

SINAI AND PALESTINE

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IN CONNECTION WITH THEIR HISTORY

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ADVERTISEMENT

WHAT is personal in this book may be briefly told. In the winter of 1852 and spring of 1853, in the company of three friends (to whose kindness I shall always feel grateful for having enabled me to fulfil this long-cherished design), I visited the well-known scenes of Sacred History in Egypt, Arabia, and Syria. Any detailed description of this journey has been long since rendered superfluous by the ample illustrations of innumerable travellers. But its interest and instruction are so manifold that, even after all which has been seen and said of it, there still remain points of view unexhausted.

Much has been written, and still remains to be written, both on the History and the Geography of the Chosen People ; but there have been comparatively few attempts to illustrate the relation in which each stands to the other. To bring the recollections of my own journey to bear on this question ; to point out how much or how little the Bible gains by being seen, so to speak, through the eyes of the country, or the country by being seen through the eyes of the Bible ; to exhibit the effect of the " Holy Land " on the course of the " Holy History,"—seemed to be a task not hitherto fully accomplished. To point out the limits of this connection will be the object of the following Preface.

As a general rule, it has been my endeavour, on the one hand, to omit no geographical feature which throws any direct light on the History or the Poetry of the Sacred Volume ; and on the other hand, to insert no descriptions except those which have such a purpose, and to dwell on no passages of Scripture except those which are capable of such an illustration. The form of narrative has thus been merged in that of dissertation, following the course of historical and geographical divisions. Whenever I have given extracts from journals or letters, it has been when it seemed necessary to retain the impression not merely of the scene, but of the moment. Only in a few instances, chiefly confined to notes, the main course of the argument has been interrupted in order to describe in greater

detail particular spots which have not been noticed in previous accounts. I have, as much as possible, avoided the controverted points of Sacred Topography, both because they mostly relate to spots which throw no direct light on the History, and also because they depend for their solution on data which are not yet fully before us.

P.S.—Nine years after the journey to the East on which this volume is based, I was enabled to revisit Palestine in attendance on His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales. The tour was necessarily rapid, and was chiefly confined to scenes already familiar; but it furnished me with illustrations, or corrections, of what I had before described; and some spots were seen which I had not been able to visit on the previous journey, and one of which (the Mosque of Hebron) I owe entirely to the privilege accorded to the Prince of Wales. The main topographical results of the journey are incorporated in this edition; though, for the convenience of those who have purchased the earlier editions, I have given the same, in substance, in my "Lectures on the History of the Jewish Church," and in the Appendix to my "Sermons in the East."

In these same nine years the Geography of Palestine has been almost rewritten. Not only have new discoveries been made in every part (with which I have been hardly able to keep pace in the corrections of my successive editions), but the historical and topographical details of the subject have been worked up into a far more complete form than any to which I can lay claim. It is a satisfaction to me to think that this task has fallen to the lot of one to whose friendship I have been so greatly indebted in the present work, and that I may refer my readers, for any shortcomings, to the numerous articles on Sacred Topography in the new "Dictionary of the Bible" signed by the well-known name of George Grove.

DEANERY, WESTMINSTER.
January, 1864.

P R E F A C E

THE CONNECTION OF SACRED HISTORY AND SACRED GEOGRAPHY

THE historical interest of Sacred Geography, though belonging in various degrees to Mesopotamia, Egypt, Asia Minor, Greece, and Italy, is, like the Sacred History itself, concentrated on the Peninsula of Sinai and on Palestine. Even in its natural aspect the topography of these two countries has features which would of themselves rivet our attention ; and on these, as the basis of all further inquiry, and as compared with similar features of other parts of the world, I have dwelt at some length. But to this singular conformation we have to add the fact that it has been the scene of the most important events in the history of mankind ; and not only so, but that the very fact of this local connection has occasioned a reflux of interest, another stage of history, which intermingles itself with the scenes of the older events, thus producing a tissue of local associations unrivalled in its length and complexity. Greece and Italy have geographical charms of a high order. But they have never provoked a crusade ; and, however bitter may have been the disputes of antiquaries about the Acropolis of Athens or the Forum of Rome, they have never, as at Bethlehem and Jerusalem, become matters of religious controversy—grounds for interpreting old prophecies or producing new ones—cases for missions of diplomatists, or for the war of civilised nations.

This interest in Sacred Geography, though in some respects repelled, yet in some respects is invited by the Scriptures themselves. From Genesis to the Apocalypse there are—even when not intending, nay, even when deprecating, any stress on the local associations of the events recorded—constant local allusions, such as are the natural result of a faithful, and, as is often the case in the Biblical narrative, of a contemporary history. There is one document in the Hebrew Scriptures to which probably no parallel exists in the topographical records

of any other ancient nation. In the book of Joshua we have what may without offence be termed the Domesday Book of the conquest of Canaan. Ten chapters of that book are devoted to a description of the country, in which not only are its general features and boundaries carefully laid down, but the names and situations of its towns and villages enumerated with a precision of geographical terms which encourages and almost compels a minute investigation. The numerous allusions in the Prophetical writings supply what in other countries would be furnished by the illustrations of poets and orators. The topographical indications of the New Testament, it is true, are exceedingly slight; and, if it were not for the occurrence of the same names in the Old Testament or Josephus it would often be impossible to identify them. But what the New Testament loses by the rarity of its allusions, it gains in their vividness; and, moreover, its general history is connected with the geography of the scenes on which it was enacted, by a link arising directly from the nature of the Christian religion itself. That activity and practical energy, which is its chief outward characteristic, turns its earliest records into a perpetual narrative of journeyings to and fro, by lake and mountain, over sea and land, that belongs to the history of no other creed.

It is easy in all countries to exaggerate the points of connection between history and geography; and, in the case of Palestine especially, instances of this exaggeration have sometimes led to an undue depreciation of any such auxiliaries to the study of the Sacred History. But there are several landmarks which can be clearly defined.

I. The most important results of an insight into the geographical features of any country are those which elucidate in any degree the general character of the nation to which it has furnished a home. If there be anything in the course of human affairs which brings us near to the "divinity which shapes men's ends, rough-hew them how they will," which indicates something of the prescience of their future course even at its very commencement, it is the sight of that framework in which the national character is inclosed, by which it is modified, beyond which it cannot develop itself. Such a forecast, as every one knows, can be seen in the early growth of the Roman commonwealth, and in the peculiar conformation and climate of Greece. The question which the geographer of the Holy Land, which the historian of the Chosen People has to propose to himself is, Can such a connection be traced between the scenery, the features, the boundaries, the situation, of Sinai and of Palestine on the one hand, and the

history of the Israelites on the other ? It may be that there is much in one part of their history, and little in another ; least of all in its close, more in the middle part, most of all in its early beginnings. But whatever be the true answer, it cannot be indifferent to any one who wishes—whether from the divine or the human, from the theological or the historical point of view—to form a complete estimate of the character of the most remarkable nation which has appeared on the earth. If the grandeur and solitude of Sinai was a fitting preparation for the reception of the Decalogue and for the second birth of an infant nation ; if Palestine, by its central situation, by its separation from the great civilised powers of the Eastern world, and by its contrast of scenery and resources both with the Desert and with the Egyptian and Mesopotamian empires, presents a natural home for the chosen people ; if its local features are such as in any way constitute it the cradle of a faith that was intended to be universal ; its geography is not without interest, in this its most general aspect, both for the philosopher and theologian.

II. Next to the importance of illustrating the general character of a nation from its geographical situation is the importance of ascertaining how far the forms and expressions of its poetry, its philosophy, and its worship have been affected by it. In Greece this was eminently the case. Was it so in Palestine ? It is not enough to answer that the religion of the Jewish people came direct from God, and that the poetry of the Jewish prophets and psalmists was the immediate inspiration of God's Spirit. In the highest sense, indeed, this is most true. But, as every one acknowledges that this religion and this inspiration came through a human medium to men living in those particular 'times' of civilisation, and in those particular 'bounds of habitation,' which God had 'before appointed and determined' for them, we cannot safely dispense with this or with any other means of knowing by what local influences the Divine message was of necessity coloured in its entrance into the world. Again, as there are some who would exaggerate this local influence to the highest, and others who would depreciate it to the lowest degree possible, it is important to ascertain the real facts, whatever they may be, which may determine our judgment in arriving at the proper mean. And lastly, as there was in the later developments of the history of Palestine, in the rabbinical times of the Jewish history, in the monastic and crusading times of the Christian history, an abundant literature and mythology of purely human growth, it becomes a matter of at least a secondary interest to know how far the traditions and

the institutions of those times have been fostered by local considerations.

III. In the two points just noticed, the connection between history and geography, if real, is essential. But this connection must always be more or less matter of opinion, and, for that very reason, is more open to fanciful speculation on the one side, and entire rejection on the other. There is, however, a connection less important, but more generally accessible and appreciable, that, namely, which, without actually causing or influencing, explains the events that have occurred in any particular locality. The most obvious example of this kind of concatenation between place and event is that between a battle and a battle-field, a campaign and the seat of war. No one can thoroughly understand the one without having seen or investigated the other. In some respects this mutual relation of action and locality is less remarkable in the simple warfare of ancient times than in the complicated tactics of modern times. But the course of armies, the use of cavalry and chariots, or of infantry, the sudden panics and successes of battle, are more easily affected by the natural features of a country in earlier than in later ages, and accordingly the conquest of Palestine by Joshua and the numerous battles in the plain of Esdraelon must be as indisputably illustrated by a view of the localities as the fights of Marathon or Thrasymenus. So again the boundaries of the different tribes, and the selection of the various capitals, must either receive considerable light from a consideration of their geographical circumstances, or, if not, a further question must arise why in each case such exceptions should occur to what is else the well-known and general rule which determines such events. It is to the middle history of Palestine and of Israel, the times of the monarchy, where historical incidents of this kind are related in such detail as to present us with their various adjuncts, that this interest especially applies. But perhaps there is no incident of any magnitude, either of the New or Old Testament, to which it is not more or less applicable. Even in those periods and those events which are least associated with any special localities, namely the ministrations and journeys described in the Gospels and in the Acts, it is at least important to know the course of the ancient roads, the situation of the towns and villages, which must have determined the movements there described in one direction or another.

IV. Those who visit or who describe the scenes of Sacred History expressly for the sake of finding confirmations of Scripture are often tempted to mislead themselves and others by involuntary exaggeration or invention. But this danger

ought not to prevent us from thankfully welcoming any such evidences as can truly be found to the faithfulness of the Sacred Records.

One such aid is sometimes sought in the supposed fulfilment of the ancient prophecies by the appearance which some of the sites of Syrian or Arabian cities present to the modern traveller. But as a general rule these attempts are only mischievous to the cause which they intend to uphold. The present aspect of these sites may rather, for the most part, be hailed as a convincing proof that the Spirit of prophecy is not so to be bound down. The continuous existence of Damascus and Sidon, the existing ruins of Ascalon, Petra, and Tyre, showing the revival of those cities long after the extinction of the powers which they once represented, are standing monuments of a most important truth, namely that the warnings delivered by 'holy men of old' were aimed not against stocks and stones, but then, as always, against living souls and sins, whether of men or of nations.

But there is a more satisfactory "evidence" to be derived from a view of the sacred localities which has hardly been enough regarded by those who have written on the subject. Facts, it is said, are stubborn, and geographical facts happily the most stubborn of all. We cannot wrest them to meet our views; but neither can we refuse the conclusions they force upon us. It is by more than a figure of speech that natural scenes are said to have 'witnessed' the events which occurred in their presence. They are 'witnesses' which remain when the testimony of men and books has perished. They can be cross-examined with the alleged facts and narratives. If they cannot tell the whole truth, at any rate, so far as they have any voice at all, they tell nothing but the truth. If a partial advocate on one side or the other has extorted from them a reluctant or an imperfect testimony, they still remain to be examined again and again by each succeeding traveller; correcting, elucidating, developing the successive depositions which they have made from age to age.

It is impossible not to be struck by the constant agreement between the recorded history and the natural geography both of the Old and New Testament. To find a marked correspondence between the scenes of the Sinaitic mountains and the events of the Israelite wanderings is not much perhaps, but it is certainly something towards a proof of the truth of the whole narrative. To meet in the Gospels allusions, transient but yet precise, to the localities of Palestine, inevitably suggests the conclusion of their early origin, in the times when Palestine was still familiar and accessible, when the events

themselves were still recent in the minds of the writers. The detailed harmony between the life of Joshua and the various scenes of his battles is a slight but true indication that we are dealing not with shadows, but with realities of flesh and blood. Such coincidences are not usually found in fables, least of all in fables of Eastern origin.

If it is important to find that the poetical imagery of the prophetic books is not to be measured by the rules of prose, it is not less important to find that the historical books do not require the latitude of poetry. Here and there, hyperbolic expressions may appear ; but, as a general rule, their sobriety is evinced by the actual scenes of Palestine, as clearly as that of Thucydides by the topography of Greece and Sicily. That the writers of the Old and New Testament should have been preserved from the extravagant statements made on these subjects by their Rabbinical countrymen, or even by Josephus, is, at least, a proof of the comparative calmness and elevation of spirit in which the Sacred books were composed. The copyists who, according to Origen, changed the name of "Bethabara" into "Bethania," or "Gergesa" into "Gadara," because they thought only of the names most familiar to their ears, without remembering the actual position of the places, committed (if so be) the error into which the Evangelists were almost sure to have been betrayed had they composed their narratives, in the second century, in some city of Asia Minor or Egypt. The impossible situations in numerous instances selected by the inventors of so-called traditional sanctuaries or scenes, from the fourth century downwards—at Nazareth, at Tabor, on Olivet, at the Jordan—are so many testimonies of the authenticity of the Evangelical narratives, which have in every case avoided the natural snares into which their successors have fallen.

This kind of proof will have a different kind of value in the eyes of different persons. To some, the amount of testimony thus rendered will appear either superfluous or trivial ; to others, the mere attempt to define sacred history by natural localities and phenomena will seem derogatory to their ideal or divine character. But it will, at least, be granted that this evidence is, so far as it goes, incontestable. Wherever a story, a character, an event, a book, is involved in the conditions of a spot or scene still in existence, there is an element of fact which no theory or interpretation can dissolve. "If these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out." This testimony may even be more important when it explains, than when it refuses to explain, the peculiar characteristics of the history. If, for example, the aspect of the ground

should, in any case, indicate that some of the great wonders in the history of the Chosen People were wrought through means which, in modern language, would be called natural, we must remember that such a discovery is, in fact, an indirect proof of the general truth of the narrative. We cannot call from the contemporary world of man any witnesses to the passage of the Red Sea, or to the overthrow of the cities of the plain, or to the passage of the Jordan. So much the more welcome are any witnesses from the world of nature, to testify on the spot to the mode in which the events are described to have occurred; witnesses the more credible because their very existence was unknown to those by whom the occurrences in question were described. Some change may thus be needful in our mode of conceiving the events. But we shall gain more than we shall lose. Their moral and spiritual lessons will remain unaltered: the framework of their outward form will receive the only confirmation of which the circumstances of the case can now admit. The Sacred story would doubtless become more marvellous if it were found to be in direct contradiction to natural features now existing; if Egypt had no river, Sinai no mountains, Palestine no rocks, springs, or earthquakes. But it would be not only less credible, but less consistent with itself, and less fitted for the instruction and guidance of men.

V. Even where there is no real connection, either by way of cause or explanation, between the localities and the events, there remains the charm of more vividly realising the scene; if only that we may be sure that we have left no stone unturned in our approach to what has passed away. Even when, as in the last period of the Sacred History, local associations can hardly be supposed to have exercised any influence over the minds of the actors, or the course of events, it is still an indescribable pleasure to know what was the outline of landscape, what the colour of the hills and fields, what the special objects, far or near, that met the eye of those of whom we read. There is, as one of the profoundest historical students of our day well observes, a satisfaction in treading the soil and breathing the atmosphere of historical persons or events, like that which results from familiarity with their actual language and with their contemporary chronicles. And this pleasure is increased in proportion as the events in question occurred not within perishable or perished buildings, but on the unchanging scenes of nature; on the Sea of Galilee, and Mount Olivet, and at the foot of Gerizim, rather than in the house of Pilate, or the inn of Bethlehem, or the Garden of the Holy Sepulchre, even were the localities now shown as such ever so genuine.

This interest pervades every stage of the Sacred History, from the earliest to the latest times, the earliest perhaps the most, because then the events more frequently occurred in connection with the free and open scenery of the country, which we still have before us. It is also a satisfaction, which extends in some measure beyond the actual localities of events to those which are merely alleged to be such ; a consideration not without importance in a country where so much is shown of doubtful authenticity, yet the object of centuries of veneration. Such spots have become themselves the scenes of a history, though not of that history for which they claim attention ; and to see and understand what it was that has for ages delighted the eyes and moved the souls of thousands of mankind is instructive, though in a different way from that intended by those who selected these sites.

In one respect the sight and description of Eastern countries lends itself more than that of any other country to this use of historical geography. Doubtless there are many alterations, some of considerable importance, in the vegetation, the climate, the general aspect of these countries, since the days of the Old and New Testament. But, on the other hand, it is one of the great charms of Eastern travelling, that the framework of life, of customs, of manners, even of dress and speech, is still substantially the same as it was ages ago. Something, of course, in representing the scenes of the New Testament, must be sought from Roman and Grecian usages now extinct ; but the Bedouin tents are still the faithful reproduction of the outward life of the patriarchs ; the vineyards, the cornfields, the houses, the wells of Syria still retain the outward imagery of the teaching of Christ and the Apostles ; and thus the traveller's mere passing glances at Oriental customs, much more the detailed accounts of Lane and of Burckhardt, contain a mine of Scriptural illustration which it is an unworthy superstition either to despise or to fear.

VI. Finally, there is an interest attaching to sacred geography hard to be expressed in words, but which cannot be altogether overlooked, and is brought home with especial force to the Eastern traveller. It has been well observed that the poetical character of many events in the Sacred History, so far from being an argument against their Divine origin, is a striking proof of that universal Providence by which the religion of the Bible was adapted to suit, not one class of mind only, but many in every age of time. As with the history, so also is it with the geography. Not only has the long course of ages invested the prospects and scenes of the Holy Land with poetical and moral associations, but these scenes accommodate themselves to such

parabolical adaptation with singular facility. Far more closely as in some respects the Greek and Italian geography intertwines itself with the history and religion of the two countries ; yet, when we take the proverbs, the apologues, the types, furnished even by Parnassus and Helicon, the Capitol and the Rubicon, they bear no comparison with the appropriateness of the corresponding figures and phrases borrowed from Arabian and Syrian topography, even irrespectively of the wider diffusion given them by our greater familiarity with the Scriptures. The passage of the Red Sea—the murmurings at the “waters of strife”—“the wilderness” of life—the “Rock of Ages”—Mount Sinai and its terrors—the view from Pisgah—the passage of the Jordan—the rock of Zion, the fountain of Siloa, and the shades of Gehenna—the lake of Gennesareth, with its storms, its waves, and its fishermen,—are well-known instances in which the local features of the Holy Lands have naturally become the household imagery of Christendom.

In fact, the whole journey, as it is usually taken by modern travellers, presents the course of the history in a living parable before us, to which no other journey or pilgrimage can present any parallel. In its successive scenes, as in a mirror, is faithfully reflected the dramatic unity and progress which so remarkably characterises the Sacred History. The primeval world of Egypt is with us, as with the Israelites, the starting-point and the contrast of all that follows. With us, as with them, the Pyramids recede, and the Desert begins, and the wilderness melts into the hills of Palestine, and Jerusalem is the climax of the long ascent, and the consummation of the Gospel History presents itself locally, no less than historically, as the end of the Law and the Prophets. And with us, too, as the glory of Palestine fades away into the ‘common day’ of Asia Minor and the Bosporus, gleams of the Eastern light still continue, first in the Apostolical labours, then, fainter and dimmer, in the beginnings of ecclesiastical history,—Ephesus, Nicæa, Chalcedon, Constantinople ; and the life of European scenery and of Western Christendom completes by its contrast what Egypt and the East had begun. In regular succession at “sundry” and “divers” places, no less than “in sundry times and divers manners,” “God spake in times past to our fathers” ; and the local as well as the historical diversity is necessary to the ideal richness and completeness of the whole.

These are the main points which, in a greater or less degree, are brought out in the following pages. One observation must be made in conclusion. A work of this kind, in which the

local description is severed from the history, must necessarily bear an incoherent and fragmentary aspect. It is the frame without the picture—the skeleton without the flesh—the stage without the drama. The materials of a knowledge of the East are worthily turned to their highest and most fitting use only when employed for a complete representation of the Sacred History as drawn out in its full proportions from the condensed and scattered records of the Scriptures. Without in the least degree overloading the narrative with illustrations which do not belong to it, there is hardly any limit to the legitimate advantage derived by the historical and theological student from even such a transient glimpse of Eastern life and scenery as that which forms the basis of the present volume. It is not so much in express elucidation that this additional power is felt, as in the incidental turn of a sentence—in the appreciation of the contrast between the East and West, of the atmosphere and the character of the people and the country—in the new knowledge of expressions, of images, of tones, and countenances, which in a merely abstract work like this can have no place. So to delineate the outward events of the Old and New Testament, as that they should come home with a new power to those who by long familiarity have almost ceased to regard them as historical truth at all, so to bring out their inward spirit that the more complete realisation of their outward form should not degrade but exalt the faith of which they are the vehicle,—this would indeed be an object worthy of all the labour which travellers and theologians have ever bestowed on the East.

The present work is but a humble contribution towards this great end. It is an attempt to leave on record, however imperfectly, and under necessary disadvantages, some at least of the impressions, whilst still fresh in the memory, which it seemed ungrateful to allow wholly to pass away. Its object will be accomplished if it brings away one with new interest to the threshold of the Divine story, which has many approaches, as it has many mansions; which the more it is explored the more it reveals; which, even when seen in close connection with the local associations from which its spirit holds most aloof, is still capable of imparting to them and of receiving from them a poetry, a life, an instruction, such as has fallen to the lot of no other history in the world.

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INTRODUCTION

EGYPT IN ITS RELATION TO SINAI AND PALESTINE

EGYPT, amongst its many other aspects of interest, has this special claim—that it is the background of the whole history of the Israelites ; the land to which, next after Palestine, their thoughts either by way of contrast or association immediately turned. Even in the New Testament the connection is not wholly severed ; and the Evangelist emphatically plants in the first page of the Gospel History the prophetic text which might well stand as the inscription over the entrance to the Old Dispensation—"Out of Egypt have I called my Son." Doubtless some light must be reflected on the national feelings of Israel by their Mesopotamian origin ; and, when in the second great exile from the Land of Promise they found themselves once more on the shores of the Euphrates, it is possible that their original descent from these regions quickened their interest in their new settlement, and confirmed that attachment to the Babylonian soil which made it in later times the chief seat of Jewish life external to the boundaries of Palestine. But these points of contact with the remote East were too distant from the most stirring and the most brilliant epochs of their history to produce any definite result. Not so Egypt. The first migration of Abraham from Chaldæa is one continued advance southward, till he reaches the valley of the Nile ; and, when he reaches it, he finds there a kingdom which must have been to the wandering tribes of Asia what the Roman empire was to the Celtic and Gothic races when they first crossed the Alps. Egypt is to them the land of plenty, whilst the neighbouring nations starve ; its long strip of garden-land was the Oasis of the primitive world ; through Abraham's eyes we first see the ancient Pharaoh, with palace and harem and princes, and long trains of slaves and beasts of burden, so familiar to the traveller in the sculptured processions and sacred images of Thebes and Ipsambul. What Abraham had begun was yet further carried on by Jacob and Joseph. Whatever may have been the relations of this great Israelite migration to the dynasty of the Shepherd kings,—there can be no doubt that during the period of the settlement in Goshen, Egypt became

"the Holy Land"; the Israelites to all outward appearance became Egyptians; Joseph in his robes of white and royal ring—son-in-law of the High Priest of On—was incorporated into the reigning caste, as truly as any of those whose figures are seen in the Theban tombs. The sepulchres of Machpelah and Shechem received, in the remains of himself and his father, embalmed Egyptian mummies. The shepherds who wandered over the pastures of Goshen were as truly Egyptian Bedouins as those who of old fed their flocks around the Pyramids, or who now, since the period of the Mussulman conquest, have spread through the whole country.

As from that long exile or bondage the Exodus was the great deliverance, so against the Egyptian worship and imagery the history of the Law in Sinai is a perpetual protest, though with occasional resemblances which set off the greater difference. Against the scenery of Egypt all the scenery of the Desert and of Palestine is put in continual contrast, though with occasional allusions which show that their ancient home was not forgotten. To that home, the heart of the people, as at first, so afterwards, was always "turning back." The reign of Solomon, the revival of the Egyptian animal-worship by Jeroboam, the leaning on the "broken reed" of the Nile in the Egyptian alliances of Hezekiah and Jehoiakim, interweave in later times the fortunes of the two nations, which else had parted for ever on the shores of the Red Sea. And in the new Egypt of the Ptolemies arose the second settlement of the Jews in the same land of Goshen, destined to exercise so important an influence on the last and greatest stage of their history by the Alexandrian translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, and by the Alexandrian forms first of Jewish and afterwards of Christian philosophy.

Egypt, therefore, is a fitting, it may almost be called a necessary, prelude to Sinai and Palestine. Even the outward features of those countries, in their historical connection, cannot be properly appreciated without some endeavour to conceive the aspect which the valley of the Nile, with its singular imagery and scenery, offered to the successive generations of Israel. To give such a picture in its full proportions would not be consistent with the object or limits of the present work. But, as no view of the Holy Land can for the reasons above stated be complete without a glance at what may be called its mother country, I have ventured to throw together a few extracts from many letters written on the spot. The fragmentary and prefatory form in which they are presented will best explain their purpose, and excuse their superficial character. They contain no detailed discussions of Egyptian archæology or geography, but are almost entirely confined to such general views of the

leading features of the country, in its river and its monuments,¹ as will render intelligible any subsequent allusions.

1. NILE IN THE DELTA.

The eastern sky was red with the early dawn : we were on the broad waters of the Nile—or rather, its Rosetta branch. The first thing which struck me was its size. Greater than the Rhine, Rhone, or Danube, one perceives what a sea-like stream it must have appeared to Greeks and Italians, who had seen nothing larger than the narrow and precarious torrents of their own mountains and valleys. As the light broke, its colour gradually revealed itself,—brown like the Tiber, only of a darker and richer hue—no strong current, only a slow, vast volume of water, mild and beneficent as his statue in the Vatican, steadily flowing on between its two almost uniform banks, which rise above it much like the banks of a canal, though in some places with terraces or strips of earth marking the successive stages of the flood.

These banks form the horizon on either side, and therefore you can have no notion of the country beyond ; but they are varied by a succession of eastern scenes. Villages of mud rise like ant-hills, with human beings creeping about,—like ants, except in numbers and activity. Mostly they are distinguished by the minaret of a well-built mosque, or the white oven-like dome of a sheykh's tomb ; mostly, also, screened by a grove of palms, sometimes intermixed with feathery tamarisks, and the thick foliage of the carob-tree or the sycamore. Verdure, where it is visible, is light green, but the face of the bank is usually brown. Along the top of the banks move, like scenes in a magic lantern, and as if cut out against the sky, groups of Arabs, with their two or three asses, a camel, or a buffalo.

2. VIEW FROM THE CITADEL OF CAIRO.

The citadel, which stands on a low ridge of rocky hills on the east of the town, commands the whole.

The town is a vast expanse of brown, broken only by occasional interludes of palms and sycamores, and by the countless minarets. About half a dozen larger buildings, mosques or

¹ For the points of contact between Egyptian and Israelite history, the reader is referred to Hengstenberg's "*Egypt and the Books of Moses*"; for the general impression of Egypt on Palestine, to the 18th and 19th chapters of Isaiah, and the 29th, 30th, and 31st of Ezekiel, with the usual commentaries. The only direct illustration of Jewish history contained in the monuments is the procession of Shishak and Ammon with the king of Judah amongst the prisoners, on one of the outer walls of Karnac. It may be worth while to mention that this sculpture, which is incorrectly given by Champollion-Figeac and by Dr. Robinson, is accurately represented, from Rosellini, in Kenrick's *Egypt*, vol. ii. p. 349.

palaces, also emerge. On each side rise shapeless mounds,—those on the east covered with tents, and, dimly seen beyond, the browner line of the Desert ; those on the west, the town of Old Cairo, the site of the Roman fortress of Babylon, and of Fostat, where Amrou first pitched his tent, deserted since the time of Saladin. Beyond is the silver line of the Nile ; and then, rising in three successive groups, above the delicate green plain which sweeps along nearly to the foot of the African hills, the pyramids of Abusir, Sakarah, and Ghizeh, these last being “The Pyramids,” and the nearest. There is something very striking in their total disconnection with Cairo. They stand alone on the edge of that green vale which is Egypt. There is no intermingling, as in ancient and modern Rome. It is as if you looked out on Stonehenge from London, or as if the Colosseum stood far away in the depths of the Campagna. Cairo is not “the ghost of the dead Egyptian Empire,” nor anything like it. Cairo itself leaves a deep feeling that, whatever there was of greatness or wisdom in those remote ages and those gigantic monuments is now the inheritance, not of the East, but of the West. The Nile, as it glides between the tombs of the Pharaohs and the city of the Caliphs, is indeed a boundary between two worlds.

3. HELIOPOLIS.

Through two hours of green fields,—green with corn and clover,—avenues of tamarisk, fig-trees, and acacia ; along causeways raised high above these fields,—that is, above the floods of the summer inundations,—we rode to Heliopolis. At every turn there was the grateful sound of little rills of living water, worked by water-wheels, and falling in gentle murmurs down into these little channels along the roadside, whence they fell off into the fields, or the canals. The sides of these canals were black with the deep soil of the land of Ham. Beyond was the green again, and, close upon that, like the sea breaking upon the shore, or (to compare what is the most like it in England, though on a very small scale) the Cornish sandhills overhanging the brook of Perranzabuloe, rose the yellow hills of the hazy desert.

At the very extremity of this cultivated ground are the ruins of On or Heliopolis. They consist simply of a wide enclosure of earthen mounds, partly planted with gardens. In these gardens are two vestiges of the great Temple of the Sun, the high-priest of which was father-in-law of Joseph, and, in later times, the teacher of Moses.

One is a pool, overhung with willows and aquatic vegetation,—the Spring of the Sun.

The other, now rising wild amidst garden shrubs, the solitary obelisk which stood in front of the temple, then in company with another, whose base alone now remains. This is the first obelisk I have seen standing in its proper place, and there it has stood for nearly four thousand years. It is the oldest known in Egypt, and therefore in the world,—the father of all that have arisen since. It was raised about a century before the coming of Joseph; it has looked down on his marriage with Asenath; it has seen the growth of Moses; it is mentioned by Herodotus; Plato sat under its shadow: of all the obelisks which sprung up around it, it alone has kept its first position. One by one, it has seen its sons and brothers depart to great destinies elsewhere. From these gardens came the obelisks of the Lateran, of the Vatican, and of the Porta del Popolo; and this venerable pillar (for so it looks from a distance) is now almost the only landmark of the great seat of the wisdom of Egypt.

But I must not forget the view from the walls. Putting out of sight the minarets of Cairo in the distance, it was the same that Joseph and Moses had as they looked out towards Memphis,—the sandy desert; the green fields of Egypt; and, already in their time ancient, the Pyramids in the distance. This is the first day that has really given me an impression of their size. In this view, the two great pyramids stand so close together that they form one bifurcated cone; and this cone does, indeed, look like a solitary peak rising over the plain,—like Etna from the sea. On the other side, in the yellow desert, seen through the very stems of the palm-trees, rise three rugged sand-hills, indicating the site of Leontopolis, the City of the Sacred Lions; where in after-times rose the second colony and temple of the Jews under Onias.

One more object I must mention, though of doubtful interest, and thus unlike the certainties that I have just been describing. In a garden immediately outside the walls is an ancient fig-tree, in form not unlike the sacred Ash of the sources of the Danube, its immense gnarled trunk covered with the names of travellers, where Coptic belief and the tradition of the Apocryphal Gospels fix the refuge of Mary and Joseph on the flight into Egypt. There can, of course, be no proof, but it reminds us that for the first time our eyes may have seen the same outline that was seen by our Lord.

4. THE NILE VALLEY.

I am now confined within the valley of the Nile—I may say literally confined. Never in my life have I travelled continuously along a single valley with all the outer world so

completely shut off. Between two limestone ranges, which form part of the tableland of the Arabian and African desert, flows the mighty river, which the Egyptians called Hapi-Mu, "the genius of the waters"; which the Hebrews called sometimes "Ior," from some unknown meaning,—sometimes "Sihor," "the black." Its brown colour, seen from the heights on either side and contrasted with the still browner and blacker colours of all around it, seems as blue and bright as the rivers of the North; hence, some say, the word "Nile," which is the form adopted by the Greeks, and by all the world since.

The two limestone ranges press it at unequal intervals, sometimes leaving a space of a few miles, sometimes of a few yards, sometimes even a large plain. They are truly parts of a table-mountain. Hardly ever is their horizontal line varied; the only change in them is their nearer or less approach to the stream. In this respect the eastern range is a much greater offender than the western; and therefore the great line of Egyptian cities is on the western, not on the eastern shore; and hence Egypt has never, in its political divisions, followed the two shores, but the upper and lower course of the river. On the other hand, the western range, where it does approach, is more formidable, because it comes clothed with the sands of the African desert—sands and sand-drifts, which in purity, in brightness, in firmness, in destructiveness, are the snows and glaciers of the South. Immediately above the brown and blue waters of the broad, calm, lake-like river, rises a thick, black bank of clod or mud, mostly in terraces. Green—unutterably green—mostly at the top of these banks, though sometimes creeping down to the water's edge, lies the Land of Egypt. Green—unbroken, save by the mud villages which here and there lie in the midst of the verdure, like the marks of a soiled foot on a rich carpet; or by the dykes and channels which convey the life-giving waters through the thirsty land. This is the Land of Egypt, and this is the memorial of the yearly flood. Up to those black terraces, over the green fields, the water rises and descends:

"Et viridem Ægyptum nigrâ fecundat arenâ."

And not only when the flood is actually there, but throughout the whole year, is water continually ascending through innumerable wheels worked by naked figures, as the Israelites of old "in the service of the field," and then flowing on in gentle rills through the various allotments. To the seeds of these green fields, to the fishes of the wide river, is attached another natural phenomenon, which I never saw equalled; the numbers numberless, of all manner of birds—vultures,

and cormorants, and geese, flying like constellations through the blue heavens ; pelicans standing in long array on the water-side ; hoopoes and ziczacs, and the (so-called) white ibis, the gentle symbol of the god Osiris in his robes of white ; *ἐν ποσσὶν εἰλύμενοι*—walking under one's very feet.

5. THE TOMBS OF BENI-HASSAN.

High along the eastern shore—sometimes varied by a green strip of palms, sometimes a sheer slope of Desert-sand, broken only by the shadow of a solitary Arab—rises a white wall of limestone rock. In the face of this cliff are thirty holes—the famous tombs of Beni-Hassan, that is, of the children of Hassan, the wild Arab-tribe once settled near the spot. These tombs of Beni-Hassan are amongst the oldest monuments of Egypt, during or before the time of Joseph, yet exhibiting, in the most lively manner, hunting, wrestling, and dancing—and curious as showing how gay and agile these ancient people could be, who in their architecture and graver sculptures appear so solemn and immovable. Except a doubtful figure of Osiris in one, and a mummy on a barge in another, there is nothing of death or judgment or sorrow.

Every one looks here for the famous procession long supposed to be the presentation of Joseph's brethren to Pharaoh. Clearly it cannot be this. Besides the difference of numbers, and of gifts, and of name, there is no presentation to any one. The procession is in one of three compartments ; the two lower show the ordinary droves of oxen and Egyptian servants, all equally relevant or irrelevant to the colossal figure of the owner of the tomb, who stands in the corner towering above the rest, with his dog by his side. Possibly, as the procession is of Asiatics—and yet not prisoners of war—they may, if the date will admit, be a deputation of Israelites after their settlement in Goshen.

6. THE TOMBS AND HERMITS.

The rocky wall still continues on the eastern side, still called by the names of successive Sheykhs or hermits who have lived or died on its desert heights—still perforated by the square holes which indicate ancient tombs. This eastern range is thus the long cemetery, the Appian Way, the Valley of Jehoshaphat, of Egypt. It is, indeed, the Land of the Dead. Israel might well ask, "Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou brought us to die in the wilderness ?" The present use of the tombs also brings before us how those deserted dwellings of the dead made Egypt the natural parent of anchorites and monks. . . .

In one of these caves, close by the water's edge, lived for twelve years Sheykh Hassan, with his wife, two daughters, and his son—a hermit, though according to the Mahometan notions, which permitted him still to have his family about him. Below was a little island which he cultivated for lentils. The two daughters at last married into the village on the opposite shore, which here, as usual, spreads out its green plain for cultivation and habitation; whilst on the white cliffs of the eastern bank the only mark of the fertilising inundation is in the line of brown discoloration immediately above the river—here alone unprofitable, or profitable only to such little portions of soil as the hermit had rescued. He still lived on with his wife and the little boy. One day the child climbed down the rocks to play on the island; a crocodile came and carried him off. "This was four years ago"; and "from that time," said the Arabs, who related the story, "the Sheykh is gone—we have seen him no more—he took everything away; and as soon as he was gone, the river washed away the island," and now nothing is left but the empty cave.

7. COLOSSAL STATUES OF THEBES.

(First Visit.)

No written account has given me an adequate impression of the effect, past and present, of the colossal figures of the Kings. What spires are to a modern city,—what the towers of a cathedral are to its nave and choir,—that the statues of the Pharaohs were to the streets and temples of Thebes. The ground is strewn with their fragments: there were avenues of them towering high above plain and houses. Three of gigantic size still remain. One was the granite statue of Rameses himself, who sat on the right side of the entrance to his palace. By some extraordinary catastrophe, the statue has been thrown down, and the Arabs have scooped their millstones out of his face, but you can still see what he was,—the largest statue in the world. Far and wide that enormous head must have been seen, eyes, mouth, and ears. Far and wide you must have seen his vast hands resting on his elephantine knees. You sit on his breast and look at the Osiride statues which support the portico of the temple, and which anywhere else would put to shame even the statues of the cherubs in St. Peter's—and they seem pigmies before him. His arm is thicker than their whole bodies. The only part of the temple or palace at all in proportion to him must have been the gateway, which rose in pyramidal towers, now broken down, and rolling in a wild ruin down to the plain.

Nothing which now exists in the world can give any notion of

what the effect must have been when he was erect. Nero towering above the Colosseum may have been something like it; but he was of bronze, and Rameses was of solid granite. Nero was standing without any object; Rameses was resting in awful majesty after the conquest of the whole of the then known world. No one who entered that building, whether it were temple or palace, could have thought of anything else but that stupendous being who thus had raised himself up above the whole world of gods and men.

