies it is the ordinary cretaceous limestone of the country.

From Yahmûr we crossed a difficult ridge, the Jebel ed Duhar, the starting-point of the Jordan Valley, and the link between Hermon and Lebanon, which hence diverge N.E. and N.W. respectively. Crossing the head of the valley, with a fine vista down the Huleh, we approached the village of Libbeiya. On the little plateau in front of it, stood what seemed to be a dome-like group of holm-oak. "That cannot be a single tree," we exclaimed; and as the branches swept to the ground, a tuft of brushwood in front seemed to divide the trunk into two or three. However, on reaching it we found ourselves under the most magnificent tree I remember ever to have seen. Arbaham's and the Penshanger Oaks are shabby in comparison. It is one symmetrical tree in the heyday of its prime; its wide-spreading roots gather together into a pedestal, which at the height of six feet sends forth more than a dozen lateral branches, each a fine piece of timber in itself. At four feet from the ground, the narrowest part, where its waist is tightly and most fashionably compressed, it measured thirty-seven feet in circumference. The branches extend with perfect symmetry, forming a true circle and a dome without flaw or break, covering a circumference of ninety-one yards,

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everywhere reaching down to within five feet of the ground, as though trimmed artificially to that height by the browsing of the cattle. It has neither history nor legend, and is known to the villagers simply as the oak of Libbeiya, and seemed to have escaped the notice of travellers. Under its shade we sat and wondered.

The next village was Thelthathah, with the remarkable ruined temple, called Nebi Sufa, one wall of which still stands erect. It was one of the grand circle of temples of Baal, all facing Hermon, this one looking due east towards it. Its architecture is Ionic, of the oldest and severest type,* the frieze simple, adorned with the figures of a ram's head and bull's head alternately. The whole of the north wall is standing, tall and desolate, without a fragment of the others. We found under the west end of the ruins some interesting crypt corridors, very low and massive, six feet high and fifteen feet wide, opening into each other, and from which a secret staircase led to the platform of the adytum, reminding us of the secret access of the priests of Bel, in the story of "Bel and the Dragon."

We next crossed a long basaltic stream, which for several miles forms a rounded elevation running from north to south, rugged, and covered with boulders, but nourishing many fine vineyards. It is about a mile and a-half wide. At a distance it looks like a lower ridge parallel to Jebel ed Duhar, running down the Wady Teim; but closer examination soon shows that it has been a subsequent irruption, partially filling in the more ancient valley.

As we approached Rasheiya, the sunset hues of Hermon were magnificent, recalling the familiar evening glow on Mont Blanc or Monte Rosa, the lovely blush, the death-like pallor, and the darkness relieved by the snow, in quick succession. The last half-hour was a steep ascent up a rocky path amidst vineyards, till we reached Rasheiya,

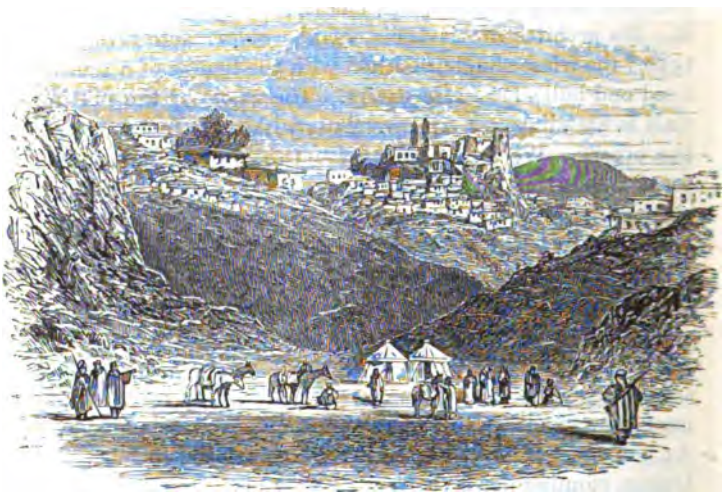
* Porter, by some unaccountable mistake, calls it "Corinthian, light and graceful, though not in the best style."—P. 570.



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perched on a spur of Hermon projecting to the north; the palace of the Druse Emir, the hereditary feudal lord, occupying the brow, and the straggling, flat-roofed houses, the slopes and depressions on the irregular site, bearing a rude resemblance to the city of Durham.

Below the castle is a wide, open market-place. In it hundreds of goats were gathered for the night, and it was no easy matter to thread our way among them, as they had



RASHEIYA.

no idea of moving for such belated intruders on their rest. All the she-goats of the neighbouring hills are driven in every evening, and remain for their morning milking, after which they set forth on their day's excursion. Each house possesses several, and all know their owners. The evening milking is a picturesque scene. Every street and open space is filled with the goats, and women, girls, and boys are everywhere milking with their small pewter pots, the

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goats anxiously waiting their turn, and lying down to chew the cud as soon as it is over. As no kids or he-goats are admitted, the scene is very orderly, and there is none of the deafening bleating which usually characterises large flocks. They are a solemn set, these black mountain goats, and by the gravity of their demeanour excite a suspicion that they have had no youth—that they never were kids. The ears of the Lebanon goats are not so long as in the Syrian breed, nor do they curl up, and the horns are generally larger, and often diverge horizontally instead of lying back over the ears. The hair is longer, and more silky, and the build of the animal more compact. Any other colour than black is rare.

Sheep here are few and far between, and of a very different breed from the Palestine sheep, with its broad, flat tail, long Roman nose, and hornless head. There are some broad-tailed sheep here, but more of the merino-shape, short-woolled, and larger in the barrel, while their mutton is much better, owing perhaps to their not running to tail.

At Rasheiya, which we made our head-quarters for five days, the morning air was keen and frosty, and the mountain atmosphere a truly refreshing change. We were now, for the first time since we had been in the country, above the line of the olive, which no longer added its silvery blue to the varied tints of the landscape, but its place was abundantly supplied by fine walnut-trees, apricots, figs, and almonds.

We could not here but recall the Psalmist's expression, "As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion" (Ps. cxxxiii. 8), (in which passage Zion is evidently a synonym for Hermon, as in Deut. iv. 48, where we read that the limits of the land were "even unto Mount Zion, which is Hermon,") for more copious dew we never experienced. Everything was drenched with it, and the tents were small protection. The under sides of our macintosh sheets were in water,

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our guns were rusted, dew drops were hanging everywhere. The copiousness of the dew is easily accounted for by the geographical configuration. The hot air in the daytime comes streaming up the Ghor from the Huleh, while Hermon arrests all the moisture, and deposits it congealed at nights.

Though Hermon is 9,400 feet above the Mediterranean, and nearly 11,000 above the Ghor on which it looks down, I never experienced an easier mountain ascent. There was no absolute necessity ever to dismount till we gained the top. For the first hour we wound among vine-clad hills in all the beauty of early summer, the young shoots hanging from every rock, and climbing up the rough stone-heaps; and the vineyards, especially in the lower valleys, being well stocked with mulberry, apricot, and fig-trees. Then having crossed a well-watered plain, where the wheat was still green, for we were now on the cold uplands, the real ascent began. From its commencement vineyards supplanted cornfields, not studded, like those of Rasheiya, with fig-trees, but with pear-trees, here one of the most abundant fruits, and which we had often found wild in the woods of Northern Galilee.

It is a question what is the "apple" of Scripure, תַּפּוּחַ (tappûach). Dr. Thomson (*The Land and the Book*, p. 546) argues for our apple, which he states to be found in great abundance at Askelon. I have not visited Askelon, but I scarcely ever saw the apple-tree in Palestine, nor till we reached Damascus, except on a very few high situations in Lebanon. I have searched in vain in the gardens of Jaffa, a situation and climate precisely like Askelon, for any decent apples, and never found any, though there were plenty of quinces, and some few miserable apple-trees, which, owing to the heat, never thrive nor yield. Perhaps Dr. Thomson mistook the quince for the apple. He objects to the acceptance of the citron, which is generally put forward as the representation of

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"tappûach," on the ground that it is a "small tender tree," "too small and straggling to make a shade." But he surely can never have noticed the citron-trees of Jenin, Caiffa, Sidon, or a dozen other places, quite as large as the orange, and affording a dense shade. The pear and the quince are, I conceive, too local, and not sufficiently valued, to stand for the favourite fruit of the Canticles. The orange is most probably a later introduction into the country. For my own part I have no hesitation in expressing my conviction that the *apricot* (*mushmushah*) alone is the apple of Scripture. It is true we found no wild apricot-trees, while we found wild pears; but neither is the apple, quince, or citron wild in Palestine, and the apricot is known to be a native of the neighbouring country of Armenia, and, therefore, introduced probably as early as the vine which is originally from the same regions, and is certainly not a *native* of Palestine. But everywhere the apricot is common; perhaps it is, with the single exception of the fig, the most abundant fruit of the country. In highlands and lowlands alike, by the shores of the Mediterranean and on the banks of the Jordan, in the nooks of Judæa, under the heights of Lebanon, in the recesses of Galilee, and in the glades of Gilead, the apricot flourishes, and yields a crop of prodigious abundance. Its characteristics meet every condition of the "tappûach" of Scripture. "I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste." (Cant. ii. 3.) Near Damascus, and on the banks of the Barada, we have pitched our tents under its shade, and spread our carpets secure from the rays of the sun. "The smell of thy nose (shall be) like tappûach." (Cant. vii. 8.) There can scarcely be a more deliciously-perfumed fruit than the apricot; and what fruit can better fit the epithet of Solomon, "Apples of *gold* in pictures of silver" (Prov. xxv. 11), than this golden fruit, as its branches bend under the weight in their setting of bright yet pale foliage?

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The vineyards under Hermon are more picturesque than those of Southern Europe. Wherever the soil admits, the long aged branches trail on the ground, and the fruit-bearing shoots are raised on short forked sticks. But in many places the soil is invisible, and the whole hill-side looks like the *débris* of a stone-quarry. Here an ingenious method is adopted. The larger stones are gathered up into dry walls, three feet apart, and about the same height. The vines are allowed to trail and hang over these little walls, by which means a very large surface is exposed to the sun, and the crops are enormous.

In these vineyards we obtained no less than three new species of birds—a very beautiful little finch, allied to our canary, and described by me (*Proceedings of Zool. Soc.*, Nov., 1864) as *Serinus aurifrons*; a new warbler, named by me *Hippolais upcheri* (*Ibid*); and a very beautiful and remarkable bird, *Bessonornis albigularis* (*Ibid*). All these three we obtained during two days, and some of them in considerable plenty; and of all we discovered the nests and eggs. All were songsters of no ordinary power and compass. Who can say there is nothing left to be discovered in natural history, when on hackneyed Hermon, in a single spot, three new species could reward our search?

From the vineyards we rose over old "moraines," into a slope of oak coppice, which gradually dwindled to a bare rocky ravine, the sides of which afforded yet clearer evidence of glacial action; for the ice-scratches of the old glaciers could plainly be traced on the rounded face of many a rock and boulder. The surface of the soil was dotted with numbers of dwarf shrubs, *Rosa spinosissima*, *Prunus syriacus*, a most exquisite little shrub, far surpassing the cotoneaster, which it resembles in manner of growth; many clumps of a lovely pink astragalus, and other plants, too many to recount, strange to our eyes, but kept down by the constant browsing of the goats.



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The ascent gradually became steeper, yet we could still keep the saddle, for there were no peaks, no granite "aīguilles." The hard crystalline limestone was much upheaved, and dipped almost vertically south-west, but was rounded and worn by aqueous or glacial action. At length we crossed the first ridge of snow, after which, turfy banks, gravelly slopes, and broad snow-patches, alternated till we reached the summit, the ascent having occupied five hours.

Porter describes the sides and top of Hermon as the acme of barren desolation. Much must depend on the time of year. To us they were rich indeed. We obtained a little short-tailed marmot, of a species new to us, near the top. The Alpine yellow-billed chough (*Pyrrhocorax alpinus*, L.) perched near us, and kept hovering in small bands about us. The raven and the common swift were incessantly wheeling, croaking, and screaming round us. The griffon and the Egyptian vulture, with an eagle or two, soared majestically far above our heads. The snow was covered with the fresh tracks of bears, though none of these were visible. Of smaller birds, the English brown linnet (*Linota cannabina*, L.), the common wheatear (*Saxicola œnanthe*, L.), the snow finch (*Montifringilla nivalis*, L.), and the Persian horned lark (*Otocoris penicillata*, Gould) were living and breeding abundantly. Of all of these we found nests, but with young instead of eggs. It was a strange surprise to discover on this isolated Arctic patch two English winter birds, with the horned lark of Persia, the chough of the Alps, and, just below, a finch, related to the Himalayan birds, and a warbler related to the Central African *Bessonornis*.

The occurrence of these boreal forms of life, both in fauna and flora, on Hermon, may perhaps throw some light on the parallel fact of the occurrence of tropical or semi-tropical birds and plants in the Jordan Valley and the basin of the Dead Sea. The traces of glacial action are

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evident both on Hermon and Lebanon. On the latter range we found evidence (p. 11) of the existence in prehistoric times of animals now existing only in more northern regions. The occurrence of an epoch of great cold in the northern hemisphere subsequent to the later pleiocene period, called the glacial epoch, is now admitted by all geologists. But beyond this, we have much evidence to show that in the pre-glacial later pleiocene times, there was a more equable and genial temperature in the northern regions than at present rules there. Tropical, as well as temperate forms of life, would consequently have a considerably further northward range; and we can suppose that the tropical birds and plants which now scarcely penetrate into lower Egypt would and could then exist quite up to the shores of the Mediterranean, and probably further north, into Asia Minor. The effect of the supervening glacial period would naturally be to cause a general exodus from the north; the more tender species would be the first to suffer, and the only survivors of those which had not withdrawn would be the few which had found such warm nooks as the Jordan valley for their place of refuge.

When the temperature modified again, shortly before the creation of man, the retreating cold would naturally leave the hills occupied by resident northern birds and animals, and subarctic plants, exactly as we find is the case on Hermon and Lebanon. These forms would be confined to their narrow limits just as the tropical forms to theirs, because Palestine is out of the range of the uniform temperature of the tropics; and is, excepting in the Ghor, subject to considerable changes of temperature between winter and summer.*

The top of Hermon was quite free from snow, only broad glacier-like streaks running down the sides, expand-

* I am indebted to my friend Osbert Salvin, Esq., for the hints which suggested this solution.

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ing as they descended towards the valleys. Though rocky, the mountain was well earthed to the very summit, not, indeed, for the last 500 feet with a carpet, but with dwarf clumps, which seldom left a square yard without a plant. And miniature gems all the flowers were—numbers of a kind of tulip in full bloom, a delicate blue sort of iris, *Ixolirion montanum*, a crocus, a ranunculus (*R. demissus*), three species of *androsace*, a sort of primula, a charming *fritillaria*, *Draba vesicaria*, and *D. villosa*, and a rue. These latter were the plants of the top. Five hundred feet below the crests plants began to be countless, but we saw no mosses and no saxifrages. Altogether Hermon added fifty species to our catalogue of plants.

We were highly favoured in the day and atmosphere. We were at last on Hermon, whose snowy head had been a sort of pole-star for the last six months. We had looked at him from Sidon, from Tyre, from Carmel, from Gerizim, from the hills about Jerusalem, from the Dead Sea, from Gilead, and from Nebo; and now we were looking down on them all, as they stood out from the embossed map that lay spread at our feet. The only drawback was a light fleecy cloud which stretched from Carmel's top all along the Lebanon, till it rested upon Jebel Sunnin, close to Baalbec. But it lifted sufficiently to give us a peep of the Mediterranean in three places, and amongst them of Tyre. There was a haze, too, over the Ghor, so that we could only see as far as Jebel Ajlûn and Gilead; but Lakes Huleh and Gennesaret, sunk in the depths beneath us, and reflecting the sunlight, were magnificent. We could scarcely realise that at one glance we were taking in the whole of the land through which for more than six months we had been incessantly wandering. Not less striking were the views to the north and east, with the head waters of the Awaj (Pharpar) rising beneath us, and the Barada (Abana) in the far distance, both rivers marking the courses of their fertilising streams by the deep green lines

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of verdure, till the eye rested on the brightness of Damascus, and then turned up the wide opening of Cœle Syria, until shut in by Lebanon.