And when from the statue you descend to the palace, the same impression is kept up. It is the earliest instance of the enshrinement in Art of the historical glories of a nation. But everywhere the same colossal proportions are preserved. Everywhere the King is conquering, ruling, worshipping, worshipped. The Palace is the Temple. The King is Priest. He and his horses are ten times the size of the rest of the army. Alike in battle and in worship, he is of the same stature as the gods themselves. Most striking is the familiar gentleness with which—one on each side—they take him by each hand, as one of their own order, and then in the next compartment introduce him to Ammon and the lion-headed goddess. Every distinction, except of degree, between divinity and royalty, is entirely levelled; and the royal majesty is always represented by making the King, not like Saul or Agamemnon, “from the head and shoulders,” but from the foot and ankle upwards, higher than the rest of the people.

It carries one back to the days “when there were giants on the earth.” It shows how the King, in that first monarchy, was the visible God upon earth. The only thing like it that has since been seen is the deification of the Roman emperors. No pure Monotheism could for a moment have been compatible with such an intense exaltation of the conquering King. “I am Pharaoh”; “By the life of Pharaoh”; “Say unto Pharaoh, Whom art thou like in thy greatness?”—all these expressions seem to acquire new life from the sight of this monster statue.

And now let us pass to the two others. They are the only statues remaining of an avenue of eighteen similar, or nearly similar, statues, some of whose remnants lie in the field behind them which led to the palace of Amenophis III., every one of the statues being Amenophis himself, thus giving in multiplication what Rameses gained in solitary elevation. He lived some reigns earlier than Rameses, and the statues are of ruder workmanship and coarser stone. To me they were much more striking close at hand when their human forms were distinctly visible, than at a distance, when they looked only like two towers or landmarks.

The sun was setting ; the African range glowed red behind them ; the green plain was dyed with a deeper green beneath them ; and the shades of evening veiled the vast rents and fissures in their aged frames. As I looked back at them in the sunset, and they rose up in front of the background of the mountain, they seemed, indeed, as if they were part of it,—as if they belonged to some natural creation rather than to any work of art. And yet, as I have said, when anywhere in their neighbourhood the human character is never lost. Their faces are dreadfully mutilated ; indeed, the largest has no face at all, but is from the waist upwards a mass of stones or rocks piled together in the form of a human head and body. Still, especially in that dim light, and from their lofty thrones, they seem to have faces, only of hideous and grinning ugliness.

And now, who was it that strewed the plain with their countless fragments ? Who had power to throw down the Colossus of Rameses ? Who broke the statue of Amenophis from the middle upwards ? From the time of the Roman travellers, who have carved their names in verses innumerable on the foot of Amenophis, there has been but one answer,—Cambyzes. He was, in the traditions of that time, the Cromwell of Egypt. It is possible that Rameses, it is probable that Amenophis, was shattered by earthquakes. But the recollection of Cambyzes shows the feeling he had left while here, as the great Iconoclast. What an effort this implies of fanatical or religious zeal ! What an impression it gives of that Persian hatred of idols, which is described in the Bible, only here carried to excess against these majestic kings : “ Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth.” Well might the idols of Babylon tremble before Cyrus, if such was the fate of the Egyptian Pharaohs before Cambyzes.

8. THEBES, KARNAK, AND THE ROYAL TOMBS.

(Second Visit.)

Alone of the cities of Egypt, the situation of Thebes is as beautiful by nature as by art. The monotony of the two mountain ranges, Libyan and Arabian, for the first time assumes a new and varied character. They each retire from the river, forming a circle round the wide green plain : the western rising into a bolder and more massive barrier, and enclosing the plain at its northern extremity as by a natural bulwark ; the eastern, further withdrawn, but acting the same part to the view of Thebes as the Argolic mountains to the plain of Athens, or the Alban hills to Rome—a varied and bolder chain, rising and falling in almost Grecian outline, though cast in the conical form which marks the hills of Nubia

further south, and which perhaps suggested the Pyramids. Within the circle of those two ranges, thus peculiarly its own, stretches the green plain on each side the river to an unusual extent; and on each side of the river, in this respect unlike Memphis, but like the great city of the further East on the Euphrates,—like the cities of northern Europe on their lesser streams—spread the city of Thebes, with the Nile for its mighty thoroughfare. “Art thou better than No-‘Amon’—that was situated by the ‘rivers of the Nile’—that had the waters round about it—whose rampart was ‘the sealike stream,’ and whose wall was the ‘sealike stream’?”

“Thebes” proper, “Tāba,” the capital—No-Amon (the Hebrew name of Thebes) the sanctuary of Ammon—stood on the eastern plain. This sanctuary, as founded by Osirtasen in the time of Joseph, as restored by the successors of Alexander the Great, still exists, a small granite edifice, with the vestiges of the earliest temple round it. This is the centre of the vast collection of palaces or temples which, from the little Arab village hard by, is called Karnac.

Imagine a long vista of courts, and gateways, and halls—and gateways, and courts, and colonnades, and halls; here and there an obelisk shooting up out of the ruins, and interrupting the opening view of the forest of columns. Imagine yourself mounted on the top of one of these halls or gateways, and looking over the plain around. This mass of ruins, some rolled down in avalanches of stones, others perfect and painted, as when they were first built, is approached on every side by avenues of gateways, as grand as that on which you are yourself standing. East and west, and north and south, these vast approaches are found,—some are shattered, but in every approach some remain; and in some can be traced, besides, the further avenues, still in part remaining, by hundreds together, avenues of ram-headed sphinxes.

Every Egyptian temple has, or ought to have, one of these great gateways formed of two sloping towers, with the high perpendicular front between. But what makes them remarkable at Thebes is their number, and their multiplied concentration on the one point of Karnac. This no doubt is the origin of Homer’s expression “The City of the Hundred Gates”; and in ancient times, even from a distance, they must have been beautiful. For, instead of the brown mass of sandstone which they now present, the great sculptures of the gods and conquering kings which they uniformly present were painted within and without; and in the deep grooves which can still be seen, twofold or fourfold, on each side the portal, with enormous holes for the transverse beams of support, were placed immense red flag-staffs, with Isis-headed standards, red and

blue streamers floating from them. Close before almost every gateway in this vast array were the colossal figures, usually in granite, of the great Rameses, sometimes in white or red marble, of Amenophis and of Thothmes, whose fragments still remain. And close by these were pairs of towering obelisks (for in Egypt they always stood in pairs), which can generally be traced by pedestals on either side, or by the solitary twin, mourning for its brother, either lying broken beside it, or far away in some northern region at Rome, at Paris, or at Petersburg.

I have spoken of the view from the top of the great gateway which overlooks the whole array of avenues. I must speak also of that which from the other end commands the whole series of ruins, each succeeding the other in unbroken succession. It is a view something of the kind of that up the Forum from the Colosseum to the Capitol. You stand in front of a stately gateway, built by the Ptolemies. Immediately in the foreground are two Osiride pillars—their placid faces fixed upon you—a strange and striking contrast to the crash of temple and tower behind. That crash, however, great as it is, has not, like that of the fall of Rome, left mere empty spaces where only imagination can supply what once there was. No—there is not an inch of this Egyptian Forum, so to call it, which is not crowded with fragments, if not buildings, of the past. No Canina is wanted to figure the scene as it once was. You have only to set up again the fallen obelisks which lie at your feet; to conceive the columns as they are still seen in parts, overspreading the whole; to reproduce all the statues, like those which still remain in their august niches; to gaze on the painted walls and pillars of the immense hall, which even now can never be seen without a thrill of awe,—and you have ancient Thebes before you.

And what a series of history it is! In that long defile of ruins every age has borne its part, from Osirtasen I. to the latest Ptolemy, from the time of Joseph to the Christian era; through the whole period of Jewish history, and of the ancient world, the splendour of the earth kept pouring into that space for two thousand years.

This is the result of the eastern bank: on the western bank can be nothing more grand, but there is something more wonderful even than Karnac.

The western barrier of the Theban plain is a mass of high limestone cliffs, with two deep gorges: one running up behind the plain, and into the very heart of the hills, entirely shut in by them; the other running up from the plain, so as to be enclosed within the hills, but having its face open to the city.

The former is the valley of the Tombs of the Kings, the Westminster Abbey of Thebes ; the latter, of the Tombs of the Priests and Princes, its Canterbury Cathedral.

Ascend, therefore, the first of these two gorges. It is the very ideal of desolation. Bare rocks, without a particle of vegetation, overhanging and enclosing, in a still narrower and narrower embrace, a valley as rocky and bare as themselves : no human habitation visible, the stir of the city wholly excluded ; such is, such always must have been, the awful aspect of the resting-place of the Theban kings.

Nothing that has ever been said about them had prepared me for their extraordinary grandeur. You enter a sculptured portal in the face of these wild cliffs, and find yourself in a long and lofty gallery, opening or narrowing, as the case may be, into successive halls and chambers, all of which are covered with white stucco, and this white stucco brilliant with colours fresh as they were thousands of years ago.

Some, of course, are more magnificent than the others ; but of the chief, seven all are of this character. They are, in fact, gorgeous palaces ; hewn out of the rock, and painted with all the decorations that could have been seen in palaces. No modern galleries or halls could be more completely ornamented. But splendid as they would be even as palaces, their interest is enhanced tenfold by being what they are. There lie "all the Kings in glory ; each one in his own house." (Isa. xiv. 18.) Every Egyptian potentate, but especially every Egyptian king, seems to have begun his reign by preparing his sepulchre. It was so in the case of the Pyramids, where each successive layer marked the successive years of the reign. It was so equally in these Theban tombs, where the longer or shorter reign can be traced by the extent of the chambers or the completeness of their finish. In one or two instances, you pass at once from the most brilliant decorations to rough unhewn rock. The King had died, and the grave closed over his imperfect work. At the entrance of each tomb he stands making offerings to the Sun, who, with his hawk's head, wishes him a long life to complete his labours.

Two ideas seem to reign through the various sculptures.

First, the endeavour to reproduce, as far as possible, the life of man, so that the mummy of the dead King, whether in his long sleep, or on his awakening, might still be encompassed by the old familiar objects. Egypt, with all its peculiarities, was to be perpetuated in the depths of the grave ; and truly they have succeeded. This is what makes this valley of Tombs like the galleries of a vast Museum. Not the collections of Pompeii at Naples give more knowledge of Greek or Roman life than these do of Egyptian. The kitchen, the dinners,

the boating, the dancing, the trades, all are there—all fresh from the hands of the painters of the primeval world.

The other idea is that of conducting the King to the world of death.

The further you advance into the tomb, the deeper you become involved in endless processions of jackal-headed gods, and monstrous forms of genii, good and evil ; and the Goddess of Justice, with her single ostrich feather ; and barges, carrying mummies, raised aloft over the sacred lake, and mummies themselves ; and, more than all, everlasting convolutions of serpents in every possible form and attitude ; human-legged, human-headed, crowned, entwining mummies—enwreathing or embraced by processions,—extending down whole galleries, so that meeting the head of the serpent at the top of a staircase, you have to descend to its very end before you reach his tail. At last you arrive at the close of all—the vaulted hall, in the centre of which lies the immense granite sarcophagus, which ought to contain the body of the King. Here the processions above, below, and around, reach their highest pitch—meandering round and round—white and black, and red and blue—legs and arms and wings spreading in enormous forms over the ceiling ; and below lies, as I have said, the coffin itself.

It seems certain that all this gorgeous decoration was, on the burial of the King, immediately closed, and meant to be closed for ever ; so that what we now see was intended never to be seen by any mortal eyes except those of the King himself when he awoke from his slumbers. Not only was the entrance closed, but in some cases—chiefly in that of the great sepulchre of Osirei—the passages were cut in the most devious directions, the approaches to them so walled up as to give the appearance of a termination long before you arrived at the actual chamber, lest by any chance the body of the King might be disturbed. And yet in spite of all these precautions, when these gigantic fortresses have been broken through, in no instance has the mummy been discovered. . . .

Amongst the inscriptions of early travellers is one of peculiar interest. It was the “ torch-bearer of the Eleusinian mysteries,” who records that he visited these tombs “ many years after the divine Plato ”—thanks “ to the gods and to the most pious Emperor Constantine who afforded him this favour.” It is written in the vacant space under the figure of a wicked soul returning from the presence of Osiris in the form of a pig, which probably arrested the attention of the Athenian by reminding him of his own mysteries. Such a confluence of religions—of various religious associations—could hardly be elsewhere found ; a Greek priest philosopher recording his

admiration of the Egyptian worship in the time of Constantine, on the eve of the abolition of both Greek and Egyptian religion by Christianity. . . .

It was on the evening of our last day that we climbed the steep side of that grand and mysterious valley, and from the top of the ridge had the last view of the valley itself, as we looked back upon it, and of the glorious plain of Thebes as we looked forward over it.

No distant prospect of the ruins can ever do them justice ; but it was a noble point from which to see once more the dim masses of stone rising here and there out of the rich green, and to know that *this* was Karnac with its gateways, and *that* Luxor with its long colonnade, and those nearer fragments the Rameseum and Medinet-Habou ; and further, the wide green depression in the soil, once the funeral lake.

Immediately below lay the Valley of Assasif, where in a deep recess under towering crags, like those of Delphi, lay the tombs of the priests and princes. The largest of these, in extent the largest of any, is that of Petumenap, Chief Priest in the reign of Pharaoh Necho. Its winding galleries are covered with hieroglyphics, as if hung with tapestry. The only figures which it contains are those which appear again and again in these priestly tombs, the touching effigies of himself and his wife—the best image that can be carried away of Joseph and Asenath—sitting side by side, their arms affectionately and solemnly entwined round each other's necks. . . . To have seen the Tombs of Thebes is to have seen the Egyptians as they lived and moved before the eyes of Moses—is to have seen the utmost display of funereal grandeur which has ever possessed the human mind. To have seen the Royal Tombs is more than this—it is to have seen the whole religion of Egypt unfolded as it appeared to the greatest powers of Egypt, at the most solemn moments of their lives. And this can be explored only on the spot. Only a very small portion of the mythological pictures of the Tombs of the Kings has ever been represented in engravings. The mythology of Egypt, even now, strange to say, can be studied only in the caverns of the Valley of the Kings.

9. NILE AT SILSILIS.

At Silsilis, the seat of the ancient sandstone quarries, there was a scene which stood alone in the voyage. The two ranges, here of red sandstone, closed in upon the Nile, like the Drachenfels and Rolandseck ; fantastic rockery, deep sand-drifts. tombs and temples hewn out of the stone, the cultivated land literally reduced to a few feet or patches of rush and grass. It

was curious to reflect, that those patches of green were for the time the whole of the Land of Egypt, we ourselves, as we swept by in our boat, the whole living population contained within its eastern and western boundaries. It soon opened again, wide plains appearing on each side.

10. NILE AT THE FIRST CATARACT.

And now the narrow limits of the sandstone range, which had succeeded to our old friends of limestone, and from which were dug the materials of almost all the temples of Egypt, are exchanged at Assouan—the old Syene—for the granite range; the Syenite granite, from which the Nile issues out of the mountains of Nubia.

For the first time a serrated mass of hills ran, not as heretofore along the banks, but across the southern horizon itself. The broad stream of the river, too, was broken up, not as heretofore by flat sandbanks, but by fantastic masses of black porphyry and granite, and by high rocky islands, towering high above the shores; strewn, far into the eastern Desert, far up the course of the Nile itself.

These are the rocks which make, and are made by, the Cataract,—well so called, the rapid which “breaks down” a course for itself through the fragments of granite crags. These, too, furnish the quarries from whence came the great colossal statues of Rameses, and all the obelisks. From this wild and distant region sprang all those familiar forms which we know so well in the squares of Rome. In the quarries which are still visible in the white sands and black crags immediately east of Assouan, one obelisk still remains, hewn out, but never removed from his original birth-place; the latest, as that of Heliopolis, is the earliest born of the race. And not only are these rocks the quarries of the statues, but it is hardly possible to look at their forms and not believe that they suggested the idea. Islands, quarries, crags, along the river-side, all seem either like grotesque colossal figures, sitting with their grim features carved out against the sky, their vast limbs often smoothed by the inundations of successive ages; or else like the same statues broken to shivers, like that we saw at Thebes. One can quite imagine how, in the days when power was will and will was power, Rameses, returning from his Ethiopian conquests, should say, “Here is the stone, hard and glittering, from which my statue shall be hewn, and here is the model after which it shall be fashioned.”

This is the utmost limit of the journey of Herodotus. He had been told a strange story, which he says he could not believe, by the Treasurer at Sais, that at this point of the

river there were two mountains running up into sharp peaks, and called Crophî and Mophî, between which were the sources of the Nile, from which it ran down northwards, on one side, into Egypt, and southwards, on the other, into Ethiopia. He came, he says, to verify it, and observes (doubtless with truth), that by those deep, unfathomable sources which they described they meant the violent eddies of the Cataracts. To an inhabitant of Lower Egypt, the sight or the report of such a convulsion as the rapids make in the face of their calm and majestic river, must have seemed like the very beginning of his existence, the struggling into life of what afterwards became so gentle and beneficent. And if they heard that there was a river Nile further south, it was then natural for them to think that this could not be the same as their own. The granite range of Syene was to them their Alps—the watershed of their world. If there was a stream on the other side, they thought that it must needs flow far away into the Ocean of the South. And these fantastic peaks, not two only, but hundreds, were simplified by them into Crophî and Mophî—the names exactly suit the wild mysterious character of the whole scenery which they represent.

And now it is immediately above the roar of these rapids, but still in the very centre of these colossal rockeries—that you emerge into sight of an island lying in the windings of the river, fringed with palms, and crowned with a long line of temples and colonnades. This is Philæ.

11. PHILÆ.

The name expresses its situation—it is said to be “Pilek,” “the frontier” between Egypt and Ethiopia, and the name seems to have been applied to all the larger islands in this little archipelago. One of these (Biggeh) immediately overhangs Philæ, and is the most remarkable of all the multitude for its fantastic shapes. High from its black top, you overlook what seems an endless crater of these porphyry and granite blocks, many of them carved with ancient figures and hieroglyphics; in the silver lake which they enclose lies Philæ, the only flat island amongst them. Its situation is more curious than beautiful, and the same is true of its temples. As seen from the river or the rocks, their brown sandstone colour, their dead walls, hardly emerge sufficiently from the sand and mud cottages which enclose them round, and the palms are not sufficiently numerous to relieve the bare and mean appearance which the rest of the island presents. As seen from within, however, the glimpses of the river, the rocky knolls, and the feathery tresses of the palm, through the

vista, the massive walls and colonnades, irregular and perverse in all their proportions, but still grand from their size, are in the highest degree peculiar. Foreground, distance, Art and nature, are here quite unique : the rocks and river (of which you might see the like elsewhere) are wholly unlike Egypt, as the square towers, the devious perspective, and the sculptured walls, are wholly unlike anything else except Egypt.

The whole temple is so modern that it no way illustrates, except so far as it copies them, the feelings of the religion of the old Egyptians. The earliest, and the only Egyptian, name that occurs upon it, is Nectanebo, an Egyptian prince, who revolted against the later Persian kings. All the rest are the Grecian Ptolemies, and of these the chief is Ptolemy Physcon, or the Fat, so called because he became so bloated by his luxurious living that he measured six feet round, and who proposed, but in vain, to Cornelia, mother of the Gracchi. But in this very fact of its modern origin there is a peculiar interest. It is the fullest specimen of the restoration of the old Egyptian worship by the Ptolemies, and of an attempt, like ours, in Gothic architecture, to revive a style and form which had belonged to ages far away. The Ptolemies here, as in many other places, were trying "to throw themselves" into Egyptian worship, following in the steps of Alexander "the son of Ammon." In many ways this appears. First, there is much for show without real use. One great side chapel, the finest of the group, is built for the sake of its terrace towards the river. The main entrance to the Temple is, in like manner, no entrance at all. Then there is the want of symmetry which always more or less distinguishes the Egyptian architecture, but is here carried to a ridiculous excess. No perspective is carried consistently through : the sides of the same courts are of different styles : no one gateway is in the same line with another. Lastly there is the curious sight of sculptures contemporary with the finest works of Greek Art, and carved under Grecian kings, as rude and coarse as those under the earliest Pharaohs to be "in keeping" with Egyptian architecture, and to "preserve the ancient type," like the mediæval figures in painted windows and the illegible inscriptions round the arches of some modern English churches. And not only are the forms but the subjects imitated, long after all meaning had passed away, and this not only in the religious figures of Isis and the gods. There is something ludicrously grotesque in colossal bas-reliefs of kings seizing innumerable captives by the hair of their head, as in the ancient sculptures of Rameses—kings who reigned at a time when all conquests had ceased, and who had, perhaps, never stirred out of the palaces and libraries of Alexandria.

The mythological interest of the Temple is its connection with Isis, who is its chief divinity, and accordingly the sculptures of her, of Osiris, and of Horus, are countless. The most remarkable, though in a very obscure room, and on a very small scale, is the one representing the death of Osiris, and then his embalmment, burial, gradual restoration, and enthronement as judge of the dead. But this legend belongs, like the rest of the Temple, to the later, not the ancient stage of Egyptian belief.

12. NILE IN NUBIA.

We are still on the Nile, but it is no longer the Nile of Egypt. The two ranges are wild granite and sandstone hills, which enclose the river so completely, and render the banks so high and steep, that there is no general cultivation. The waters rise to a certain height up the terraced shore, and accordingly here, as to a certain extent in Upper Egypt, you see the springing corn and vegetation to the very edge of the stream. But beyond that the water can only be raised by water-wheels worked by oxen, which accordingly are here ten times as numerous as in Egypt, working by night and day, and—as all the grease in the country is used in plastering the long hair of the unturbaned heads of the Nubians—creaking by night and day, and all along the river, with a sound which in the distance is like the hum of a mosquito. How much that hum tells you of the state of the country if you inquire into all its causes ! The high banks which prevent the floods, the tropical heats which call for the labour of oxen instead of men, the constant need of water, and the wild costume of the people.

Another feature of the country is, that you feel you are now beyond the reach of history. This is Ethiopia, and from this possibly the Egyptian race may have sprung ; and there is no doubt that the great Pharaohs, and afterwards the Cæsars, pushed their conquests over it far south. But it was, after all, a province without any national existence of its own, and accordingly of all the towns and temples we shall pass there is not one of the slightest historical interest—not the villages in the wilds of Australia or America can be less known or less important than these. Their sole interest is, that they assist you in filling up the broken outlines and vacant spaces of Thebes and Memphis ; and the very fact of their remoteness from the course of history conduces to this result, because this remoteness has preserved them, whilst the monuments of the better frequented country below the Cataract have perished. Already we have passed as many temples in one

day as we passed (with the exception of Thebes) during the whole of the rest of our Egyptian voyage. There they stand, broken and of various ages, but massive and striking, on the river-side, taking the place of the tombs of Egypt, and of the castles on the Rhine and Danube.

Further on we see clusters of deep purple hills rising, not in continuous chains, but east and west, and north and south; purple, not of the amethyst of the Apennines, but of a black porphyry hue, that contrasts strangely with the bright green strip which lies at their feet, or else with the drifts of sand, sometimes the grey dust of the Nile alluvium, oftener the yellow sand of the Desert, which now appears far oftener than in Egypt.

You feel here the force of that peculiar attribute of the Nile—his having no tributaries. After having advanced 800 miles up his course, you naturally expect, as in the Rhine, that when you have tracked him up into his mountain-bed, and are approaching, however indefinitely, to his veiled sources, you will find the vast volume of waters shrink. But no—the breadth and strength below was all his own; and throughout that long descent he has not a drop of water but what he brought himself, and therefore you have the strange sight of a majestic river flowing like an arm of the sea in the Highlands, as calm and as broad amongst these wild Nubian hills as in the plain of Egypt.

13. IPSAMBUL (OR ABOU-SIMBIL).

Why the great Temple of Ipsambul should have been fixed at this spot it is hard to say. Perhaps because, after this point, begins the more strictly Desert-part of Nubia, known by the name of the "Belly of Stone"; and thus, for a long way further south, on the western bank (to which all the Nubian temples but two are confined) there are no masses of rock out of which such a monument could be hewn. The great Temple is in the bowels of a hill, obliquely facing eastwards, and separated from the smaller Temple, which immediately overhangs the river, by the avalanche of sand which for centuries had entirely buried the entrance, and now chokes up its greater part.

There are two points which give it an essential and special interest. First, you here get the most distinct conception of the great Ramesses. Sculptures of his life you can see elsewhere. But here alone, as you sit on the deep pure sand, you can look at his features inch by inch, see them not only magnified to tenfold their original size, so that ear and mouth and nose, and every link of his collar, and every line of his skin,

sinks into you with the weight of a mountain ; but these features are repeated exactly the same, three times over—four times they once were, but the upper part of the fourth statue is gone. Kehama, victorious over gods and men, is the image which most nearly answers to these colossal kings : and this multiplication of the same statue—not one Rameses but four—not one Amenophis but eighteen—is exactly Kehama entering the eight gates of Padalon by eight roads at once. Look at them, as they emerge,—the two northern figures, from the sand which reaches up to their throats—the southernmost, as he sits unbroken, and revealed from the top of his royal helmet to the toe of his enormous foot. Look at them, and remember that the face which looks out from the top of that gigantic statue is the face of the greatest man of the Old World that preceded the birth of Greece and Rome—the first conqueror recorded in history—the glory of Egypt—the terror of Africa and Asia—whose monuments still remain in Syria and in Asia Minor—the second founder of Thebes, which must have been to the world then as Rome was in the days of its empire. It is certainly an individual likeness. Three peculiarities I carry away with me, besides that of profound repose and tranquillity, united, perhaps, with something of scorn—first, the length of the face, compared with that of most others that one sees in the sculptures ; secondly, the curl of the tip of the nose ; thirdly, the overlapping and fall of the under lip.

One of the two southern colossal figures, I said, was shattered from the legs upwards ; but the legs are happily preserved, and on them, as on the Amenophis at Thebes, are the scrawls, not of modern travellers—nor even as at Thebes, of Roman pilgrims—but of the very earliest Greek adventurers who penetrated into Africa. Some of them are still visible. The most curious, however, has been again buried in the accumulation of sand. It is the oldest Greek inscription in the world,—by a Greek soldier who came here to pursue some deserters in the last days of the Egyptian monarchy.

And now let us pass to the second great interest of Ipsambul, which is this. Every other great Egyptian temple is more or less in ruins. This, from being hewn out of the rock, is in all its arrangements as perfect now as it was when it was left unfinished by Rameses himself.

You can explore every chamber from end to end, and you know that you have seen them all. The fact of its being a cave, and not a building, may of course have modified the forms. But the general plan must have been the same ; and the massive shapes, the low roofs, the vast surface of dead wall, must have been suggested in the temples of Lower Egypt,

where these features were not necessary, by those in Ethiopia where they were.

The temple is dedicated to Ra or the Sun. This is represented in a large bas-relief over the great entrance between the colossal figures. There is Rameses presenting offerings to the Sun, whom you recognise at once here and elsewhere by his hawk's head. This in itself gives the whole place a double interest. Not only was the Sun the especial deity of the Pharaohs (which means "Children of the Sun"), but he was the god of Heliopolis, and such as we see him here, and such in great measure as his worship was here, such was he and his worship in the great Temple of Heliopolis, now destroyed, from which came the obelisks of Europe, of which Joseph's father-in-law was High Priest, and where Moses must most frequently have seen the Egyptian ceremonies.

Now climb up that ridge of sand, stoop under the lintel of the once gigantic doorway, between which and the sand there is left only an aperture of a few feet, and dive into the dark abyss of the Temple itself. Dark it must always have been, though not so dark as now. All the light that it had came through that one door. First, there is the large hall, with four pillars ranged on each side, colossal figures of Osiris; each figure with the feet swathed, the hands crossed on the breast, the crook and knotted scourge—his universal emblems—clasped in them; the face absolutely passionless; broad, placid, and serene as the full Nile; the highest ideal of repose, both as the likeness of death in the mummy, and as the representative of the final Judgment. From this hall, richly sculptured round with the Homeric glories of Rameses, we pass into another filled with sculptures of gods. We have left the haunts of man and are advancing into the presence of the Divinities. Another corridor, and the Temple narrows yet again, and we are in the innermost sanctuary. . . . In that square rocky chamber, to which we are thus brought by the arms of the mountain closing us in with a closer and ever closer embrace, stood, and still stands, though broken, the original altar. Behind the altar seated against the rocky wall, their hands upon their knees, looking straight out through the door of the sanctuary, through the corridor, through the second hall, and through the first, to the small aperture of daylight and blue sky, as it is now,—to the majestic portal as it was in ancient times,—sate, and still sit, the four great gods of the Temple. There they sate and looked out; and as you stand far back in the Temple, and light up the Adytum by kindling fires once more on that forgotten altar, you can see them still.

On the south side is the Hawkhead of the Sun. Next to him, Rameses himself; next Ammon, the Jupiter of Egypt

—the great god of Thebes—you see his tall cap, or tiara, towering high above the heads of the rest in strong relief against the wall ;—and in the remaining corner, Kneph with the ram's head, the Spirit of the Universe. As the whole Temple has contracted in proportion to its receding inwards, so also have the statues in size. The sculptures of the Adytum on each side represent the processions of the Sacred Boat, floating to its extremity. There is no trace of habitation for the sacred hawk, who, if he were in the Temple, must have been here, sitting at the feet of Ra. So at least it follows from Strabo's clear account, that in the Adytum of every Egyptian temple the sacred animal was kept, whatever it might be, corresponding to the statue of the Greek and Roman sanctuary,—to the no-statue of the Holy of Holies in the Jewish Temple.

The chief thought that strikes one at Ipsambul, and elsewhere, is the rapidity of transition in the Egyptian worship, from the sublime to the ridiculous. The gods alternate between the majesty of antediluvian angels and the grotesqueness of pre-Adamite monsters. By what strange contradiction could the same sculptors and worshippers have conceived the grave and awful forms of Ammon and Osiris, and the ludicrous images of gods in all shapes, “in the heavens and in the earth, and in the waters under the earth,” with heads of hawk, and crocodile, and jackal, and ape ? What must have been the mind and muscles of a nation who could worship, as at Thebes, in the assemblage of hundreds of colossal *Pashts* (the Sacred Cats) ? And, again, how extraordinary the contrast of the serenity and the savageness of the kings ! Rameses, with the placid smile, grasping the shrieking captives by the hair, as the frontispiece of every temple ; and Ammon, with the smile no less placid, giving him the falcion to smite them. The whole impression is that gods and men alike belong to an age and world entirely passed away, when men were slow to move, slow to think, but when they did move or think their work was done with the force and violence of Giants.

One emblem there is of true Monotheism,—a thousand times repeated,—always impressive, and always beautiful,—chiefly on the roof and cornice, like the Cherubim in the Holy of Holies,—the globe, with its wide-spread wings of azure blue, of the all-embracing sky : “Under the shadow of thy wings shall be my refuge.”

14. THE NILE BEFORE THE SECOND CATARACT.

The great peculiarity of this last stage of Nubia is, that whereas in Egypt the Nile flowed through its limestone ranges, in Lower Nubia through its wild mountain-passes, so here, in

Upper Nubia, it flows through an absolute Desert. From the high sandstone rock of Abou-Sir, that last monument of English travellers, you look over a wide expanse of sand, broken only by the sight of the turbid river which dashes below through innumerable islets of what look exactly like black bristling coal. This wide expanse ends, or ended, on the day when I saw it, in clouds of sand, such as overwhelmed the host of Cambyses, and which rose high in the heavens, like a thick November fog, the sun glaring with a sickly orb above, and his rays streaming through the mist below, like the rain of northern regions. Sand is, as I have said before, the snow of these southern regions; it is also its water, for rightly did the Prophet enjoin his followers to use its fine and pure streams for their ablutions when water failed; it is also, as I saw on this day, its mist, its rain, its fog. In the dim distance rose the two isolated mountains on the southern horizon, which mark the way to Dongola. The Second Cataract is, geographically speaking and historically, of but little significance in the Valley of the Nile: it stops the navigation, that is all; the Desert has begun before, and continues afterwards.

One feature of the Nile I must here add to what I have already said. Every one knows that the only mode of communication is the river: but the voyage up the Nile requires and possesses the consent of another power besides that of the stream; namely, the wind. It is a remarkable provision that the north wind which blows for nine months in the year, and especially during the floods when the stream is strongest, acts as a corrective to enable navigation upwards when else it would be impossible. Hence the plausibility of the ancient conjecture that the inundation was caused by the "yearly winds." So fixed, so regular a part of the economy of the river do they form, that it was natural to imagine that they actually prevented the waters of the river from entering the sea. And thus when we look at the boats with their white sails scudding before the breeze along the broad stream, we see how Egypt and Ethiopia might be fitly called "a land shadowing with wings."¹

15. DENDERA.²

Dendera is the only perfect Temple left besides those in Nubia—that is, the only one perfect, not as an excavation from the rock, but as a building. But its interest is like Philæ, not from its antiquity, but its novelty. Its oldest portion was

¹ Isa. xlviii. 1. (Ewald.)

² These three last letters are, for convenience of their contents, arranged not in order of place, but of time.

built by Cleopatra ; its finest part by Tiberius. Here, as at Hermouthis, is yet to be seen that famous form and face. She is here sculptured in colossal proportions, so that the full features are well brought out, and, being like those at Hermouthis, give the impression that it must be a likeness. Immediately before her stands, equally colossal and with the royal crown of Egypt, her son, by Cæsar.

These must be the latest sculptures of the independent sovereigns of Egypt. The interior is filled with the usual ovals for the names of kings—now blank—for before Cleopatra had time to fill them Actium was fought, and Egypt had passed into the hands of Rome, and accordingly the splendid portico is the work of Tiberius. It is in these great porticoes that you trace the real spirit of Roman architecture in Egypt. The interior of the Temple, though very large, is but a tedious and commonplace copy of the most formal plan of an old temple ; but the portico has something of its own, which is only seen here and in the corresponding portico at Esneh, and of which the whole effect, though on a gigantic scale and with curious capitals of human faces, is like that of the colonnade in front of the Pantheon.

10. MEMPHIS.

Memphis was the second capital of Egypt—sometimes the first—and there the Pharaohs lived at the time of the Exodus ; and there, if its monuments had remained, might have been found the traces of the Israelites, which we seek in vain elsewhere. Historically and religiously it ought to be as interesting as Thebes. Yet Thebes still remains quite unrivalled. There was never anything at Memphis like that glorious circle of hills—there is now nothing like those glorious ruins. Still it is a striking place. Imagine a wide green plain, greener than anything else I have seen in Egypt. A vast succession of palm-groves, almost like the Ravenna pine-forest in extent, runs along the river-side, springing in many spots from green turf. Behind these palm-forests—behind the plain—rises the white back of the African range ; and behind that again, "even as the hills stand round about Jerusalem," so stand the Pyramids round about Memphis. These are to Memphis as the Royal tombs to Thebes, that is, the sepulchres of the Kings of Lower, as those of Upper, Egypt. And such as the view now is, such it must have been as far back as history extends. They are not actually as old as the hills, but they are the oldest monuments of Egypt and of the world, and such as we see them in that distant outline, each group rising at successive intervals—Dashur, Sakara, Abou-Sir, and Ghizeh

—such they seemed to Moses, to Joseph, perhaps to Abraham. They are the sepulchres of the kings, and in the sandhills at their feet are the sepulchres of the ordinary inhabitants of Memphis.

For miles you walk through layers of bones and skulls and mummy-swathings, extending from the sand, or deep down in shaft-like mummy pits ; and amongst these mummy-pits are vast galleries filled with mummies of Ibises, in red jars, once filled, but now gradually despoiled. And lastly—only discovered recently—are long galleries hewn in the rock, and opening from time to time—say every fifty yards—into high-arched vaults, under each of which reposes the most magnificent black marble sarcophagus that can be conceived—a chamber rather than a coffin—smooth and sculptured within and without ; grander by far than even the granite sarcophagi of the Theban kings—how much grander than any human sepulchres anywhere else ! And all for the successive corpses of the bull Apis ! These galleries formed part of the great temple of Serapis, in which the Apis mummies were deposited ; and here they lay, not in royal, but in divine state. The walls of the entrances are covered with ex-votos. In one porch there is a painting at full length, black and white, of the Bull himself as he was in life.

One other trace remains of the old Memphis. It had its own great temple, as magnificent as that of Ammon at Karnak, dedicated to the Egyptian Vulcan, Pthah. Of this not a vestige remains. But Herodotus describes that Sesostris, that is Rameses, built a colossal statue of himself in front of the great gateway. And there accordingly—as it is usually seen by travellers, is the last memorial of that wonderful King, to be borne away in their recollections of Egypt. Deep in the forest of palms before described, in a little pool of water left by the inundations, which year by year always cover the spot, lies a gigantic trunk, its back upwards. The name of Rameses is on the belt. The face lies downwards, but is visible in profile and quite perfect, and the very same as at Ipsambul, with the only exception that the features are more feminine and more beautiful, and the peculiar hang of the lip is not there. . . .

17. THE PYRAMIDS.

The approach to the Pyramids is first a rich green plain, and then the Desert ; that is, they are just at the beginning of the Desert, on a ridge, which of itself gives them a lift above the valley of the Nile. It is impossible not to feel a thrill as one finds oneself drawing nearer to the greatest and the most ancient monuments in the world, to see them coming out stone by stone into view, and the dark head of the Sphinx

peering over the lower sandhills. Yet the usual accounts are correct which represent this nearer sight as not impressive—their size diminishes, and the clearness with which you see their several stones strips them of their awful or mysterious character. It is not till you are close under the great Pyramid, and look up at the huge blocks rising above you into the sky, that the consciousness is forced upon you that this is the nearest approach to a mountain that the art of man has produced.

The view from the top has the same vivid contrast of Life and Death which makes all wide views in Egypt striking—the Desert and the green plain: only, the view over the Desert—the African Desert—being much more extensive here than elsewhere, one gathers in better the notion of the wide heaving ocean of sandy billows which hovers on the edge of the Valley of the Nile. The white line of the minarets of Cairo is also a peculiar feature—peculiar, because it is strange to see a modern Egyptian city which is a grace instead of a deformity to the view. You also see the strip of Desert running into the green plain on the east of the Nile, which marks Heliopolis and Goshen. . . .

The strangest feature in the view is the platform on which the Pyramids stand. It completely dispels the involuntary notion that one has formed of the solitary abruptness of the Three Pyramids. Not to speak of the groups, in the distance, of Abou-Sir, Sakara, and Dashur—the whole platform of this greatest of them all is a maze of Pyramids and Tombs. Three little ones stand beside the first, three also beside the third. The second and third are each surrounded by traces of square enclosures, and their eastern faces are approached through enormous masses of ruins as if of some great temple; whilst the first is enclosed on three sides by long rows of massive tombs, on which you look down from the top as on the plats of a stone-garden. You see, in short, that it is the most sacred and frequented part of that vast cemetery which extends all along the Western ridge for twenty miles behind Memphis.