A ruined temple of Baal, constructed of squared stones arranged nearly in a circle, crowns the highest of the three peaks of Hermon, all very close together. We spent a great part of the day on the summit, but were before long painfully affected by the rarity of the atmosphere. The sun had sunk behind Lebanon before we descended to our tents, but long after we had lost him he continued to paint and gild Hermon with a beautiful mingling of Alpine and desert hues.

On our return the third evening to our tents, which were close to the pond or cistern of the town, we found sentries in charge, and ourselves debarred from using the water. This is here a precious commodity, and, as there were symptoms of a drought, the Emir had issued an edict, limiting the supply of each household to a pitcher daily; and restricting its use by strangers to a single day. Great was the wrangling, loud the clamour, of the disappointed women with their long jars. For our own part we despatched a messenger to the Emir, who speedily returned with a bimbashi (corporal), authorised to permit us to take what we required.

The dress of the women of Rasheiya is peculiar, but very becoming, though extremely simple. Being all Druses or Christians, they do not veil, but over a small fez cap wear a white cotton handkerchief, which hangs down behind, below the waist. In front, the married women wear another white handkerchief, from the chin to the waist, the unmarried a rather open frock, with their long plaited hair hanging down in front. All have loose coloured trousers tied tight at the ankles, and over these an open skirt of cotton print rather full; they have no stockings, but neat red slippers, often embroidered, and turned up at the toes.

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On the Sunday we had a visit from the native Protestant pastor, connected, I believe, with the American Presbyterian Mission, who was dressed in a fez and suit of purple, probably as being the most clerical colour Oriental wardrobes would allow. He spoke no English, but seemed a very intelligent as well as devoted man, and gave us some interesting information on the progress of his schools and mission work.

On June 6th we left Rasheiya for Damascus, making a circuit on the way to visit some of the old Syrian temples which encircle Hermon, towards the "high place" of which they all face. On one of them at Rukleh, in a wild, desolate ravine, there still remains built into the wall fronting the mountain a hugh medallion face in a border, supposed to be of Baal, three feet four by two feet four inches in extent, and including the border, five feet by four feet.

At Deir el Ashâyer was another very fine ruin, an Ionic temple very like that of Thalthathah, and near it a small lake, which we visited in hope of finding the birds with which Porter saw it swarming, but where we could discover nothing but a few storks and vultures. Soon after, we struck the carriage-road engineered by the French from Beyrout to Damascus, and the telegraph wires by its side. The road is a valuable legacy of the occupation, the only road for wheel carriages in all Syria. We gazed with all the wonder of novelty at some stage wagons which passed us. Crossing the road, we camped at the wretched village of Dîmâs.

The next morning we traversed the barren rocky plain of Es Sahra, more dreary than its namesake, but inhabited by numbers of sand grouse, and occasionally enlivened by glimpses of the green glen of the Barada (Abana), "the golden-flowing."

At length we came upon the crest of the hill overlooking the wide oasis of Damascus, and an Arabian Nights'

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vision was before us. It was our unusual fortune to have our first view of the city under what is looked on as a phenomenon at this time of year—a tremendous thunder-storm. We were out of it ourselves, as it burst over half the city, leaving the other half gleaming and flashing light from its gilded minarets and cupolas, the whole embossed in a forest of fruit-trees covering many square miles.

As we descended the storm cleared off, and when we were at a slight elevation above the oasis, the sudden gush of perfume, chiefly of orange blossom, wafted through the air, was almost overpowering. It seemed as though a cloud of scent were floating at a certain height in the atmosphere, for when we were below it was not nearly so strong. The change from the rocky desert to the wilderness of gardens was instantaneous. Tall mud walls extended in every direction under the trees, and rich flowing streams of water from the Barada everywhere bubbled through the orchards, while all was alive with the song of birds, and the hum of bees. The great apricot-trees were laden and bent down under strings of ripe golden fruit. The lanes were strewn with apricots. Asses, mules, and camels in long strings carried heaped panniers of these "golden apples." Walnut, peach, plum, pomegranate, pear, olive, orange, and even apple-trees crowded the maze through which for an hour we wound, till we found our camping ground in a garden, one tent shaded by an apricot, the other by a walnut-tree, surrounded by pomegranates in full blossom, while a rill from the Barada ran past to cool our water bottles.

It is not within my limits to describe Damascus after a five days' sojourn. It has scarcely been exhausted by one who spent five years in it. Yet, after the first dazzling effect had worn off, it was rather a disappointing place. Much filth, endless tortuous streets, miserable exteriors, sumptuous palaces, bustling, shabby, but rich bazaars, repulsive smells, and piteous ruins—these make up the

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Damascus of to-day. Outside, the gardens were very charming, but were too well cultivated to afford many wild flowers, or much of interest in natural history, abounding chiefly in Syrian squirrels and woodpeckers. We experienced nothing of the reputed ill manners of the Damascenes towards strangers, our only difficulty being to avoid a surfeit from the apricots and mulberries pressed upon us wherever we went.

In the city we were taken to visit one of the wealthiest houses. After picking our way over heaps of offal, stepping over dead dogs, and kicking aside living ones, through a loathsome dark lane, we turned up a narrow entry, and were admitted at a small door. This led into a crypt-like, vaulted antechamber, through which we passed, and turning round, found ourselves on a sudden in a marble open court, in the centre of which was a fountain, surrounded by exotic trees. All round the court were rooms; and in the centre of each side an open chamber, or large alcove, up two or three steps, with a little marble fountain playing in front, and silk ottomans, work-tables, and easy chairs behind. The roofing of these alcoves and the walls were marvellous in their elaborate workmanship and covering—the whole one mass of carved and gilded arabesque. The flooring was marble, the walls up to the wainscot marble, in elaborate mosaic patterns. Each room had a fountain in its centre, and was furnished with silk ottomans all round, lavishly strewn with brocade and silken cushions. A gallery ran round above, in front of the up-stairs rooms, which were similarly arranged. Such was probably a Jewish house in the palmy days of the monarchy. Yet in all this lavish decoration, this Oriental splendour and luxury, there was nothing to feed or occupy the mind, nothing to assist social intercourse— neither books, nor music, nor paintings—nothing, in fact, beyond good taste and polished barbarism.

Under the guidance of the Consular cavasse we visited

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the great cathedral, in "the street that is called Straight," and several of the mosques. The great mosque, once the Christian cathedral, and yet in earlier ages a heathen temple, is a noble structure, though, of course, without the interest or the splendour of the Mosque of Omar. From the roof of the silversmiths' Bazaar we looked at one magnificent portal, over which still remains engraven the inscription in Greek, "Thy kingdom, O Christ, is an everlasting kingdom, and Thy dominion endureth throughout all generations." There stand the words, unread by the Moslem. We will take them as a silent prophecy that the day is coming when this dark land shall be Christ's once more, and He shall reign for ever and ever. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

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## CHAPTER XXVI.

*Damascus — The Barada (Abana) — The Art of Sitting — The Sahra — Ain Fijeh — Wonderful Fountain — Noble Mountaineers — Bludan — Zebdâny — Surghâya — Baalbec — Moonlight in the Temples — Nocturnal Fox-hunt — The Bukâa (Cœle-Syria) — Ascent of Lebanon — Shrubs on the Lower Slopes — Ainât — Ascent of Jebel Arz — First view of the Cedars — Birds of the Crest and of the Grove — Scripture Allusions to the Cedars — Cedars near Ehden — Vale of the Kadisha — Hazrûn — Cedars of El Hadith — Cedars of the Duweir, of Ain Zahalteh — Traces of the Cedar elsewhere — Abundance of the Cedar in Ancient Times — Jebeil (Gebal) — Shepherds' Camps on the Mountains — Akurah — The Adonis-Afka — Meiruba — Natural Bridge — A Funeral in Lebanon — Descent to the Shore — Our Travels ended.*

FAREWELL, Damascus, mother of cities! a city when Abram was yet in Ur of the Chaldees; pearl of the East; emerald of the desert, with thy gorgeous colourings and reeking dunghills; paradise of perfumes and of stinks; the realisation of all that Arabian dreams have painted; Dives at his table, but Lazarus and the dogs at his gate! We have wandered at will among thy fairy gardens, the air laden with odours, the trees weighted with golden fruits; we have picked our steps amidst offal in the streets, and sauntered through the quaint bazaars. We have emptied our pockets over the silks of the East; and as we stepped from the stall have been upset by a loaded camel from Bagdad into the pannier of a scavenger's ass. We have walked over the marble mosaics of Damascene palaces, where fountains in every room lull to sleep with their gentle murmur, and cool the heats of June; and then we have scrambled among the choking dust of ruined



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heaps, which mark where once was the Christian quarter, and which tell us that the Islam of 1864 is as fanatical and as bloodthirsty as when it swept away the Eastern empire, or when Tamerlane, *el Wahsh*, "the wild beast," made Damascus a heap of blood and ashes. Let politicians talk of improvement, or tell us the Turk will advance with the times. Islam advance! Yes, when "the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid," when "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord," when the demon of a sensuous deism shall be exorcised, and the Cross shall supplant the Crescent.