It is only by going round the whole place in detail that the contrast between its present and its ancient state is disclosed. One is inclined to imagine that the Pyramids are immutable, and that such as you see them now such they were always. Of distant views this is true, but taking them near at hand it is more easy, from the existing ruins, to conceive Karnac as it was than it is to conceive the Pyramidal platform as it was. The smooth casing of part of the top of the Second Pyramid, and the magnificent granite blocks which form the lower stages of the third, serve to show what they must have been all, from top to bottom; the first and second, brilliant white or yellow limestone, smooth from top to bottom, instead of

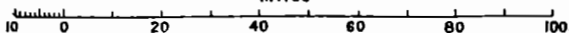
those rude disjointed masses which their stripped sides now present; the third, all glowing with the red granite from the First Cataract. As it is, they have the barbarous look of Stonehenge; but then they must have shone with the polish of an age already rich with civilisation, and that the more remarkable when it is remembered that these granite blocks which furnish the outside of the third, and inside of the first, must have come all the way from the First Cataract. It also seems, from Herodotus and others, that these smooth outsides were covered with sculptures. Then you must build up or uncover the massive tombs, now broken or choked with sand, so as to restore the aspect of vast streets of tombs, like those on the Appian Way, out of which the Great Pyramid would rise like a cathedral above smaller churches. Lastly, you must enclose the two other Pyramids with stone precincts and gigantic gateways, and above all you must restore the Sphinx, as he (for it must never be forgotten that a female Sphinx was almost unknown) was in the days of his glory.

Even now, after all that we have seen of colossal statues, there was something stupendous in the sight of that enormous head—its vast projecting wig, its great ears, its open eyes, the red colour still visible on its cheek, the immense projection of the whole lower part of its face. Yet what must it have been when on its head there was the royal helmet of Egypt; on its chin the royal beard; when the stone pavement, by which men approached the Pyramids, ran up between its paws; when immediately under its breast an altar stood, from which the smoke went up into the gigantic nostrils of that nose, now vanished from the face, never to be conceived again! All this is known with certainty from the remains which actually exist deep under the sand on which you stand, as you look up from a distance into the broken but still expressive features.

And for what purpose was this Sphinx of Sphinxes called into being—as much greater than all other Sphinxes as the Pyramids are greater than all other temples or tombs? If, as is likely, he lay couched at the entrance, now deep in sand, of the vast approach to the second, that is, the Central Pyramid, so as to form an essential part of this immense group; still more, if, as seems possible, there was once intended to be (according to the usual arrangement which never left a solitary Sphinx any more than a solitary obelisk) a brother Sphinx on the northern side, as this on the southern side of the approach, its situation and significance was worthy of its grandeur. And if, further, the Sphinx was the giant representative of Royalty, then it fitly guards the greatest of Royal sepulchres; and, with its half-human, half-animal form, is the best welcome and the best farewell to the history and religion of Egypt.

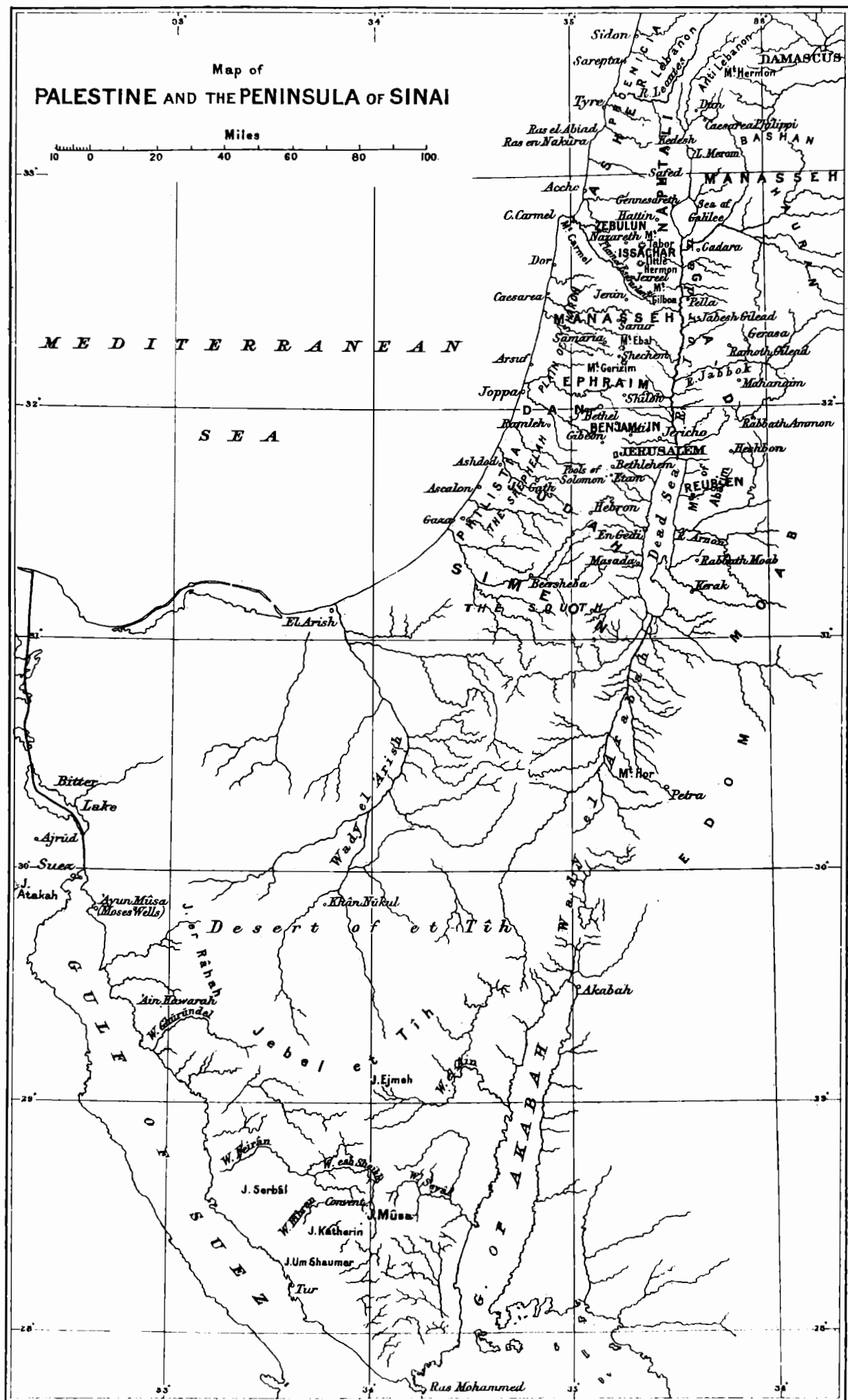
PALESTINE AND THE PENINSULA OF SINAI

Miles



M E D I T E R R A N E A N

S E A



Sinai and Palestine

CHAPTER I

SINAI

PART I

THE PENINSULA OF SINAI

THE Peninsula of Mount Sinai is, geographically and geologically speaking, one of the most remarkable districts on the face of the earth. It combines the three grand features of earthly scenery—the sea, the desert, and the mountains. It occupies also a position central to three countries, distinguished, not merely for their history, but for their geography amongst all other nations of the world—Egypt, Arabia, Palestine. And lastly, it has been the scene of a history as unique as its situation ; by which the fate of the three nations which surround it, and through them the fate of the whole world, has been determined.

It is a just remark of Chevalier Bunsen, that “ Egypt has, properly speaking, no history. History was born on that night when Moses led forth his people from Goshen.” Most fully is this felt as the traveller emerges from the Valley of the Nile, the study of the Egyptian monuments, and finds himself on the broad track of the Desert. In those monuments, magnificent and instructive as they are, he sees great kings, and mighty deeds—the father, the son, and the children,—the sacrifices, the conquests, the coronations. But there is no before and after, no unrolling of a great drama, no beginning, middle, and end of a moral progress, or even of a mournful decline. In the Desert, on the contrary, the moment the green fields of Egypt recede from our view, still more when we reach the Red Sea, the further and further we advance into the

events. But it has, through its two watery boundaries, been encircled with two tides of history, which must not be forgotten in the associations which give it a foremost place in the geography and history of the world; two tides, never flowing together, one falling as the other rose, but imparting to each of the two barren valleys through which they flow a life and activity hardly less than that which has so long animated the Valley of the Nile. The two great lines of Indian traffic have alternately passed up the eastern and the western gulf; and, though unconnected with the greater events of the Peninsula of Sinai, the commerce of Alexandria and the communications of England with India, which now pass down the Gulf of Suez, are not without interest, as giving a lively image of the ancient importance of the twin Gulf of 'Akaba. That gulf, now wholly deserted, was, in the times of the Jewish monarchy, the great thoroughfare of the fleets of Solomon and Jehoshaphat, and the only point in the second period of their history which brought the Israelites into connection with the scenes of the earliest wanderings of their nation.

Such are the western and eastern boundaries of this mountain tract; striking to the eye of the geographer, as the two parallels to that narrow Egyptian land from which the Israelites came forth: important to the historian, as the two links of Europe and Asia with the great ocean of the south—as the two points of contact between the Jewish people and the civilisation of the ancient world. From the summit of Mount St. Catherine, or of Um Shaumer, a wandering Israelite might have seen the beginning and the end of his nation's greatness. On the one side lay the sea through which they had escaped from the bondage of slavery and idolatry—still a mere tribe of the shepherds of the Desert. On the other side lay the sea, up which were afterwards conveyed the treasures of the Indies, to adorn the palace and the temple of the capital of a mighty empire.

2. Of the three geological elements which compose the Peninsula itself, the first and the most extensive is the northern table-land of limestone which is known as the Desert of the "Tih," or the "Wanderings." It is supported and enclosed by long horizontal ranges, which keep this uniform character wherever they are seen. They are the same which, under the name of the Mountains of Râhah, first meet the eye of the traveller approaching Suez from Egypt, as forming the western boundary of the great plateau; the same which, under the name of the Mountains of the Tih, run along its southern border, as seen from Serbâl or St. Catherine; and which, under

the same name, form its eastern border, as seen from Mount Hor. However much the other mountains of the Peninsula vary in form or height, the mountains of the Tih are always alike; always faithful to their tabular outline and blanched desolation. It is this which gives them a natural affinity of appearance with the two long limestone walls which confine the traveller's view down the Valley of the Nile from Cairo to Thebes; and, again, to the unbroken line of mountains which runs along the eastern side of the Jordan, from the Dead Sea to Mount Hermon.¹

One solitary station-house and fort marks this wilderness. It probably derives its name of Nûkhl, the "Palm," from an adjacent palm-grove, now vanished; a miniature in this respect of the midway station for the great Syrian desert—"Tadmor," "Palmyra"—the palm-grove station of Solomon and Zenobia, whence in like manner the palms are now said to have disappeared. It seems to have no peculiar features, beyond the general character of its horizontal hills, and its one wide undulating pebbly plain. If any of the stations of the Israelites mentioned in the Pentateuch were in this portion of the Peninsula, it is useless to seek for them; nor is there apparently any passage or scene in their wanderings which derives any special light from its scenery. Its one interest now is the passage of the Mecca pilgrimage.

3. The plateau of the Tih is succeeded by the sandstone mountains which form the first approach to the higher Sinaitic range, called by the general Arabic name for a high mountain, the "Tûr." One narrow plain or belt of sand, called from that circumstance the "Debbet er-Ramleh," divides the table-land of the north from these mountains of the south; the hills of the "Tih"—the seat of the tribe thence called "Tiyâhah,"—from the hills of the "Tûr," the seat of the tribe thence called "Tawârah." From Serbâl and St. Catherine this yellow line of sand is distinctly visible; and seems to be, as its name implies, the only tract of pure sand which the desert of Sinai presents. The name is of itself sufficient to indicate to the experienced geographer, what the traveller soon learns by observation, that sand is properly speaking the exception and not the rule of the Arabian desert. In the usual route from Cairo to Suez, and from Suez to 'Akaba, it occurs only once in any great quantity or depth: namely, in the hills immediately about Hûderâh, where, it would seem,

¹ The Tih has been traversed and described by Rûppell, Burckhardt, and Bartlett from east to west, and by Robinson from south to north. I did not see it, except from a distance. The passage of the Caravan has been described by Rûppell and Bartlett.

the Debbet er-Ramleh terminates on reaching the sandstone cliffs which here shut off both it and the table-land of the Tih from the Gulf of 'Akaba. There, after traversing the whole Peninsula on hard ground of gravel, pebble, or rock, the traveller again finds himself in the deep sand-drifts which he has not seen since he left them on the western shores of the Nile, enveloping the temples of Ipsambul, and the Serapeum of Memphis. It is important to notice this, partly as a correction of a popular error, partly as an illustration, negative indeed, but not altogether worthless, of the narrative of the Pentateuch. Whatever other sufferings the Israelites may have undergone, the great sand-drifts which the armies of Cambyzes encountered in the desert of Africa are never mentioned, nor could have been mentioned, in their journeyings through the wilderness of Sinai.

4. This brings us to the mountains of the Tûr (as distinct from the Tih), which form, strictly speaking, the mountain-land of the Peninsula. This mass of mountains, rising in their highest points to the height of more than 9,000 feet, forms the southern tower, if one may use the expression, of that long belt or chain of hills, of which the northern bulwark is the double range of Lebanon. It is the southern limit of the history of the Israelites. Their boundaries, in the narrower sense, were Dan and Beersheba; in the wider sense Lebanon and Sinai.

(a) It is with the configuration and aspect of this district that we are now chiefly concerned. The sandy plain which parts it from the table-land of the Tih on the north has been already noticed. A similar plain, though apparently of gravel rather than of sand, under the name of El-Kâ'a,—“the plain,”—runs along its south-western base, generally reaching the shores of the Gulf of Suez, but at times interrupted by a lower line of hills, which form as it were the outposts of the Sinaitic range itself, and contain the two singular mountains known respectively as the mountains of Nâkûs (the Bell), and Mukatteb (the Written). On their north-western side, and on the whole of the eastern side of the Peninsula, the mountains of the Tûr descend so steeply on the shores of the respective gulfs of the Red Sea, that there is little more than the beach left between the precipitous cliffs and the rising tides.

(b) From these shores or plains the traveller ascends into the mountain triangle of which they form the three sides. It is approached for the most part by rugged passes, leading to the higher land above, from which spring the cliffs and mountains themselves. These begin in a gradual, but terminate usually in a very steep, ascent—almost a staircase of rock—

resembling the "Puertas" of the Andalusian table-land; that, for example, of Gaucin, on the way from Gibraltar to Ronda; or the Sapphira, on the way from Malaga to Granada. To these steep and rugged defiles is given the name of "Nūkb," or "'Akaba." It is from one of these—that down which the Egyptian pilgrimage descends, on the eastern branch of the Red Sea—that the gulf and town of 'Akaba derives its name.¹ The others of note are, the Nūkb Badera, which is the chief entrance to the cluster of Serbāl; the Nūkb Hāwy, to the cluster of Sinai; the Nūkb um Rachi, through which the whole range is approached from the "Tih."

(c) The cluster itself consists (speaking in general and popular language) of two formations—sandstone, and granite or porphyry. These two formations, of which it may be said generally that the first constitutes the northern, and the latter the southern division, play an important part, both in its outward aspect and in its history. To these it owes the depth and variety of colour which distinguish it from almost all other mountainous scenery. Sandstone and granite alike lend the strong red hue, which, when it extends further eastward, is, according to some interpretations, connected with the name of "Edom." It was long ago described by Diodorus Siculus as of a bright scarlet, and is represented in legendary pictures as of a brilliant crimson. But viewed even in the soberest light, it gives a richness to the whole mountain landscape which is wholly unknown in the grey and brown suits of our northern hills. Sandstone, moreover, when, as in the Wādy Mūghareh, and on the cliffs which line the shores of the Red Sea, it has become liable to the infirmities of age and the depredations of water, presents us with those still more extraordinary hues, of which the full description must be reserved for the scene of their greatest exemplification in the rocks of Petra. In these formations, too, we trace the connection of the Sinaitic range with the two adjacent countries, and with the historical purposes to which their materials have been turned. The limestone ranges of the Tih, in their abutment on the Valley of the Nile, furnished the quarries of the Pyramids. The soft surface of these sandstone cliffs in the Wādy Mukatteb, offered ready tablets to the writers of the so-called Sinaitic inscriptions and engravings, and to Egyptian sculptors in the Wādy Mūghareh and the valley of Sūrābit el-Khādim, just as the continuation of the same

¹ There is another, 'Akaba es-Shām—"the Pass of the Syrian Pilgrimage"—on the eastern side of the 'Arabah (see Burckhardt's Arabia, ii. 94) which forms the great ascent from the lower level of Arabia to the higher level of Syria.

formation, far away to the south-west, reappears in the consecrated quarries of the gorge of Silsilis, whence were hewn the vast materials for the Temples of Thebes; as the same cliffs, far away to the east, lent themselves to the excavations of the Edomites and Nabatæans at Petra, and of ancient Ammon and Moab in the deep defiles of the Arnon. So, too, the granite mountains, on whose hard blocks were written the Ten Commandments of the Mosaic Law, and whose wild rents and fantastic forms have furnished the basis of so many monastic or Bedouin legends, reappear in Egypt at the First Cataract, in the grotesque rocks that surround the island of Philæ, and in the vast quarries of Syene; and are to be found far off to the east, in Arabia Felix, forming the granite mass of Ohod, the scene of Mahomet's first victory near Medina.

The mountains, thus flanked by the sandstone formations—being themselves the granitic kernel of the whole region—are divided into two, or perhaps three groups, each with a central summit. These are (1) the north-western cluster, which rises above Wâdy Feirân, and of which the most remarkable mountain—being in some respects also the most remarkable in the whole Peninsula—is Mount Serbâl; (2) the eastern and central cluster, of which the highest point is Mount St. Catherine;—and (3) the south-eastern cluster, which forms as it were the outskirts of the central mass, the highest point of which is Um Shaumer, the most elevated summit of the whole range. Of these points Mount St. Catherine, with most of its adjacent peaks, has been ascended by many travellers; Mount Serbâl by a very few, of whom only four have recorded their ascent; Um Shaumer has been ascended by none except Burckhardt, and by him not quite to the summit.

Reserving for the present the more special characteristics of these respective clusters, their general peculiarities may be best given in common. The colours¹ have been already mentioned. Red, with dark green, are the predominant hues; the two are most markedly combined in the long line of Jebel Mûsa, as Pococke, with more than his usual observation, noticed long ago. These colours, especially in the neighbourhood of Serbâl, are diversified by the long streaks of purple which run over there from top to bottom. But it is only in the parts of the sandstone cliffs where the surface has been broken away, as in the caves of the Wâdy Mûghareh, or

¹ The most accurate description of the colours of the Desert is that given by Dr. Olin. (*Travels*, i. 372, 390.) Unfortunately, no published views ever attempt it. The three peaks of red granite which overhang the northern side of the Valley of Chamouni, called from their colour the *Atquilles Rouges*, give some notion of the colour and form of Sinai.

on the shores of the two gulfs, that they present the great variety of colour which reaches its highest pitch at Petra.

Another feature, less peculiar, but still highly characteristic, is the infinite complication of jagged peaks and varied ridges. When seen from a distance, as from the hills between Sinai and 'Akaba, this presents as fine an outline of mountain scenery as can be conceived, but the beauty and distinctness of a nearer view is lost in its multiplied and intricate confusion—the cause no doubt, in part, of the numerous mistakes made by travellers in their notice of the several peaks to be seen from this or that particular point. This is the characteristic described by Sir Frederick Henniker, with a slight exaggeration of expression, when he says that the view from Jebel Mûsa (where this particular aspect is seen to the greatest perfection) is as if “Arabia Petræa were an ocean of lava, which, whilst its waves were running mountains high, had suddenly stood still.”

It is an equally striking, and more accurate expression of the same traveller, when he speaks of the whole range as being “the Alps unclothed.” This—their union of grandeur with desolation—is the point of their scenery absolutely unrivalled. They are the “Alps” of Arabia—but the Alps planted in the Desert, and therefore stripped of all the clothing which goes to make up our notions of Swiss or English mountains; stripped of the variegated drapery of oak, and birch, and pine, and fir, of moss, and grass, and fern; which to landscapes of European hills are almost as essential as the rocks and peaks themselves. Of all the charms of Switzerland, the one which most impresses a traveller recently returned from the East, is the breadth and depth of its verdure. The very name of “Alp” is strictly applied only to the green pasture-lands enclosed by rocks or glaciers;—a sight in the European Alps so common, in these Arabian Alps so wholly unknown. The absence of verdure, it need hardly be said, is due to the absence of water—of those perennial streams which are at once the creation and the life of every other mountain district.

And it is this probably, combined with the peculiarity of the atmosphere, that produces the deep stillness and consequent reverberation of the human voice, which can never be omitted in any enumeration of the characteristics of Mount Sinai. From the highest point of Râs Sûsâfeh to its lower peak, a distance of about sixty feet, the page of a book, distinctly but not loudly read, was perfectly audible; and every remark of the various groups of travellers descending from the heights of the same point rose clearly to those immediately above

them. It was the belief of the Arabs who conducted Niebuhr, that they could make themselves heard across the Gulf of 'Akaba; a belief doubtless exaggerated, yet probably originated or fostered by the great distance to which in those regions the voice can actually be carried. And it is probably from the same cause that so much attention has been excited by the mysterious noises which have from time to time been heard on the summit of Jebel Mûsa, in the neighbourhood of Um Shaumer, and in the mountain of Nâkûs, or the Bell, so called from the legend that the sounds proceed from the bells¹ of a convent enclosed within the mountain. In this last instance the sound is supposed to originate in the rush of sand down the mountain side; sand, here, as elsewhere, playing the same part as the waters or snows of the north. In the case of Jebel Mûsa, where it is said that the monks had originally settled on the highest peak, but were by these strange noises driven down to their present seat in the valley, and in the case of Um Shaumer, where it was described to Burckhardt as like the sound of artillery, the precise cause has never been ascertained. But in all these instances the effect must have been heightened by the deathlike silence of a region where the fall of waters, even the trickling of brooks, is unknown.

This last peculiarity of the Sinai range brings us to another, which has hardly been sufficiently described in the accounts of the Desert—namely, the valleys or “Wâdys.”

(d) It is by a true instinct that the Bedouins, as a general rule, call the mountains not by any distinctive name, but after the valleys or wâdys which surround them. It is necessary to use this Arabic name, because there is no English word which exactly corresponds to the idea expressed by it. A hollow, a valley, a depression—more or less deep or wide or long—worn or washed by the mountain torrents or winter rains for a few months or weeks in the year—such is the general idea of an Arabian “wâdy,” whether in the Desert or in Syria. The Hebrew word (*nachal*), which is as nearly as possible the correlative of the Wâdy of the Arabic, is unfortunately confounded in our translation with a distinct word (*nahar*) under the common version of “river,” though occasionally rendered, with a greater attempt at accuracy, by the name of “brook.”²

¹ I use the word “bell” for the sake of convenience. But “the sound of the church-going bell” is unknown in the East; and the *nâkûs* is really the rude cymbal or sounding-board used in Greek churches.

² The word *wâdy* (spelt by the French *ouadi*) is properly a “hollow between hills, whether dry or moist.” It is said to be derived from *wada*, a verb of a strange signification, but of which apparently the fundamental idea must be to “perforate by water.” *Nachal*, in like manner, is probably from *chahal*, to “perforate.”

For a few weeks or days in the winter these valleys present, it is said, the appearance of rushing streams. A graphic description is given of this sudden conversion of the dry bed of the Wâdy Mûsa into a thundering mountain torrent, in Miss Martineau's account of Petra. Another such is recorded by Wellsted near Tûr. The Wâdy Shellâl (the Valley of the Cataracts) both in its name and aspect bears every trace of its wintry cascades. But their usual aspect is absolutely bare and waste ; only presenting the image of thirsty desolation the more strikingly, from the constant indications of water which is no longer there. But so essentially are they, in other respects, the rivers of the Desert, and so entirely are they the only likeness to rivers which an Arab could conceive, that in Spain we find the name reproduced by the Arab conquerors of Andalusia : sometimes indeed fitly enough, as applied to the countless water-courses of southern Spain, only filled like the valleys of Arabia by a sudden descent of showers, or melting of snow ; but sometimes to mighty rivers, to which the torrents of the Desert could furnish only the most general parallel. Few who pass to and fro along the majestic river between Cadiz and Seville, remember that its name is a recollection of the Desert far away ; the Arab could find no other appellation for the Bætis than that of "The Great Wâdy"—Guad-al-Khebir.¹

To these waterless rivers the Desert owes its boundaries, its form, its means of communication, as truly as the countries or districts of Europe owe theirs to the living streams which divide range from range, and nation from nation. Sometimes, as in the Wâdy Taiyibeh and the Wâdy Seyâl, a broad and winding track ; sometimes, as in the Wâdy Mûsa, closed between overarching cliffs ; sometimes, as in the Wâdy es Sheykh, leaving a vast margin on each side, such as in a

¹ A still more remarkable instance of this violent adaptation of the scanty nomenclature of the Desert to the varied features of European scenery has been pointed out by M. Engelhardt, in his learned work on the valleys of Monte Rosa. It appears that in the ninth and tenth centuries the valley of Saas was occupied by a band of Saracens ; and M. Engelhardt ingeniously, though in one or two instances fancifully, derives the existing names of the localities in that valley from these strange occupants. Amongst these are the *Monte Moro*—the Pass of the Moors—the two villages or stations of *Almagal*, and the mountain of *Mischebel* ; of which the former, by the likeness of its first syllable to the Arabian article *al*, the latter of its termination to the word *jebel*, certainly confirm the hypothesis. But the most curious and the most probable is the name of the huge glacier through which rushes the wild torrent of the Visp. Hardly two objects less like can be conceived than that mass of ice, with its lake reflecting the glaciers in the tranquil water, and the abundant stream gushing from its bosom, on the one hand ; and on the other hand, the scanty rivulet or pool in the hot rocky bed of the Desert, fringed with palm or acacia. But this was the only image which the Arabs had of a source or spring of a river. And "Al-al-'Ain," accordingly, is the present name of the glacier of their Alpine valley.

happier soil and climate would afford pasturage for a thousand cattle ; sometimes, as in the Wâdy Sidri, expanding into a level space, where, in Switzerland and Westmoreland, the surrounding precipices would descend, not as there on a waste of sand or gravel, but on a bright lake ; they yet all have this in common, that they are the high roads of the Desert : the stations, the tribes, the mountains, are as truly along their banks, and distinguished by their courses, as if they were rivers or railroads. By observing their peculiarities, their points of junction, and their general direction, any one who had once traversed the route from Cairo to Petra, would probably find his way back without any great risk or difficulty. And, as in western countries, amongst a variety of lesser streams there is generally one commanding river which absorbs all the rest, and serves as the main line of communication for the whole region, so it is with the wâdys of the Desert. Um Shaumer, St. Catherine, and Serbâl, are not more decisively the dominant summits of the Sinaitic mountains, than is the Wâdy es-Sheykh—the “valley of the saint”—the queen of the Sinaitic rivers. The immense curve by which it connects the two great clusters of the Peninsula is as clear in reality as on the map.

Thus the general character of the wâdys, as well as of the mountains of Sinai, is entire desolation. If the mountains are naked Alps, the valleys are dry rivers. But there are exceptions in both instances. There is nearly everywhere a thin, it might almost be said a transparent coating of vegetation. There are occasional spots of verdure, which escape notice in a general view, but for that very reason are the more remarkable when observed. It is said that travellers, on arriving at Lisbon from Madrid, after crossing the bare tableland of Central Spain, are asked, “Do you remember that tree you passed on the road ?” The same feeling is more strongly experienced in the passage of the Desert. Not perhaps every single tree, but every group of trees, lives in the traveller’s recollection as distinctly as the towns and spires of civilised countries. Accordingly, both the valleys, and (where they are not named directly from the valleys) the mountains also are usually named from the slight vegetation by which they are distinguished from each other. The highest peak of the whole range is known by no other name than the trivial appellation of Um Shaumer,—“the mother of fennel,” doubtless from the fennel which Burckhardt describes as characteristic of the Peninsula. The Râs Sûfsâfeh, which represents, according to Dr. Robinson’s view, the Horeb of Moses, is the “willow-head,” from the group of two or three willows which grow in

the Wâdy Süfsâfeh, in its recesses. Serbâl is possibly so called from the *ser*, or myrrh, which creeps over its ledges up to the very summit. And (judging by this analogy) the most probable origin even of the ancient "Sinai" is the *seneh* or acacia, with which, as we know, it then abounded. The Wâdy Abû-Hamad—the "father of fig-trees"—is from the old fig-tree in its deep clefts; the Wâdy Sidri from its bushes of wild thorn; the Wâdy Seyâl from the acacia; the Wâdy Taiyibeh, from the "goodly" water and vegetation it contains.

The more definitely marked spots of verdure, however, are the accompaniments not of the empty beds of winter torrents, but of the few living, perhaps perennial springs, which by the mere fact of their rarity assume an importance difficult to be understood in the moist scenery of the West and North. These springs, whose sources are for the most part high up in the mountain clefts, occasionally send down into the wâdys rills of water, which however scanty—however little deserving of the name even of brooks¹—yet become immediately the nucleus of whatever vegetation the desert produces. Often their course can be traced, not by visible water, but a track of moss here, a fringe of rushes there, a solitary palm, a group of acacias—which at once denote that an unseen life is at work. Wherever these springs are to be found, there, we cannot doubt, must always have been the resort of the wanderers in the Desert; and they occur at such frequent intervals, that, after leaving Suez, there is at least one such spot in each successive day's journey. In two of the great wâdys which lead from the first beginnings of the Sinai range to the Gulf of Suez—Ghüründel, and Useit with its continuation of the Wâdy Taiyibeh—such tracts of vegetation are to be found in considerable luxuriance. In a still greater degree is this the case in all the various wâdys leading down from the Sinai range to the Gulf of 'Akaba—of which the Wâdy el-'Ain is described by Rüppell and by Miss Martineau; the Wâdy Sümghy by Dr. Robinson; and the Wâdy Kyd by Burckhardt—in all of which this union of vegetation with the fantastic scenery of the desolate mountains presents a combination as beautiful as it is extraordinary. In three spots, however, in the Desert, and in three only so far as appears, this vegetation is brought by the concurrence of the general configuration of the country to a still higher pitch. By far the most remarkable collection of springs is that which renders the clusters of Jebel Mûsa the chief resort of the Bedouin

¹ Rüppell notices four perennial brooks: 1. The Wâdy el-'Ain. 2. The Wâdy Salaka. 3. The Wâdy Feirân. 4. The Wâdy Hibrân. I only saw the first and third.

tribes during the summer heats. Four abundant sources in the mountains immediately above the Convent of St. Catherine must always have made that region one of the most frequented of the Desert. The two other exceptions are of a different character. It has been already observed that, in order fully to understand the geography of Sinai, we must combine it with the geography of the neighbouring countries. Every one has heard of the Oasis of Ammon, in the western desert of the Nile. What that oasis is on a great scale may be seen on a small scale elsewhere ; namely, deep depressions of the high table-land, which thus become the receptacles of all the rain and torrents, and consequently of the vegetation and the life, of the whole of that portion of the Desert. These oases, therefore, are to be found wherever the waters from the different wâdys or hills, whether from winter-streams, or from such living springs as have just been described, converge to a common reservoir. One such oasis in the Sinaitic desert seems to be the palm-grove of El-Wâdy at Tûr,¹—the sea-port half-way down the Gulf of Suez,—which receives all the waters which flow down from the higher range of Sinai to the sea. The other, and the more important, is the Wâdy Feirân, high up in the table-land of Sinai itself ; but apparently receiving all the waters which, from the springs and torrents of the central cluster of Mount Sinai, flow through the Wâdy es-Sheykh into this basin, where their further exit is forbidden by the rising ground in the Wâdy Feirân. These two green spots are the oases of Sinai, and with the nucleus of springs in Jebel Mûsa, form the three chief centres of vegetation in the Peninsula.

II. This is the general conformation of the scenery through which the Israelites passed. Even if their precise route were unknown, yet the peculiar features of the country have so much in common that the history would still receive many illustrations. They were brought into contact with a desolation, to them the more remarkable by its contrast with the green valley of the Nile. They were enclosed within a sanctuary of temples and pyramids not made with hands,—the more awful from its total dissimilarity to anything which they or their fathers could have remembered in Egypt or in Palestine. They were wrapt in a silence which gave full effect to the morning and the evening shout with which the encampment rose and pitched ; and still more to the “ thunders, and

¹ Burckhardt (*Arabia*, ii. 362) describes the palm-grove as so thick that he could hardly find his way through it. It is two miles from the village of Tûr, in a valley called emphatically, *El-Wâdy*, “ *The Wâdy*.” (*Weilsted*, ii. 9.)

the voice exceeding loud " on the top of Horeb. The Prophet and his People were thus secluded from all former thoughts and associations, that

"Separate from the world, his breast
Might duly take and strongly keep
The print of Heaven, to be exprest
Ere long on Sion's steep."

Not less illustrative, though perhaps less explanatory, of the more special incidents recorded, are some of the more local peculiarities of the Desert. The occasional springs, and wells, and brooks, are in accordance with the notices of the "waters" of Marah; the 'springs' (mistranslated "wells") of Elin; the "brook" of Horeb; the "well" of Jethro's daughters, with its "troughs" or tanks, in Midian. The vegetation is still that which we should infer from the Mosaic history. The wild Acacia (*Mimosa nilotica*), under the name of "sünt," everywhere represents the "seneh" or "senna" of the Burning Bush. A slightly different form of the tree, equally common under the name of "sayal," is the ancient "Shittah," or, as more usually expressed in the plural form (from the tangled thickets into which its stem expands), the "Shittim," of which the tabernacle was made,—an incidental proof, it may be observed, of the antiquity of the institution, inasmuch as the acacia, though the chief growth of the Desert, is very rare in Palestine.¹ The "Retem," or wild broom, with its high canopy and white blossoms, gives its name to one of the stations of the Israelites (Rithmah), and is the very shrub under which—in the only subsequent passage which connects the Desert with the history of Israel—Elijah slept in his wanderings. The "palms"—not the graceful trees of Egypt, but the hardly less picturesque wild palms² of uncultivated regions, with their dwarf trunks and shaggy branches,—vindicate by their appearance the title of being emphatically the "trees" of the Desert; and therefore, whether in the cluster of the seventy palm-trees of the second station of the wanderings, or in the grove, which still exists at the head of the Gulf of 'Akaba, were known by the generic name of "Elim," "Elath," or "Eloth,"³—"the trees." The "tarfa," or tamarisk, is not mentioned by name in the history of the

¹ The gum which exudes from it is said to be the old Arabian frankincense, and is brought from Sinai by Tûr. See Clarke's Travels, vol. v. 73

² The palms in the palm-groves at Tûr are all registered. Property in them is capital; marriage portions are given in dates, like tulips in Holland. (Henniker, p. 217.)

³ It is the same word which in Palestine is used habitually for the *ilex* or *terebinth*; an instructive change, because the terebinth is as emphatically the distinguished tree (if one may so say) of Palestine, as the palm is of the Desert. See Chapter II.

Exodus ; yet, if the tradition of the Greek Church and of the Arabs be adopted, it is inseparably connected with the wanderings by the "manna" which distils from it, as gum-arabic from the acacia. It is also brought within the limit of their earlier history by the grove of "tamarisks," which Abraham planted round the wells of Beersheba, as soon as he had exchanged the vegetation of Palestine—the oaks of Moreh and of Mamre,—for the wild and scanty shrubs of the desert frontier. The *lasaf* or *asaf*, the caper plant, the bright green creeper which climbs out of the fissures of the rocks in the Sinaitic valleys, has been identified on grounds of great probability with the "hyssop" or *ezob* of Scripture, and thus explains whence came the green branches used, even in the Desert, for sprinkling the water over the tents of the Israelites.

Again, it has often been asked whether there are any natural phenomena by which the wonders of the giving of the Law can be explained or illustrated. There are at first sight many appearances which, to an unpractised eye, seem indications of volcanic agency. But they are all, it is believed, illusory. The vast heaps, as of calcined mountains, are only the detritus of iron in the sandstone formation. The traces of igneous action on the granite rocks belong to their first upheaving, not to any subsequent convulsions. Everywhere there are signs of the action of water, nowhere of fire. On the other hand, the tremendous thunderstorms reverberated amongst the mountains have greatly impressed on those who have heard them the likeness to "the voice of the trumpet," the "trembling of the earth," the "blackness and thick darkness." The mysterious sounds which have been mentioned on Um Shaumer and Jebel Mûsa, may also be in some way connected with the terrors described in the Mosaic narrative. If there is such a connection, additional proof is furnished of the historical truth of the narrative. If not, it must rest, as heretofore, on its own internal evidence.

Finally, the relation of the Desert to its modern inhabitants is still illustrative of its ancient history. The general name by which the Hebrews called "the wilderness," including always that of Sinai, was "the pasture." Bare as the surface of the Desert is, yet the thin clothing of vegetation which is seldom entirely withdrawn, especially the aromatic shrubs on the high hill sides, furnishes sufficient sustenance for the herds of the six thousand Bedouins who constitute the present population of the Peninsula.

"Along the mountain ledges green,
The scattered sheep at will may glean
The Desert's spicy stores."

So were they seen following the daughters or the shepherd-slaves of Jethro. So may they be seen climbing the rocks, or gathered round the pools and springs of the valleys, under the charge of the black-veiled Bedouin women of the present day. And in the Ti'yâhah, Tawârah, or 'Alawin tribes, with their chiefs and followers, their dress, and manners, and habitations, we probably see the likeness of the Midianites, the Amalekites, and the Israelites themselves in this their earliest stage of existence. The long straight lines of black tents which cluster round the Desert springs, present to us on a small scale the image of the vast encampment gathered round the one Sacred Tent which, with its coverings of dyed skins, stood conspicuous in the midst, and which recalled the period of their nomadic life long after their settlement in Palestine. The deserted villages—marked by rude enclosures of stone—are doubtless such as those to which the Hebrew wanderers gave the name of "Hazereth," and which afterwards furnished the type of the primitive sanctuary at Shiloh. The rude burial-grounds, with the many nameless head-stones, far away from human habitation, are such as the host of Israel must have left behind them at the different stages of their progress—at Massah, at Sinai, at Kibroth-hattaavah, "the graves of desire." The salutations of the chiefs, in their bright scarlet robes, the one "going out to meet the other," the "obeisance," the "kiss" on each side the head, the silent entrance into the tent for consultation, are all graphically described in the encounter between Moses and Jethro. The constitution of the tribes, with the subordinate degrees of sheykhs, recommended by Jethro to Moses, is the very same which still exists amongst those who are possibly his lineal descendants—the gentle race of the Tawârah.