From Damascus we leisurely directed our steps towards Baalbec, resting over the Sunday at Ain Fijeh. To reach the Baalbec road we made the circuit of the city, delayed long by our collision with a caravan of camels, arriving from Bagdad, laden with Persian silks and Indian rice—a living picture of the commerce and manners of 3,000 or 4,000 years ago. For nearly an hour we wound under the grateful shade of walnut-trees, or gathered melting apricots, plums, or mulberries at pleasure from the overhanging boughs. There was no orchard-robbing in this, —the lanes were strewn with fallen fruit, and apricots were selling at about twopence per peck. In many of the gardens we observed the preparation of "mush-mush." The apricots were collected in large quantities, squeezed in a light press, and then rolled out into long thin strips of gummy paste, which were spread on the ground to dry in the sun. They were then folded, and packed in boxes for exportation to Arabia and Egypt.

Once and again we crossed the Barada by low bridges; and as we beheld its fertilising powers, and recalled the barren sides of Jordan, we could not but sympathise with the natural feeling of Naaman—"Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?" Towards the southern outskirts of the oasis are many open farms, and fields of corn-land, mingling among

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the orchards. Here we saw many of the people *sitting* at their work. But no Moslem will move when he can stand, or stand when he can sit. We observed three men in a farrier's shop, devoting their combined energies to the shoeing of a little mule. One sat under the mule's nose, and held it down with the halter; another sat with its foot turned up in his lap, and a third sat alongside while he fitted and nailed the shoe. Even the masons' labourers must sit on their haunches to fill their panniers with lime; and a little further on, where some new pavement was actually being laid down, all the paviors sat at their work, from the boys lolling on their hams, who passed the stones from the heap, to the two men who sat *vis-à-vis* with a great mallet between them, and in that posture lazily poised it, and let it fall. But the acme of the art of sitting seemed to have been reached by a party of reapers in a wheat-field through which we rode. All in a long row, men and women sat to reap, and jerked themselves forwards or sideways as their work progressed. We watched them for some ten minutes, and during all that time not one of the twenty-five ever found it necessary to rise.

When we had passed the large suburb of Sâlahîyeh, itself a considerable town, in a moment we stepped from an Eden to a desolate wilderness. Not a tree, not a blade of grass, not a dwelling, not a sign of life, relieved the drear monotony of the glaring chalk hills, as they glittered and fretted in the sunlight. At the brow of the hill, under the little wely, we halted, and looked back on that fairy view of Damascus, quivering in the sunbeams, so often described by travellers, and could scarcely tear ourselves away, or turn to the scorching three hours' ride across the Sahra, which lay before us. It was not, however, so desolate of life as might have been expected from its scorched condition in the month of June. Among the brown and scrubby plants, abundance of game—bustard, sand-grouse, and gazelle—beguiled the journey.



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But our last hour's ride made up for all. Every now and then we had had glimpses of the deep green zone in the hollow which marked the life-giving course of the Barada, and now we descended into it, and followed up its side. The little river roared and dashed away, buried from sight in the foliage of a forest of fruit-trees—apricot, fig, and orange—overshadowed, in turn, by long lines of tall poplars and spreading walnuts. Among and under these we wound, sometimes climbing a rocky projection by a winding path, or riding along the bed of an ancient disused aqueduct; then emerging on a bit of velvet turf, where a wider space than ordinary was left between the walls of rock, which rose on one side to the height of 2,000 feet, on the other to over 1,000 feet. Vineyards, straggling, but *never terraced*, climbed high up their sides. Then again we found ourselves under the apricot-trees in the orchards, with cows tethered below them; and the women and children gathering the fruit in the branches, or running to us, and insisting on us tasting all, till we had reason to fear the results of the struggle between politeness and moderation.

A sudden turn brought us to Ain Fijeh, where, under the shade of three noble walnut-trees, we encamped for two days, on a narrow terrace, overhanging the blue stream, close to the fountain. It is the largest spring in Syria, next to the lower fountain of the Jordan, leaping from the mouth of a cave thirty yards above us, where it instantly forms a torrent five feet deep, and thirty feet wide, and, dashing down the glen for a few hundred yards, it forms rather than joins the Barada. Over the caves and round it are the remains of a massive though small temple, of cyclopean stones, anterior to Greek or Roman architecture, and without a name or tradition. What a home for a poet's dream of nymphs! At night the reflections of the blue and white torrent, lit up by the moon, gleamed through the trees; while the sound of the rushing water drowned even the voices in the adjoining tent. We had a bathe in

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a deep pool formed by the reflux of the fountain. As we swam about, we could have seen a needle at the bottom; and the little water-ouzel (*Cinclus aquaticus*, Bechst.), the "dipper" of my Northumbrian boyhood, sat on a stone, vainly essaying to raise his little cheery notes above the din of waters, bobbing time and jerking his tail, as on Cheviot side. What a bird contrast! A few hours before we had shot the African sand-grouse; here we are watching the ouzel of Northumberland!

We strolled the next day up the river-side through a succession of orchards, chiefly of cherry and apricot. Every orchard has its cottage, and each owner accosted us, and pressed us to partake of buttermilk and cherries, while no thought of backshîsh affected their hospitality. They are a noble race, these Lebanon mountaineers; large built, muscular, and very fair, while the women are robust and handsome, dressed in a sort of Swiss costume and bodice, and only to be told from Yorkshire lasses by the large lustrous black eyes of Syria. They are very cleanly, and the children, who merrily crowd round our tents in their red frocks and blue trousers, are bright arch little creatures. Their families are much larger than among the polygamist Bedouin. The woman from whom we bought our milk and eggs brought her knitting, and spent the day in front of the camp, with her baby three weeks old by her side. She told us it was her eleventh, and that not one of her family had ever had a day's illness. She did not look more than thirty-five, and was as sprightly as a girl. Certainly all over the world there is a wonderful superiority in mountain races.

A ride of eight hours brought us to Surghâya, through very varied scenery, mountain glen, rocky bare hills, cultivated and monotonous plain, with great variety of wild flowers, rich garden and orchard slopes, watered valleys, teeming with verdure and fertility, and, in short, everything that mountain landscape could afford, excepting

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forest. We followed up the Barada under the anti-Lebanon range, visiting on the way the Roman ruins of Sûk Wady Barada, the ancient *Abila*, the capital of the tetrarchy of Abilene (Luke iii. 1), with a few inscriptions. We then passed the romantic village of Bludan, which is the fashionable summer retreat of the Damascenes. There are here remains of an old temple of Baal; and the grove of aged oaks on the slope beneath it is still a place held in superstitious veneration by the villagers. The town of Zebdâny stands in the plain below it. Soon we were at Ain Hawar, the highest sources of the Barada, where there seems to have been another Syrian temple; and then, crossing a low ridge, we found ourselves on the water-shed of the Mediterranean, and descended to Surghâya. The whole route has been described by many travellers, but especially by Porter. We met with many interesting birds on the way. The rock sparrow (*Petronia stulta*, Bp.), with its yellow breast, was very common on the open ground, as was also the rare and scarcely known Arabian *Petronia brachydactyla*, Bp., whose nest and eggs we obtained twice during the day. The golden oriole abounded in the cherry-orchards, and the hobby (*Hypotriorchis subbuteo*, L.), and the beautiful Eleonora falcon (*Falco eleonoræ*, Géne.), often swept over the trees. The thickets by the water-side were the home of Cetti's warbler (*Cettia sericia*, Bp.), which would burst forth in a wild refrain for a few seconds, and then drop down unseen among the reeds.