As we pass from the Desert to its inhabitants, a question naturally arises—How far can we be sure that we have the same outlines, and colours, and forms, that were presented to those who wandered through these mountains and valleys three thousand years ago? It might at first sight seem, that in this, as in other respects, the interest of the Desert of Sinai would be unique; that here, more than in any other great stage of historical events, the outward scene must remain precisely as it was; that the convent of Justinian with its gardens, the ruins of Paran, with the remains of hermits' cells long since desolate, are the only alterations which human hands have introduced into these wild solitudes. Even the Egyptian monuments and sculptures which are carved out of the sandstone rocks were already there, as the

Israelites passed by—memorials at once of their servitude and of their deliverance. But a difficulty has often been stated that renders it necessary somewhat to modify this assumption of absolute identity between the ancient and modern Desert. The question is asked—"How could a tribe, so numerous and powerful as, on any hypothesis, the Israelites must have been,¹ be maintained in this inhospitable desert?" It is no answer to say that they were sustained by miracles; for except the manna, the quails, and the three interventions in regard to water, none such are mentioned in the Mosaic history; and if we have no warrant to take away, we have no warrant to add. Nor is it any answer to say that this difficulty is a proof of the impossibility, and therefore of the unhistorical character of the narrative. For, as Ewald has well shown, the general truth of the wanderings in the wilderness is an essential preliminary to the whole of the subsequent history of Israel. Much may be allowed for the spread of the tribes of Israel far and wide through the whole Peninsula, and also for the constant means of support from their own flocks and herds. Something, too, might be elicited from the undoubted fact that a population nearly if not quite equal to the whole permanent population of the Peninsula does actually pass through the Desert, in the caravan of the five thousand African Pilgrims on their way to Mecca. But amongst these considerations, it is important to observe what indications there may be of the mountains of Sinai having ever been able to furnish greater resources than at present. These indications are well summed up by Ritter. There is no doubt that the vegetation of the wâdys has considerably decreased. In part, this would be an inevitable effect of the violence of the winter torrents. The trunks of palm-trees washed up on the shore of the Dead Sea, from which the living tree has now for many centuries disappeared, show what may have been the devastation produced amongst those mountains, where the floods, especially in earlier times, must have been violent to a degree unknown in Palestine; whilst the peculiar cause—the impregnation of salt—which has preserved the vestiges of the older vegetation there, has here, of course, no existence. The traces of such a destruction were pointed out to Burckhardt on the eastern side of Mount Sinai, as having occurred within half a century before his

¹ In spite of the difficulties attending upon the statement of the 600,000 armed men, as given in the Pentateuch, and the uncertainty always attached to attaining exact statements of numbers in any ancient text, or in any calculation of this kind, yet the most recent and the most critical investigation of this history inclines to adopt the numbers of 600,000 as authentic. [But see Petrie, *Researches in Sinia*. Murray, 1906.]

visit ; also to Wellsted, as having occurred near Tûr, in 1832. In part, the same result has followed from the reckless waste of the Bedouin tribes—reckless in destroying, and careless in replenishing. A fire, a pipe, lit under a grove of Desert trees, may clear away the vegetation of a whole valley.

The acacia trees have been of late years ruthlessly destroyed by the Bedouins for the sake of charcoal ; especially since they have been compelled by the Pasha of Egypt to pay a tribute in charcoal for an assault committed on the Mecca caravan in the year 1823. Charcoal from the acacia is, in fact, the chief, perhaps it might be said the only, traffic of the Peninsula. Camels are constantly met, loaded with this wood, on the way between Cairo and Suez. And as this probably has been carried on in great degree by the monks of the convent, it may account for the fact, that whereas in the valleys of the western and the eastern clusters this tree abounds more or less, yet in the central cluster itself, to which modern tradition certainly, and geographical considerations probably, point as the mountain of the burning "thorn," and the scene of the building of the Ark and all the utensils of the Tabernacle from this very wood, there is now not a single acacia to be seen. If this be so, the greater abundance of vegetation would, as is well known, have furnished a greater abundance of water, and this again would re-act on the vegetation, from which the means of subsistence would be procured. How much may be done by a careful use of such water and such soil as the Desert supplies, may be seen by the only two spots to which, now, a diligent and provident attention is paid ; namely, the gardens at the Wells of Moses, under the care of the French and English agents from Suez, and the gardens in the valleys of Jebel Mûsa, under the care of the Greek monks of the convent of St. Catherine. Even as late as the seventeenth century, if we may trust the expression of Monconys, the Wâdy er-Râhah in front of the convent, now entirely bare, was "a vast green plain,"—"une grande champagne verte." And that there was in ancient times a greater population than at present—which would, again, by thus furnishing heads and hands to consider and to cultivate these spots of vegetation, tend to increase and to preserve them—may be inferred from several indications.¹ The Amalekites, who contested the passage of

¹ In the question of the maintenance of the Israelites, it is impossible to avoid considering the question of the identity of the present manna with that described in the Mosaic history. The hypothesis of their identity, it must be remembered, is no modern fancy ; but was believed by Josephus (Ant. III. i. 6) and has always been maintained by the Greek Church in its representatives at the Convent of St. Catherine ; and portions of it have

the Desert with Israel, were—if we may draw any inferences from this very fact, as well as from their wide-spread name and power even to the time of Saul and David, and from the allusion to them in Balaam's prophecy as "the first of the nations,"—something more than a mere handful of Bedouins. The Egyptian copper-mines and monuments and hieroglyphics, in Sūrâbit el-Khadîm and the Wâdy Mûghareh, imply a degree of intercourse between Egypt and the Peninsula in the earliest days of Egypt, of which all other traces have long ceased. The ruined cities of Edom in the mountains east of the 'Arabah, and the remains and history of Petra itself, indicate a traffic and a population in these remote regions which now seems to us almost inconceivable. And even much later times, extending to the sixth and seventh centuries of our era, exhibit signs both of movements and habitations which have long ago ceased; such as the writings of Christian pilgrims on the rocks, whether in the Sinaitic characters, in Greek, or in Arabic; as well as the numerous remains of cells, gardens, houses, chapels, and churches, now deserted and ruined, both in the neighbourhood of Jebel Mûsa and of Serbâl. It must be confessed that none of these changes solve the difficulty, though they may mitigate its force; but they at least help to meet it, and they must under any circumstances be borne in mind, to modify the image which we form to ourselves of what must always have been—as it is even thus early described to be—"a great and terrible wilderness."

III. And now, is it possible to descend into details, and to ascertain the route by which the Israelites passed—over the Red Sea, and then through the Desert to Palestine?

been by them deliberately sold as such to pilgrims and travellers for many centuries. It must be acknowledged, with all deference to so ancient a tradition, that the only arguments in its favour are the name and the locality in which it is found. An exudation like honey, produced by insects from the leaves of the tamarisk, used only for medicinal purposes, and falling on the ground only from accident or neglect, and at present produced in sufficient quantities only to support one man for six months, has obviously but few points of similarity with the "small round thing, small as the hoar-frost on the ground; like *coriander seed*, white, its taste like wafers made with honey; gathered and ground in mills, and beat in a mortar, baked in pans and made into cakes, and its taste as the taste of fresh oil;" and spoken of as forming at least a considerable part of the sustenance of a vast caravan like that of the Israelites. All the arguments in favour of the ancient view of the identity may be seen in Ritter (pp. 665–695), all those in favour of the modern view of the diversity of the two kinds of manna, in Robinson (vol. i. p. 170) and Laborde (Commentary on Exodus and Numbers, p. 97). So far as the argument against its identity depends on its insufficiency, the greater abundance of vegetation, and therefore of *tarfa* trees, should be taken into account. And it should be observed, that the manna found in Kurdistan and Persia far more nearly corresponds to the Mosaic account, and also is asserted by the Bedouins and others to fall fresh from heaven (Wellsted, ii. 48).

First, can we be guided by tradition? In other words, has the recollection of those great events formed part of the historical consciousness and tradition of the Desert, or has it been merely devised in later times from conjectures either of the Greek monks and hermits of Sinai speculating on the words of the Old Testament, or of the Bedouin chiefs applying here and there a fragment of their knowledge of the Koran? Such a question can only be authoritatively answered by a traveller who, with a complete knowledge of Arabic, has sifted and compared the various legends and stories of the several tribes of the Peninsula. But any one, by combining his own experience, however slight, with the accounts of previous travellers, especially of Burckhardt, may form an approximation to the truth. From whatever source it be derived, there is unquestionably a general atmosphere of Mosaic tradition everywhere. From Petra to Cairo—from the northern platform of the peninsula to its southern extremity, the name and the story of Moses are still predominant. There are the two groups of "Wells of Moses," one on each side the Gulf of Suez—there are the "Baths of Pharaoh"—and the "Baths of Moses" further down the coast; there is the "Seat of Moses," near Besâtin, and in the Wâdy es-Sheykh; there is the "Mountain of Moses" in the cluster of Sinai; the "Cleft of Moses" in Mount St. Catherine; the "Valley" and the "Cleft of Moses" at Petra; the "Island of Pharaoh," or of "Moses," in the Gulf of Akaba. There is the romantic story told to Burckhardt, that the sighing of wind down the Pass of Nuweibi'a, on that gulf, is the wailing of Moses as he leaves his loved mountains; there is the "Hill of Aaron," at the base of the traditional Horeb; the "Tomb of Aaron," at the summit of the "Mountain of Aaron," overhanging Petra. It is possible, too, that the plateau of the Tih, or the Wanderings, on the north of the Peninsula—the valley of the Tih, with the Mountain of Gharbûn (Doubt), on the southern road from Cairo to Suez—and the Jebel 'Atâkah, or Mountain of Deliverance, between that valley and Suez, have reference to the wanderings and the escape of Israel. But these latter names may perhaps have originated in the dangers and deliverances of the Mecca pilgrimage.

Two circumstances throw doubt on the continuity of the tradition. The first is, that hardly in one instance do the actual localities bear the names preserved in the Old Testament. These names are frequent and precise. The different regions of the Desert which are indicated by their natural features, as above described, all seem to have had their

special nomenclatures. All these as general names have perished. One name only, that of *Paran*, has lingered in the valley and city of that name—apparently the same as that corrupted into *Feirân*. The names of the particular stations which are given both in the general narrative, and in the special enumeration in the 33rd chapter of the Book of Numbers, have also disappeared. There are three possible exceptions: the defile of *Muktala* may be a corruption of Migdol; *Ajerûd* of Pi-hahiroth; *Hûderah* of Hazeroth. But these are all doubtful, and of the others, even the most celebrated, Marah, Elim, and Rephidim, no trace remains. More remarkable still, perhaps, if we did not remember how very rarely mountains retain their nomenclature from age to age, is the disappearance of the names of Horeb and Sinai.¹ What was the original meaning or special appropriation of these two names it is difficult to determine.² Horeb is probably the "Mountain of the Dried-up Ground;" Sinai the "Mountain of the Thorn." Either name applies, therefore, almost equally to the general aspect or to the general vegetation of the whole range. But both are now superseded by the fanciful appellations which attach to each separate peak, or by the common name of "Tûr," in which all are merged alike.

The names now given to the mountains, as before observed, are chiefly derived either from the adjacent wâdys, or from their peculiar vegetation. Some few are called from some natural peculiarity, such as, Jebel Hammâm, so called from the warm springs at its foot; or Tâset Sûdr, from its cuplike shape. Some, however, both of the wâdys and the mountains, are called from legendary or historical events attached to them. Such are the Wâdy es-Sheykh—the central valley of the Peninsula, which derives its name from the tomb of

¹ One of the most intelligent guides I ever saw in any mountain country—Sheykh Zeddan, Sheykh of Serbâl—who accompanied us to the top of that mountain, was wholly unacquainted with the names of Horeb and Sinai; and this seemed to be the general rule. But it must be observed, that in Niebuhr's time the Arabs spoke of the whole cluster now called "Tûr" as "Tûr Sina": and the little Arab guides of the convent gave to one particular peak the name of "Sena."

² The special use of "Horeb" and "Sinai" in the Old Testament has often been discussed. It appears to me that this depends rather on a distinction of usage than of place. 1. In Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Judges, *Sinai* is always and exclusively used for the scene of the Giving of the Law; *Horeb* being only used twice—for the scene of the Burning Bush, and of the Striking of the Rock. (Ex. iii. 1, xvii. 6 are doubtful; Ex. xxxiii. 6 is ambiguous.) 2. In Deuteronomy, *Horeb* is substituted for *Sinai*, the former being always used, the latter never, for the Mountain of the Law. 3. In the Psalms, the two are used indifferently for the Mountain of the Law. 4. In 1 Kings xix. 8, it is impossible to determine to what part, if to any special part, *Horeb* is applied. For a further discussion of the subject see Lepsius' Letters, p. 317; Ewald, ii. 84.

Sheykh Saleh; the Jebel el-Benât—the “Mountain of the Damsels,” so called from a story of two Bedouin sisters having, in a fit of disappointed love, twisted their hair together, and leaped from the two peaks of the mountain—which, in all probability, originated the legend; the Jebel Katherin, or Mountain of St. Catherine, the scene of the miraculous translation of the body of that saint from Alexandria. This nomenclature suggests the likelihood that the various names before mentioned in connection with the Mosaic history are comparatively modern. If the monks of the convent have been able so completely to stamp the name of St. Catherine on one of their peaks, there is no reason to doubt that they may have been equally able to stamp the name of Moses on the other.¹

But, secondly, the moment that the Arab traditions of Moses are examined in detail, they are too fantastic to be treated seriously. They may well be taken as representing some indistinct or mysterious impressions left by that colossal figure as he passed before the vision of their ancestors. But it is not possible to apply them for verification of special events or localities. The passage of the Red Sea, as Niebuhr has well remarked, is fixed wherever the traveller puts the question to his Arab guides. The “Wells of Moses,” the “Baths of Pharaoh,” the “Baths of Moses,” all down the Gulf of Suez; and the “Island of Pharaoh,” in the Gulf of ‘Akaba, equally derive their names from traditions of the passage at each of these particular spots. The “warm springs of Pharaoh” are his last breath as the waves passed over him; the “Wells of Moses,” the “Baths of Moses,” the great “Clefts of Moses” on St. Catherine, and at Petra, are equally the results of Moses’ rod. The “Mountain of Moses” is so called, not so much from any tradition of the Giving of the Law, as because it is supposed to contain in the cavity of the granite rock the impression of his back, as he hid himself from the presence of God. His visit to Sinai is apparently separated from that of the Children of Israel, who, according to the Bedouin story, occupied the whole forty years in vainly endeavouring to cross the platform of the Tih.

2. If the Arab tradition fails in establishing particular

¹ At the same time it is impossible not to remark the much greater slowness with which foreign traditions strike root here than would be the case in Europe. Since Burckhardt’s time, the spring of Hawārah has been generally assumed to be Marah. Had this spring been in England, Italy, or Greece, the place would long before this have received the name of Marah, which travellers and guides are anxious to impose upon it. But here, in spite of the endeavours made by every party that passes to extract a confession of the desired name, “Hawārah” it still is, and probably will remain.

localities, so does also the Greek tradition as preserved in the convent. How far in earlier times the monks were better guides than they are at present, it is difficult to determine. At present, and as far back as the modern race of travellers extends, there is probably no branch of the vast fraternity of ciceroni so unequal to their task as the twenty-one monks of the most interesting convent in the world. Exiles from the islands in the Greek Archipelago; rebels against monastic rules at home; lunatics sent for recovery; none as a general rule remaining longer than two or three years; with an imperfect knowledge of Arabic, with no call upon their exertions, and no check upon their ignorance, they know less about the localities which surround them than the humblest of the Bedouin serfs who wait upon their bounty. It may be said, perhaps, that for this very reason, they may have the more faithfully handed down the traditions of the first inhabitants of the convent. Yet, when we remember how many of these sites have evidently been selected for the sake of convenience rather than of truth, it is not easy to trust a tradition that has descended through such channels even for fifteen hundred years, unless it can render good its claim to be the offspring of another, which requires for its genuineness another fifteen hundred still. In order to bring it into the round of the daily sights, the cleft of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram is transferred from Kadesh Barnea to the foot of Horeb. The peak of Jebel Mûsa, now pointed out by them as the scene of the Giving of the Law, fails to meet the most pressing requirements of the narrative. Rephidim has been always shown within an hour's walk instead of a day's march from the mountain. The monks in the last century confessed or rather boasted that they had themselves invented the foot-mark of Mahomet's mule, in order to secure the devotion of the Bedouins. The cypress, surmounted by a cross and cut into the shape of a serpent, in the court of the convent, in all probability was intended to commemorate the really remote event of the erection of the Brazen Serpent. Tûr, and even 'Akaba, were long shown as Elim.¹

3. There are, however, some few traces of traditions ex-

¹ Wellsted (ii. 13) says that "the traditions of the country assert Tûr to be Elim, where Moses and his household encamped;" and that "the Mohamedan pilgrims proceeding to or returning from Mecca, give implicit credence to the tradition," and "believe the waters to be efficacious in removing cutaneous and other tropical disorders." This shows the importance of an accurate distinction between the different classes of tradition. There is no doubt that the Mussulmans regard the wells as the Baths of Moses; but the question is, whether they regard them as Elim, or whether, as is probable, that is not a name given by the Greek convent, to which the palm-grove of Tûr belongs.

tending beyond the age of Justinian or of Mahomet, which ought not to be disregarded. Josephus, here, as elsewhere, refers throughout to sources of information not contained in the Old Testament, yet free from the grotesqueness and absurdity of the Rabbinical interpretation. Eusebius and Jerome also speak as if the nomenclature of the Desert¹ was in some instances known to them, either by tradition or conjecture. The selection of the sites of the two great convents of Feirân and St. Catherine, though it may have been dictated in part by the convenience of the neighbouring water and vegetation, yet must also have been in part influenced by a pre-existing belief in the sanctity of those spots. One point there is—not, indeed, in the Peninsula itself, but in connection with the route of the Israelites—in which the local tradition so remarkably coincides with every indication furnished by historical notices, and by the nature of the country, as not only to vindicate credibility for itself, but to lend some authority to the traditions of the Desert generally—the “Mountain of Aaron,” in all probability the “Hor” of Aaron’s grave. The cycle of Mosaic names and traditions, which seems most reasonably to point to a genuine Arab source, is that which relates to the Arab chief Jethro, or (as he is called from his other name Hobab) Shu’eib. The most remarkable of these is the Wâdy Shu’eib; according to one version, the valley east of Jebel Mûsa, in which the convent stands; according to another, the ravine leading down into that valley from the Râs Süfsâfeh. Probably the Wâdy Lejá on the western side of the same range, and the Jebel Fureiâ above the plain Er-Râhah, point to the two daughters of Jethro, called in the Arabian legends Lija and Safuria (Zipporah). There is also the cave of Shu’eib on the eastern shores of the Gulf of ‘Akaba, a tradition the more remarkable as being by its situation removed from any connection with the Christian convents, and also being the very region which, in all probability, is the country described as Jethro’s Midian in the Pentateuch.

IV. Bearing these earliest traditions in mind, whenever they can be traced, it may still be possible, by the internal evidence of the country itself, to lay down not indeed the actual route of the Israelites in every stage, but, in almost all cases, in the main alternatives between which we must

¹ At the same time the rash conjecture that Jerome makes about the second encampment by the Red Sea (Numb. xxxiii. 10) shows that he was quite unacquainted with the details of the geography. He speaks of it as a great difficulty, and solves it by imagining that there was a bay running inland, or that a pool of water with reeds (!) may possibly have been the Reedy Sea. (Ep. ad Fabiolam.)

choose, and, in some cases, the very spots themselves. Hitherto no one traveller has traversed more than one, or at most two routes of the Desert; and thus the determination of these questions has been obscured, first, by the tendency of every one to make the Israelites follow his own track, and secondly, by his inability to institute a just comparison between the facilities or the difficulties which attend the routes which he has not seen. This obscurity will always exist till some competent traveller has explored the whole Peninsula. When this has been fairly done, there is little doubt that some of the most important topographical questions now at issue will be set at rest. Meanwhile, with the materials before us, it may be useful to give a summary of the points in dispute as they at present stand.

1. Of all the events of the Israelite history, there is none which either from the magnificence of the crisis itself, or from its long train of associations, has greater interest than the passage of the Red Sea. In the history of the Old Dispensation it took, not merely by type or prophecy, but actually, the same place as is occupied in the New Dispensation by the highest events of the Gospel History. It was the birthday of the people and of the religion; it was the deliverance from the bondage of Egypt, of Africa, of gigantic oppression and strange worship. It was a deliverance not by the force of man, but by the hand of God. It was the basis of that long succession of imagery, which through the sacred poetry of Israel has penetrated to all nations—the “waves and storms of affliction,”—in them the more remarkable as an inland people; and thus affording a testimony of enduring value to the deep impression left by the one great scene which ushered in their history. The spray of the Red Sea is found, as if were, on the inmost hills of Palestine; and, from them, it has been wafted throughout the world.

It was the greatest event which ancient history records; its effects are still felt. What then was its scene? We cannot say here, as in the sacred events of the New Testament, that the narrative withdraws us from all local considerations. On the contrary, the localities, both on the march and before the passage, are described with a precision which indicates that at the time when the narrative was written they were known with the utmost exactness. Unhappily, it is an exactness which to us now is only tantalising. It is for the most part only by conjecture that any places mentioned can be in any way identified. Still there are indications in the history, combined with a few vestiges of authentic tradition, and a few natural features, which may help us to approximation.

The event has been extended, as already observed, by the Arab traditions down the whole Gulf of Suez, and even to the Gulf of 'Akaba. But it may, for all practical purposes, be confined to two quarters—the Wâdy Tawârik, opposite the Wells of Moses ; or the neighbourhood of the Isthmus of Suez. In favour of the former locality, besides the usual Arab tradition, there is the statement of Josephus, that the start was made from Latopolis, which he identifies with the Egyptian Babylon, that is, Old Cairo. If they started from this city, standing almost at the entrance of the valley which opens on the southern point of passage, the great probability is, that they would have followed that source throughout. This, perhaps, is the chief argument in favour of the theory of the southern passage. But the traditions of Josephus can hardly weigh against those of the Alexandrine translators, who make Rameses, the point of departure, to be in the north-east of the Delta in the neighbourhood of Heroopolis. From this point they marched a day's journey to "Succoth," a halt which left an indelible trace in their subsequent institutions, as it was from the leafy booths in which they then, probably for the last time, rested that the Festival of the Tabernacles took its rise. These green coverts indicate that they were still on the pasture-land of the Delta. It was not till the next day's encampment that they reached Etham, "in the edge of the wilderness." Unless therefore the limits of the wilderness, which on the southern route now reach up to the very gates of Cairo, have been completely altered, it is clear that this first part of the march, even irrespectively of the position of "Rameses," must have been to the north of the head of the gulf—north even of the present overland route to Cairo. At Etham their course changed. Instead of the route by Pelusium to "the land of the Philistines," they were here commanded to "turn" and encamp "before Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, over against Baal-zephon." I have said that this precise enumeration fails us, from our ignorance of almost every place named ; but the narrative itself in part supplies the deficiency.

First, we are expressly told that the agency by which the sea was dried up was "a strong east wind" or, according to the Septuagint, "a strong south wind." This compels us to select a portion of the sea where the depth is not too great to forbid the agency of wind ; and this is only at the northern end, where the shoals are, and must always have been, sufficient to render a shallower passage possible. And it may be added that the actual description accords with this, better than with the hypothesis which would lead the army through the

more southern part of the gulf, where they would have passed, not between "walls," but between "mountains" of water, such as no faithful narrative could have failed to notice. Secondly, we are told that the host, to the number of 600,000 armed men, passed over within the limits of a single night. If so, the passage must have occurred in the narrow end of the gulf, and not in the wide interval of eight or ten miles between the Wâdy Tawârik and the Wells of Moses.¹ Indeed, it should be remembered that the notion of the Israelites *crossing* the Red Sea at its broader part is comparatively modern. By earlier Christian commentators, and by almost all the Rabbinical writers who selected the wider road as the scene of the event, the passage was explained to be not a *transit*—which, as Chytræus of Rostock calculated, would have required at least three days—but a short *circuit*, returning again to the Egyptian shore, and then pursuing their way round the head of the gulf. Such an interpretation, faithfully represented on the old maps, and defended at great length by Quaresmius, is worth preserving, as a curious instance of the sacrifice of the whole moral grandeur of a miracle, to which men are often (and in this case necessarily) driven by a mistaken desire of exaggerating its physical magnitude. These reasons oblige us to look for the scene of the passage at the northern end of the gulf; whether at the present fords of Suez, or at some point higher up the gulf, which then probably extended at least as far as the Bitter Lakes, depends on arguments which have not yet been thoroughly explored. On the one hand, the exclamation of Pharaoh "They are entangled in the land; the wilderness hath shut them in," is best explained by the supposition that they were hemmed in on the south by mountains; and this was the view of Josephus, who repeatedly speaks of the "precipitous mountain descending on the sea." This could be no other than the Jebel Atâkah, which borders the north-west side of the gulf, and which terminates the mountain range. Farther north, there are no eminences higher than sand-hills. The subsequent route also agrees best with the passage at Suez. On the other hand, the previous route will best agree with some spot nearer to "the edge" of the cultivated land, that is, farther north; and the names, so far as they can be traced, point in the same direction. "Pi-hahiroth" is probably an Egyptian word—"the grassy places"—and, if so, can only

¹ This is the width according to the survey of the Red Sea by Commander Moresby and Lieutenant Careless. A remarkable instance of the effect of wind even on deep water occurs constantly in the Fritzsler Hof on the shores of the Baltic between Memel and Königsberg.

be sought northwards, not in the naked desert either of 'Ajrûd, where it has been sometimes found, or of the Wâdy Tawârik. "Migdol" may indeed be only the "watch-tower" of the fords; but it may also be the ancient "Magdolum," twelve miles south of Pelusium, and undoubtedly described as "Migdol" by Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

Meanwhile, we must be content with the general scene placed before us on that memorable night—the Paschal moon, the darkness, the storm:—"The waters saw thee, O God, the waters saw thee; . . . the depths also were troubled. The clouds poured out water: the skies sent out a sound: . . . the voice of thy thunder was in the heaven: the lightnings lightened the world: the earth trembled and shook,"—and then rest satisfied in the conclusion of the Psalmist (in this local question, as in so much of which it is the likeness), "Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known."

2. There can be no dispute as to the general track of the Israelites after the passage. If they were to enter the mountains at all, they must continue in the route of all travellers, between the sea and the table-land of the Tih, till they entered the low hills of Ghûrûndel. According to the view taken of the scene of the passage, Marah may either be at "the Springs of Moses" or else at Hawâraah or Ghûrûndel. Elim must be Ghûrûndel, Useit, or Taiyibeh.

3. The "encampment by the Red Sea" (Numbers xxxiii. 10) must almost certainly be at the descent of the Wâdy Taiyibeh on the sea, or in some portion of the plain of Mûrkhâh, before they again turned up into the mountains; the cliffs forbidding any continuous line of march along the shore between the Wâdy Ghûrûndel and the Wâdy Taiyibeh. It is indeed just possible that, like Pococke and Bartlett, they may have descended to the mouth of the Wâdy Ghûrûndel, by the warm springs ("of Pharaoh"), and then returned to the Wâdy Useit. Such a détour is not likely: yet it must be borne in mind as possible. For if the "encampment by the Red Sea" was at the mouth of the Wâdy Ghûrûndel, it must have been before the bifurcation of the two routes to Jebel Mûsa—that namely to the north by Surâbit el Khâdim, and that to the south by Wâdy Taiyibeh—and would thus open the alternative of their having gone by the former of these two roads, and so avoided altogether the Wâdy Feirân. This is a material point in favour of all views which exclude Mount Serbâl from the history. If, on the other hand, they proceeded, as travellers usually do, by Ghûrûndel, Useit, and Taiyibeh, (and if Taiyibeh or Useit be Elim, they must

have done so,) and thus descended on the sea, here two other alternatives open upon us.

4. For when arrived at the plain of Mürkhâh, they may have gone, according to the route of the older travellers—Shaw, Pococke, and the Prefect of the Franciscan Convent—to Tôr, and thence by the Wâdy Hibrân, and the Nûkb Hâwy, to Jebel Mûsa; or they may have gone, according to the route of all recent travellers, by the Wâdy Shellâl, the Nûkb Badera, and the Wâdys Mukatteb, Feirân, and es-Sheykh, to the same point. The former route is improbable, both because of its détour, and also because the Wâdy Hibrân is said to be, and the Nûkb Hâwy certainly is, as difficult if not more difficult than any pass on the route of the Wâdy Feirân. If it might seem to be in its favour that it was the habitual route of the early travellers, before the newly awakened love of scenery had induced any one to visit the Wâdy Feirân, yet it must be remembered that all early travellers went and returned from Cairo to Sinai, and consequently took one route on their egress and the other on their regress. Still it must be borne in mind as a possible alternative.

5. Of the three routes just mentioned, which we may call the northern, the central, and the southern, the northern and the southern combine in this result, that they omit Mount Serbâl, and necessarily take the Israelites to Jebel Mûsa, or at least some mountain in the eastern extremity of the peninsula. But the central route, after leaving the plain of Mürkhâh, mounts by the successive stages of the Wâdy Shellâl, the Nûkb Badera, and the Wâdy Mukatteb, to the Wâdy Feirân, and its great mountain, Serbâl, the pride of this cluster. If, as is most probable for the reasons just assigned, the Israelites took this road, the question is at once opened, Whether Serbâl be the Sinai of the Exodus? If it be, then we are here arrived at the end of their journey. If, on the other hand, the Israelites could be shown to have taken the northern or the southern road, or if there are insuperable objections to the identification of Serbâl with Sinai, the end is to be sought where it has usually been found, in the cluster of Jebel Mûsa. Between these two clusters the question must lie.¹

¹ Um Shaumer, the highest point of the peninsula, was ascended by Burckhardt to within 200 feet of the summit. The plain of El-Kâ'a is immediately below. There is a spring and fig-trees, the ruins of a convent (Deir Antûs), and there are strange stories of sounds like thunder. (Burckhardt, 586-588.) These points agree to a certain extent with the scriptural indications of Sinai, yet it is so far removed from any conceivable track of the Israelites as to render its claims highly improbable. It has been since explored by Mr. Hogg, who tells me that it meets none of the special requirements.

Each has its natural recommendations, which will best appear on proceeding. The claims of tradition are very nearly equal. Jebel Mûsa is now the only one which puts forward any pretensions to be considered as the place, and is indeed the only region of the Sinaitic mountains where any traditions of Israel can be said to linger. They are certainly as old as the sixth century; and they probably reach back still further. On the other hand, though Serbâl has in later times lost its historical name, in earlier ages it enjoyed a larger support of tradition than Jebel Mûsa. This, at least, is the natural inference from the Sinaitic inscriptions, which, of whatever date, must be prior to the age of Justinian, founder of the Convent of St. Catherine, and which are found at the very top of the mountain and the ruined edifice on its central summit. This too is the impression conveyed by the existence of the episcopal city of Paran, at its foot, which also existed prior to the foundations of Justinian. And the description of Horeb by Josephus as a mountain, "the highest of the region," "with good grass growing round it," is more like the impression that is produced on a traveller by Serbâl than that derived from any other mountain usually seen in the range. It was undoubtedly identified with Sinai by Eusebius, Jerome, and Cosmas; that is, by all known writers till the time of Justinian. Rûppell asserts that the summit of Serbâl was regarded by the Bedouins who accompanied him as a sacred place, to which at certain times they brought sacrifices.¹

There remains the question, Whether there is any solution of the rival claims of Serbâl and Jebel Mûsa, which can give to each a place in the sacred history. Such an attempt has been made by Ritter, who, with his usual union of diffidence and learning, suggests the possibility that Serbâl may have been "the Mount of God," the sanctuary of the heathen tribes of the Desert—already sacred before Israel came, and that to which Pharaoh would understand that they were going their long journey into the Wilderness for sacrifice. It may then have been the Wâdy Feirân that witnessed the battle of Rephidim, the building of the Altar on the hill, and the visit of Jethro; and after this long pause, in "the third month," they may again have moved forward to "Sinai," the cluster of Jebel Mûsa. There are two points gained by any such solution: first, that Sinai may then be identified

¹ This was denied by the Arab Chief whom I questioned on the spot. But I am informed by recent travellers that, on being pressed, he acknowledges the custom, and points out the rock at the top from which the goat is thrown down.

with Jebel Mûsa, without the difficulty, otherwise considerable, that the narrative brings the Israelites through the two most striking features of the Desert—Wâdy Feirân and Serbâl—without any notice of the fact; and secondly, that it gives a scene, at least in some respects well suited, for the encampment at Rephidim, the most remarkable which occurred before the final one in front of Sinai itself. How far the narrative itself contains sufficient grounds for such a distinction between the two mountains is, in our present state of knowledge, very uncertain. If “Horeb” be taken for the generic name of the whole range, and not necessarily as identical with Sinai, then there is only one passage left (Exod. xxiv. 13, 16) in which, in the present text, “the Mount of God” is identified with “Sinai”; and even if Horeb be identified with Sinai, yet the variations of the Septuagint on this point show how easily the title of one mountain might be assumed into the text as the title of the other after the distinction between the two had been forgotten. In Exod. iii. 1, where the “Mountain of God” occurs in the present Hebrew text, it is omitted in the LXX (though not in the Alexandrian MS.), as in Exod. xix. 3, where it occurs in the LXX, it is omitted in the Hebrew text. The identification of the Wâdy Feirân with Rephidim would also agree well with the slight topographical details of the battle. In every passage where Sinai, and Horeb, and the Mount of God, and Mount Paran are spoken of, the Hebrew word *hor* for “mountain” is invariably used. But in Exod. xvii. 9, 10, in the account of the battle of Rephidim, the word used is *gibeah*, rightly translated “hill.” Every one who has seen the valley of Feirân will at once recognise the propriety of the term, if applied to the rocky eminence which commands the palm-grove, and on which, in early Christian times, stood the church and palace of the Bishops of Paran. Thus, if we can attach any credence to the oldest known tradition of the Peninsula, that Rephidim is the same as Paran, then Rephidim, “the resting-places,” is the natural name for the paradise of the Bedouins in the adjacent palm-grove; then the hill of the Church of Paran may fairly be imagined to be “the hill” on which Moses stood, deriving its earliest consecration from the altar which he built; the Amalekites may thus have naturally fought for the oasis of the Desert, and the sanctuary of their gods; and Jethro may well have found his kinsmen encamping after their long journey, amongst the palms “before the Mount of God,” and acknowledged that the Lord was greater even than all the gods who had from ancient days been thought to dwell on the lofty peaks

which overhung their encampment. And then the ground is clear for the second start, described in the following chapter : "They 'departed' from Rephidim, and came to the Desert of Sinai, and 'pitched' in the Wilderness; and there Israel encamped before the Mount."

If the Wâdy Feirân, by its palm-grove and its brook, be marked out as the first long halting-place of Israel, the high valleys of Jebel Mûsa with their abundant springs no less mark out the second. The great thoroughfare of the Desert, the longest and widest and most continuous of all the valleys, the Wâdy es-Sheykh, would lead the great bulk of the host, with the flocks and herds, by the more accessible though more circuitous route into the central upland; whilst the chiefs of the people would mount directly to the same point by the Nûkb Hâwy, and all would meet in the Wâdy er-Râhah, the "enclosed plain" in front of the magnificent cliffs of the Râs Süfsâfeh. It is possible that the end of the range Furei'a, to which the Arab guides give the name of *Sena*, may have a better claim than the Râs Süfsâfeh, from the fact that it commands both the Wâdy er-Râhah and the Wâdy es-Sheykh; and that alone of those peaks it appears to retain a vestige of the name of *Sinai*. It contains a basin surrounded by lofty peaks. That which commands the widest view is covered with giant blocks, as if the mountain had there been shattered and split by an earthquake. A vast cleft divides the peak into two summits. But whether this high mountain or the Râs Süfsâfeh be the Mountain of the Law, the plain below will still remain the essential feature of the view of the Israelite camp. That such a plain should exist at all in front of such a cliff is so remarkable a coincidence with the sacred narrative, as to furnish a strong internal argument, not merely of its identity with the scene, but of the scene itself having been described by an eye-witness. The awful and lengthened approach, as to some natural sanctuary, would have been the fittest preparation for the coming scene. The low line of alluvial mounds at the foot of the cliff exactly answers to the "bounds" which were to keep the people off from "touching the Mount." The plain itself is not broken and uneven and narrowly shut in, like almost all others in the range, but presents a long retiring sweep, against which the people could "remove and stand afar off." The cliff, rising like a huge altar in front of the whole congregation, and visible against the sky in lonely grandeur from end to end of the whole plain, is the very image of "the mount that might be touched," and from which the "voice" of God might be heard far and wide over the stillness of the plain

below, widened at that point to its utmost extent by the confluence of all the contiguous valleys. Here, beyond all other parts of the Peninsula, is the adytum, withdrawn as if in the "end of the world," from all the stir and confusion of earthly things.¹ And as in the Wâdy Feirân, "the hill" of Paran may be taken as fixing with some degree of probability the scene of Rephidim, so there are some details of the plain of er-Râhah, which remarkably coincide with the scene of the worship of the Golden Calf, evidently the same as that of the encampment at the time of the Delivery of the Law. In this instance the traditional locality is happily chosen. A small eminence at the entrance of the convent-valley is marked by the name of Aaron, as being that from which Aaron surveyed the festival on the wide plain below. This tradition, if followed out, would of necessity require the encampment to be in the Wâdy er-Râhah, as every other circumstance renders probable. But there are two other points which meet here, and nowhere else: First, Moses is described as descending the mountain without seeing the people; the shout strikes the ear of his companion before they ascertain the cause; the view bursts upon him suddenly as he draws nigh to the camp, and he throws down the tables and dashes them in pieces "beneath the mount." Such a combination might occur in the Wâdy er-Râhah. Any one coming down from one of the secluded basins behind the Râs Sûsâfeh, through the oblique gullies which flank it on the north and south, would hear the sounds borne through the silence from the plain, but would not see the plain itself till he emerged from the Wâdy ed-Deir or the Wâdy Lejâ; and when he did so, he would be immediately under the precipitous cliffs of Sûsâfeh. Further, we are told that Moses strewed the powder of the fragments of the idol on the "waters" of the "brook that came down out of the mount." This would be perfectly possible in the Wâdy er-Râhah, into which issues the brook of the Wâdy Lejâ, descending, it is true, from Mount St. Catherine, but still in sufficiently close connection with the Jebel Mûsa to justify the expression, "coming down out of the mount." These two coincidences, which must be taken for what they are worth, would not occur either at Serbâl or in the Wâdy Sebâ'iyeh. In the case of the former, although there is the brook from the Wâdy Aleyat, which would probably meet the description, there is no corresponding contiguity of the encampment. In the case of the latter, both are wanting.

1 "If I were to make a model of the end of the world, it would be from the valley of the convent of Mount Sinai." Henniker, p. 225.