*June* 14*th*.—Five hours and a half brought us from Surghâya to Baalbec, perhaps the *Baal Gad* (Gathering of Baal) of Josh. xi. 17, "in the valley of Lebanon under Mount Hermon," and possibly synonymous with the *Baalath* of 1 Kings ix. 18, though Dr. Robinson has advanced weighty reasons against either, and inclines to its identification with "the plain of Aven" (Amos i. 5) (בִּקְעַת אָוֶן) *Bek'ath* (=*Buka'a*) *Aven*.

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We took neither the shortest nor the most picturesque route. But it was interesting to ride up the course of one of the feeders of the Leontes, by a wild though often bleak glen, and to notice how the change of vegetation registered our increasing elevation. We had long since lost the olive. Now the apricot became scarce, and the apple took its place. The ripe corn and bare stubbles were exchanged for green wheat, and the mulberry became stunted in its growth, cankered, and dying back in the young wood, as it does in the north of England. On inquiring of a peasant, who was pruning the trees, the remedy for this, he told us that it was caused by the early frosts, and that the dead wood must be cut out without wounding the sound bark, or allowing it to bleed.

After crossing a ridge of bare chalky limestones, we reached the little isolated spur on which Baalbec overlooks the long plain of the Buka'a. We passed by the quarry whence the great stones of the temple have been hewn, and where one remains, nearly ready for transport, sixty-eight feet long and about fourteen feet in breadth and depth.

It is beyond my province to give any description of Baalbec, illustrated and exhausted by so many pens, and familiar to every Eastern traveller. Surpassed in size only by Thebes, in beauty by Athens, our first glimpse was, nevertheless, somewhat disappointing. One could not realise the vastness of the ruins without some standard at hand to which to refer. But a nearer view, and a ride round the place, soon changed the first impressions to those of bewildered amazement at the stupendous conception of the Great Temple, which at first absorbs all attention from the other remains. Then, indeed, we felt that we stood under one of the wonders of the world. We rode up the dark-arched vault, decorated with mutilated busts, which runs under the platform of the Great Temple for 150 yards; and then, mounting over prostrate columns,

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found a camping-place in the area under the shadow of those wondrous shafts of the peristyle amidst the wilderness of ruins. Reluctant, indeed, were our muleteers to pitch here, and they almost broke into open rebellion. The Moslem believe these stupendous buildings to have been the work of evil spirits, and that they are haunted. "Who but a devil," asked Hadj Khadour, pointing to one of the great stones in the west wall, sixty-four feet by fourteen feet, "could have planted that rock there"? And certainly the question was hard to answer.

We spent hours in gazing at the varying effects of sunlight, shade, and moonlight, as they alternately gilded, darkened, and again lit up those marvellous pink columns. During the night I turned out more than once to stroll again amongst the ruins, and feast my eyes on those records of a perished race and a perished civilisation, or rather of a perished superstition, for to Baal (or the Sun-God) were those shrines erected. Some prowling pariah dogs started a fox close to me, and round and round they gave chase in full cry for a quarter of an hour, till at last Reynard eluded them among a pile of broken columns at my feet. The owls hooted and the bats flitted overhead. Such were the occupants of the temple of Heliopolis.

The distant firing of musketry also broke the stillness of the night, and we learned afterwards that there had been a battle between the retainers of two rival feudal seigneurs (of whom there are many in this part of Syria, with the habits and lawlessness of mediæval barons), but that no one had been killed, and only three or four wounded. With woe-begone faces our people told us in the morning that they had never closed their eyes. *We* had no difficulty in guessing whether the ghosts or the guns had been the cause of their restlessness.

We had wished to extend our travels to the "entering in of Hamath," the border of the Land of Promise; but time and heat deterred us, and we were content to turn

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our steps direct to the "Cedars." After another morning among the ruins, we crossed the plain of Cœle-Syria, as fertile and as uninteresting as such tracts generally are, and passed once more from the Anti-Lebanon to the Lebanon. A few larks, and a fine white hollyhock (*Althœa acaulis*), the common corn-weed of the district, were the only varieties in the wheaten sea, save one tall Corinthian column, standing solitary in the centre of the plain, without inscription, history, or tradition.

But as soon as, after riding ten miles, we began to ascend the Lebanon, all was changed—the roads and the crops for the worse, everything else for the better. This east side of Lebanon is rather bare; the lower portion was scantily clothed with deciduous oak, for the most part stunted, and with small scrub of juniper and barberry (*Berberis vulgaris*, L.), for the elevation is too great to encourage the fragrant underwood of Carmel and Tabor. Neither of these most abundant shrubs had we found on Hermon.

After surmounting what we may term the lower platform of Lebanon, we crossed a tolerably flat and rather bare plain, well watered, with soft turf in many parts, and the plants chiefly of an English character, though with some very pretty dwarf *astragali* in addition. On the slopes near it numbers of plants new to us, the true Lebanon flora, delighted L., especially a beautiful little Daphne (*Daphne oleoides*, L.), covered with fragrant white blossoms. We obtained many rare birds, among them, for the first time, the Syrian redstart (*Ruticilla semirufa*, H. and E.), not hitherto known in English collections.

We lingered till near sunset, and then rode sharply across the plain, where, on the edge of a deep ravine, with the shoulder of Lebanon rising steeply on the other side, stood the bleak village of Ainât, with its stone-built, low-roofed houses. From the village we descended at once into a charming glen, carefully cultivated, and with clumps

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of fine walnut-trees here and there. Close under the cliff, sheltered by these, was our camp. The little stream at our feet wound southwards, for four miles, till it emptied itself into the Lake Lemone, a mountain tarn without exit, and of which our ride had afforded many pretty peeps. About two hundred yards across the valley began the steep ascent of Jebel Erz, and just in front the stream was dashing down the mountain, and formed a series of little cascades as it bounded from rock to rock.

We saw at once why the village was built on the edge of the bleak plateau, and not in the lovely glen, for the snow has an uninterrupted slide of 2,000 or 3,000 feet, and would soon engulf any buildings in the valley. Yet the walnut-trees flourish under their hybernation, as the extreme heat in summer compensates for the severity of the winter.

The whole village came down in the evening, to sit under the trees and gossip with our camp by moonlight, the young ladies not scrupling to beg tobacco, and to enjoy cigarettes and coffee. The parties who had visited the place during the season were recounted and described by the names of their dragomans (while we sank somewhat in their estimation by travelling without one), and the number of chickens each had consumed was reckoned up,—so great that the village was cleared of all save the most elderly hens, as we found to the cost of our teeth. They made no secret of their liking for the French, and expressed an earnest hope they would come back and occupy the country permanently. We had now entered the Christian district, and never met a Moslem again till we reached Beyrout.

*June 16th.*—The snow had been so far melted by the summer's sun that we were able to ascend by the highest pass, very close to the summit of Lebanon, 10,000 feet high, and descend almost directly upon the cedars. For nearly two hours we wound up the steep mountain-side,

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looking down upon our camping-ground of the last night so perpendicularly that it seemed as if a sudden leap might have sent a horse upon the top of the walnut-trees. We kept Ainât in sight till we reached the summit, and at many a turn had a fine view of Lake Lemone, of the wide plain of Cœle Syria, and of the green and brown spot which marked the site of Baalbec, pushing forward from the distant range of Jebel es Shurky.

The snow we had to cross was hard, compact, and crisp under the horses' feet; and the cool air was most grateful, though afterwards we all suffered from violent headaches and pain in the eyes. The same birds and plants which had delighted us on Hermon were, for the most part, also here, with several scented shrubs and beautiful flowers in addition.

No sooner had we surmounted the pass, than one of those sudden panoramas which only such an elevation could afford burst upon us by surprise. For many miles the Mediterranean coast was stretched from Beyrout northwards. Tripoli, with its little harbour and protruding rocks, formed the centre, and rugged terraces shelved down to the sea for 10,000 feet. In the nearer foreground was a sort of hollow or basin, opening out to the west, the origin of the romantic Kadisha. It was bare and rocky, and its sites were fringed here and there with the rough knolls which marked the deposits of ancient glaciers, the "moraines" of the Lebanon. All was brown and bare, save on one dark spot, where stood a clump of trees, the famous cedar grove. Viewed from above, the effect of that grove is much more remarkable than when, as is generally the case, it is approached from below. Insignificant, perhaps, in itself, it here becomes the one noticeable feature in a landscape otherwise peculiarly bare and monotonous. As we looked down upon the trees, we could just discern beyond them a thread of cultivation, which gradually expands as it descends, and links them,

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standing on "the edge of Lebanon," with man and with civilisation. A few separate trees stood out from the mass, but the general appearance of the grove was of a thick clump, as though it had been a fragment of some ancient forest.