6. It is hardly necessary, after what has been said, to examine minutely the special traditional localities of Jebel Mûsa. How little could have been the desire of finding a place which should realise the general impressions of the scene; how the great event which has made Sinai famous was forgotten in the search after traces of special incidents, of which there could be no memorial, and in the discovery of which there could be no real instruction, is sufficiently apparent from the fact that, amongst all the pilgrims who visited Mount Sinai for so many centuries, hardly one noticed, and not one paid any attention to, the great plain of er-Râhah. And yet it is the very feature which, since the time that Lord Lindsay first, and Dr. Robinson shortly afterwards, discovered and called attention to it, must strike any thoughtful observer as the point in the whole range the most illustrative of Israelite history. There is, however, one general remark that applies to almost all the lesser localities. If, on the one hand, the general features of the Desert, and of the plain beneath the Râs Sûfsâfeh in particular, accord with the authentic history of Israel, there is little doubt, on the other, that the physical peculiarities of the district have suggested most of the legendary scenes which subsequent tradition has fastened on that history. Where almost every rock is a *lusus naturæ*, it is not surprising that men, like the Greek monks or the Bedouin Arabs, as keen in their search for special traces of the history as they were indifferent to its impression as a whole, should have seen marks of it everywhere. The older travellers, the Prefect of the Franciscan Convent, Pococke, Shaw, and others, all notice what they call Dendrite-stones,—i.e. stones into which moisture has percolated, and which have thus assumed the appearance of plants or trees. In early ages they seem to have been regarded as amongst the great wonders of the mountain; they were often supposed to be memorials of the Burning Bush. The mark of the back of Moses on the summit of the mountain which bears his name, has been already mentioned. Still more evident is the mark of the body of St. Catherine on the summit of Jebel Katherin. The rock of the highest point of that mountain swells into the form of a human body, its arms swathed like that of a mummy, but headless; the counterpart, as it is alleged, of the corpse of the beheaded Egyptian saint. It is difficult to trace the earliest form of the legend, now so familiar through pictorial art, of the transference of the Alexandrian martyr by angelic hands to the summit of Mount Sinai,—a legend which, in the convent to which the relics are said to have been then

carried down, almost ranks on an equality with the history of the Burning Bush and of the Giving of the Law. But not improbably this grotesque figure on the rock furnishes not merely the illustration, but the origin of the story. A third well-known instance of the kind is what in earlier times was called the head—at present the mould of the head—of the molten calf, just as the rock of St. Catherine is sometimes called the body itself; sometimes (to accommodate it to the story of the transference of the relics to the convent), the place on which the body rested. It is a natural cavity, in the juncture of one or two stones, possibly adapted in some slight measure by art, representing rudely the round head, with two horns spreading out of it. A fourth is one of the many curious fissures and holes in the weather-beaten rocks near the summit of Jebel Mûsa, pointed out as the footmark of the mule or dromedary of Mahomet. It is true that the monks themselves, in the seventeenth century, declared to the Prefect of the Franciscan Convent that this mark had been made by themselves, to secure the protection of the Bedouin tribes. But it has more the appearance of a natural hollow, and it is more probable that they were unwilling to let the Prefect imagine that such a phenomenon should be accidental, than that they actually invented it. Another (which has not found its way into books) is the legend in the convent (as represented in an ancient picture of the traditional localities), of the sunbeam, which on one day in the year darts into the Chapel of the Burning Bush from the Jebel ed-Deir. On ascending the mountain, the origin of the legend appears. Behind the topmost cliffs, a narrow cleft admits of a view, of the only view, into the convent buildings, which lie far below but precisely commanded by it, and therefore necessarily lit up by the ray, which once in the year darts through that especial crevice.

But the most famous of all these relics is the Rock of Moses. Every traveller has described, with more or less accuracy, the detached mass, from 10 to 15 feet high, as it stands in the wild valley of the Lejâ, under the ridge of the Râs Sûfsâfeh, —slightly leaning forwards, a rude seam or scoop running over each side, intersected by wide slits or cracks, which might, by omitting or including those of less distinctness, be enlarged or diminished to any number between ten and twenty; perhaps ten on each side would be the most correct account; and the stone between each of those cracks worn away as if by the dropping of water from the crack immediately above. Unlike as this isolated fragment is to the image usually formed of "the rock in Horeb," and incompa-

tible as its situation is with any tenable theory of the event with which it professes to be connected, yet to uncultivated minds, regardless of general truth, and eager for minute coincidence, it was most natural that this rock should have suggested the miracle of Moses. There is every reason accordingly to believe that this is the oldest legendary locality in the district. It is probable that it was known even in the time of Josephus, who speaks of the rock as "lying beside them"—*παρὰκειμένην*—an expression naturally applicable to a fragment like this, but hardly to a cliff in the mountain. The situation and form of this stone would also have accommodated itself to the curious Rabbinical belief that the "rock followed them" through the wilderness; a belief groundless enough under any circumstances, but more natural if any Jewish pilgrims had seen or heard of this detached mass by the mountain side. It next appears, or rather, perhaps, we should say, its first unquestionable appearance is, in the reference made more than once in the Koran to the rock with the twelve mouths for the twelve tribes of Israel, evidently alluding to the curious cracks in the stone, as now seen. These allusions probably increased, if they did not originate, the reverence of the Bedouins, who, at least down to the present generation of travellers, are described as muttering their prayers before it, and thrusting grass into the supposed mouths of the stone. From the middle ages onwards, it has always been shown to Christian pilgrims; and the rude crosses on the sides, as well as the traces of stone chipped away, indicate the long reverence in which it has been held. In more modern times, it has been used to serve the two opposite purposes, of demonstrating on the one hand the truth of the Mosaic history, and on the other hand the lying practices of the monastic system. Bishop Clayton triumphantly quotes it as a voice from the Desert, providentially preserved to put the infidels of the eighteenth century to shame. Sir Gardner Wilkinson as positively brings it forward to prove the deceptions practised by the Greek Church to secure the respect of the Arabs and the visits of pilgrims. It is one of the many instances in which both arguments are equally wrong. It is evidently, like the other examples given above, a trick of nature, which has originated a legend, and through the legend, a sacred locality. Probably less would have been said of it, had more travellers observed what Sir Frederick Henniker alone has expressly noticed, namely, the fragment which lies in the same valley, less conspicuous, but with precisely similar marks. But taking it merely for what it is, of all the lesser objects of interest in

Sinai, the Rock of Moses is the most remarkable; clothed with the longest train of associations, allied in thought, though not in fact, to the image which, of all others in the Exodus, has, perhaps, been most frequently repeated in the devotions of Jewish and Christian worship; of all the objects in the Desert most bound up with the simple faith of its wild inhabitants and of its early visitants.

V. It has been said, that the history of the Peninsula is confined to the history of the Exodus. Yet we must not forget that it is the oldest of the "Holy Places," and accordingly, the halo of that first glory has rested upon it long after the events themselves had ceased. There are, as has already been intimated, traces of a sanctity even anterior to the passage of the Israelites; the "Mount of God" was honoured by the Amalekite Arabs, and known at the Egyptian Court. A belief prevailed, as Josephus tells us, that a Divine presence dwelt in those awful cliffs, on that long ascent, deemed unapproachable by human footsteps; the rich pastures round the mountain foot avoided even by the wandering shepherds. On a lofty hill, to the north of the Sinai range, are the remains of ancient Egyptian monuments, prior, as it would seem, to the Exodus. This reverence, whatever it was, or to whichever point it might be more especially attached, must have been thrown into the shade from the moment that it was announced that the ground on which Moses stood was "holy ground"—still more from the day when the Law was given, in "fire, and blackness, and tempest." Yet, as it has been well observed, so high already did the Religion which was there first proclaimed tower above any local bonds, that throughout the whole subsequent history of Judaism there is but one known instance of a visit to this its earliest birthplace. The whole tenor of the historical and prophetic Scriptures is to withdraw the mind from the Desert to Palestine—from Sinai to Zion. "Why leap ye so, ye high 'mountains'? This (Jerusalem) is the 'mountain' which God desireth to dwell in. . . . The Lord is among them, as *in Sinai*, in the holy place." "God came from Teman, and the Holy One from Mount Paran." The sanctuary of Horeb was not living but dead and deserted. One visitant, however, there was to this wild region—it may be, as the only one known, out of many unknown pilgrims, but, more probably, an exception proving the rule—driven here only by the extraordinary circumstances of his time, and by his own character and mission, the great prophet Elijah. The scene of the address to Elijah is now localised in the secluded plain immediately below the highest point

of Jebel Mûsa, marked by the broken chapel, and by the solitary cypress. There, or at Serbâl, may equally be found "the cave," the only indication by which the sacred narrative identifies the spot. There, or at Serbâl, equally may have passed before him the vision in which the wind rent the granite mountains, and broke in pieces the 'cliffs,' followed as at the time of Moses, by the earthquake and the fire, and then, in the silence of the desert air, by the "still small voice."

We hear of Sinai no more till the Christian era. In the local touches that occur from time to time in Josephus, the question rises, whether he or those from whom he received his information, had really passed through the Desert. The "mountain" of which he speaks emphatically on the shores of the Red Sea can be no other than the Jebel 'Atâkah: the "rock lying beside" Mount Sinai is probably the stone of Moses; and although it may be difficult in "the highest mountain of the range, so high as not to be visible without straining of the sight," to recognise any peak of Sinai, yet the exaggeration is precisely similar to that in which he indulges in speaking of the precipices, which he had himself seen about Jerusalem. There is another traveller through Arabia at this time, on whose visit to Mount Sinai we should look with still greater interest. "I went into Arabia," says St. Paul, in describing his conversion to the Galatians. And when, in a later chapter of the same Epistle, the words fall upon our ears, "This Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia," it is difficult to resist the thought that he, too, may have stood upon the rocks of Sinai, and heard from Arab lips the often repeated "Hadjar,"—"stone" or "rock,"—suggesting the double meaning to which that text alludes.

If the sanctity of Sinai was forgotten under the Jewish Dispensation, still more likely was it to be set aside under the Christian, where not merely its contrast, but its inferiority, was the constant burden of all the allusions to it—"the mount that gendereth to bondage," "the mount that might be touched." But gradually the combined passion for ascetic retirement and for pilgrimage to holy places, peopled its desert solitudes. From the neighbouring shores of Egypt—the parent land of monasticism—the anchorites and cœnobites were drawn by the sight of these wild mountains across the Red Sea. From Armenia and from Syria pilgrims came, if only for a moment, to offer their prayers on the spot where Moses had seen the Divine Presence. Beside the palm-groves of Feirân, and the springs of Jebel Mûsa, were gathered a host of cells and convents. The whole range must have been then to the Greek Church what Athos is now. No less than six

thousand monks or hermits congregated round Jebel Mûsa, and Paran must almost have deserved the name of a city at the time when it was frequented by the Arabian pilgrims, who wrote their names on the sandstone rocks of the Wâdy Mukatteb and the granite blocks of Serbâl.¹ Probably, the tide of Syrian and Byzantine pilgrims chiefly turned to Jebel Mûsa; the African and Alexandrian, to the nearer sanctuary at Feirân. Of all these memorials of ancient devotion, the great convent of the Transfiguration, or, as it was afterwards called, of St. Catherine, alone remains. It has been described by every traveller, and with the utmost detail by Burckhardt and by Robinson. But it is so singular of its kind, that a short summary of its aspect and recollections is essential to any account of the Peninsula of Sinai.

Those who have seen the Grande Chartreuse in the Alps of Dauphiny, know the shock produced by the sight of that vast edifice in the midst of its mountain desert—the long, irregular pile, of the Parisian architecture of the fifteenth century, the one habitation of the upland wilderness of which it is the centre. It is this feeling, raised to its highest pitch, which is roused on finding in the heart of the Desert of Sinai the stately Convent of St. Catherine, with its massive walls, its gorgeous church hung with banners, its galleries of chapels, of cells, and of guest-chambers, its library of precious manuscripts, the sound of its rude cymbals calling to prayer, and changed by the echoes into music as it rolls through the desert valley, the double standard of the Lamb and Cross floating high upon its topmost towers. And this contrast is heightened still more by the fact, that, unlike most monastic retreats, its inhabitants and its associations are not indigenous, but wholly foreign, to the soil where they have struck root. The monks of the Grande Chartreuse, however secluded from the world, are still Frenchmen; the monks of Subiaco are still Italians. But the monks of Sinai are not Arabs, but Greeks. There in the midst of the Desert, the very focus of the pure Semitic race, the traveller hears once again the accents of the Greek tongue; meets the natives of Thessalonica and of Samos; sees in the gardens the produce, not of the Desert or of Egypt, but of the isles of Greece; not the tamarisk, or the palm, or the acacia, but the olive, the almond tree, the apple tree, the poplar, and the cypress of Attica and Corcyra. And as their present state so also their past origin is alike strange to its local habitation. No Arab or Egyptian or Syrian patriarch erected that massive pile; no pilgrim princess, no ascetic king;

¹ See Note A. p. 44.

a Byzantine Emperor, the most worldly of his race, the great legislator Justinian, was its founder. The fame of his architectural magnificence, which has left its monuments in the most splendid churches of Constantinople and Ravenna, had penetrated even to the hermits of Mount Sinai; and they, "when they heard that he delighted to build churches and found convents, made a journey to him, and complained how the wandering sons of Ishmael were wont to attack them suddenly, eat up their provisions, desolate the place, enter the cells, and carry off everything—how they also broke into the church and devoured even the holy wafers." To build for them, as they desired, a convent which should be to them for a stronghold, was a union of policy and religion which exactly suited the sagacious Emperor. Petra was just lost, and there was now no point of defence against the Arabian tribes, on the whole route between Jerusalem and Memphis. Such a point might be furnished by the proposed fortress of Sinai; and as the old Pharaonic and even Ptolemaic kings of Egypt had defended their frontier against the tribes of the Desert by fortified temples, so the Byzantine Emperor determined to secure a safe transit through the Desert by a fortified convent. A tower ascribed to Helena furnished the nucleus. It stood by the traditional sites of the Well of Jethro and the Burning Bush, a retreat for the hermits, when in former times they had been hard-pressed by their Bedouin neighbours. It still remains, the residence of the Archbishop of Sinai, if that term may be applied to an abode in which that great dignitary is never resident; the very gate through which he should enter having been walled up since 1722, to avoid the enormous outlay for the Arab tribes, who, if it were open for his reception, have an inalienable right to be supported for six months at the expense of the convent. Round about this tower, like a little town, extend in every direction the buildings of the convent, now indeed nearly deserted, but still by their number indicating the former greatness of the place, when each of the thirty-six chapels was devoted to the worship of a separate sect. Athwart the whole stretches the long roof of the church; within which, amidst the barbaric splendour of the Greek ritual, may be distinguished with interest the lotus-capitals of the columns—probably the latest imitation of the old Egyptian architecture; and high in the apse behind the altar—too high and too obscure to recognise their features or lineaments distinctly—the two medallions of Justinian and Theodora, probably, with the exception of those in St. Vitalis at Ravenna, the only existing likenesses of those two great and wicked sovereigns; than whom perhaps few

could be named who had broken more completely every one of the laws which have given to Sinai its eternal sacredness.

High beside the church towers another edifice, which introduces us to yet another link in the recollections of Sinai—another pilgrim, who, if indeed he ever passed through these valleys, ranks in importance with any who have visited the spot, since Moses first led thither the flocks of Jethro. No one can now prove or disprove the tradition which relates that Mahomet, whilst yet a camel-driver in Arabia, wandered to the great convent, then not a century old. It is at least not impossible, and it is almost brought within the range of probability, by the repeated allusions in the Koran to the stone of Moses, evidently that now exhibited; to the holy valley of Tuwa, a name now lost, but by which he seems to designate the present valley of the convent; and to the special addresses made to Moses on the western and on the southern slopes of the mountain.

His name certainly has been long preserved, either by the policy or the friendliness of the monks. Nowhere else probably in the Christian world is to be found such a cordial, it might also be said such a tender feeling towards the Arabian prophet and his followers, as in the precincts and the memorials of the Convent of Mount Sinai. "As he rested," so the story has with slight variations been told from age to age, "as he rested with his camels on Mount Menejia, an eagle was seen to spread its wings over his head, and the monks, struck by this augury of his future greatness, received him into their convent, and he in return, unable to write, stamped with ink on his hand the signature to a contract of protection, drawn up on the skin of a gazelle, and deposited in the archives of the convent." This contract, if it ever existed, has long since disappeared; it is said that it was taken by Sultan Selim to Constantinople, and exchanged for a copy, which however no traveller has ever seen. The traditions also of Mahomet in the Peninsula have evidently faded away. The stone which was pointed out to Laborde in 1828 as that on which Moses first, and the youthful camel-driver afterwards, had reposed, and to which the Bedouins of his day muttered their devotions, is now comparatively unknown. The foot-mark on the rock, whatever it is, invented or pointed out by the monks, as impressed by his dromedary or mule, according as it is supposed to have been left in his early visit, or on his nocturnal flight from Mecca to Jerusalem—is now confounded by the Arabs with the impress of the dromedary on which Moses rode up and down the long ascent to Jebel Mûsa. But there still remains, though no longer used, the mosque on the

top of the mountain, and that within the walls of the convent, in which the monks allowed the Mahometan devotees to pray side by side with Christian pilgrims; founded according to the belief of the illiterate Mussulmans,—in whose minds chronology and history have no existence,—in the times of the prophet, when Christians and Mussulmans were all one, and loved one another as brothers.

As centuries have rolled on, even the Convent of Sinai has not escaped their influence. The many cells which formerly peopled the mountains have long been vacant. The episcopal city of Paran, perhaps in consequence of the rise of the foundation of Justinian, has perished almost without a history. The nunnery of St. Episteme has vanished; we see only the ruins of the convent of the good physicians Cosmo and Damian, the hermitage of St. Onufrius, the convent of the Forty Martyrs—each tinged with a certain interest from the famous churches of the same name, derived from them, in the Forum of Rome, on the Janiculan Hill, and on the Lateran. The great fortress of St. Catherine probably owes its existence more to its massive walls than to any other single cause. Yet it is a thought of singular, one might add of melancholy, interest, that amidst all these revolutions, the Convent of Mount Sinai is still the one seat of European and of Christian civilisation and worship, not only in the whole Peninsula of Sinai, but in the whole country of Arabia. Still, or at least till within a very few years, it has retained a hold, if not on the reason or the affections, at least on the superstitions of the Bedouins, beyond what is exercised by any other influence. Burekhardt, and after him, Robinson, relate with pathetic simplicity the deep conviction with which these wild children of the Desert believe that the monks command or withhold the rain from heaven, on which the whole sustenance of the Peninsula depends.

It is not for us to judge the difficulties of their situation, the poverty and ignorance of the monks, the untamable barbarism of the Arabs. Yet looking from an external point of view at the singular advantages enjoyed by the convent, it is hard to recall another institution, with such opportunities so signally wasted. It is a colony of Christian pastors planted amongst heathens, who wait on them for their daily bread and for their rain from heaven, and hardly a spark of civilisation or of Christianity, so far as history records, has been imparted to a single tribe or family in that wide wilderness. It is a colony of Greeks, of Europeans, of ecclesiastics, in one of the most interesting and the most sacred regions of the earth, and hardly a fact, from the time of their first foundation to the

present time, has been contributed by them to the geography, the geology, or the history of a country which in all its aspects has been submitted to their investigation for thirteen centuries.

One other sanctuary of the Desert must be mentioned. The Bedouin tribes, as has been said, have lost their ancient reverence for the traces of the Prophet, and every traveller has observed on their godless life. It is very rare indeed that any sign of religious worship can be found amongst them. Few have any knowledge of the prescribed prayers of the Mussulman; still fewer practise them. But there is one exception. In the eastern extremity of the great crescent-shaped valley which embraces the whole cluster of Sinai, is the tomb of the Sheykh, from which the wâdy derives its name—"the Wâdy es-Sheykh," the "Valley of the Saint." In a tenement of the humblest kind is Sheykh Saleh's grave. Who he was, when he lived, is entirely unknown. Possibly he may have been the founder of the tribe of that name which still exists in the Peninsula; possibly the ancient prophet mentioned in the Koran as preaching the faith of Islam before the birth of Mahomet. The present belief would seem to be, that he was one of the circle of companions of the prophet, which, according to the defiance of all chronological laws in the minds of uneducated Mussulmans, included Saleh, Moses, David, and Christ, as well as Abû Bekr, Omar, and Ali. This tomb is to the modern Bedouins the sanctuary of the Peninsula. As they approach it they exhibit signs of devotion never seen elsewhere; and once a year all the tribes of the Desert assemble round it, and celebrate with races and dances a Bedouin likeness of the funeral games round the tomb of Patroclus. Sacrifices of sheep and camels, with sprinkling of the blood on the walls of this homely chapel, are described as accompanying this sepulchral feast.

NOTE A.

SINAITIC INSCRIPTIONS.

(See page 40.)

I HAVE preferred to give my account of these inscriptions as nearly as possible in the words of a letter, written immediately after having seen the last of them on the frontier of the Desert, because I wish to confine myself simply to facts which fell under my own observation. It may, however, be well briefly to state their history down to the present time.

1. The earliest indication of any such inscriptions is in Diodorus (B.C. 10), who probably derived his information from Artemidorus (B.C. 110), or Agatharchides (B.C. 160). In speaking of the sacred palm-grove on the south-west shore of the Peninsula (possibly Feirân, but more probably Tôr), he says, "There is also an altar of solid stone *very old, inscribed with ancient unknown letters.*" As the locality is uncertain we cannot identify this with any existing inscription. But it is important as a record of inscriptions, already old and unknown, at that date.

2. About A.D. 518, Cosmas, the Indian traveller (Indico-pleustes) visited the Peninsula. He observed "*at all halting places, all the stones in that region which were broken off from the mountains, written with carved Hebrew characters,*" which were explained to him by his Jewish companions as "*written thus: 'The departure of such and such a man of such a tribe, in such a year, in such a month; ' just as with us some people often write in inns.*" These words well describe the inscriptions in and near the Wâdy Mukatteb; their position, their numbers, their accessibility, their likeness to the scribbles of casual travellers in halting-places. The only inaccuracy is the description of them as *Hebrew*, which, to one unacquainted with the language, was a natural mistake from the occasional resemblance of the characters. His own explanation (he does not say that of his guides) is, that they were the work of the Israelites exercising themselves in the art of writing, newly acquired, as he supposed, at Sinai, and thus followed up "with the ardour of a new study" during the stay in the wilderness, "as in a quiet school."

3. The attention of scholars was again directed to them in 1753, by the eccentric Irish prelate, Bishop Clayton; who published an account of them by the Prefect of the Franciscan Convent of Cairo, and offered a large reward for their transcription.

4. Since that time they have been frequently described by travellers, and various copies taken, of which the most complete were those published (1820) by Mr. Gray, in Vol. II. Part 1 of the Transactions of the Royal Society of Literature; in addition to which, in 1845, many more were copied by Dr. Lepsius, which will, it is hoped, soon appear.

5. Of the copies so obtained two main explanations have been given.

(a) In 1840, Dr. Beer of Leipsic published a work containing one hundred of these inscriptions, in which he arrived at the conclusion, first, that the language was a dialect of Arabic, and that their contents were the greetings and names of

travellers; secondly, that they were the work of Christian pilgrims. The author of this work died of starvation and neglect, just as it had acquired celebrity enough to procure him aid too late. It has since been followed up by Professor Tuch of Leipsic (1849), who agrees with Beer in the decyphering of the inscriptions; but believes them to be of an earlier date, and chiefly by Pagans, pilgrims to Serbâl.

(b) In two works published respectively in 1851 and 1856, the Rev. C. Forster revived Bishop Clayton's notion of their Israelitish origin,—combining it with a new theory, that the characters are identical with the enchorial Egyptian alphabet; that the rude accompanying pictures illustrate or explain the characters; and that the inscriptions thus decyphered contain records of some of the chief events of the Exodus.

It will be seen that, whilst in the account of their origin the theory of Cosmas agrees with Mr. Forster, in the account of their contents his statement agrees with Dr. Beer and Professor Tuch.

The following observations have no further value than as the record of eye-witnesses. To enter more fully into the subject would require a knowledge of languages which I do not possess. But I may be permitted to draw a general conclusion from the facts just stated, combined with the appearance of the inscriptions themselves. On the one hand the statements of Cosmas, and still more (if we could identify his description), of Diodorus, imply in some of the inscriptions an age prior, perhaps long prior, to the Christian era—which would receive an additional confirmation, if a statement made by Mr. Forster in his second work (p. 61), and by Dr. Stewart, Tent and Khan (p. 88), should prove correct, that a Sinaitic inscription has been found contemporaneous with a tablet of Egyptian hieroglyphics. On the other hand, the existence of Christian crosses, and the intermixture of Greek, Latin, and Arabic inscriptions, require in many others a date long subsequent, and prove that the whole series cannot be confined within the limits of a single generation, but must have extended over a period of centuries.

Of their origin much may be inferred from their contents, if truly decyphered; nothing, from their position, their numbers, or their mode of execution, except as to the probable direction or intention of the writers.

1. I have seen the inscriptions in the following places: First, in the Wâdy Sidri, the Wâdy Mũghareh, and in great numbers in the Wâdy Mukatteb. I class these valleys together, because they are within three hours of each other.

Secondly, a few in the lower parts of the Wâdy Feirân. Thirdly, in considerable numbers up the Wâdy Aleyat, and five or six in the Wâdy Abû-Hamad, and three on the summit of Mount Serbâl. These I class together as being all on the passage to the top of Serbâl. Fourthly, in the Wâdy Solaf, three or four, and in great numbers in the Nûkb-Hâwy. This valley and pass form together the lower road between Serbâl and Sinai. Fifthly, in great numbers in the Lejâ, up to the first ascent of the "Shûk Mûsa," or ravine by which you mount St. Catherine. Sixthly, on the high table-plain, called Herîmet Haggag, between the Wâdy Seyâl and the Wâdy el-'Ain; the rock which stands at the end of this plain has more in proportion than any other spot I have seen, and there are some in the sandstone labyrinths near it. Seventhly, a few on the staircase leading up to the Deir at Petra, and, apparently, on the "isolated column" in the plain. (Some of our fellow-travellers also found them in a tomb near the Theatre.) Eighthly, on the broken columns of a ruin at or near the ancient Malatha, immediately before entering the hills of Judæa.

2. This enumeration will show how widely spread they are. It will also, I think, show that in some instances at least they have been cut by pilgrims or travellers, visiting particular, and probably, sacred localities. I allude to those of the Lejâ, the Deir at Petra, and especially Serbâl. In all these places there is no thoroughfare, and therefore the places themselves must have been the object of the writers. What could have been their purpose in the Lejâ it is difficult to say, for they go beyond the traditional Rock of Moses, and yet they fall far short of the summit of St. Catherine; nor have they any connection with the traditional scenes of the giving of the Law, Jebel Mûsa being entirely without them. At Petra, their object is evidently the Deir. At Serbâl their object must have been something at the top of the mountain itself. It should also be observed, that they are nearly, though not quite, as numerous on the east as on the west of the peninsula. Those on the north and on the south lay out of my route.

3. Their situation and appearance is such as in hardly any case requires more than the casual work of passing travellers. Most of them are on sandstone, those of Wâdy Mukatteb, and Herîmet Haggag, and Petra, of course very susceptible of inscriptions. At Herîmet Haggag one of us scooped out a horse, more complete than any of these sculptured animals, in ten minutes. Those which are on granite are very rudely and slightly scratched. Again, none that I saw, unless it might be a very doubtful one at Petra, required ladders or machinery

of any kind. Most of them could be written by any one, who, having bare legs and feet as all Arabs have, could take firm hold of the ledges, or by any active man even with shoes. I think there are none that could not have been written by one man climbing on another's shoulder. Amongst the highest in the Wâdy Mukatteb are single Greek names.

4. Their numbers seem to me to have been greatly exaggerated. I had expected in the Wâdy Mukatteb to see both sides of a deep defile covered with thousands. Such is not the case by any means. The Wâdy Mukatteb is a large open valley, almost a plain, with no continuous wall of rock on either side, but masses of rock receding and advancing; and it is only or chiefly on these advancing masses, that the inscriptions straggle, not by thousands, but at most by hundreds or fifties. On Serbâl, I think we could hardly have overlooked any; but we saw no more than three, though it is difficult to reconcile this with the statement of Burckhardt, that he had there seen many inscriptions. They are much less numerous than the scribblings of the names of Western travellers on the monuments in the Valley of the Nile since the beginning of this century.

5. So far as the drawings of animals, by which they are usually accompanied, indicate the intention of the inscriptions themselves, it is difficult to conceive that that intention could have been serious or solemn. The animals are very rudely drawn; they are of all kinds; asses, horses, dogs, but, above all, ibexes; and these last, in forms so ridiculous, that, making every allowance for the rudeness of the sculpture, it is impossible to invest them with any serious signification. The ludicrous exaggeration of the horns of the ibex was almost universal; and no animal occurred so frequently. Sometimes they are butting other animals. Sometimes they, as well as asses and horses, occur disconnected with inscriptions.

6. As regards their antiquity, I observed the following data. There was great difference of age, both in the pictures and letters, as indicated by the difference of colour; the oldest, of course, being those which approached most nearly to the colour of the rock. But, first, I found none on fallen rocks inverted, and, though I doubt not that there may be such, the sandstone crumbles so rapidly that this is no proof of age. A famous Greek inscription at Petra fell in 1846. Secondly, they are intermixed, though not in great numbers, with Greek and Arabic, and in one or two instances Latin inscriptions, these in some cases bearing the same appearance of colour, wear and tear, as the Sinaitic. Thirdly, these Greek inscriptions, which alone I could read, were chiefly the *names* of the

writers. The only Latin inscription which I remember was in the sandstone rocks near Herimet Haggag,—PERTUS. Fourthly, *Crosses* of all kinds, chiefly + and ✚, were very numerous and conspicuous, standing usually at the beginning of the inscriptions, and (what is important) occurring also and in the same position before those written in Greek and Arabic: often nothing but the cross, sometimes the cross with Alpha and Omega. These last were in the same place where I noticed the Latin inscription, (thus A + Ω), of the same colour as the contiguous Sinaitic characters. There are also said to be Ethiopic characters, and a peculiar figure used in the Greek service books, when engravings are given representing some specially sacred subject. From having previously seen that Forster and Tuch (the last German writer on the subject) had united in the conclusion that the hypothesis of their being Christian inscriptions was groundless, and that the alleged appearance of crosses was a mistake, I was the more surprised to find them in such numbers, and of such a character. However else the crosses may be explained, I can hardly imagine a doubt that they are the work, for the most part, of Christians, whether travellers or pilgrims. They are in this case curious, and if their object could be ascertained would throw great light on the traditions of the Peninsula. But they cannot have been the work of Israelites. The date of the columns at Malatha, or of the temple and tomb at Petra, would settle the question of the inscriptions written on them. The two latter, I presume, cannot be older than the Roman dominion of Arabia.

PART II.

THE JOURNEY FROM CAIRO TO JERUSALEM.

EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS, ETC.

I.—DEPARTURE FROM EGYPT—OVERLAND ROUTE—FIRST ENCAMPMENT.

It was too hazy to see anything in the distance,—even the Pyramids were but shadows. Soon the green circle of cultivated land receded from view, like the shores as you sail out to sea, and in an hour we were in the Desert ocean. Not, however, a wide circle of sand, but a wild waste of pebbly soil, something like that of the Plaine de Crau (near Marseilles), broken into low hills, and presenting nowhere an even horizon. But the remarkable feature was a broad beaten track, smooth

and even, and distinctly marked as any turnpike-road in England, only twice the width, and running straight as a railway or Roman road through these desert hills.

It was a striking sight in itself, to see the great track of civilised man in such a region. It was still more striking when you knew what it was, the great thoroughfare of the British empire, becoming yearly more important and interesting, as the course which so many friends have travelled and will travel. Even the Exodus for that day waxed faint before it. And lastly, it was most instructive, as the only likeness probably which I shall ever see of those ancient roads, carried through the Desert in old times to the seats of the Babylonian and Persian Empires, to which allusion is made in the 40th chapter of Isaiah. In this comparatively level region, it is true, no mountains had to be brought low, nor valleys filled up; but it was literally "a high-way prepared in the wilderness:" and the likeness was only interrupted, not obscured, by the solitary stations and telegraphs which at intervals of every five miles, broke the perfect desolation. It has hitherto run along our whole course. To-day, between heaps of stones—said by one of the dragomans to be the graves of Ibrahim Pasha's soldiers—which, as the heaps extend for miles and miles, with the utmost regularity, needs no remark, except as an instance of the extreme rapidity with which false local traditions spring up. They are really the "stones," the stumbling-blocks "cast up" out of the way, and so left on each side of the road to mark it more distinctly. . . .

Nothing was more striking to me in our first encampment than the realisation of the first lines in Thalaba:—

"How beautiful is night,
A dewy freshness fills the silent air."

There is the freshness without coldness, and there is the silence doubly strange as compared with the everlasting clatter of the streets and inns of Cairo, and the incessant sound of songs, and screams, and shocks of the boat upon the Nile; nothing heard but the slight movement amongst the Bedouin circles round their fires, and from time to time a plaintive murmur from the camels as they lie, like stranded ships, moored round the tents.

II.—THE PASSAGE OF THE RED SEA.

(1.) *Approach to Suez.*—I have at last, as far as mortal eyes can see it, seen the passage of the Red Sea. It was about

3 P.M. yesterday, that as we descended from the high plain on which we had hitherto been moving, by a gentle slope through the hills, called, by figure of speech, the "defile" of Mukkala, a new view opened before us. Long lines, as if of water, which we immediately called out to be the sea, but which was, in fact, the mirage; but above these, indubitably, the long silvery line of even hills—the hills of ASIA. Onwards we still came, and in the plain below us lay on the left a fortress, a tomb, and a fortified wall.

This is 'Ajrūd, famous as the first great halting-place of the Mecca Pilgrimage; famous as the scene of Eothen's adventure; still more famous as being the only spot on the road which, by its name and position, can claim to be identified with any of the stations mentioned in the flight of the Israelites. It may possibly be Pi-hahiroth.

If it was so, then the low hills of Mukkala, through which we descended, are Migdol, and Baal Zephon was Suez, which lay on the blue waters of the sea, now incontrovertibly before us east and south; and high above the whole scene towered the Gebel 'Atâkah, the "Mountain of Deliverance," a truly magnificent range, which, after all, is the one feature of the scene unchanged and unmistakable; if, at least, this was the impediment which prevented the return of the Israelites into Egypt, when Pharaoh appeared on their rear and "shut them in."

(2.) *From the Wells of Moses ('Ayûn Mûsa).*—The wind drove us to shore: and on the shore—the shore of Arabia and Asia—we landed in a driving sand-storm, and reached this place, 'Ayûn Mûsa, "the Wells of Moses." It is a strange spot,—this plot of tamarisks with its seventeen wells,—literally an island in the desert, and now used as the Richmond of Suez,—a comparison which chiefly serves to show what a place Suez itself must be. It is not mentioned in the Bible, but coming so close as it does upon any probable scene of the Passage, one may fairly connect it with the song of Miriam. And now once more for the Passage. From the beach, within half an hour's walk from hence, the shore commands a view across the Gulf into the wide opening of the two ranges of mountains, the opening of the valley through which the traditional Exodus took place, and consequently the broad blue sea of the traditional passage. This, therefore, is the traditional spot of the landing, and this, with the whole view of the sea as far as Suez, I saw to-night; both at sunset, as the stars came out; and later still by the full moon—the white sandy desert on which I stood, the deep black river-like sea, and the dim

silvery mountains of 'Atâkah on the other side. These are the three features which are indisputable. You know the Straits of Gibraltar,—the high mountains of Africa, the green swells of Europe, the straits which divide them. Such in their way are the three characteristic features of this great boundary of Africa and Asia, on which the Israelites looked through the moonlight of that memorable night. Behind that high African range lay Egypt, with all its wonders; the green fields of the Nile, the immense cities, the greatest monuments of human power and wisdom. On this Asiatic side begins immediately a wide circle of level desert, stone and sand, free as air, but with no trace of human habitation or art, where they might wander, as far as they saw, for ever and ever. And between the two rolled the deep waters of the sea, rising and falling with the tides, which, except on its shores, none of them could have seen,—the tides of the great Indian Ocean, unlike the still dead waters of the Mediterranean Sea. "The Egyptians whom they had seen yesterday they will see no more for ever." Most striking, too, it is to look on that mountain of 'Atâkah, and feel that on its northern and its southern extremity settle the main differences which on so many like questions have divided the Church in after times. For the passage at its southern end are the local Arab traditions, the poetical interest of its scenery, the preconceived notions of one's childhood. For the passage at the northern end are the ancient traditions of the Septuagint; almost all the arguments founded on the text of the Bible itself; all the wishes to bring the event within our own understanding. It is remarkable that this event—almost the first in our religious history—should admit on the spot itself of both these constructions. But the mountain itself remains unchanged and certain—and so does the fact itself which it witnessed. Whether the Israelites passed over the shallow waters of Suez by the means, and within the time, which the narrative seems to imply, or whether they passed through a channel ten miles broad, with the waves on each side piled up to the height of 180 feet, there can be no doubt that they did pass over within sight of this mountain and this desert by a marvellous deliverance. The scene is not impressive in itself,—that at Suez especially is matter-of-fact in the highest degree, and even that at 'Ayûn Mûsa is not amongst those grand frameworks, such as at Marathon and elsewhere correspond to the event which they have encompassed. In this very fact, however, there is something instructive; "a lesson," as the Arabian Nights say, "to be graven on the understanding for such as would be admonished."

III.—THE DESERT, AND SAND-STORM.

The clearing up of the sand the next morning revealed a low range of hills on the eastern horizon, the first step to the vast plain of Northern Arabia. The day after leaving 'Ayûn Mûsa was at first within sight of the blue channel of the Red Sea. But soon Red Sea and all were lost in a sand-storm, which lasted the whole day. Imagine all distant objects entirely lost to view,—the sheets of sand fleeting along the surface of the desert like streams of water; the whole air filled, though invisibly, with a tempest of sand, driving in your face like sleet. Imagine the caravan toiling against this,—the Bedouins each with his shawl thrown completely over his head, half of the riders sitting backwards,—the camels, meantime, thus virtually left without guidance, though, from time to time, throwing their long necks sideways to avoid the blast, yet moving straight onwards with a painful sense of duty truly edifying to behold. I had thought that with the Nile our troubles of wind were over; but (another analogy for the *ships* of the Desert) the great saddlebags act like sails to the camels, and therefore, with a contrary wind, are serious impediments to their progress. And accordingly Mohammed opened our tents this morning just as he used to open our cabin-doors, with the joyful intelligence that the wind was changed,—“good wind, master.” Through the tempest, this roaring and driving tempest, which sometimes made me think that this must be the real meaning of “*a howling wilderness*,” we rode on the whole day.

IV.—MARAH—ELIM.

We were undoubtedly on the track of the Israelites, and we saw the spring which most travellers believe to be Marah, and the two valleys, one of which must almost certainly, both perhaps, be Elim. The general scenery is either immense plains, or latterly a succession of water-courses, that especially of Ghûrûndel, exactly like the dry bed of a Spanish river. These gullies gradually bring you into the heart of strange black and white mountains, the ranges of which overhang the Red Sea above the Hot Wells of Pharaoh, where, according to the Arab traditions of these parts, somewhat invalidating that of 'Ayûn Mûsa, Pharaoh literally breathed his last. For the most part the Desert was absolutely bare, but Wâdy Ghûrûndel and Wâdy Useit, the two rivals for Elim, are fringed with trees and shrubs, the first vegetation we have met in the Desert. These are so peculiar and so interesting that

I must describe each. First, there are the wild palms, successors of the "threescore and ten." Not like those of Egypt or of pictures, but either dwarf,—that is, trunkless—or else with savage hairy trunks and branches all dishevelled. Then there are the feathery tamarisks, here assuming gnarled boughs and hoary heads, worthy of their venerable situation, on whose leaves is found what the Arabs call manna. Thirdly, there is the wild acacia, the same as we had often seen in Egypt, but this also tangled by its desert growth into a thicket—the tree of the Burning Bush, and the shittim-wood of the Tabernacle. Keble's expression of the "towering thorn" is one of his few inaccuracies. No one who has seen it would have used that expression for the tangled spreading tree which shoots out its grey foliage and white blossoms over the Desert.