From the top of the pass, it seemed as though in a few minutes we might reach the cedars; but we had to wind for two hours down the rocky slope. The Persian horned-lark, the wheat-ear, and the brown linnet, vied in giving us a musical welcome to their dreary home, as we gathered the Alpine plants on the edge of the melting snow. The grove itself was vocal with life. The cicadæ hissed and grilled in every tree; and many a note, some strange and others familiar, caught our ear from the branches. The chaffinch, which had left the lowlands since the winter, gave forth its home-like chirrup on every tree. Little flocks of the cole-tit (*Parus ater*), and a few of the Russian sombre-tit (*P. lugubris*, Natt.), hopped nimbly up and down the boughs, both of them birds not before obtained in Syria; my new little siskin (*Serinus aurifrons*), in company with the bright Lebanon redstart (*Ruticilla semirufa*, H. and E.), sang blithely on the lower sprays, or sent forth a nuthatch-like note, as it stealthily glided from trunk to trunk.

But the charm of solitude was no longer here, for a rude Maronite chapel has been erected in the centre of the grove, and the priest has collected round him many of the goat-herds of the neighbouring villages, who spend the summer under the rude shelter of the huts. We picketed our horses under one of the ancient patriarchs of the forest, and shook off the priest by a donation of a dollar for his chapel roof, with an exhortation to protect the trees from the wanton damage which is fast destroying them; but the idle loungers were not so easily disposed of, and were determined to be beforehand with us in climbing for cones, vociferously demanded backshîsh for their vexatious efforts.

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Finding us determined to collect for ourselves, they clustered round us, abusing the English and praising the French, till we left the place.

The trees are not too close, nor are they entirely confined to the grove. Though the patriarchs are of enormous girth, they are no higher than the younger trees, many of which reach a circumference of eighteen feet. In the topmost boughs, ravens, hooded crows, kestrels, hobbies, and wood-owls were secreted in abundance; yet so lofty are the trees that the birds were out of reach of ordinary shot, as they took care to keep outside, and could not be seen till we were clear of the trees. But before leaving we added many interesting specimens to our collection. The breeze, as it soughed through the dark boughs, seemed to breathe sounds of solemnity and awe, and to proclaim these to be "the trees of the Lord," "the cedars of Lebanon which He hath planted." In such a spot we could well comprehend that feeling of superstition which seduced the chosen people to erect altars and high places "on every high hill and under every green tree." "The cedar in Lebanon (was) with fair branches, and with a shadow shroud, and of a high stature; the fir-trees were not like his boughs, and the chestnut-trees were not like his branches, nor any tree in the garden of the Lord was like unto him in his beauty." (Ezek. xxxi.)

We had a long ride from the cedars to Hazrûn, whither our convoy had preceded us. For the first hour we hastened down a barren ravine with narrow corn strips in its bottom, till almost abruptly the wondrous cultivation of the Kadisha valley burst upon us near the village of B'sherreh. To the right we made a short *détour* towards the town of Ehden, on the Tripoli road. Just above the fountain of Ehden, towards B'sherreh, stands another clump of ancient cedars, which, though fine old trees, have, from their comparatively smaller size, been neither noticed nor recorded by travellers. They are probably a relic of the

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ancient forests, which may have extended along the edge of the valley.

Turning back just above B'sherreh, we descended a tremendous chasm. The bare amphitheatre of the upper basin contracted into a deep valley of about 2,000 feet, which was rent at its bottom into a cleft 1,000 feet deeper still, down which dashed the Kadisha, buried between these stupendous walls of rock. All above the chasm was terraced, far as the eye could reach, with indefatigable industry. Tiny streamlets bounded and leaped from terrace to terrace, fertilising them as they rushed to join the torrent in the abyss. Some of these waterfalls were of great height, and of considerable volume. From one spot we could count no less than seven of these chains of cascades, now dashing in white spray over a cliff, now lost under the mulberry-trees, soon to reappear over the next shelving rock. The mulberry was the predominant tree, but many an apple and apricot varied the orchards; while, wherever a handful of earth could be scraped together, in shade or sunshine, it nourished its bunch of corn, its stem of maize, or its straggling melon or cucumber plant.

The villages followed each other in rapid succession—no bare compact collection of hovels, like those of the plains, but scattered, straggling houses, peeping from their gardens, and spreading irregularly from the village church, which marked the centre of each little parish. The valley was studded with churches, and little chapels and monasteries, distinguished externally by no architectural ornament, save the open bell-turret, as often in the middle as at either end. The churches of the Lebanon are large oblong buildings, having their flat roofs covered with turf, and with but few windows, always very small, square or round-headed.

Many a hermit chapel was perched in the deepest recesses of the glen below, where the foot of goat could hardly

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climb, yet even there, not a scrap of surface where root could hold or cling was left without its plant.

Hazrûn was but a mile west of B'sherreh, but on the other side; and down a path trying and rugged even for Syria we had to lead our stumbling horses. The descent and the climb on the opposite side occupied two hours, and the bridge, many yards above the stream, was but



HAZRÛN.

two trees thrown across with a little earth and turf spread over them. Nothing could be more lovely than the scenery. All mountain ranges seem to have a type of scenery peculiar to themselves; the Alps, the Pyrenees, the Dovrefjeld, have theirs; nor is that of the Lebanon inferior to others, consisting of a peculiar combination of

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grand precipices with delicate cultivation.* One waterfall in particular arrested our attention, as it dashed down the mountain, and was lost to sight behind a wall of rock 1,000 feet high. At the bottom was a natural archway, through which the stream reappeared to join the Kadisha, having worked its hidden channel behind the frontage of cliff.

Night had fallen ere we reached our tents at Hazrûn, erected in a garden under an ancient walnut-tree, in front of a rustic booth, where the silkworms of our landlord were spread on shallow stages, and tended by his wife and children. Our servants had announced our taste for natural history, and a crowd of urchins were awaiting our arrival, with squirrels, birds, and some score of nests, to give us employment after a day of fourteen hours' exciting travel.

Next morning we sent our mules direct to Akûrah, but determined to make a slight *détour* ourselves in order to visit a district marked by Van de Velde as not examined. We had hardly left Hazrûn when we had to turn our backs on the romantic Kadisha, and climb the bare shoulder of Lebanon, which projects to the S.W., in order to reach El Hadith. As we were riding up the steep we met two men carrying firewood, and L.'s quick eye at once detected some boughs of cedar. We eagerly inquired where they found *arz* (ارز). They pointed to some scattered trees on a bare hill-side between El Hadith and Niha, which they said were all *arz*. On examination, we found they were quite right. The nearer slopes were scattered very

* It is easy for cynical travellers, especially when fact is not allowed stand in the way of smart writing, to depreciate any type of scenery. Thus Hermon has been called "berry brown," which it may be in August, and its height contemptuously contrasted with the Andes, while the slopes of Lebanon are compared with Highgate Rise. The facts of the mountain rising, unlike the Andes, direct from its base; and of the clefts of Lebanon, are, of course, ignored by a writer who wishes to insinuate exaggeration against the inspired writers.

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sparsely with old riven and half-decayed junipers, and a few aged pines (*Pinus halepensis*), while the cedars were all collected on this hill.

An hour afterwards, as we crossed the next ridge and came to one of the feeders of the Duweir, we noticed that the wild gorge to our right was clad from top to bottom with a scattered forest of trees, which, when examined through the glass, appeared too spreading and flat-topped for pines. In spite of Hamoud's angry remonstrance against our wandering we knew not whither, we pushed on for the ravine. It was too elevated as well as too rugged to encourage any attempt at cultivation, even by the mountaineers of the Lebanon, and has remained untouched by man, one of the last refuges of the Syrian bear. The trees were all cedars, grouped in clusters, or scattered in every variety of situation, some clinging to the steep slopes or gnarled and twisted on the bare hill-tops, others sheltered in the recesses of the dell. L. climbed one of the larger trees, and brought down some cones in triumph. The largest trees might be fifteen or eighteen feet in circumference, but none that we saw approached the patriarchs of the grove, either in size or magnificence. Still there was cedar enough here to have rebuilt Solomon's Temple. We have now discovered it in two mountain valleys, growing, too, in every variety of situation.

Nor are the four places I have referred to the only spots where the cedar of Lebanon still lingers. I have good authority for stating that it is also found abundantly scattered about Dûma, a place five hours south-west of Hadith. More interesting still is its existence in a far distant part of the mountains. In one of the glens to the north of Deir el Kamar, the ancient stronghold of the Druses up the course of the Nahr el Baruk, south-east of B'hamdun, near the village of Ain Zahalteh, are many scattered trees and small clumps. Probably a careful search among the



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*western* roots of the Lebanon would result in the discovery of many more relics of the primæval forest.*

Interesting as was our discovery, we cannot lay claim to priority, for some of these trees must have been visited by Hemprich and Ehrenberg, who, so long ago as 1823, mentioned in their report the existence of cedars between Tripoli and Beyrout, but without specifying the exact locality.† Dr. Thomson, too, seems to have been informed of their existence, but erroneously asserts (*Land and Book*, p. 197) that those travellers who speak of them are "simply mistaken in the tree!"

The subject is not without considerable interest in its bearings on the illustration of Scriptural language and imagery. It is quite possible that the Hebrew word אֶרֶז (*erez*) translated "cedar" in our version, and which is

* While the second edition was passing through the press, I have received a most interesting communication from my friend the Rev. H. H. Jessup, of Beyrout, who has, during the autumn of 1865, visited several of these groves, and has added many new localities. Among these is a second locality at Dûma.

In Southern Lebanon he visited the groves east of Ain Zahalteh. One of these, a few years ago, contained about 10,000 trees; but the Vandal of a Sheikh sold them to a native speculator, who cut them down for pitch. Poetic justice, however, reached him, for he lost his whole fortune by the operation. The stumps of the old trees remain, and vigorous young plants are springing up on every side. One stump Mr. J. measured was thirteen feet in diameter.

North-east of this are two small groves on the *east* slope of the Lebanon, overlooking the Buka'a just above El Medeûk.

Above El Barûk and Ma'asir are two other groves, containing many thousand trees, of great size and beauty, more especially those in a fine compact grove above Ma'asir. These trees are rapidly disappearing, being cut down by the fellâhin for firewood.

† From the statement of Dr. Robinson (Researches, iii. 592, 593), it seems probable that the cedar may yet be found in far greater abundance than I have ventured to suggest. Two of the groves which Seetzen heard of, but did not visit, seem to be those discovered by us. The one he visited at Etnûb, with thousands of trees, we did not see, as it was to the north of our route. Dr. Paulding is clearly mistaken in his botany or his topography.

*Note to Second Edition.*—My anticipations, as has been seen above, have been already verified.

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identical with the modern Arabic ارز (*arz*) (or, with the article, *el arz*), may be sometimes used—without the additional "of Lebanon"—to express generally the tribe of fir, or cone-bearing trees (of which the cedar of Lebanon is one); and in one passage (Lev. xiv. 6) it must be so interpreted, for the cedar *of Lebanon* never could have grown in the wilderness of Sinai; still the constant allusions to the cedars *of Lebanon* in the Psalms and the prophets seem to point to the true cedar peculiarly and exclusively. "The cedars of Lebanon which He hath planted"—"The trees of the Lord"—"The cedars of Lebanon that are high and lifted up."—"The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars, yea, the Lord breaketh the cedars of Lebanon."—"The Amorite, whose height was like the height of the cedars."—"The Assyrian was a cedar in Lebanon with fair branches."—"Open thy doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour thy cedars; howl, fir-tree, for the cedar is fallen," where the lesser fir-tree is especially contrasted with the great cedar, as the humble follower bewailing the fall of its mighty chief. And it was the cutting down of these cedars, which Sennacherib is represented as making the special topic of his mighty boast. And though Linnæus had not yet arranged his system of nature, we may be very certain that the wise man, whose botanical knowledge extended downwards from the cedar that was in Lebanon, had clearly noted the difference between the proud cedar, with which the thistle had the monstrous presumption to propose to ally itself (2 Kings xiv. 9), and the ordinary fir-tree, which then existed throughout the whole of Palestine.

The name has been handed down on the spot intact throughout all the changes of language, and the name ارز (*arz*) is never applied by the natives to any tree but the true cedar; while, according to one interpretation (Stanley, *Sinai and Pal.*, 414 d.) by an interesting philological journey, we have derived from the Spaniards, and they



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from the Moors of North Africa, who, in their turn, drew the appellation from their brethren in Syria, the name "larch," a contraction of "el ar'z," which we have almost unconsciously applied to the larch, the tree of all our familiar firs most unlike in appearance, but most closely allied in reality, to the true cedar of Lebanon.*

We cannot, then, study all the passages in the Old Testament, which so refer to the cedar, without feeling certain that in ancient times it was a far more conspicuous feature in the landscape than it is now. It was not merely a few groups, and scattered trees hidden in the most inaccessible recesses, which could have so frequently suggested that glorious and majestic imagery of the prophets. They spoke to men to whom the splendour of those monarchs of the forest was familiar. In the cedars of the famous grove we have living evidence handed down to us that that imagery was no exaggeration. The scattered relics which we have traced on other parts of the mountain are a living evidence that the range of the cedar was wide spread, and, therefore, that illustrations drawn from it were familiar and forcible. Its gradual destruction has been the necessary consequence of the dense population of the Lebanon, the only portion of the vast country of Syria whose population has multiplied, because the only Christian portion. The population has increased most where the soil is poorest, because that part is least exposed to invaders and plunderers, and every scrap of ground that could be rendered available for the growth of the mulberry-tree has been so appropriated, the wealth of these mountaineers depending on silkworms, which they rear for the Damascus market. Again, fuel here is most precious and scarce. Thus every possible cause has operated for the extirpation of the primitive forest; and it is only when above the line of elevation up to which the

* Larch is more generally derived from *Larix*—of Pliny and Vitruvius.

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soil can be profitably cultivated, or when in ravines too steep and poor to tempt agriculture, that the cedar has been able to hand down the living proofs of its ancient empire.

In concluding this notice of Lebanon and its cedars, we may remark that one of the ravines, whose sides we discovered clad with the cedar, is many miles long, and opens upon the sea at the port of Jebeil, the ancient Gebal. The ruins and walls of Gebal attest its great importance in ancient times. Ezekiel speaks of its inhabitants as ship-builders, at least as pre-eminent as caulkers; and from 1 Kings, v. 18, &c. (marginal reading), we learn that they were celebrated as the most renowned artificers, and were employed by Hiram in preparing the materials for the Temple. Probably they cut their cedars from this very valley (which would be far more accessible to them than those on the moraines many miles inland, and on snow-covered heights), and thence launched them at their own port. Perhaps the cedars of that valley beyond El Hadith are seedlings whose ancestors supplied the timber for the building of the House of the Lord at Jerusalem.

The rest of the day was spent in crossing one shoulder of Lebanon after another, often over the snow. The scenery at such an elevation—from 5,000 to 8,000 feet—was bleak and bare, but with grand views of the Mediterranean, and the ports of Tripoli and El Batrûn (*Botrys*) beneath us. Yet on many of the highest ridges there were little depressions carpeted with the freshest and softest mountain herbage, though far above human habitations. Here the shepherds had often contrived for themselves sleeping-places, which were simply a number of oblong circles of stones, inside of which rushes were collected for bedding, according to the Bedouin fashion in the desert. These simple beds were arranged in a circle, and sticks and roots were collected in the centre for a fire; a few pots and pans stood by them, and the shepherds' sheepskins,

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cloaks, and old rugs, were left in their places, under the guardianship of three or four faithful watch-dogs, whose vigilance in this peaceful region was sufficient protection, while their masters wandered during the day with their flocks. We visited several of these camps, and often met the shepherds miles away from their stations. This is their ordinary summer habit, just as the shepherds of Bethlehem kept watch over their flocks by night, away from the town. (Luke ii. 8.)

The sheep seem to have the attachment of a dog to their guardian. We observed a shepherd playing with his flock. He pretended to run away, the sheep ran after him, and surrounded him; then to climb the rocks, the goats pursued him. Finally, all the flocks formed in a circle gamboling round him, the leaders being dignified, as in Switzerland, with little bells.