To-day occurred a curious instance of the tenacious adherence of the Bedouins to their own traditions. We passed a cairn, said to be the grave of the horse of Abû Zenneh, his horse killed in battle. Who Abû Zenneh was—when he lived—what the battle was—is quite unknown, but he left an ordinance that every Arab should throw sand on the cairn as if it were barley, and say, "Eat, eat, O horse of Abû Zenneh," as if the dead creature was still alive. So said our Bedouin, and accordingly each Arab muttered the words and pushed the sand twice or thrice with his foot as he passed. I could not help thinking of the Rechabites, as described by Jeremiah.

V.—SECOND ENCAMPMENT BY THE RED SEA—"WILDERNESS OF SIN."

Another glorious day. We passed a third claimant to the title of Elim, the Wâdy Taiyibeh, palms and tamarisks, venerable as before; then down one of those river-beds, between vast cliffs white on the one side, and on the other of a black calcined colour, between which burst upon us once more the deep blue waters of the Red Sea, bright with their white foam. Beautiful was that brilliant contrast, and more beautiful and delightful still to go down upon the beach and see the waves breaking on that shell-strewn weed-strewn shore, and promontory after promontory breaking into those waters right and left: most delightful of all, the certainty,—I believe I may here say the certainty (thanks to that inestimable verse in Numbers xxxiii.),—that here the Israelites, coming down through that very valley, burst upon that very view,—the view of their old enemy and old friend,—that mysterious sea, and one more glimpse of Egypt dim in the distance in the shadowy hills beyond it. Above the blue sea rose the white

marbly terraces, then blackened by the passage of the vast multitude. High above those terraces ranged the brown cliffs of the Desert, streaked here and there with the purple bands which now first began to display themselves. And as the bright blue sea formed the base of the view, so it was lost above in a sky of the deepest blue that I have ever observed in the East.

We turned aside at last into the plain of Murkhâh—probably the Wilderness of Sin.

Red mountains closed it in on the north, one of which the Bedouins called *Um Shauner*—different from the far greater mountain of that name. Over the hills to the south was the first view of the peaks of *Serbâl*. From this plain we entered the *Wâdy Shellâl*—the “Valley of Cataracts;” thus, for the first time, plunged into the bosom of the strangely-formed and strangely-coloured mountains we had seen so long in the distance. They closed the prospect in front,—red tops resting on black or dark-green bases. The nearer rocks cast their deep evening shades along the level surface of the valley. The bright caper-plant hung from their cliffs, and dwarf palms nestled under the overhanging cliff at the entrance.

VI.—APPROACH TO MOUNT SERBÂL—WÂDY SIDRI AND WÂDY FEIRÂN.

The first great ascent we had made was after leaving the *Wâdy Shellâl*. A stair of rock,¹ the *Nûkb Badera*, brought us into a glorious *wâdy* (*Sidri*) enclosed between red granite mountains descending as precipitously upon the sands as the Bavarian hills on the waters of the *Königsee*. It was a sight worthy of all remembrance, before we reached this, to see, in the first break of day, the sunbeams striking the various heights of white and red, and to think what an effect this must have had as the vast encampment, dawn by dawn, in these mountains, broke up with the shout, “Rise up, Lord, and let Thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate Thee flee before Thee.” In the midst of the *Wâdy Sidri*, just where the granite was exchanged for sandstone, I caught sight of the first inscription. A few more followed up the course of a side valley where we turned up to see (strange sight in that wild region!) Egyptian hieroglyphics and figures carved in the cliffs,—strange sight, too, for the Israelites if they passed this way; like that second glimpse of the Red Sea, for these hiero-

¹ It is said that the Arabs describe this as called up by Moses to enable the Israelites to get out of the valley below. (Lowth's *Wanderer in Arabia*.)

glyphics are amongst the oldest in the world, and were already there before the Exodus. Of the other inscriptions, the chief part were in the next valley, Mukatteb, "of writing," so called from them. Of these I will speak elsewhere.¹ From the Wâdy Mukatteb, we passed into the endless windings of the Wâdy Feirân. I cannot too often repeat, that these wâdys are exactly like rivers, except in having no water; and it is this appearance of torrent-bed and banks, and clefts in the rocks for tributary streams, and at times even rushes and shrubs fringing their course, which gives to the whole wilderness a doubly dry and thirsty aspect—signs of

"Water, water everywhere, and not a drop to drink."

Here, too, began the curious sight of the mountains, streaked from head to foot, as if with boiling streams of dark red matter poured over them; really the igneous fluid squirted upwards, as they were heaved from the ground. On the previous part of that day, and indeed often since, the road lay through what seemed to be the ruins, the cinders, of mountains calcined to ashes, like the heaps of a gigantic foundry. I cannot conceive a more interesting country for a geologist. Even to the most uneducated eye the colours tell their own story, of chalk and limestone, and sandstone, and granite; and these portentous appearances are exactly such as give the impression that you are indeed travelling in the very focus of creative power. I have looked on scenery as strange, and on scenery more grand, but on scenery at once so strange and so grand I never have looked, and probably never shall again. One other feature I must add. Huge cones of white clay and sand are at intervals planted along these mighty water-courses, guarding the embouchure of the valleys; apparently the original alluvial deposit of some tremendous antediluvian torrent, left there to stiffen into sandstone. We encamped at El-Hessué, the first, but not the largest of those groves of tamarisks and palms which make the Wâdy Feirân so important a feature in the Desert.

VII.—ASCENT OF MOUNT SERBÂL.

At 5.30 A.M. we started. We passed the instructive and suggestive sight of the ruins of the old Christian city and episcopal palace of Paran, under the hill which has great claims to be that on which Moses prayed, whilst the battle of Rephidim was fought for the passage through what is now (whatever it may have been) the oasis of the Desert. We

¹ See Note A. to Part I.

then turned up the long water-course occupied in part by the brook of Wâdy 'Aleyat, which conducted us to the base of the mountain, where the spring rises amidst moss and fern.

It is one of the finest forms I have ever seen. It is a vast mass of peaks, which, in most points of view, may be reduced to five, the number adopted by the Bedouins. These five peaks, all of granite, rise so precipitously, so column-like, from the broken ground which forms the root of the mountain, as at first sight to appear inaccessible. But they are divided by steep ravines, filled with fragments of fallen granite. Up the central ravine, Wâdy Abû-Hamad ("valley of the father of wild figs," so called from half-a-dozen in its course), we mounted. It was toilsome, but not difficult, and in about three hours we reached a ridge between the third and fourth peaks. Here we rested; close by us were the traces of a large leopard. A little beyond was a pool of water surrounded by an old enclosure.

Three-quarters of an hour more brought us over smooth blocks of granite to the top of the third or central peak, the steep ascent was broken by innumerable shrubs like sage or thyme, which grew to the very summit; and at last, also helped by loose stones arranged by human hands (whether yesterday or two thousand years ago), and through a narrow pass of about twenty feet, to the two eminences of which this peak is formed.

The highest of these is a huge block of granite; on this, as on the back of some petrified tortoise, you stand and overlook the whole Peninsula of Sinai. The Red Sea, with the Egyptian hills opposite, and the wide waste of the Kâ'a on the south, the village and grove of Tôr just marked as a dark line on the shore; on the east the vast cluster of what is commonly called Sinai, with the peaks of St. Catherine; and, towering high above all, the less famous, but most magnificent of all, the Mont Blanc of those parts, the unknown and unvisited Um Shaumer. Every feature of the extraordinary conformation lies before you; the wâdys coursing and winding in every direction; the long crescent of the Wâdy es-Sheykh; the infinite number of mountains like a model; their colours all as clearly displayed as in Russegger's geological map, which we had in our hands at the moment; the dark granite, the brown sandstone, the yellow Desert, the dots of vegetation along the Wâdy Feirân, and the one green spot of the great palm-grove (if so it be) of Rephidim. On the northern and somewhat lower eminence are the visible remains of a building, which, like the stairs of stones mentioned before, may be of any date, from Moses to Burckhardt. It consists of granite fragments cemented with lime and mortar. In the

centre is a rough hole, and close beside it, on the granite rocks, are three of those mysterious inscriptions, which, whatever they mean elsewhere, must mean here that this summit was frequented by unknown pilgrims, who used those characters; the more so, as the like inscriptions were scattered at intervals through the whole ascent. A point of rock immediately below this ruin was the extreme edge of the peak. It was flanked on each side by the tremendous precipices of the two neighbouring peaks—itsself as precipitous; and as we saw them overlooking the circle of Desert—plain, hill, and valley, it was impossible not to feel that for the *giving* of the Law to Israel and the world the scene was most truly fitted. I say “for the *giving* of the Law,” because the objections urged from the absence of any plain immediately under the mountain for *receiving* the Law, are unanswerable, or could only be answered if no such plain existed elsewhere in the Peninsula.

It was already dark by the time that we reached our encampment at the eastern extremity of the Wâdy Feirân. It was a beautiful sight to see on our way the mountains lit up from top to bottom with the red blaze which shot up from the watchfires of the Bedouin tents. So they must have shone before the Pillar of Fire. The palm-groves of Feirân I saw only by the clear starlight; yet it was still possible to see how great must be the beauty of the luxuriant palms and feathery tamarisks—the wild glades below, the vast mountains above.

VIII.—APPROACH TO JEBEL MÛSA, THE TRADITIONAL SINAI.

We started at 5 A.M. The camels went round by Wâdy es-Sheykh; we took the direct route by Wâdy Solaf, which, passing by several deserted Bedouin villages of the Arab serfs of the convent, with their lonely burial-grounds, brought us to the foot of the Nûkb Hâwy, the “Pass of the Wind,” a stair of rock like that by which we had mounted to the cluster of Serbâl, and by which we were to mount again into the second and highest stage of the great mountain labyrinth. Its entrance is formed by the white alluvial formations before-mentioned, as if left by the great streams of the central mountains when they first burst forth to feed the lower plains and valleys of the Wâdy Feirân; this being the opening into the dark range we had seen in the distance from the top of Serbâl. The pass itself is what would be elsewhere a roaring torrent, like the Pass of St. Gothard. It is amidst masses of rock, a thread of a stream just visible, and here and there forming clear pools. shrouded in palms. On many of these rocky fragments are Sinaitic inscriptions, mostly with crosses. The

steep pass is broken in part by long green swells as of tufa. At its summit, the course of the stream is still traceable from time to time by rushes.

We reached the head of the pass ; and far in the bosom of the mountains before us, I saw the well-known shapes of the cliffs which form the front of Sinai. At each successive advance these cliffs disengaged themselves from the intervening and surrounding hills, and at last they stood out—I should rather say the columnar mass, which they form, stood out—alone against the sky. On each side the infinite complications of twisted and jagged mountains fell away from it. On each side the sky encompassed it round as though it were alone in the wilderness. And to this giant mass we approached through a wide valley, a long continued plain, which, enclosed as it was between two precipitous mountain ranges of black and yellow granite, and having always at its end this prodigious mountain block, I could compare to nothing else than the immense avenue,—the “dromos,” as it is technically called,—through which the approach was made to the great Egyptian temples. One extraordinary sensation was the foreknowledge at each successive opening of the view of every object that would next appear ; as cliff and plain, and the deep gorges on each side, and lastly the Convent with its gardens burst before me, it was the unfolding of the sight of sights, of which I had read and heard for years, till each part of it seemed as familiar as if I had seen it again and again. Was it the same or not ? The colours and the scale of the scene were not precisely what I should have gathered from descriptions : the colours less remarkable, the scale less grand. But the whole impression of that long approach was even more wonderful than I had expected. Whatever may have been the scene of the events in Exodus, I cannot imagine that any human being could pass up that plain and not feel that he was entering a place above all others suited for the most august of the sights of earth. We encamped outside the Convent, at the point where the great Wâdy es-Sheykh falls into the Wâdy er-Râhah, immediately under the corner of the cliff.

IX.—ASCENT OF JEBEL MÛSA AND OF RÂS SÛFSÂFER.

The next day we started for Jebel Mûsa, the Mountain of Moses, the traditional scene of the Giving of the Law. I shall not go through all the steps of the well-known ascent. There were two points which especially struck me. First, the little plain just before the last ascent. The long flight of rude steps, which leads from the base to the summit, winding through

craggs of granite, at last brings you in sight of a grand archway standing between two of these huge cliffs, somewhat like that by which you enter the desert of the Chartreuse. You pass this, and yet another, and then find yourself in that world-renowned spot. The tall cypress, which stands in the centre of the little basin, had already appeared towering above the rocks before we came in sight of the whole. There is a ruined church on the slope of the hill, built over the so-called cave of Elijah, and a well and tank on the other side of the basin, also ascribed to him. It is a solemn and beautiful scene, entirely secluded, and entirely characteristic, with the exception of the cypress, which marks the hand of strangers. Next, the summit itself, whatever else may be its claims, bears on its front the marks of being, or having been, regarded as the spot most universally sacred on earth. For there, side by side, and from reverence for the same event on which both religions are founded, stand the ruins of a small Christian church, once divided amongst all the Christian sects, and of a small Mahometan mosque. From whatever point we saw this famous peak, these two fragments of worship, almost always visible upon it, more distinctly than anything else told what it was. And now for the question which every one asks on that consecrated spot. Is this "the top of the mount" described in Exodus, or must we seek it elsewhere? The whole question turns on another question, whether there is a plain below it agreeing with the words of the narrative. Dr. Robinson, who has the merit of discovering first that magnificent approach which I have before described on the other side of the mountain, declares not: but Laborde and others have so confidently maintained that there was a large and appropriate place for the encampment below this peak, that I was fully prepared to find it, and to believe in the old tradition. This impression is so instantly overthrown by the view of the Wâdy Sebâ'iyeh, as one looks down upon it from the precipice of Jebel Mûsa, that it must be at once abandoned in favour of the view of the great approach before described, unless either the view of the plain of Er-Râhah was less imposing from above than it was from below, or the plain of Sebâ'iyeh more imposing from below than it was from above. The first thing to be done was, therefore, to gain the summit of the other end of the range called the Râs Sûfsâfeh (Willow Head), overlooking the Er-Râhah from above. The whole party descended, and after winding through the various basins and cliffs, which make up the range, we reached the rocky point overlooking the approach we had come the preceding day. The effect on us, as on every one who has seen and described it, was in-

stantaneous. It was like the seat on the top of Serbâl, but with the difference that here was the deep wide yellow plain sweeping down to the very base of the cliffs ; exactly answering to the plain on which the people "removed and stood afar off." . . . There is yet a higher mass of granite immediately above this point, which should be ascended for the greater completeness of view which it affords.—The plain below is then seen extending not only between the ranges of Tlaha and Furei'â, but also into the lateral valleys, which, on the north-east, unite it with the wide Wâdy of the Sheykh. This is important, as showing how far the encampment may have been spread below, still within sight of the same summit. Behind extends the granite mass of the range of Jebel Mûsa, cloven into deep gullies and basins, and ending in the traditional peak, crowned by the memorials of its double sanctity. The only other point which now remained was to explore the Wâdy Sebâ'iyeh on the other side, and ascertain whether its appearance and its relation to Jebel Mûsa from below was more suitable than it had seemed from above. This I did on the afternoon of the third day, and I came to the conclusion that it could only be taken for the place if none other existed. It is rough, uneven, narrow. The only advantage which it has is, that the peak from a few points of view rises in a more commanding form than the Râs Sûfsâfeh. But the mountain never descends upon the plain. No ! If we are to have a mountain without a wide amphitheatre at its base, let us have Serbâl ; but, if otherwise, I am sure that if the monks of Justinian had fixed the traditional scene on the Râs Sûfsâfeh, no one would for an instant have doubted that this only could be the spot. . . . Considering the almost total absence of such conjunctions of plain and mountain in this region, it is a really important evidence to the truth of the narrative, that one such conjunction can be found, and that within the neighbourhood of the traditional Sinai. Nor can I say that the degree of uncertainty, which must hang over it, materially diminished my enjoyment of it. In fact, it is a great safeguard for the real reverence due to the place, as the scene of the first great revelation of God to man. As it is, you may rest on your general conviction, and be thankful.

[On a careful consideration of the traditional statements, it seems very doubtful whether the scene of the Giving of the Law as we now conceive it ever entered into the minds of those who fixed the traditional site. The consecrated peak of Jebel Mûsa was probably revered simply as the spot where Moses saw the vision of God, without reference to any more general event.]

X.—ASCENT OF ST. CATHERINE.

The next day we ascended the highest peak, not of the whole peninsula, but of the Sinai range. Its whole historical or legendary interest depends on the story from which it derives its name, that the angels bore St. Catherine's body from Alexandria over the Red Sea and Desert, and placed it on this mountain top. It is a noble mountain, and glorious was the view from the top. It embraces not only the labyrinth of bare granite peaks which you see from Jebel Mûsa, but a panorama over the whole Peninsula. Once more we saw Serbâl itself; once more, and now nearer at hand, the masses of Um Shaumer; and (what we could not see from Serbâl) both the gulfs of the Red Sea, beautifully blue, with the high mountains of Egypt and Arabia beyond. Most complete, too, was the view of Jebel Mûsa below; the reddish granite of its lower mass ending in the grey-green granite of the peak itself.

XI.—ASCENT OF THE JEBEL ED-DEIR.

[This mountain is the only one of the group immediately around the Convent which had never been explored. For this reason, amongst others, we made the ascent, and for this reason I here give the account of it. It bears the various names of Jebel ed-Deir, "the Mountain of the Convent," from the nunnery which once existed there—"Jebel Bestin," from St. Episteme, the first abbess of the nunnery,—"Solab," the Cross, from the cross which stands on its summit;—of "the Burning Bush," from the story already given.] "We went up with two Bedouin boys, belonging to the serfs of the Convent:—The name of the eldest was Sâleh, of the younger, Hamadân. Like all the young guides attached to the monastery, they were remarkably intelligent; and though they had never been to the summit before, found their way with great sagacity. The ascent took three hours: it was steep, but the granite was sufficiently rough to afford hold and footing. In the recesses between the peaks was a ruined Bedouin village. On the highest level was a small natural basin, thickly covered with shrubs of myrrh,—of all the spots of the kind that I saw, the best suited for the feeding of Jethro's flocks in the seclusion of the mountain. From this, through the rock, a deep narrow cleft opens straight down upon the Convent, which lies far below, like a collection of houses of card or cork, with the leaden roof of the church standing athwart them. This, doubtless, is the explanation of the legend of the miraculous sunbeam. The highest point

of all is a little above this, reached by clambering over blocks of granite,—and is crowned by the rude wooden cross which gives the mountain its name, and stands out in the blue sky, a strange sight in the Arabian wilderness. From this point, St. Catherine and Jebel Mûsa are both visible; also beyond St. Catherine, the long line of peaks, which we saw from thence; and amongst them rose the tall pyramidal mountain, of which we were still in doubt whether it was Um Shaumer. A light cloud veiled the summit of Râs Sûfsâfeh. This is the only spot which commands the view both of the Wâdy Sebâ'iyeh and of the Wâdy er-Râhah. In other respects it is inferior to any of the other four mountain views we saw: less extensive than Serbâl or St. Catherine, less wild than Jebel Mûsa, and less imposing than Râs Sûfsâfeh. Thence we descended by a path on the south-west to the ruins of the nunnery, called Magarefeh ('Security'), which was under a steep rock, and above a little spring or stream. Steps of broken stones, like those on the ascent of Jebel Mûsa, lead from thence to the Wâdy ed-Deir. In the course of the descent, we came to a precipitous granite rock, so smooth as to render it almost impossible to pass down its surface; the boys, with much ingenuity, turned the difficulty by discovering a fissure, through which we could creep underneath it."

XII.—ROUTE FROM SINAI TO 'AKABA.

[The approach to Sinai from the west has been so often described, that I have hitherto only given the general outline contained in the letters. But the descent to the east has been so seldom and so erroneously delineated, both in books and maps, that I venture to add here a few words from my journal.]

On leaving the Convent, the road soon falls into the crescent of the Wâdy es-Sheykh,—which widens till it opens into a large plain. In the midst of this was a small chapel, with a white conical roof, containing the tomb of Sheykh Sâleh, who gives his name to the wâdy. Round it are a collection of small gravestones. He was, according to the Bedouins with us, one of the Suâbis, or companions of the Prophet, "in the time of Mûsa and Mohammed," and attended the latter, and was buried on the journey,—“as if—excuse me—one of you, masters, fell sick, and died, and was buried.” “The tomb is still visited by all the Tawârah Arabs, and by them alone.” “The burial place belongs to them.” “Bedouins not of the Tawârah, however near, could not be buried here.” The Arabs who accompanied us (here and here only on the journey)

began to mutter prayers as they approached. They (with our own Mohammed) stood for a few minutes, saying a few prayers or addresses to the dead saint, with a great appearance of solemnity, and then entered the hovel. The Saint is buried in the floor. His wooden coffin, with a wooden handle to mark the head, closed with a cloth—and sticks are rudely put up round it, hung with old rags and lid above, is supposed to be above the grave. This is covered with shawls. "If they were of Cashmere, no one would take them." The one Bedouin who entered with us knelt down, and taking dust from the coffin, threw it on his head. One by one they all entered, but with a kind of delicacy, waiting till we had left it.

From this point we struck off from the Wâdy es-Sheykh, leaving it to pursue its winding course towards the Wâdy Feirân—and went up the Wâdy Suweiriyeh, near the spring of Abû Suweiriyeh, whence the Bedouins fetched water. Up the Nûkb Suweiriyeh—an abrupt but not high or difficult pass into the wâdy or wide broad plain of El-Wah, the watershed between the cluster of Sinai and 'Akaba. From this pass, and from this plain, the backward view of the Sinai mountains was very fine—St. Catherine and at times Jebel Mûsa and Râs Sûfsâfeh towering above the rest; and in front a long bulwark of black and jagged peaks, like the Grampians.

From this plain we descended into the Wâdy Seyâl—so called, apparently, from a few scattered acacias, the first we have seen since leaving the Wâdy Solaf. This wâdy is a continuous descent, between high granite rocks, occasionally red—sometimes like the deep red of old brick. In this we encamped. The next day it widened, and the acacias increased into spreading mazy thorns. A sharp storm of rain, the only one we experienced in our whole journey, swept from the Sinai range, during which we took shelter under a "Retem," or broom. The shrubs on the ground were myrrh (ser), a yellow flowering shrub, called "Abeithiran," and a blue thorny plant, called "Silleh." The hills here are of a conical shape, curiously slanting across each other, and with an appearance of serpentine and basalt. The wâdy, still bearing the same name, then mounted a short rocky pass—of hills capped with sandstone—and entered on a plain of deep sand—the first we had encountered—over which were scattered isolated clumps of sandstone, with occasional chalk—to which the Arabs gave the name of "'Adjerat-el-Farûs." On two of these rocks were Sinaitic inscriptions; one with animals, one without. At the close of this plain, an isolated rock, called by the Bedouins "Herîmet Haggag," "Aboutig

Suleman," "Kel'at 'Abdallah"—its high tiers rising out of lower tiers, like a castle. Almost all round the lower tier are inscriptions, some Sinaitic, some Arab, two or three Greek—many animals, some recent, but the greater part of the same colour as the inscriptions, and chiefly ibexes, with enormous horns, overlapping the whole body like a rainbow; also camels and ostriches.

Leaving this rock—and leaving also the level ranges of El-Tih, which now rose in front—we turned down from the Maharid-el Hüderâh—the "network," so called from the extreme complication of small isolated masses—through a sandy desert, amidst fantastic sandstone rocks, mixed with lilac and dull green, as if of tufa. Here were some more inscriptions—and here we encamped. Above the encampment was a crumbling sandstone ridge, which commanded our last great view, and almost equal in beauty to any that we had seen in the Sinaitic Peninsula. On the south-west was the whole Sinai range. Um Shaumer and St. Catherine were veiled in cloud—but Serbâl and El-Benât were just visible—the first like one dot, the second, with its double peak, like two dots, on the far horizon. On the north-west were the level ridges of the Tih: on the east was the vast and beautiful outline of the Arabian mountains on the other side of the gulf of 'Akaba, with yet another range beyond them, rising as if to a very great height. The near view was of sand, isolated sandstone hills, and the green and purple hill on which we stood.

At 7.30 A.M. we started through deep sand, and what Dr. Robinson well calls "fragments of the Tih," over a flat plain called by the Arabs Ridhân-es-Shukâ'a. This presently contracted into a valley (Wâdy Ghüzâleh), winding, like the Wâdy Seyâl, between high granite rocks. At 9.30, the Wâdy Hüderâh fell into it from the north-west, and the Wâdy Ghüzâleh now opened into another and a still more tortuous valley, which, from first to last, was called by the Arabs the Wâdy el-'Ain—"of the Spring." The spring, or brook, which gives it its name, is a rill of clear fresh water, which descends into it, winding through a winding ravine from the west: its course marked by rushes, the large-leaved plant called "Esher," tamarisks, and wild palms. A venerable group of these last stands near the entrance of the brook into the Wâdy el-'Ain, the rough stems springing up from one vast shaggy root—the branches, dead and living, hanging over in a tangled canopy. As it descends into the wâdy, it spreads out its stream with more rushes and more palms. The rocks rise, red granite or black basalt, occasionally tipped

as if with castles of sandstone, to the height of about 1000 feet. They are absolutely bare, except where the green "lasaf" or caper plant springs from the clefts. Occasionally they overlap and narrow the valley greatly. Finally they open on the sea—the high Arabian mountains rising beyond. At the mouth of the pass are many traces of flood—trees torn down, and strewn along the sand.

HAZEROTH.

Besides the interest of the physical peculiarities of this route is the faint probability that this beautiful valley and its neighbourhood may have been the scene of the first long halt after the departure from Sinai. After Taberah and Kibroth-Hattaavah, the people "*abode*" "for seven days," at least, in HAZEROTH. Burckhardt, and most travellers after him, have from the resemblance of the two radical letters in the two words, identified this with *Hüderah*. Such a conjecture must be very uncertain, the more so as the name of Hazeroth is one the least likely to be attached to any permanent or natural feature of the desert. It means simply the "enclosures," such as may still be seen in the Bedouin villages, hardly less transitory than tents. Three points, however, may be mentioned, as slightly confirmatory of the hypothesis that the Israelite route lay in these valleys. First the brook of el-'Ain, as its name implies, is emphatically "*the water*," "*the spring*," of this region of the desert, and must therefore have attracted round it any nomadic settlements, such as are implied in the name of Hazeroth, and such as that of Israel must have been. If they descended at all to the western shores of the Gulf of 'Akaba, this is the most natural spot for them to have selected for a long halt. Secondly, in the murmurs previous to their arrival at Hazeroth, "*the sea*" is twice mentioned, in a manner which may indicate its proximity, and which is therefore certainly more appropriate to these valleys touching on the Gulf of 'Akaba, than to the more inland route over the Tih. "Shall the flocks and the herds be slain for them to suffice them? or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together, to suffice them?" "There went forth a wind from the Lord, and brought quails from the sea." Thirdly, in connection with this incident of the "quails," may be mentioned the fact, that on the evening and the morning of our encampment, immediately before reaching the Wādy Hüderah, the sky was literally darkened by the flight of innumerable birds, which proved to be the same large red-legged cranes, three feet high, with black

and white wings, measuring seven feet from tip to tip, which we had seen in like numbers at the First Cataract of the Nile. It is remarkable that a similar flight was seen by Schubert near the very same spot. That any large flights of birds should be seen in those parts at any rate illustrates the scripture narrative. But if a recent explanation of the difficult passage in Numbers xi. 31 be correct, and the expression "two cubits high upon the face of the earth," be applied, not to the accumulation of the mass, but to the size of the individual birds, the flight of cranes, such as we saw, may be not merely an illustration, but an instance, of the incident recorded in the Pentateuch, and the frequency of the phenomenon in this locality may serve to show that Kibroth-Hattaavah and Huderah were not far distant.

XIII.—GULF OF 'AKABA.

The sea on which we descended is the Gulf of Elath and Ezion-Geber, up and down which the fleets of Solomon brought the gold of Ophir: the great channel of commerce till it was diverted by Alexandria to the Gulf of Suez. The two gulfs seem, like Castor and Pollux, to have risen and set alternately. Now there is not a single boat upon it from end to end. Once a year, and once only, boats come round from Suez to 'Akaba with provisions for the Mecca pilgrims; at all other times it is desolate as the wilderness. But what a sea! and what a shore!

From the dim silvery mountains on the further Arabian coast, over the blue waters of the sea, melting into colourless clearness as they roll up the shelly beach—that beach red with the red sand or red granite gravel that pours down from the cliffs above—those cliffs sometimes deep red, sometimes yellow and purple, and above them all the blue cloudless sky of Arabia. And the sight of the shore at once reveals why this sea, in common with the Indian Ocean, was called Red by the Greeks, and the Sea of Weeds by the Hebrews. Of the red sand and rocks I have spoken: but, besides these, fragments of red coral are for ever being thrown up from the stores below, and it is these coralline forests which form the true "weeds" of this fantastic sea. But, above all, never did I see such shells. Far as your eye can reach you see the beach whitening with them, like bleaching bones: and as you break them under your dromedary's feet, they are like the earthenware on Monte Testaccio, only, instead of broken pottery, like white porcelain. These are the larger ones; but there are smaller ones, of every size and shape and

colour : sometimes, too, the trunks of trees of white coral, shooting their roots through the sand, the upper branches gone, but still showing what these trees must be in the depths below. On the second day we had to leave the shore to cross a high mountain pass (Nûkb-Huweimirât), by a very rugged path, the highest and roughest that we had seen ; the line of camels, going in single file, extended almost from top to bottom. It is important, because, being the only means of reaching the head of the Gulf, it proves *either* that the Israelites could not have come our route, *or* that no pass which we have seen in Sinai would have impeded their march to any point in the Peninsula.

It was about 4 P.M. that we reached 'Akaba. 'Akaba is a wretched village, shrouded in a palm-grove at the north end of the Gulf, gathered round a fortress built for the protection of the Mecca pilgrimage ; into whose route we here again fell for the first time since we left it at 'Ajerûd, which is guarded by a fort like this. This is the whole object of the present existence of 'Akaba, which stands on the site of the ancient Elath—"the Palm-Trees," so called from the grove. Its situation, however, is very striking, looking down the beautiful gulf, with its jagged ranges on each side : on the west is the great black pass down which the pilgrimage descends, and from which 'Akaba ("the Pass") derives its name ; on the north opens the wide plain, or Desert Valley, wholly different in character from anything we have seen, still called as it was in the days of Moses, "the 'Arabah." Down this came the Israelites on their return from Kadesh, and through a gap up the eastern hills they finally turned off to Moab. On this view they undoubtedly looked. It was a new Red Sea for them, and they little knew the glory which it would acquire when it became the channel of all the wealth of Solomon.

XIV.—THE 'ARABAH.

Our journey for the first two days was along the wide and desert valley of the 'Arabah. It is one great peculiarity of the whole of the passage through the Desert, that every day you pass over a battle-field of historical or topographical controversy ; not the Forum of Rome is more fertile in such disputes. In this great valley there is no more question of the course of the Israelites. It is indeed doubtful whether they passed up it on their way to Canaan, but no one can doubt that they passed down it, when the valleys of Edom were closed against them. But the geographical controversy of which the 'Arabah is the scene, though it has or ought to

have been set at rest in its essential points by the comparative levels of the Gulf of 'Akaba and the Lake of Gennesareth, still remains unsettled in its lesser details.

On the west are the limestone ranges of the Tih, horizontal as before. On the east is a low gap in the hills with three low peaks visible beyond. This is the Wâdy Ithm, which turns the eastern range of the 'Arabah, and through which the Israelites must have passed on their way to Moab. It is still one of the regular roads to Petra, and in ancient times seems to have been the main approach from Elath or 'Akaba, as it is the only road from the south which enters Petra through the Sik. The only published account of it is that of Laborde. These mountains appear to be granite, till as we advance northward we reach the entrance of the Wâdy Tubal, where, for the first time, red sandstone appeared in the mountains, rising, as in the Wâdy el-'Ain, architecture-wise, above grey granite.

Two circumstances always make it difficult for travellers positively to ascertain the watershed of the 'Arabah. First, the slope in the level from east to west, which distorts the course of the torrents, and makes it almost impossible to distinguish whether they descend in a northerly or a southerly direction; secondly, the difficulty of traversing the 'Arabah (when in a caravan) directly from east to west. The ridge which is pointed out as such is a long line of hills, formed apparently of a detritus of stone and sand, called "Chragi er-Rîshi" (saddlebags of feathers), which runs due west across the 'Arabah. Just before reaching these was the first view of Mount Hor, and on ascending them we looked back for the last time over the southern 'Arabah, which from this point looks like a waste of sand; whereas, when on its own level, the shrubs at times give it almost the appearance of a jungle. The wide opening to the sea is also visible from hence, though not the sea itself. In the midst of these hills, or rather of the undulations formed by their summits, all intersected by lesser watercourses, is one broad watercourse, running from east to west, called Wâdy Howâr, *i.e.*, "the division."

It is this which Sheykh Mohammed declares to be the watershed, and which, he maintains, "shuts out" the waters of the Gulf of 'Akaba from side to side.

XV.—APPROACH TO PETRA.

The whole prospect changes at this point. We lose the opening of the valley into the Gulf of 'Akaba, and we gain

the view of Mount Hor—the “Mountain of Aaron,” as it is still called. Behind it lies Petra, and to Petra, through fantastic rocks, we turned aside, and encamped at last at the entrance of the pass, and waited for the morning. One isolated rock, with an excavation inside, in front of the hill, indicated the region we were approaching, apparently an outpost for a sentinel—perhaps the very one which the Prophet had in his eye in that well-known text, “Watchman, what of the night?”

And now arose the strange feeling of arriving at a place which it was possible we might be prevented by force from entering, or have by force to enter. Fifty years hence, when our friend Sheykh Mohammed has put down the surrounding tribes, Petra will have lost half its interest; but now the failures and dangers are sufficiently recent to form part of the first impressions of the place. It is literally “paved with the good intentions” of travellers, unfulfilled. There was Mount Hor, which Robinson and Laborde in vain wished to ascend; there, the plain half-way, where Burckhardt was obliged to halt without reaching the top; here, the temple which Irby and Mangles only saw through their telescope; here, the platform from which the Martineau party were unable to stir without an armed guard; and, lastly, on the very plain of our encampment, at the entrance of the pass, travellers with our own dragoman were driven back last year without even a glimpse of the famous city.

XVI.—ASCENT OF MOUNT HOR.

We ascended the pass early in the morning; and leaving the camels and tents to go on to Petra, turned to climb the summit of Mount Hor.

It is one of the very few spots connected with the wanderings of the Israelites, which admits of no reasonable doubt. There Aaron died in the presence of Moses and Eleazer; there he was buried; and there Eleazer was invested with the priesthood in his stead. The mountain is marked far and near by its double top, which rises like a huge castellated building from a lower base, and on one of these is the Mahometan chapel erected out of the remains of some earlier and more sumptuous building, over the supposed grave. There was nothing of interest within; only the usual marks of Mussulman devotion, ragged shawls, ostrich eggs, and a few beads. These were in the upper chamber. The great High-priest, if his body be really there, rests in a subterraneous vault below, hewn out of the rock, and in a niche now cased over

with stone, wood, and plaster. From the flat roof of the chapel we overlooked his last view—that view which was to him what Pisgah was to his brother. To us the northern end was partly lost in haze ; but we saw all the main points on which his eye must have rested. He looked over the valley of the 'Arabah, countersected by its hundred water-courses, and beyond, over the white mountains of the wilderness they had so long traversed ; and at the northern edge of it there must have been visible the heights through which the Israelites had vainly attempted to force their way into the Promised Land. This was the western view. Close around him on the east were the rugged mountains of Edom, and far along the horizon the wide downs of Mount Seir, through which the passage had been denied by the wild tribes of Esau who hunted over their long slopes. A dreary moment, and a dreary scene—such at any rate it must have seemed to the aged priest.

The peculiarity of the view was the combination of wide extension with the scarcity of marked features and points on which to observe. Petra itself is entirely shut out by the intervening rocks. But the survey of the Desert on one side, and the mountains of Edom on the other, is complete ; and of these last the great feature is the mass of red bald-headed sandstone rocks, intersected, not by valleys, but by deep seams. In the heart of these rocks, itself invisible, lies Petra. Beyond spreads the range of yellow downs, tufted with vegetation, now called Sherâh. And now to Petra let us descend.

XVII.—PETRA.

The first thing that struck me in turning out of the 'Arabah up the defiles that lead to Petra was, that we had suddenly left the Desert. Instead of the absolute nakedness of the Sinaitic valleys, we found ourselves walking on grass, sprinkled with flowers, and the level platforms on each side were filled with sprouting corn : and this continues through the whole descent to Petra, and in Petra itself.

The next peculiarity was when, after having left the summit of the pass, or after descending from Mount Hor, we found ourselves insensibly encircled with rocks of deepening and deepening red. Red indeed, even from a distance, the mountains of "Red" Edom appear, but not more so than the granite of Sinai : and it is not till one is actually in the midst of them that this red becomes crimson, and that the wonder of the Petra colours fully displays itself.

Two mistakes seem to me to have been made in the de-

scriptions. All the describers have spoken of bright hues—scarlet, sky-blue, orange, &c. Had they taken courage to say instead, “*dull* crimson, indigo, yellow, and purple,” their account would have lost something in effect, but gained much in truth. Nor really would it have lost much any way. For the colours though not gaudy,—or rather because they are not gaudy,—are gorgeous. You are never, or hardly ever, startled by them. You could never mistake them for anything else but nature; they seem the natural clothing of the place.

Another mistake is, that the descriptions lead you—or, at least, they led me—to suppose that wherever you turn at Petra you see nothing but these wonderful colours. I have already said, that from a distance one hardly sees them at all. One sees the general contrast only of the red sandstone cliffs standing out against the white limestone and yellow downs, which form their higher background. But when one comes in face of the very cliffs themselves, then they are, as I have said, a gorgeous, though dull crimson, streaked and suffused with purple. These are the two predominant colours,—“*ferruginous*,” perhaps, they might best be called,—and on the face of the rocks the only colours. But one striking feature of the whole scenery is, that not merely the excavations and buildings, but the rocks themselves, are in a constant state of mouldering decay. You can scarcely tell where excavation begins and decay ends. It is in these caves, and roofs, and recesses, whether natural or artificial—very numerous it is true, but not seen till you are close within them—that there appears that extraordinary veining and intermixture of colours, in which yellow and blue are occasionally added—ribbon-like—to red and purple. Of the three comparisons usually made—mahogany, raw-flesh, and watered-silk—the last is certainly the best.

This brings me to the third great feature of Petra—its excavations. Here again the same error has been committed. I had expected to be surrounded by rocks honeycombed with caves. By no means. I do not doubt, that by calculation of all in the outlying ravines, you might count up thousands; but in the most populous part that I could select, I could not number in one view more than fifty, and generally much fewer. It is their immense ramifications, rather than their concentrated effect, that is remarkable, and this of course can no more be seen in one view than all the streets of London. The larger excavations are temples; the others may be divided between modern (*i.e.*, Roman or Arab) tombs, and Edomite or Horite habitations. Round about, or rather

east and west, are masses of crumbling rock, their faces immediately above this mass of ruins cut out into holes, and sometimes with Grecian façades. Of these, the most remarkable are in the eastern cliffs, where four of these great excavations, apparently not tombs or houses, but temples, stand close together with tiers of pillars one above another, giving to that cliff an embattled appearance, which, architecturally speaking, is the only remarkable feature in the basin of Petra, taken by itself. . . .