We camped at Akûrah, a prettily situated mountain village with magnificent walnut-trees, and in a valley abounding with butterflies of all kinds, but the inhabitants of which were insolent and extortionate beyond measure, and have certainly not improved since Burckhardt denounced them for their avarice and inhospitality.

We made a long day from Akûrah to Meiruba over some of the highest spurs of Lebanon. The principal object of interest on the route was the magnificent fountain of Nahr Ibrahim, the ancient *Adonis*, a spot of strange wildness and beauty; a terrific precipice overhanging a maze of wood and water. Just below are the ruins of the temple of Venus, destroyed by Constantine on account of the infamous licentiousness of the place. A fine granite column still remains, though prostrate, and a few yards beyond is the modern village of Afka (*Apheca*). We halted for some time at the temple, gathered a beautiful *Oystopteris*, and then ascended a crest of the mountain, for the last time, as far as the snow line, where we shot a pair of the yellow-billed Alpine chough. Four hours more

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brought us to the Jisr el Hajr, the natural bridge across the Nahr el Leben, a far more symmetrical and artificial-looking freak of nature than the Kûweh, though by no means so useful. Lower down on the other side, at the uninteresting village of Meiruba, buried in stunted mulberry groves, we encamped; glad to look forward to the rest of Sunday, for indeed we needed a sabbath after a week of the hardest work we had gone through since leaving Gilead.

The geology of the Lebanon would require months of study. While the bulk of the mountain and all the higher ranges are, without exception, limestone of the early cretaceous period, the valleys and gorges are filled with formations of every possible variety—sedimentary, metamorphic, and igneous. Down many of them are long streams of trap and basalt, occasionally dykes of porphyry and greenstone, and then patches of sandstone before the limestone and flint recur. The slope down to Meiruba was all soft sandstone; and there was something almost startling in the gritty crunch of the sandstone under the horses' feet, after months of hard greasy, or, at best, powdery limestone. Scarcely less strange was the clinking sound of the trap and porphyry as we crossed the patches.

After our day of rest, we descended by the most difficult of mule paths to the mouth of the Nahr el Kelb. The barren rocks were densely peopled by a quick succession of villages. Before reaching Ajeltûn we overtook a country funeral. From a farm cottage on the hills above, crowds were issuing as we approached. First came about a dozen Maronite priests, chanting. Then the coffin, open at the ends, with the best attire of the deceased on the top. Crowds of men followed in their ordinary costume (funerals here follow too quickly upon death to admit of the preparation of any badge of mourning). They uttered a wailing chant quite irrespective of the chant of the clergy. Each one pressed forward and put his hand, stretched palm

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upwards, under the coffin for a few paces, till relieved by another, as is practised at Irish funerals; and thus the body was borne along, not on the shoulders but on the upraised palms of the bearers. Behind followed a crowd of women. When they reached the church, the bell of which, as well as those of several neighbouring chapels, had been tolling all the time, the bearers paused at the north door, and then rapidly carried the bier three times round the church, which stood in the graveyard, after which they entered, and we saw no more of the ceremony.

The scenery hence, as far as the shore, was very wild. We wound through a wilderness of fantastic limestone rocks, peaked and honeycombed, till, lower down, silk factories, with the tricolour flag from their windows, and the busy hum of machinery within, reminded us how nearly we were approaching Western civilisation. We reached the shore two miles to the north of the mouth of the Dog River; and there, within a few feet of the spray, our tents were pitched for the last time in Syria.

Next morning, June 21st, I mounted early, and, accompanied by Hamoud, my faithful henchman, left my sleeping companions to follow at their leisure, forded the stream, passed the famous tablets of the Pharaohs, of the Assyrian conquerors, and of Napoleon III., and rode rapidly round St. George's Bay. At ten o'clock we dismounted at the door of Constantino's Hotel, in Beyrout; and my wanderings in the Holy Land were ended.

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The primary object of our journey was the investigation of physical and natural history, not, however, to the exclusion of other objects of interest. We passed through the land with our Bibles in our hands—with, I trust, an unbiassed determination to investigate *facts*, and their independent bearing on sacred history. While on matters

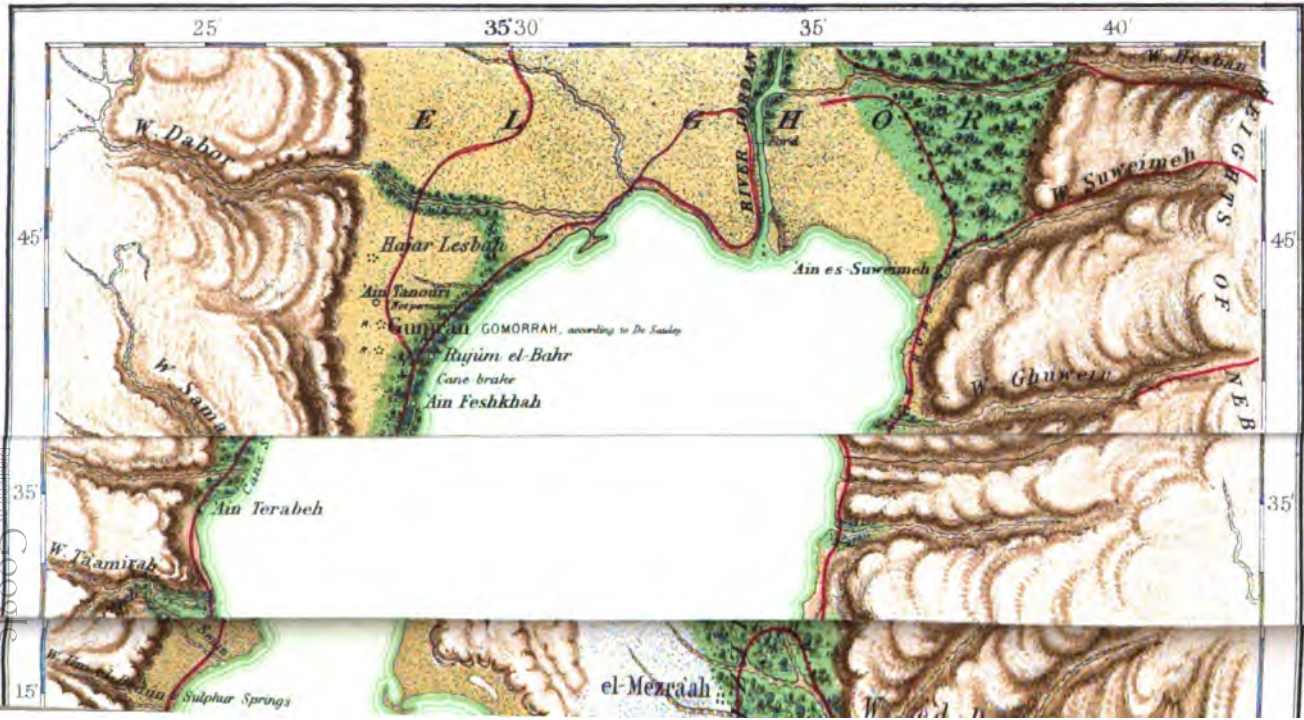
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of science the inspired writers speak in the ordinary language of their times (the only language which could have been understood), I can bear testimony to the minute truth of innumerable incidental allusions in Holy Writ to the facts of nature, of climate, of geographical position, — corroborations of Scripture, which, though trifling in themselves, reach to minute details that prove the writers to have lived when and where they are asserted to have lived; which attest their scrupulous accuracy in recording what they saw and observed around them; and which, therefore, must increase our confidence in their veracity, where we cannot have the like means of testing it. I can find no discrepancies between their geographical or physical statements and the evidence of present facts. I can find no standpoint here for the keenest advocate against the full inspiration of the Scriptural record. The Holy Land not only elucidates but bears witness to the truth of the HOLY BOOK.

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25'
35°30'
35'
40'
45'
35'
15'
W. Dabor
E L G H O R
RIVER JORDAN
W. Hesban
W. Suweimeh
EIGHTS OF NEB
Hajar Lesbah
Ain Tamouri
Ain es Suweimeh
Gumran GOMORRAH, according to De Saulcy
Ruyûm el-Bahr
Cane brake
Ain Feshkhah
W. Ghuweir
W. Sawa
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Ain Sulphur Springs

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