But Petra, that is, the mere site of the city, is by far the least striking part of Petra. There any one, I think, with highly-raised expectations will feel disappointment. In the two points I am going to describe, I believe no one.

First there is the famous defile which, in ancient times, was the chief—the only usual—approach to Petra ; and I feel so strongly the loss of interest which Petra suffers by the present gradual entrance, that I would strongly recommend all travellers—even at the cost of another day's journey—to come round by this eastern approach, through which, though we only saw it reversed, I mean now to conduct you, as if entering from the east.

You descend from those wide downs and those white cliffs which I have before described as forming the background of the Red City when seen from the west, and before you opens a deep cleft between rocks of red sandstone rising perpendicularly to the height of one, two, or three hundred feet. This is the *Sik*, or "cleft ;" through this flows—if one may use the expression—the dry torrent, which, rising in the mountains half an hour hence, gives the name by which alone Petra is now known amongst the Arabs—*Wâdy Mûsa*. "For,"—so Sheykh Mohammed tell us—"as surely as *Jebel Hârûn* (the Mountain of Aaron) is so called from the burial-place of Aaron, is *Wâdy Mûsa* (the Valley of Moses) so called from the cleft being made by the rod of Moses when he brought the stream through into the valley beyond." It is, indeed, a place worthy of the scene, and one could long to believe it. Follow me, then, down this magnificent gorge—the most magnificent, beyond all doubt, which I have ever beheld. The rocks are almost precipitous, or rather, they would be, if they did not, like their brethren in all this region, overlap, and crumble, and crack, as if they would crash over you. The gorge is about a mile and a half long, and the opening of the cliffs at the top is throughout almost as narrow as the narrowest part of the defile of *Pfeffers*, which, in dimensions and form, it more resembles than any other of my acquaintance. At its very first entrance you pass under the arch

which, though greatly broken, still spans the chasm—meant apparently to indicate the approach to the city. You pass under this along the bed of the torrent, now rough with stones, but once a regular paved road like the Appian Way, the pavement still remaining at intervals in the bed of the stream—the stream, meanwhile, which now has its own wild way, being then diverted from its course along troughs hewn in the rock above, or conducted through earthenware pipes, still traceable. These, and a few niches for statues now gone, are the only traces of human hand. What a sight it must have been, when all these were perfect !

A road, level and smooth, running through these tremendous rocks, and the blue sky just visible above, the green caper-plant and wild ivy hanging in festoons over the heads of the travellers as they wind along, the flowering oleander fringing then, as now, this marvellous highway like the border of a garden-walk. You move on ; and the ravine, and with it the road,—and with the road in old times the caravans of India,—winds as if it were the most flexible of rivers, instead of being in truth a rent through a mountain-wall. In this respect, in its sinuosity, it differs from any other like gorge I ever saw. The peculiarity is, perhaps, occasioned by the singularly friable character of the cliffs, the same character that has caused the thousand excavations beyond ; and the effect is, that instead of the uniform character of most ravines, you are constantly turning round corners, and catching new lights and new aspects, in which to view the cliffs themselves. They are, for the most part, deeply red, and when you see their tops emerging from the shade and glowing in the sunshine, I could almost forgive the exaggeration that calls them scarlet. But in fact they are of the darker hues which in the shadow amount almost to black, and such is their colour at the point to which I have brought you, after a mile or more through the defile—the cliffs overarching in their narrowest contraction—when, suddenly through the narrow opening left between the two dark walls of another turn of the gorge, you see a pale pink front of pillars and sculptured figures closing your view from top to bottom. You rush towards it, you find yourself at the end of the defile, and in the presence of an excavated temple, which remains almost entirely perfect between the two flanks of dark rock out of which it is hewn ; its preservation, and its peculiarly light and rosy tint being alike due to its singular position facing the ravine or rather wall of rock, through which the ravine issues, and thus sheltered beyond any other building (if one may so call it) from the wear and tear of weather, which has effaced,

though not defaced, the features, and tanned the complexion, of all the other temples.

This I only saw by degrees, coming upon it from the west ; but to the travellers of old times, and to those who, like Burckhardt in modern times, came down the defile, not knowing what they were to see, and meeting with this as the first image of the Red City, I cannot conceive anything more striking. There is nothing of peculiar grace or grandeur in the temple itself—the Khazné, or Treasury, it is called—it is of the most debased style of Roman architecture ; but under the circumstances, I almost think one is more startled by finding in these wild and impracticable mountains a production of the last effort of a decaying and over-refined civilisation, than if it were something which, by its better and simpler taste, mounted more nearly to the source where Art and Nature were one.

Probably any one who entered Petra this way would be so electrified by this apparition (which I cannot doubt to have been evoked there purposely, as you would place a fountain or an obelisk at the end of an avenue), as to have no eyes to behold or sense to appreciate anything else. Still I must take you to the end. The Sik, though it opens here, yet contracts once more, and it is in this last stage that those red and purple variegations, which I have before described, appear in their most gorgeous hues ; and here also begins what must have been properly the Street of Tombs, the Appian Way of Petra. Here they are most numerous, the rock is honey-combed with cavities of all shapes and sizes, and through these you advance till the defile once more opens, and you see—strange and unexpected sight!—with tombs above, below, and in front, a Greek Theatre hewn out of the rock, its tiers of seats literally red and purple alternately, in the native rock. Once more the defile closes with its excavations, and once more opens in the area of Petra itself ; the torrent-bed passing now through absolute desolation and silence, though strewn with the fragments which show that you once entered on a splendid and busy city gathered along in the rocky banks, as along the quays of some great northern river.

The Sik is unquestionably the great glory of Petra ; but there is another point, on the other side, which struck me very much also, and which, if thoroughly explored, would, I think, be the most instructive and interesting spot in the place. You turn up a torrent bed in the western cliffs (for torrent-beds from all sides pour down into this area in the heart of the hills), but soon leave it to ascend a staircase hewn out

of the rocks, steps not absolutely continuous now, though probably they once were; broad steps glowing with the native colours, which conduct you through magnificent rocks, and along the banks of an almost second Sîk, high up into the vast cluster of rocks which face Mount Hor on the north. This staircase is the most striking instance of what you see everywhere. Wherever your eyes turn along the excavated sides of the rocks you see steps, often leading to nothing; or to something which has crumbled away; often with their first steps worn away, so that they are now inaccessible; sometimes as mere ornaments in the façades, but everywhere seen even more than the caves themselves. High up in these rocks, withdrawn like the Khazné between two gigantic walls of cliff, with a green platform before it, is another temple of the same kind, though not of the same singular colour. In fact, it has the appearance of yellow stone, but in form it is more perfect than the Khazné, and its whole effect is so extremely modern, that I cannot better describe its impression on me than by comparing it to a London church of the last century. That is to say, you must imagine a London church, of the most debased style of ornament and taste, transplanted into a mountain nook as wild and solitary as the Splugen. I call it solitary—but it was not always so. The Arabic name, Ed-Deir—"the Convent"—implies their belief that it was a Christian church. Crosses are carved within it. The Sinaitic inscriptions are carved on the steps by which it is approached. Ruins lie above, below, and around it. Everything, in short, tends to indicate that this was a specially sacred spot, and that it was regarded so by Christians afterwards.

KADESH.

With the departure for Sinai, or at least from Hazeroth, the geographical interest of the Israelite history almost ceases till the arrival in the table-lands of Moab, and the first beginning of the conquest. Not only is the general course of their march wrapt in great obscurity, but even if we knew it, the events are not generally of a kind which would receive any special illustration from the scenes in which they occurred.

No attempt shall here be made to track their course in detail. It is possible that some future traveller may discover the stations recorded in the itinerary of the 33rd chapter of the Book of Numbers. At present none has been ascertained with any likelihood of truth, unless we accept the doubtful identification of *Hazeroth* with *Hûderah*, of which I

have already spoken. All that is clear is, that they marched northward from Mount Sinai, probably over the plateau of the Tih—which seems to be designated as “the wilderness of Paran”—then that they descended into the ‘Arabah—designated, apparently, as “the wilderness of Zin.” Thence on the refusal of the king of Edom to let them pass through his territory, they moved southward, encamped on the shores of the Gulf of ‘Akaba, at Ezion-Geber, and then turned the corner of the Edomite mountains, at their southern extremity, and entered the tablelands of Moab at the “torrent of the willows” (“the brook Zared”), at the south-east end of the Dead Sea.

In this general obscurity, one place stands out prominently. There can be no question, that next to Sinai, the most important of all the resting-places of the Children of Israel is Kadesh. It is the only one dignified by the name of “a city.” Its very name awakens our attention—the “Holy Place”—the same name by which Jerusalem itself is still called in Arabic, “El-Khods.” It is probably the old oracular “Spring of Judgment,” mentioned as existing in the earliest times of Canaanite history; as if, like Mount Sinai itself, it had an ancient sanctity before the host of Israel encamped within its precincts. The encampment there is also distinct in character from any other in the wilderness, except the stay at Sinai or perhaps at Rephidim. The exact time is not given; but it is stated generally that “they abode in Kadesh many days.” They were there at least forty days, during the absence of the spies. In its neighbourhood, the first battle was fought with the southern Canaanites. There arose the demand for water, which gave to the place its new name of Meribah-Kadesh; there also occurred the rebellion of Korah, and the death of the sister and the brother of Moses.

All these indications compel us to look for some more definite locality than can be found in the scattered springs and pools in the midst of the Desert, with which travellers have usually endeavoured to identify it—such, for example, as ‘Ain el-Weibeh, on the western side of the ‘Arabah, which Dr. Robinson selected as the spot, and which, but for the reasons just given, would not be an inappropriate scene.

The geographical notices of its situation are unfortunately too slight to be of much service. Yet thus much they fix, that it was “in the wilderness of Zin,” that it was “on the ‘edge’ of the border of Edom”—that it was near “Mount Hor”—that it was at the southern point to which the territory of Judah afterwards reached.

Is there any place to which these indications correspond?

Possibly, if the country were thoroughly explored, there might be found several in the deserted cities of Edom, known only to the very few travellers who have entered Edom by the Wâdy Ithm. At present one only is known, and that is Petra.

An oasis of vegetation in the desert hills: scenery only second in grandeur to that where the Law was delivered; a city of which the present ruins are modern, but of which the earlier vestiges reach back to the remotest antiquity—these are some of the points which give Petra a claim to be considered as the original sanctuary of the Idumean wilderness. It is moreover one of the few facts localised by anything like an authentic tradition,—in this case preserved by Josephus, the Talmudists, Eusebius, and Jerome—that Kadesh was either identical or closely connected with Petra. With this the existing names (though capable of another origin) remarkably harmonise. The mountain which overhangs the valley of Petra has been known as far back as the knowledge of travellers extends as the “Mountain of Aaron.” The basin of Petra is known to the Arabs by no other name than “the Valley of Moses.” The great ravine through which the torrent is admitted into the valley is called “the Cleft of Moses”—in distinct reference to the stroke of the rod of Moses.

In accordance with these confirmations are the incidental expressions of the narrative itself. The word always used for “the rock” of Kadesh, in describing the second supply of water, is “*sela*” or “*cliff*,” in contradistinction to the usual word “*tzûr*”—“*rock*,” which is no less invariably applied to “the rock” of Horeb—the scene of the first supply. It may be difficult to determine the relative meaning of the two words. But it is almost certain that of the two, “*sela*,” like our word “*cliff*,” is the grander and more abrupt feature. On the one hand, this is of importance as excluding from the claimants to the name of Kadesh such spots as 'Ain el-Weibeh, where the rocks are merely stony shelves of three or four feet in height. On the other hand, the name “*Sela*” is also the same as that by which in later times the place now called “Petra” was designated. As the southern boundary of Judah is described as “reaching over the ascent of scorpions” to Kadesh, so the Amorite boundary is described as “from the ascent of scorpions, from ‘the cliff’ (*sela*) and upwards.” “Amaziah took ‘the cliff’ (*sela*) by war.” “Other ten thousand did the children of Judah carry away captive, and brought them up to the top of the ‘cliff’ (*sela*), and cast them down from the top of ‘the cliff’ (*sela*), that they were all broken into pieces.”

The name of Kadesh almost entirely disappears from the Sacred Books before the name of Sela appears, and it is therefore possible that the latter, taken from its natural peculiarity, may have been given to it by the Edomites or later settlers after the recollections of its earlier sanctity had passed away. That a sanctuary of this kind should have been gradually transformed into an emporium and thoroughfare of commerce, as was the case with Petra during the Roman empire, would be one out of many instances with which oriental and ancient history abounds.

If there be any ground for this conclusion, Petra assumes a new interest. Its rock-hewn caves may have served in part for the dwellings, in part for the graves of the Israelites ; it is dignified as the closing scene of the life both of Miriam and Aaron ; its sanctity may account for the elevation and seclusion of some of its edifices, perched high among almost inaccessible rocks, and evidently the resort of ancient pilgrims ; its impressive scenery well accords with the language of the ancient hymns of Israel, in which Kadesh with the surrounding rocks of Edom is almost elevated to the rank of a second Sinai : " Lord, when thou wentest out of *Seir*, when thou marchedst out of the field of *Edom*." " God came from *Teman*, and the Holy One from Mount Paran." " He brought them to Mount Sinai and *Kadesh-barnea*." " The Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from *Mount Seir* unto them ; he shined forth from Mount Paran, and he came"—if we take the Hebrew as followed in the Authorised Version—" with ten thousands of saints ;" if we take the Septuagint, " with the ten thousands of *Kadesh* ;"—if we follow the conjecture of Ewald, " from *Meribah-Kadesh*."

And if any point is to be selected in Petra as especially the seat of this primeval sanctuary, it is that which I have just described, commonly known by the name of the Deir, or Convent. Its present form is of the same modern character as that which deprives all these monuments of any deep interest—a façade, with a vast urn on the summit ; the interior, one large hall. But its situation and its accompaniments indicate the great importance, if not sanctity, with which it was invested at some period by the inhabitants of Petra. Removed as it is from the sight not only of the town, but of the numerous sepulchres or excavations with which the cliffs which surround the town are perforated, it must have had some special purpose of its own. The long ascent by which it is approached, mostly along the edge of a precipitous ravine, is carefully hewn, wherever the rocks admit, into a continuous staircase, of which the steps are in more

than one instance marked by the unknown inscriptions in the so-called Sinaitic character. The walls of the interior of the Deir itself, as well as the steps, are sculptured with the usual accompaniments of these inscriptions,—crosses and figures of the wild goat, or ibex. Immediately opposite is a hill, with a large chamber below, partly natural, partly artificial; containing a sculptured niche at the end of it for a statue; and bases of columns lie strewn around. A staircase leads to the roof of the Deir, which is again inscribed with a rude character; and on the rocky platform with which the roof communicates is a circle of hewn stones, and again, still beyond, is a solitary cell¹ hewn in an isolated cliff, and joined to this platform by a narrow isthmus of rock.

In the absolute dearth of records of Petra it is impossible to decide the reason of the selection of this lonely spot for a sanctuary, thus visited, as it would appear, by the same pilgrims who have left their traces so often elsewhere in the Peninsula. Yet its situation inevitably suggests some relation to Mount Hor. From the threshold, indeed, of the Deir Mount Hor is not visible. But the whole of the upper story, and the roof—to which, as I have said, a staircase ascends as if for the express purpose of commanding a wider view,—both look upon the sacred mount of the High-priest's tomb, and are seen from thence. It is, in fact, the only building of Petra included in the view from Mount Hor, through which alone, in its deep seclusion, it was first revealed to the eyes of travellers.

Is it too much to suppose that this point and Mount Hor were long regarded as the two sacred spots of Petra; that the scene of the death and sepulture of Aaron were designedly fixed in view of this, the innermost sanctuary of the Holy Place of "Kadesh;" that this sanctity was retained through the successive changes of Pagan and Christian worship; and that the pilgrims of the Desert mounted these time-worn steps and traced their inscriptions upon the rock, on their way to the only spot whence they could see the grave of Aaron?

XVIII.—APPROACH TO PALESTINE.

The day of leaving Petra was occupied in the passage of the mountains into the 'Arabah; the next in crossing the 'Arabah; on the other side we came to 'Ain el-Weibeh—three springs with palms under the low limestone cliffs which form the boundary to the mass of the mountains of the Tih. This spot Dr. Robinson supposes to be Kadesh. . . .

¹ This last feature I derive from Miss Martineau (*Eastern Life*, 2nd Ed. p. 410), who is the only person who has left a record of its existence. From an oversight I omitted to see it on the spot.

It was at 'Akaba that Mohammed, stretching out his hands in prayer, after a few moments of silence exclaimed, pointing over the palm trees, "There is the new moon,"—the new moon which gave me a thrill no new moon had ever wakened before, for, if all prospered, its fulness would be that of the Paschal moon at Jerusalem. At 'Akaba, too, we first came within the dominions of David and Solomon. And now we were already on the confines of the tribe of Judah, and the next day we crossed the difficult high pass of Sâfeh, thought to be that through which the Israelites were repulsed by the Amorites. Unfortunately a thick haze hung over the mountains of Edom, so that we saw them no more again. It was on Palm Sunday that we descended on the other side, and from this time the approach to Palestine fairly began. How the name of Aaron rang with a new sound in the first and second lessons of that evening after the sight of Mount Hor.

The Approach to Palestine—nothing can be more gradual. There is no special point at which you can say the Desert is ended and the Land of Promise is begun. Yet there is an interest in that solemn and peaceful melting away of one into the other which I cannot describe. It was like the striking passage in Thalaba, describing the descent of the mountains, with the successive beginnings of vegetation and warmth. The first change was perhaps what one would least expect—the disappearance of trees. The last palms were those we left in the 'Arabah. Palm Sunday was the day which shut us out, I believe, with few rare exceptions, from those beautiful creations of the Nile and the Desert springs. The next day we saw the last of our well-known Acacia—that consecrated and venerable tree of the Burning Bush and of the Tabernacle; and then, for the first time in the whole journey, we had to take our mid-day meal without shade. But meanwhile every other sign of life was astir. On descending from the Pass of Sâfeh, one observed that the little shrubs, which had more or less sprinkled the whole 'Arabah, were more thickly studded; the next day they gave a grey covering to the whole hill-side, and the little tufts of grass threw in a general tint of green before unknown. Then the red anemones of Petra reappeared, and then here and there patches of corn. As we advanced, this thin covering became deeper and fuller; and daisies and hyacinths were mixed with the blood-drops of the anemones. Signs of ancient habitations appeared in the ruins of forts, and remains on the hill-sides; wells, too, deeply built with marble casings round their mouths, worn by the ropes of ages. East and west, under a long line of hills which bounded it to the north, ran a wide plain in which verdure, though not universal,

was still predominant. Up this line of hills our next day's course took us, and still the marks of ruins increased on the hill-tops, and long courses of venerable rock or stone, the boundaries, or roads, or both, of ancient inhabitants; and the anemones ran like fire through the mountain glens; and deep glades of corn, green and delicious to the eye, spread right and left before us.

Most striking anywhere would have been this protracted approach to land after that wide desert sea—these seeds and plants, and planks, as it were, drifting to meet us. But how doubly striking when one felt in one's inmost soul that this was the entrance into the Holy Land—"Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozra?" Everything told us that we were approaching the sacred frontier. In that solitary ride—for all desert rides are more or less solitary—through this peaceful passing away of death into life, there was indeed no profanation of the first days of Passion Week. That wide plain of which I spoke, with its ruins and wells, was the wilderness of Beersheba; with wells such as those for which Abraham and Isaac struggled; at which, it may be, they had watered their flocks; the neutral ground between the Desert and the cultivated region which those shepherd-patriarchs would most naturally choose for their wanderings, before the idea of a more permanent home had yet dawned upon them. That long line of hills was the beginning of "the hill country of Judæa," and when we began to ascend it was the first answer to our inquiries after the route told that it was "Carmel," not the more famous mountain of that name, but that on which Nabal fed his flocks; and close below its long ranges was the hill and ruin of "Ziph;" close above, the hill of "Maon." That is to say, we were now in the heart of the wild country where David wandered from Saul like those very "partridges in the mountains," which we saw abounding in all directions. And in the extensive views which the tops of these hills commanded on the south, there was the long range of the Tih,—faithful to the last to that same horizontal character which we saw from Suez; and to the east, towering high into the hazy sky, what looked like the Alps of Moab; and between us and them a jagged line of lower hills, the rocks of En-gedi; and, in the misty depths which parted these nearer and those further mountains, there needed no guide to tell that there lay, invisible as yet, the DEAD SEA.

From these heights, by gradual ascent and descent we went on. With Ziph the more desolate region ended. The valleys now begun, at least in our eyes, almost literally "to laugh and sing." Greener and greener did they grow—the shrubs,

too, shot up above that stunted growth. At last, on the summits of further hills, lines of spreading trees appeared against the sky. Then came ploughed fields and oxen. Lastly, a deep and wide recess opened in the hills—towers and minarets appeared through the gap, which gradually unfolded into the city of “the Friend of God”—this is its Arabic name: far up on the right ran a wide and beautiful upland valley, all partitioned into gardens and fields, green fig-trees and cherry-trees, and the vineyards—famous through all ages: and far off, grey and beautiful as those of Tivoli, swept down the western slope the olive-groves of Hebron. Most startling of all was the hum through the air—hitherto “that silent air” which I described during our first encampment, but which had grown familiar as the sounds of London to those who live constantly within their range—the hum, at first, of isolated human voices and the lowing of cattle, rising up from these various orchards and cornfields, and then a sound, which to our ears seemed like that of a mighty multitude, but which was only the united murmur of the population of the little town which we now entered at its southern end. They had come out to look at some troops which were going off to capture a refractory chief, and they still remained sitting on the mounds—old men, women, and children, in their various dresses, which, after the monotonous brown rags of the Bedouins, looked gay and bright—sitting, with their hands shading their faces from the rays of the afternoon sun, to see the long passage of the caravan, guarded on each side by the officers of the Quarantine. High above us on the eastern height of the town—which lies nestled, Italian-like, on the slope of a ravine—rose the long black walls and two stately minarets of that illustrious mosque, one of the four sanctuaries of the Mahometan world, sacred in the eyes of all the world besides, which covers the Cave of Machpelah, the last resting-place of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. We passed on by one of those two ancient reservoirs, where King David hanged the murderers of his rival, up a slope of green grass, broken only by tombs and flocks of sheep, to the high gates of the Quarantine, which closed upon us, and where we are now imprisoned for the next three days, but with that glorious view of Hebron before us day and night. And now the second stage of our tour is finished.

XIX.—RECOLLECTIONS OF THE FIRST DAY IN PALESTINE.

Let me say briefly what has chiefly impressed me during that first day in Palestine. After all the uncertainty of the

Desert topography, it was quite startling, though I knew it beforehand, to find the localities so absolutely authentic, to hear the names of Carmel, Maon, Ziph, shouted out in answer to my questions from our Bedouin guides, and from the ploughmen in the fields, who knew no more of David's wanderings than those of Ulysses. And now I am in Hebron, looking on the site of a sepulchre whose genuineness has never yet been questioned, and to that with equal certainty is to succeed Bethlehem, and to that Jerusalem. With this, how much of special localities may be spared again and again.

Then I am struck with the vast number and extent and massiveness of the ruins of the deserted cities, each on its mountain height, like those of Italy. I had expected mere fragments of stones—I find solid walls, columns, towers. It is true they are all ascribed to Christian times. But any way, they give a notion of what the country was.

And I am struck by what is also noticed by Miss Martineau—the western, almost the English, character of the scenery. Those wild uplands of Carmel and Ziph are hardly distinguishable (except by their ruined cities and red anemones) from the Lowlands of Scotland or of Wales; these cultivated valleys of Hebron (except by their olives) from the general features of a rich valley in Yorkshire or Derbyshire. The absence of palms and the presence of daisies greatly contributes to this result, and, added to the contrast of the strange scenery which has been ours for the last month, gives a homelike and restful character to this entrance which can never be effaced.

Lastly, the great elevation of this country above the level of the sea is most forcibly brought out by the journey we have made. From the moment of leaving the 'Arabah has been almost a continual ascent. We mounted the great Pass of Sáfah, and, having mounted, hardly descended at all—crossed the great table-land of Beersheba—and then mounted the barrier of the hills of Judah—and thence have been mounting ever since. Hebron is, in fact, only four hundred feet lower than Helvellyn. How well one understands the expression, "*They went down into Egypt.*"

XX.—HEBRON.

This afternoon (Good Friday) we walked, under the guard of the Quarantine, round the western hills of Hebron. There was little to add to the first impressions, except the deep delight of treading the rocks and drinking in the view which had been trodden by the feet and met the eyes of the Patriarchs and Kings. I observed, too, for the first time the enclosures

of vineyards with stone walls, and towers at the corners for guards. This was the first exemplification of the Parables. The hills, except where occupied by vineyards and olive-groves, are covered with disjointed rocks and grass, such as brought back dim visions of Wales. In that basin which lay amongst them, what well-springs of thought spring up; numerous as those literal wells and springs with which the whole ground of the hills themselves is penetrated! One that most strangely struck me, was, that here for the first time was heard that great funeral dirge over Abner, whose last echo I had heard in St. Paul's Cathedral over the grave of the Duke of Wellington. And marvellous, too, to think that within the massive enclosure of that Mosque lies, possibly, not merely the last dust of Abraham and Isaac, but the very body—the mummy—the embalmed bones of Jacob, brought in solemn state from Egypt to this (as it then was) lonely and beautiful spot. And to the east was the height, the traditional spot whence Abraham saw the smoke of Sodom rising out of the deep gulf between the hills of Engedi and the mountains of Moab.

XXI.—APPROACH TO JERUSALEM.

In a long line of horses and mules, we quitted Hebron.

Two more relics of Abraham we saw after leaving the mosque. The first was the beautiful and massive oak on its greensward, called by his name, and which, with two or three near it, at least enables one to figure the scene in Genesis xviii., and to understand why it is that the spot was called "the oaks" (mistranslated "the plain") of Mamre. Whether this be the exact spot, or even the exact kind of tree, seems doubtful; for the next object we saw was one of those solid and vast enclosures, now beginning to be so familiar; which seems to coincide with the account of the place which Josephus mentions as the site of what he calls, not the oak, but the terebinth of Abraham. However, there was the wide scenery; the vineyards, too, with their towers, reaching down on every side of the valley of Eschol, whence came the famous cluster; and the red anemones, and white roses on their briar-bushes. Next in one of those grey and green valleys—for these are the predominant colours—appeared, one below the other, the three pools of Solomon—I must again say "venerable," for I know no other word to describe that simple, massive architecture in ruin, yet not in ruin; the "pools of water that he made to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees," and there are the very gardens, not now, indeed, beautiful as when he

came out in state as Josephus describes, with his gold-powdered servants, to see them, but marked by the long winding defile of Urtas—green, and fresh, and winding as a river—which leads towards Jerusalem. And along the mountain side runs the water through the channel begun by him, but—strange conjunction—restored by Pontius Pilate.

XXII.—FIRST VIEW OF BETHLEHEM.

Far away to the east rises the conical hill where Herod died, and now we mount the ridge of which that hill is the eastern extremity, and crowning the crest of the opposite ridge is a long line of houses, with the massive and lofty convent. There was a shout which ran down the long file of horsemen, followed by deep silence—"BETHLEHEM." . . .

It is a wild bleak hill, amidst hills equally bleak—if bleak may be applied to hills which are terraced with vineyards; in autumn, of course, rich and green, and which now in part wave with corn. One only green plain, I believe of grass, hangs behind the town. But what most arrests the eye is the elevation of the whole place, and, above all, that most striking feature, which was to me quite unexpected—the immense wall of the mountains of Moab seeming to overhang the lower hills of Judah, from which they are only separated by that deep mysterious gulf of the Dead Sea. Well might Moses from their summits overlook the Promised Land. Well might Orpah return as to a near country—and Naomi be reminded of her sorrows. Well might her descendant David choose their heights as the refuge for his aged parents when Bethlehem was no longer safe for them.

Of the one great event of Bethlehem the chief outward memorial is the enormous convent—or convents, Latin, Greek, and Armenian—clustering round the church, which is divided amongst them in different compartments—built on the Cave of the Nativity. Whether that cave be genuine or not, yet there is the deep interest of knowing that it is the oldest special locality fixed upon by the Christian Church. Before the Sepulchre, before the Church of the Ascension, before any of the other countless scenes of our Saviour's life had been localised, the famous passage in Justin Martyr proves that the cave of Bethlehem was already known and revered as the scene of His birth. . . .

I have said, one is reminded of the Nativity by the convent. But, in truth, I almost think it distracts one from it. From the first moment that those towers, and hills, and valleys burst upon you, there enters the one prevailing thought

that now, at last, we are indeed in the "Holy Land." It pervades the whole atmosphere—even David and Ruth wax faint in its presence. . . .

XXIII.—FIRST VIEW OF JERUSALEM.

Next came Rachel's Tomb—a modern mosque, but the site must be the true one—and then, far on the top of the hill opposite Bethlehem, was the Convent of St. Elias, seen from Bethlehem, and from which I knew we should see Jerusalem. It is the one place which commands the view of both. We reached the spot from its broken ridge. I saw a wide descent and ascent, and a white line rising high—of I knew not what buildings—but I knew that it was Jerusalem. . . . What were the main features of the approach? First, there was still the mighty wall of Moab; secondly, there was the broad green approach of the valley of Rephaim, so long, so broad, so green, that it almost seemed a natural entrance to the city, which still remained suspended, as it were, above it—for that white line kept increasing in height and length, as we neared it yet saw not the deep ravines which parted us from it. The first building which catches the eye is the palace of the Armenian Patriarch, then the castle, then the minaret over the mosque of David. The Mosque of Omar and even the Mount of Olives were for a long time shut out by the Hill of Evil Counsel, which, with its solitary tree before us, intercepted all to the east. High beyond towered Ramah (of Benjamin). At last the deep descent of the Valley of Hinnom appeared, opening into that of Jehoshaphat. What struck me as new and unexpected was the rush, so to speak, of both the valleys to the south-east corner of the city. We entered the Jaffa gate about 4.30 P.M.

CHAPTER II

PALESTINE

BETWEEN the great plains of Assyria and the shores of the Mediterranean Sea, a high mountain tract is interposed, reaching from the Bay of Issus to the Desert of Arabia. Of this the northern part, which consists of the ranges known in ancient geography under the names of Amanus and Casius, and which includes rather more than half the tract in question, is not within the limits of the Holy Land; and, though belonging to the same general elevation, is distinguished from the southern division by strongly marked peculiarities, and only enters into the sacred history at a later time, when its connection with any local scenes was too slight to be worth dwelling upon in detail. It is with the southern division that we are now concerned.

The range divides itself twice over into two parallel chains. There is first, the main chain divided into two by the broad valley commonly called Cœle-Syria; the western mountain of Lebanon reaching its highest termination in the northern point above the cedars; the eastern of Anti-Lebanon, in the southern point known by the name of Hermon. This last summit again breaks into two ranges, of which the western, with the exception of one broad depression, extends as far as the Desert of Sinai; the eastern, as far as the mountains of Arabia Petræa. From this double chain flow four rivers of unequal magnitude, on which, at different times, have sprung up the four ruling powers of that portion of Asia. Lebanon is, in this respect, a likeness of that primeval Paradise, to which its local traditions have always endeavoured to attach themselves. The Northern River, rising from the fork of the two ranges of Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon, and forming the channel of life and civilisation in that northern division of which we have just spoken, is the Orontes—the river of the Greek kingdom of Antioch and Seleucia. The Western is the Litâny or Leontes, rising from the same watershed between

the two ranges, near Baalbec, and forcing its way through Lebanon into the Mediterranean, close to Tyre—the River of Phœnicia. The Eastern, rising from the centre of Anti-Lebanon and joined by one or two lesser streams, is the modern Barada, the Abana or Pharpar of the Old Testament—the river of the Syrian kingdom of Damascus. The kingdoms which have risen in the neighbourhood or on the banks of these rivers have flourished, not simultaneously, but successively. The northern kingdom was the latest, and is only brought into connection with the Sacred History as being that from which the “Kings of the North” made their descent upon Palestine, and in which were afterwards founded the first Gentile churches. It was, as it were, the halting-place of Christianity before it finally left its Asiatic home—beyond the limits of the Holy Land, yet not in another country or climate; naturally resting on the banks of the Orontes, on the way from the valley of the Jordan, before (to use the Roman poet’s expression in another and a better sense) it joined “the flow of the Orontes into the Tiber.” The eastern kingdom of Damascus on one side, the western kingdom of Phœnicia on the other, claim a nearer connection with the history of the chosen people from first to last; the one, as the great opening of communication with the distant Eastern deserts, the other with the Mediterranean coasts. The Fourth and Southern river, which rises at the point where Hermon splits into its two parallel ranges, is the River of Palestine—the JORDAN.

The Jordan, with its manifold peculiarities, must be reserved for the time when we come to speak of it in detail. Yet it must be remembered throughout that this river, the artery of the whole country, is unique on the surface of the globe. The ranges of the Lebanon are remarkable; the courses of the Orontes, the Leontes, and the Barada are curious; but the deep depression of the Jordan has absolutely no parallel. No other valley in the world presents such extraordinary physical features, none has been the subject of such various theories as to its origin and character. How far this strange conformation of the Holy Land has had any extensive influence on its history may be doubtful. But it is worth observing at the outset, that we are in a country of which the geography and the history each claims to be singular of its kind: the history, by its own records, unconscious, if one may so say, of the physical peculiarity; the geography, by the discoveries of modern science, wholly without regard, perhaps even indifferent or hostile, to the claims of the history. Such a coincidence may be accidental; but, at least, it serves to awaken the curiosity, and strike the imagination; at least

it lends dignity to the country, where the Earth and the Man are thus alike objects of wonder and investigation.

It is around and along this deep fissure that the hills of western and eastern Palestine spring up, forming the link between the high group of Lebanon on the north, and the high group of Sinai on the south; forming the mountain-bridge, or isthmus, between the ocean of the Assyrian Desert, and the ocean (as it seemed to the ancient world) of the Mediterranean, or "Great Sea" on the west. On the one side of the Jordan these hills present a mass of green pastures and forests melting away, on the east, into the red plains and blue hills of the Haurân. On the other side they form a mass of grey rock rising above the yellow Desert on the south, bounded on the west by the long green strip of the maritime plain; cut asunder on the north by the rich plain of Esdraelon; rising again beyond Esdraelon into the wild scenery of mountain and forest in the roots of Lebanon.

Each of these divisions has a name, a character, and, to a certain extent, a history of its own, which will best appear as we proceed. But there are features more or less common to the whole country, especially to that portion of it which has been the chief seat of the national life; and these, so far as they illustrate the general history, must be now considered. "The Vine" was "brought out of Egypt": what was the land in which God "prepared room before it, and caused it to take deep root," and "cover the 'mountains' with its shadow"?

I. The peculiar characteristic of the Israelite people, whether as contemplated from their own sacred records, or as viewed by their Gentile neighbours, was that they were a nation secluded, set apart, from the rest of the world; "haters," it was said, "of the human race," and hated by it in return. Is there anything in the physical structure and situation of their country which agrees with this peculiarity? Look at its boundaries. The most important in this respect will be that on the east. For in that early time, when Palestine first fell to the lot of the chosen people, the East was still the world. The great empires which rose on the plains of Mesopotamia, the cities of the Euphrates and the Tigris, were literally then, what Babylon is metaphorically in the Apocalypse, the rulers and corrupters of all the kingdoms of the earth. Between these great empires and the people of Israel, two obstacles were interposed. The first was the eastern Desert, which formed a barrier in front even of the outposts of Israel—the nomadic tribes on the east of the Jordan;

the second, the vast fissure of the Jordan valley, which must always have acted as a deep trench within the exterior rampart of the Desert and the eastern hills of the Trans-Jordanic tribes.

Next to the Assyrian empire in strength and power, superior to it in arts and civilisation, was Egypt. What was there on the southern boundary of Palestine to secure that "the Egyptians, whom they saw on the shores of the Red Sea, they should see no more again"? Up to the very frontier of their own land stretched that "great and terrible wilderness," which rolled like a sea between the valley of the Nile and the valley of the Jordan. This wilderness itself—the platform of the Tih—could be only reached on its eastern side by the tremendous pass of 'Akaba at the southern, of Sâfeh at the northern end of the 'Arabah, or of the no less formidable ascents from the shores of the Dead Sea.

On these, the two most important frontiers, the separation was most complete. The two accessible sides were the west and the north. But the west was only accessible by sea, and when Israel first settled in Palestine the Mediterranean was not yet the thoroughfare—it was rather the boundary and the terror of the eastern nations. From the north-western coast, indeed, of Syria, the Phœnician cities sent forth their fleets. But they were the exception of the world, the discoverers, the first explorers of the unknown depths; and in their enterprises Israel never joined. In strong contrast, too, with the coast of Europe, and especially of Greece, Palestine has no indentations, no winding creeks, no deep havens, such as in ancient, even more than in modern times, were necessary for the invitation and protection of commercial enterprise. One long line, broken only by the bay of Acre, containing only three bad harbours, Joppa, Acre, and Caïpha—the last unknown in ancient times—is the inhospitable front that Palestine opposed to the western world. On the northern frontier the ranges of Lebanon formed two not insignificant ramparts. But the gate between them was open, and through the long valley of Coele-Syria the hosts of Syrian and Assyrian conquerors accordingly poured. These were the natural fortifications of that vineyard which was "hedged round about" with tower and trench, sea and desert, against the "boars of the wood" and "the beast of the field."

II. In Palestine, as in Greece, every traveller is struck with the smallness of the territory. He is surprised, even after all that he has heard, at passing, in one long day, from

the capital of Judæa to that of Samaria ; or at seeing within eight hours three such spots as Hebron, Bethlehem, and Jerusalem. The breadth of the country from the Jordan to the sea is rarely more than fifty miles. Its length from Dan to Beersheba is about a hundred and eighty miles. The time is now gone by when the grandeur of a country is measured by its size, or the diminutive extent of an illustrious people can otherwise than enhance the magnitude of what they have done. The ancient taunt, however, and the facts which suggested it, may still illustrate the feeling which appears in their own records. The contrast between the littleness of Palestine and the vast extent of the empires which hung upon its northern and southern skirts, is rarely absent from the minds of the Prophets and Psalmists. It helps them to exalt their sense of the favour of God towards their land by magnifying their little hills and dry torrent-beds into an equality with the giant hills of Lebanon and Hermon and the sea-like rivers of Mesopotamia. It also fosters the consciousness, that they were not always to be restrained within these earthly barriers—"The place is too strait for me ; give me place where I may dwell." Nor is it only the smallness, but the narrowness of the territory which is remarkable. From almost every high point in the country its whole breadth is visible, from the long wall of the Moab hills on the east, to the Mediterranean Sea on the west. Whatever may be the poverty or insignificance of the landscape, it is at once relieved by a glimpse of either of these two boundaries.

" Two voices are there—one is of the sea,
One of the mountains,"—

and the close proximity of each—the deep purple shade of the one and the glittering waters of the other—makes it always possible for one or other of those two voices to be heard now, as they were by the Psalmists of old—"The strength of the '*mountains*' is his also—The *sea* is his, and he made it."

Thus, although the Israelites were shut off by the southern and eastern deserts from the surrounding nations, they were yet always able to look beyond themselves. They had no connection with either the eastern empires or the western isles—but they could not forget them. As in the words and forms of their worship they were constantly reminded how they had once been strangers in the land of Egypt ; so the sight of the hills beyond the Jordan, and of the sea beyond the Philistine plain, were in their daily life a memorial that they

were there secluded not for their own sakes, but for the sake of the world in whose centre they were set. The mountains of Gilead, and on the south the long ridges of Arabia, were at hand to remind them of those distant regions from which their first fathers Abraham and Jacob had wandered into the country,—from which “the camels and dromedaries of Midian and Ephah” were once again to pour in. The sea, whitening then as now with the ships of Tarshish, the outline of Chittim or Cyprus just visible in the clear evening horizon, must have told them of the western world where lay the “isles of the Gentiles,” which “should come to their light, and kings to the brightness of their rising. . . . Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows? Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first.” The very name of the “west” was to them “the sea”; and it is not merely a poetic image, but a natural reflex of their whole history and situation, that the great revelation of the expansion of the Jewish system to meet the wants of all nations should have been made to the Apostle on the house-top at Jaffa—

“When o’er the glowing western main
His wistful brow was upward raised;
Where, like an Angel’s train,
The burnished water blazed.”

III. This leads us to another point of view, in which the situation of Palestine is remarkably bound up with its future destinies. “I have set Jerusalem in the midst of the nations and countries that are round about her.” In later times this passage was taken in the literal sense that Palestine, and Jerusalem especially, was actually the centre of the earth; a belief of which the memorial is yet preserved in the large round stone still kissed devoutly by Greek pilgrims, in their portion of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. It is one of the many instances in which the innocent fancy of an earlier faith has been set aside by the discoveries of later science. In the East probably there are still many points of this kind which have been long surrendered in the more stirring West. But there was a real truth in it at the time that the Prophet wrote, which the subsequent course of history makes it now difficult for us to realise. Palestine, though now at the very outskirts of that tide of civilisation which has swept far into the remotest West, was then the vanguard of the eastern, and therefore of the civilised world, and, moreover, stood midway between the two great seats of ancient Empire, Babylon and Egypt. It was on the high road from one to the other of these mighty powers, the prize for which they contended,

the battlefield on which they fought, the lofty bridge over which they ascended and descended respectively into the deep basins of the Nile and Euphrates. Its first appearance on the stage of history is as a halting-place for a wanderer from Mesopotamia, who "passed through the land," and "journeyed going on still toward the south," and "went down into Egypt." The first great struggle which that wanderer had to maintain was against the host of Chedorlaomer, from Persia and from Babylon. The battle, in which the latest hero of the Jewish monarchy perished, was to check the advance of an Egyptian king on his way to contest the empire of the then known world with the king of Assyria at Carchemish. The whole history of Palestine, between the return from the Captivity and the Christian era, is a contest between the "kings of the north and the kings of the south"—the descendants of Seleucus and the descendants of Ptolemy, for the possession of the country. And when at last the West begins to rise as a new power on the horizon, Palestine, as the nearest point of contact between the two worlds, becomes the scene of the chief conflicts of Rome with Asia. There is no other country in the world which could exhibit the same confluence of associations, as that which is awakened by the rocks which overhang the crystal stream of the Dog River, where it rushes through the ravines of Lebanon into the Mediterranean Sea; where side by side are to be seen the hieroglyphics of the great Rameses, the cuneiform characters of Sennacherib, and the Latin inscriptions of the Emperor Antoninus.

IV. This is the most convenient place for noticing a peculiarity of the present aspect of Palestine, which though not, properly speaking, a physical feature, is so closely connected both with its outward imagery and with its general situation, that it cannot be omitted. Above all other countries in the world, it is a *Land of Ruins*. It is not that the particular ruins are on a scale equal to those of Greece or Italy, still less to those of Egypt. But there is no country in which they are so numerous, none in which they bear so large a proportion to the villages and towns still in existence. In Judæa it is hardly an exaggeration to say that whilst for miles and miles there is no appearance of present life or habitation, except the occasional goat-herd on the hillside, or gathering of women at the wells, there is yet hardly a hill-top of the many within sight which is not covered by the vestiges of some fortress or city of former ages. Sometimes they are fragments of ancient walls, sometimes mere foundations and piles of stone, but always enough to indicate signs of human

habitation and civilisation. Such is the case in Western Palestine. In Eastern Palestine, and still more if we include the Haurân and the Lebanon, the same picture is continued although under a somewhat different aspect. Here the ancient cities remain, in like manner deserted, ruined but standing; not mere masses and heaps of stone, but towns and houses, in amount and in a state of preservation which have no parallel except in the cities of Herculaneum and Pompeii, buried under the eruption of Vesuvius. Not even in Rome or Athens, hardly in Egyptian Thebes, can ancient buildings be found in such magnitude and such profusion as at Baalbec, Jerash, Ammân, and Palmyra. Nowhere else, it is said, can all the details of Roman domestic architecture be seen so clearly as in the hundreds of deserted villages which stand on the desert of the Haurân. This difference between the ruins of the two regions of Palestine arises no doubt from the circumstance, that whereas Eastern Syria has been for the last four hundred years entirely, for the last fifteen hundred years nearly, deserted by civilised, almost by barbarian, man, Western Palestine has always been the resort of a population which, however rude and scanty, has been sufficiently numerous and energetic to destroy and to appropriate edifices which in the less frequented parts beyond the Jordan have escaped through neglect and isolation.

But the general fact of the ruins of Palestine, whether erect or fallen, remains common to the whole country; deepens and confirms, if it does not create, the impression of age and decay which belongs to almost every view of Palestine, and invests it with an appearance which can be called by no other name than *venerable*. Moreover, it carries us deep into the historical peculiarities of the country. The ruins we now see are of the most diverse ages—Saracenic, Crusading, Roman, Grecian, Jewish, extending perhaps even to the old Canaanitish remains before the arrival of Joshua. This variety, this accumulation of destruction, is the natural result of the position which has made Palestine for so many ages the thoroughfare and prize of the world. And although we now see this aspect brought about in a fuller light than ever before, yet as far back as the history and language of Palestine reaches, it was familiar to the inhabitants of the country. In the rich local vocabulary of the Hebrew language, the words for sites of ruined cities occupy a remarkable place. Four separate designations are used for the several stages of decay or of destruction, which were to be seen even during the first vigour of the Israelite conquest and monarchy. There was the rude "cairn" or pile of stones,

roughly rolled together. There was the mound or heap of ruin, which, like the Monte Testaccio at Rome, was composed of the rubbish and débris of a fallen city. There were the forsaken villages, such as those in the Haurân, when "the cities were wasted without inhabitant and the houses without man,"—"forsaken, and not a man to dwell therein." There are lastly true ruins, such as those to which we give the name—buildings standing, yet shattered, like those of Baalbec or Palmyra.

What, therefore, we now see must to a certain extent have been seen always—a country strewed with the relics of an earlier civilisation; a country exhibiting even in the first dawn of history the theatre of successive conquests and destructions—"giants dwelling therein of old time . . . a people great, and many, and tall, . . . but the Lord destroyed them before those that came after; and they succeeded them and dwelt in their stead."

V. But this aspect of the land, whilst it reminds us in some respects of the identity of its present appearance with that of the past, reminds us still more forcibly of its difference.

The countless ruins of Palestine, of whatever date they may be, tell us at a glance that we must not judge the resources of the ancient land by its present depressed and desolate state. They show us not only that "Syria might support tenfold its present population, and bring forth tenfold its present produce," but that it actually did so.

And this brings us to the question which Eastern travellers so often ask, and are asked, on their return, "Can these stony hills, these deserted valleys, be indeed the Land of Promise, the land flowing with milk and honey?"

There are two answers to this question. First, as has just been observed, the country must have been very different when every hill was crowned with a flourishing town or village, from what it is since it ceased to be the seat not only of civilisation, but in many instances even of the population and habitations which once fertilised it. "The entire destruction of the woods which once covered the mountains, and the utter neglect of the terraces which supported the soil on steep declivities, have given full scope to the rains, which have left many tracts of bare rock, where formerly were vineyards and cornfields." As in Greece, since the fall of the plane-trees which once shaded the bare landscape of Attica, so in Palestine the gradual cessation of rain produced by this loss of vegetation has exposed the country in a greater degree than in early times to the evils of drought. This at least is the effect of the testimony of residents at Jerusalem, within

whose experience the Kedron has recently for the first time flowed with a copious torrent, evidently in consequence of the numerous enclosures of mulberry and olive groves, made within the last few years by the Greek convent, and in themselves a sample of the different aspect which such cultivation more widely extended would give to the whole country. There are proofs also of the same general change of climate, which in Europe has been effected by the disappearance of the German forests. The constant allusions to winter-snow in the ancient writers are not borne out by its rare occurrence in modern times. The forest of Hareth, and the thicket-wood of Ziph, in Judæa; the forest of Bethel; the forest of Sharon; the forest which gave its name to Kirjath-jearim, "the city of forests," have long disappeared; Palm-trees, which are now all but unknown on the hills of Palestine, formerly grew, as we shall presently see, with myrtles and pines, on the now almost barren slopes of Olivet; and groves of oak and terebinth, though never frequent, must have been certainly more common than at present. The very labour which was expended on these sterile hills in former times has increased their present sterility. The natural vegetation has been swept away, and no human cultivation now occupies the terraces which once took the place of forests and pastures.

Secondly, even without such an effort of imagination as is required to conceive an altered state of population and civilisation, it is enough to remember the actual situation of Palestine, in its relation to the surrounding countries of the East. We do not sufficiently bear in mind that the East, that is, the country between the Mediterranean and the tablelands of Persia, between the Sahara and the Persian Gulf, is a waterless desert, only diversified here and there by strips and patches of vegetation.¹ Such green spots or tracts, which are in fact but oases on a large scale, are the rich plains on the banks of the Tigris and the Euphrates, the long strips of verdure on the banks of the Nile, the occasional centres of vegetation in Arabia Felix and Idumæa; and, lastly, the cultivated though narrow territory of Palestine itself. It is true that as compared with the depth of soil and richness of vegetation on the banks of the Nile, or with the carpet of flowers described on the banks of the Chebar, Palestine seems poor and bare. But as compared with the whole surrounding country in the midst of which it stands, it is unquestionably a fertile land

¹ The Emperor Napoleon, in his remarks on the short-lived character of Asiatic dynasties, ascribes it to the fact that Asia is surrounded by deserts, which furnish a never-ceasing supply of barbarian hordes to overthrow the seats of civilised power reared within their reach. (*Mémoires*, Eng. Transl. vol. ii. 265.)

in the midst of barrenness. The impression on entering it from the south has been already described. The Desert often encroaches upon it—the hills of Anti-Libanus which overhang the plain of Damascus, and those which bound Judæa on the east, are as truly parts of the wilderness as Sinai itself. But the interior of the country is never entirely destitute of the signs of life, and the long tracts of Esdraelon, and the sea-coast and the plain of Gennesareth, are, or might be, as rich with gardens and with corn-fields as the most favoured spots in Egypt. And there is, moreover, this peculiarity which distinguishes Palestine from the only countries with which it could then be brought into comparison. Chaldæa and Egypt—the latter of course in an eminent degree—depend on the course of single rivers. Without the Nile, and the utmost use of the waters of the Nile, Egypt would be a desert. But Palestine is well distinguished not merely as “a land of wheat and barley, and vines and fig-trees and pomegranates, of oil-olive and honey,” but emphatically as “a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of ‘plains’ and ‘mountains’”—“not as the land of Egypt, where thou sowedst thy seed and wateredst it with thy foot, as a garden of herbs; but a land of ‘mountains’ and ‘plains,’ which drinketh water of the rain of heaven.” This mountainous character; this abundance of water both from natural springs and from the clouds of heaven, in contradistinction to the one uniform supply of the great river; this abundance of “milk” from its “cattle on a thousand hills,” of “honey” from its forests and its thymy shrubs, was absolutely peculiar to Palestine amongst the civilised nations of the East. Feeble as its brooks might be,—though, doubtless, they were then more frequently filled than now—yet still it was the only country where an Eastern could have been familiar with the image of the Psalmist: “He sendeth the springs into the valleys, which run among the ‘mountains.’” Those springs too, however short-lived, are remarkable for their copiousness and beauty. Not only not in the East, but hardly in the West, can any fountains and sources of streams be seen so clear, so full-grown even at their birth, as those of the Kishon, the Jordan, and the whole of the Jordan valley. Wales or Westmoreland are, doubtless, not regarded as fertile regions; and the green fields of England to those who have come fresh from Palestine seem, by way of contrast, to be indeed “a land of promise.” But transplant Wales or Westmoreland into the heart of the Desert, and they would be far more to the inhabitant of the Desert than to their inhabitants are the richest spots of England.

Far more : both because the contrast is in itself greater, and because the phenomena of a mountain country, with wells and springs, are of a kind almost unknown to the dwellers in the deserts or river-plains of the East.

Palestine therefore, not merely by its situation, but by its comparative fertility, might well be considered the prize of the Eastern world, the possession of which was the mark of God's peculiar favour ; the spot for which the nations would contend : as on a smaller scale the Bedouin tribes for some "diamond of the desert"—some "palm-grove islanded amid the waste." And a land of which the blessings were so evidently the gift of God, not as in Egypt of man's labour ; which also, by reason of its narrow extent, was so constantly within reach and sight of the neighbouring Desert, was eminently calculated to raise the thoughts of the nation to the Supreme Giver of all these blessings, and to bind it by the dearest ties to the land which He had so manifestly favoured.

VI. With these gentler incentives to religious thought and feeling were blended the more terrible as well as the more beautiful forms of tropical and eastern life. The "voice of the Lord" made itself heard in storms, bursting suddenly out of the clear heavens, preceded by violent hurricanes,—the clouds with their thick darkness almost seeming to touch the ground,—the thunder, heard, not as with us, in short and broken peals, but in one continuous roll, as if joining flash to flash without interruption.¹ "He bowed the heavens and came down, and there was darkness under his feet. . . . He rode upon the wings of the wind. . . . The Lord thundered out of heaven, and the Highest gave his voice ; hailstones and coals of fire. . . . The voice of the Lord divideth the flames of fire."

The volcanic phenomena of Palestine open a question of which the data are, in a scientific point of view, too imperfect to be discussed ; but there is enough in the history and literature of the people to show that there was an agency of this kind at work. The valley of the Jordan, both in its desolation and vegetation, was one continued portent ; and from its crevices ramified even into the interior of Judæa the startling appearances, if not of the volcano, at least of the earthquake. Their historical effect in the special theatres of their operation will appear as we proceed ; but their traces on the permanent feeling of the nation must be noticed here. The writings of the Psalmists and Prophets abound with indications which escape the eye of a superficial reader. Like

¹ I give these features from a thunderstorm that I witnessed in passing Mount Hermon on April 7, 1853.

the soil of their country, they actually heave and labour with the fiery convulsions which glow beneath their surface ; in part, it may be, from the recollection of the older catastrophe of Sodom and Gomorrah, but chiefly from more recent calamities, especially from the great earthquake in the reign of Uzziah, which coincides in point of time with most of these allusions. "He looketh on the earth, and it trembleth : he toucheth the 'mountains,' and they smoke."—"Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed."—"The mountains shall be molten under him, and the valleys shall be cleft as wax before the fire, and as the waters that are poured down a steep place."—"The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burned at his presence ; . . . his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him."—"The mountains flow down at thy presence, as when the melting fire burneth, the fire causeth the waters to boil." The Prophecy of Amos is a succession of earthquake-shocks. The thunder of the first "roar" from Jerusalem awakens him ; "the lion hath roared, who will not fear ? The Lord hath spoken, who will not prophesy ?" "The day of the Lord becomes darkness, very dark, and no lightness in it." The land heaves like the rising of the Nile flood. The "waters of the sea" rise, and are "poured over the face of the earth."—The most ancient and the most recent of these convulsions are brought together by the links of this mysterious agency. "I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning." The temple, the ivory palaces, the gateways of Bethel are "smitten," "shake," "fall," perish, and come to an end ; even as at a more awful moment by a like convulsion "the veil of the Temple" at Jerusalem "was rent in twain from the top to the bottom."

It is probable that nothing conveys to the human mind so strong a sense of general instability and insecurity as the recurrence of earthquake ; the only terror of which, as has been often observed, the edge is sharpened, not blunted, by familiarity. "Fear, and the pit and the snare, are upon thee, O inhabitant of the earth. And it shall come to pass, that he who fleeth from the noise of the fear shall fall into the pit ; and he that cometh up out of the midst of the pit shall be taken in the snare : for the windows from on high are open, and the foundations of the earth do shake. The earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved, the earth is moved exceedingly. The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage." But the nerves of the faith of Israel were not unstrung by shocks which

to them rather brought out the consciousness of that which was immovable. "Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be moved, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea."—"The Lord reigneth; let the people tremble: he sitteth between the cherubim; let the earth be moved."

VII. What has been already said is enough to indicate the extraordinary variety of structure and temperature exhibited in the Holy Land. It is said by Volney, and apparently with justice, that there is no district on the face of the earth which contains so many and such sudden transitions. Such a country furnished at once the natural theatre of a history and a literature which were destined to spread into nations accustomed to the most various climates and imagery. There must of course, under any circumstances, be much in the history of any nation, eastern or western, northern or southern, which, to other quarters of the world, will be more or less unintelligible. Still it is easy to conceive that whatever difficulty is presented to European or American minds by the sacred writings might have been greatly aggravated had the Bible come into existence in a country more limited in its outward imagery than is the case with Palestine. If the Valley of the Nile or the Arabian Desert had witnessed the whole of the sacred history, we cannot but feel how widely it would have been separated from the ordinary thoughts of a European; how small a portion of our feelings and imaginations would have been represented by it. The truths might have been the same, but the forms in which they were clothed would have affected only a few here and there, leaving the great mass untouched. But as it is, we have the life of a Bedouin tribe, of an agricultural people, of seafaring cities; the extremes of barbarism and of civilisation; the aspects of plain and of mountain; of a tropical, of an eastern, and almost of a northern climate. In Egypt there is a continual contact of desert and cultivated land; in Greece, there is a constant intermixture of the views of sea and land; in the ascent and descent of the great mountains of South America there is an interchange of the torrid and the arctic zones; in England there is an alternation of wild hills and valleys with rich fields and plains. But in Palestine all these are combined. The Patriarchs could here gradually exchange the nomadic life, first for the pastoral, and then for the agricultural; passing insensibly from one to the other as the Desert melts imperceptibly into the hills of Palestine. Ishmael and Esau could again wander back into the sandy waste which lay at their very doors. The scapegoat could still be sent from the temple-

courts into the uninhabited wilderness. John, and a greater than John, could return in a day's journey from the busiest haunts of men into the solitudes beyond the Jordan. The various tribes could find their several occupations of shepherds, of warriors, of traffickers, according as they were settled on the margin of the Desert, in the mountain fastnesses, or on the shore of the Mediterranean. The sacred poetry which was to be the delight and support of the human mind and the human soul in all regions of the world, embraced within its range the natural features of almost every country. The venerable poet of our own mountain regions used to dwell with genuine emotion on the pleasure he felt in the reflection that the Psalmists and Prophets dwelt in a mountainous country, and enjoyed its beauty as truly as himself. The devotions of our great maritime empire find a natural expression in the numerous allusions, which no inland situation could have permitted, to the roar of the Mediterranean Sea, breaking over the rocks of Acre and Tyre,—“the floods lift up their voice, the floods lift up their waves,”—the “great and wide sea,” whose blue waters could be seen from the top of almost every mountain, “wherein are things creeping innumerable.” “There go” the Phœnician “ships” with their white sails, and “there is that Leviathan,” the monster of the deep, which both Jewish and Grecian fancy was wont to place in the inland ocean that was to them all, and more than all, that the Atlantic is to us. Thither “they went down” from their mountains, and “did their business in ships,” in the “great waters,” and saw the “wonders” of the “deep”; and along those shores were the “havens,” few and far between, “where they would be” when “the storm became calm, and the waves thereof were still.” Hermon, with his snowy summit always in sight, furnished the images which else could hardly have been familiar,—“snow and vapours,” “snow like wool,” “hoar-frost like ashes,” “ice like morsels.” And then again, the upland hills and level plains experienced all the usual alternations of the seasons—the “rain descending on the mown grass,” the “early and the latter rain,” the mountains “watered from his chambers, the earth satisfied with the fruit of his works”—which, though not the same as the ordinary returns of a European climate, were yet far more like it than could be found in Egypt, Arabia, or Assyria.

Such instances of the variety of Jewish experience in Palestine, as contrasted with that of any other country, might easily be multiplied. But enough has been said to show its fitness for the history or the poetry of a nation with a universal destiny, and to indicate one at least of the methods by which

that destiny was fostered—the sudden contrasts of the various aspects of life and death, sea and land, verdure and desert, storm and calm, heat and cold ; which, so far as any natural means could assist, cultivated what has been well called the “variety in unity,” so characteristic of the sacred books of Israel ; so unlike those of India, of Persia, of Egypt, of Arabia.

VIII. Amidst this great diversity of physical features, undoubtedly the one which most prevails over the others is its mountainous character. As a general rule, Palestine is not merely a mountainous country, but a mass of mountains, rising from a level sea-coast on the west, and from a level desert on the east, only cut asunder by the valley of the Jordan from north to south, and by the valley of Jezreel from east to west. The result of this peculiarity is, that not merely the hill-tops, but the valleys and plains of the interior of Palestine, both east and west, are themselves so high above the level of the sea as to partake of all the main characteristics of mountainous history and scenery. Jerusalem is of nearly the same elevation as the highest ground in England, and most of the chief cities of Palestine are several hundred feet above the Mediterranean Sea.

1. Many expressions of the Old and New Testaments have immediate reference to this configuration of the country, the more remarkable from its contrast with the flat from which it rises on the east and south. This probably is at least one signification of the earliest name by which not Palestine alone, but the whole chain of mountains of which it is an offshoot, was called,—“Aram,” or the “highlands,” as distinguished from “Canaan,” “the lowlands” or plain of the sea-coast on the west, and the “Bikah” or great plain of the Mesopotamian deserts on the east. “Aram” (or *Syria*, the word by which the Greeks translated the word into their own language) seems to have been the general appellation of the whole sweep of mountains which enclose the western plains of Asia, and which were thus designated, like the various ranges of Maritime, Graian, Pennine, and Julian Alps, by some affix or epithet to distinguish one portion from another.

However this may be, there can be no doubt that in Palestine we are in the “Highlands” of Asia. This was the more remarkable in connection with the Israelites, because they were the only civilised nation then existing in the world which dwelt in a mountainous country. The great states of Egypt, of Assyria, of India, rose in the plains formed by the mighty rivers of those empires. The mountains from which those rivers descended were the haunts of the barbarian races who from time to time descended to conquer or ravage these rich

and level tracts. But the Hebrew people was raised above the other ancient states, equally in its moral and in its physical relations. From the Desert of Arabia to Hebron is a continual ascent, and from that ascent there is no descent of any importance, except to the plains of the Jordan, Esdraelon, and the coast. To "go down into Egypt," to "go up into Canaan," were expressions as true as they are frequent in the account of the Patriarchal migrations to and fro between the two countries. From a mountain sanctuary, as it were, Israel looked over the world. "The mountain of the Lord's house,"—"established on the tops of the mountains,"—"exalted above the hills,"—to which "all nations should go up," was the image in which the prophets delighted to represent the future glory of their country. When "the Lord had a controversy with his people," it was to be "before the mountains and the hills" and "the strong foundations of the earth." When the messengers of glad tidings returned from the captivity, their feet were "beautiful upon the mountains." It was to the "mountains" of Israel that the exile lifted up his eyes, as the place "from whence his help came." To the oppressed it was "the mountains" that brought "judgment, and the hills righteousness." "My mountains"—"my holy mountain,"—are expressions for the whole country.

One striking consequence of this elevation of the whole mass of the country is that every high point in it commands a prospect of greater extent than is common in ordinary mountain districts. On almost every eminence there is an opportunity for one of those wide views or surveys which abound in the history of Palestine, and which, more than anything else, connect together our impression of events and of the scene on which they were enacted. There are first the successive views of Abraham; as when on "the mountain east of Bethel" "Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan," and Abraham "lifted up his eyes, and looked from the place where he was, northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward"; or again, when "Abraham looked towards Sodom and Gomorrah . . . and beheld, and lo the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace"; or yet again, when "he lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off in the land of Moriah." In the later history there is unfolded still more distinctly the view of Balaam from the "high places of Moab," when "from the top of the rocks he saw," "from the hills he beheld," not only "the tents of Jacob" and the "tabernacles of Israel," with their future greatness rising far in the distance, but the surrounding nations also, whose fate was interwoven

with theirs—and he thought of Edom and Seir, and “looked on Amalek,” and “looked on the Kenite.” And close upon this follows the view—the most famous in all time, the proverb of all languages—when from that same spot—“the field of Zophim on the top of Pisgah,”—Moses, from “the mountain of Nebo, the top of Pisgah,” saw “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 Jericho, the city of palm-trees, unto Zoar.” Such too was the “very high mountain in the land of Israel,” from which, in vision, Ezekiel saw the “frame of the city,” and “the waters issuing to the east country,” “the desert,” and “the sea.” Such—in vision also—was the mountain “exceeding high,” which revealed on the day of the Temptation “all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them.” Such—not in vision, but in the most certain reality—was that double view of Jerusalem from Mount Olivet; the first, when, at the sudden turn of the road from Bethany, “He beheld the city, and wept over it,” the second, when “He sat on the Mount of Olives, over against the Temple,” and saw those “great buildings.”

Other prospects, such as of Jacob from Mahanaim, of Deborah from Mount Tabor, of Solomon from Gibeon, though not detailed, can well be imagined; others again, though belonging to later times, are yet full of interest—the view, whether historical or legendary, of Mahomet over Damascus; the view of Jerusalem, as Titus saw it from the heights of Scopus, or as it burst, eleven centuries later, on the Crusading armies at the same spot, or as the pilgrims beheld it from “Mont-joye.”

To all these I shall return in detail as we come to them in their several localities. No other history contains so many of these points of contact between the impressions of life and the impressions of outward scenery. But, besides this imaginative result, if one may so say, the mountainous character of Palestine is intimately connected with its history, both religious and political.

2. The infinite multiplication of these hills renders intelligible two points constantly recurring in the history of the Jewish people—the “fenced cities” and the “high places.” From the earliest times of the occupation of the country by a civilised and stationary people, we hear of the cities great and “walled up to heaven,” which terrified the Israelite spies; of the “fenced cities” attacked by Sennacherib; of the various hill-forts, Jotapata, Masada, Bether, which in the last Jewish wars held out against the Roman forces. This

is still the appearance of the existing villages or ruined cities, chiefly indeed in Judæa, but also throughout the country; in this respect more like the towns of the aboriginal inhabitants of Italy, "*præruptis oppida saxis*," than those of any other country. A city in a valley, instead of being as elsewhere the rule, is here the exception; every valley has its hill, and on that hill a city is set that "cannot be hid." From still earlier times, the same tendency is observable in their religious history. These multiplied heights were so many natural altars: at Bethel, on Moriah, at Dan, at Gibeon, on Mount Zion, on Olivet, altars were successively erected. On the various heights of Hermon ruins of such temples everywhere exist. The national worship down to the time of Hezekiah may almost be said to have been a religion of high places. There was no one height sufficient of itself to command universal acquiescence. In this equality of mountains, all were alike eligible.

3. Again, the combination of this mass of hills with its border plains and with the deserts from which it rises, has deeply affected its political and military history. The allocation of the particular portions of Palestine to its successive inhabitants, will best appear as we proceed. But the earliest and most fundamental distributions of territory are according to the simple division of the country into its highlands and lowlands. "The Amalekites," that is, the Bedouin tribes, "dwell in the land of the south," that is, on the desert frontier; "and the Hittites and the Jebusites and the Amorites dwell in the mountains," that is, the central mass of hills; "and the Canaanites dwell by the sea and by the 'side' of Jordan," that is, on the western plain and in the valley of the Ghor. And of the early inhabitants thus enumerated, those who at least by their names are brought into the sharpest geographical contrast are the Amorites or "dwellers on the summits," and the Canaanites or "lowlanders."

But the conquest of Palestine brings out this peculiarity most strongly. In most countries which consist of mountains and lowlands, two historical results are observable; first, that, in the case of invasion, the aboriginal inhabitants are driven to the mountains, and the plains fall into the hands of the conquerors; secondly, that in the case of semi-barbarous countries so situated, the plains are the secure, the mountains the insecure parts of the region. In Palestine both these results are reversed. Although some few of the ancient Amorite tribes, such as the Jebusites, retained their strongholds in the hills for many years after the first conquest of Joshua, yet the instances recorded of resistance to the progress

of the conquerors are for the most part in the plains. The hills of Judah and Ephraim were soon occupied, but "Manasseh could not drive out the inhabitants of Bethshean, . . . nor Taanach, . . . nor Dor, . . . nor Ibleam, . . . nor Megiddo, . . . [from the plains of Esdraelon and Sharon], but the Canaanites would dwell in that land. Neither did Asher drive out the inhabitants of Accho, . . . nor of Zidon, . . . nor of Achzib . . . [in the bay of Acre, and the coast of Phœnicia] . . . but the Asherites dwelt among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land: for they did not drive them out." "And the Amorites forced the children of Dan into the mountain: for they would not suffer them to come down into the valley: but the Amorites would dwell in Mount Heres in Aijalon and Shaalbim: yet the hand of the house of Joseph prevailed, so that they became tributaries." We are not left to conjecture as to one at least of the reasons. "The Lord was with Judah; and he drove out the inhabitants of the mountain; but could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, *because they had chariots of iron.*" The Israelites were a nation of infantry. Their nomadic life, in this respect differing from that of the modern Bedouins, was without horses; and even after their settlement in Palestine, horses and chariots were unknown as a national possession until the reign of Solomon. The Canaanites, on the contrary, were famous for their chariots. One chief alone is described as possessing "nine hundred"; and even after the partial introduction of them during the Jewish monarchy, the contrast between the infantry of the Israelites and the chariots of the armies from Damascus suggested the same comparison that might have been made by the Canaanites in the days of Joshua. "Their gods are gods of the 'mountains'; therefore they are stronger than we; but let us fight against them in the 'level,' and surely we shall be stronger than they." A glance at the description of Palestine given above will show how exactly this tallies with the actual results. Roads for wheeled vehicles are now unknown in any part of Palestine, and in the earlier history they are very rarely mentioned as a general means of communication. There is indeed mention of the "chariots" of Jehu and of Ahab along the plain of Esdraelon; and there was apparently a royal chariot-road between the capitals of the two kingdoms.¹ And under the Romans, the same astonishing genius for road-making, which carried the Via Flaminia through the Apennines and has

¹ The royal corpses were carried in chariots from Samaria to Jerusalem. 1 Kings xxii. 38; 2 Kings ix. 28, xxiii. 30. Rehoboam fled in his chariot from Shechem to Jerusalem. 1 Kings xii. 18.

left traces of itself in the narrow pass of the Scironian rocks, may have increased the facilities of communication in Palestine. Hence, perhaps, the mention of the chariot-road through the pass from Jerusalem to Gaza, where the Ethiopian met Philip. Hence the steep descent from Gadara is paved with the remains of a regular Roman road, marked by the ruts of wheels, where wheels have now never penetrated for at least a thousand years. But in earlier times, and under ordinary circumstances, chariots must have always been more or less impracticable in the mountain regions. It was in the plains, accordingly, that the enemies of Israel were usually successful.

Another cause, not indeed for the success of the Canaanites' resistance, but for the tenacity with which they clung to the plains, is to be seen in their great superiority both for agricultural and nomadic purposes to anything in the hills of Judæa or Ephraim. "Judah," we are told, at first "took Gaza, and Askelon, and Ekron." But these cities, with their coasts, soon fell again into the hands of the Philistines—whether the old inhabitants, or, as there is some reason to think, a new race of settlers, subsequent to the first conquest. And then, for more than four centuries, a struggle was maintained till the reign of David. It was the richest portion of the country, and the Philistines might well fight for it to the last gasp. In the same way, Tyre and Sidon, Aecho and Gaza, cared but little for the new comers, if they could but retain their hold on the corn-fields and the sea.

And this brings us to the other peculiarity which distinguishes Palestine at the present day from other half-civilised regions. In Greece and Italy and Spain, it is the mountainous tract which is beset with banditti, the level country which is safe. In Palestine, on the contrary, the mountain tracts are comparatively secure, though infested by villages of hereditary ruffians here and there; but the plains, with hardly an exception, are more or less dangerous. Perhaps the most striking contrast is the passage from the Haurân and plain of Damascus, to the uplands of the Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon, with their quiet villages and fruit-gardens, breathing an atmosphere almost of European comfort and security. The cause is soon told. Palestine, as we have before seen, is an island in a desert waste; but from this very fact it is also an island in the midst of pirates. The Bedouin tribes are the corsairs of the wilderness; the plains which run into the mountains are the creeks into which they naturally penetrate. Far up the plains of Philistia and Sharon come the Arabs of the Tih; deep into the centre of Palestine,

into the plain of Esdraelon, especially when the harvest has left the fields clear for pasturage, come the Arabs of the Haurân and of Gilead. The same levels which of old gave an opening to the chariots of the Canaanites now admit the inroad of these wandering shepherds. On one occasion, even in ancient times, there was a migration of Bedouins into Palestine on a gigantic scale; when the Midianites and Amalekites, and children of the east, encamped against the Israelites in the maritime plain, "with their cattle and their tents," and "pitched" their tents in Esdraelon, and "lay along the valley like grasshoppers for multitude." This, doubtless, was a great exception, and in the flourishing times of the Jewish Monarchy and of the Roman Empire the hordes of the Desert were kept out, or were, as in the case of the tribes of Petra in the time of the Herods, brought within the range of a partial civilisation. But now, like the sands of their own deserts which engulf the monuments of Egypt, no longer defended by a living and watchful population, they have broken in upon the country far and near; and in the total absence of solitary dwelling-places—in the gathering together of all the settled inhabitants into villages—and in the walls which, as at Jerusalem, enclose the cities round, with locked gates and guarded towers—we see the effect of the constant terror which they inspire. It is the same peculiarity of Eastern life as was exhibited in its largest proportions in the vast fortifications with which Nineveh and Babylon shut themselves in against the attacks of the Bedouins of the Assyrian Desert, and in the great wall which still defends the Chinese empire against the Mongolian tribes, from whom the civilisation of northern Asia has experienced the same reverses as that of southern Asia from the Arabs.

IX. What has already been said of the physical configuration of the country must to a great extent have anticipated what can be said of its scenery. Yet the character of scenery depends so much on its form and colour, as well as its material—on its expression as well as its features—that, unless something more is said, we shall have but a faint image of what was presented to the view of Patriarch or Prophet, King or Psalmist. Those who describe Palestine as beautiful must have either a very inaccurate notion of what constitutes beauty of scenery, or must have viewed the country through a highly coloured medium. There are, no doubt, several exceptions—Shechem, Samaria, Jericho, Engedi, the sources of the Jordan. But as a general rule, not only is it without the two main elements of beauty—variety of outline and variety of colour—but the features rarely so group together

as to form any distinct or impressive combination. The tangled and featureless hills of the lowlands of Scotland and North Wales are perhaps the nearest likeness accessible to Englishmen of the general landscape of Palestine south of the plain of Esdraelon.

1. Rounded hills, chiefly of a grey colour,¹ grey partly from the limestone of which they are all formed, partly from the tufts of grey shrub with which their sides are thinly clothed, and from the prevalence of the olive; their sides formed into concentric rings of rock, which must have served in ancient times as supports to the terraces of which there are still traces to their very summits; valleys, or rather the meetings of these grey slopes with the beds of dry water-courses at their feet; long sheets of bare rock² laid like flag-stones, side by side, along the soil; these are the chief features of the greater part of the scenery of the historical parts of Palestine. In such a landscape the contrast of every exception is doubly felt. The deep shade of the mountain wall beyond the Jordan, or again the level plains of the coast and of Esdraelon, each cut out of the mountains as if with a knife, become striking features where all else is monotonous. The eye rests with peculiar eagerness on the few instances in which the gentle depressions become deep ravines, as in those about Jerusalem, or those leading down to the valley of the Jordan; or in which the mountains assume a bold and peculiar form, as Lebanon and Hermon at the head of the whole country, or Tabor, Neby-Samwil, and the "Frank mountain," in the centre of the hills themselves. The strange scenes of the Jordan Valley and the Dead Sea are the standing marvel of the country.

2. These rounded hills, occasionally stretching into long undulating ranges, are for the most part bare of wood. Forest and large timber (with a few exceptions, hereafter to be mentioned) are not known. Cornfields, and, in the neighbourhood of Christian populations as at Bethlehem, vineyards creep along the ancient terraces. In the spring, the hills and valleys are covered with thin grass and the aromatic shrubs which clothe more or less almost the whole of Syria and Arabia. But they also glow with what is peculiar to Palestine, a profusion of wild flowers, daisies, the white flower called the Star of Bethlehem, but especially with a blaze of scarlet flowers of all kinds, chiefly anemones, wild

¹ This grey colour is exchanged for white in the hills immediately eastward of Jerusalem.

² Well described by Richardson, ii. 374. This feature of the rocky soil has sometimes been mistaken for ancient pavement (Robinson's *Later Res.*, p. 119).

tulips, and poppies. Of all the ordinary aspects of the country, this blaze of scarlet colour is perhaps the most peculiar ; and, to those who first enter the Holy Land, it is no wonder that it has suggested the touching and significant name of "the Saviour's blood-drops."

It is this contrast between the brilliant colours of the flowers and the sober hue of the rest of the landscape that gives force to the words,—“Consider the lilies of the field. . . . For I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.” Whatever was the special flower designated by the lily of the field, the rest of the passage indicates that it was of the gorgeous hues which might be compared to the robes of the great king. The same remark applies, though in a less degree, to the frequent mention of the same flower in the Canticles,—“I am the rose of Sharon, the lily of the valleys” ; “as a lily among thorns” ; “he feedeth among the lilies” ; “he is gone to gather lilies.” The roses in the “Valley of Roses” near Bethlehem are said to be a striking though solitary instance of such a burst of fragrance.

The same general bareness and poverty sets off in the same way the rare exceptions in the larger forms of vegetable life. The olive, the fig, and the pomegranate, which form the usual vegetation of the country, are so humble in stature that they hardly attract the eye till the spectator is amongst them. Then indeed the twisted stems and silver foliage of the first, the dark broad leaf of the second, the tender green and scarlet blossoms of the third, are amongst the most beautiful of sights, even when stripped of the associations which would invest the tamest of their kind with interest. On the lower slopes of the hills olives especially are more or less thickly scattered, with that peculiar colour and form which they share in common with those of Greece and of Italy ; to English eyes, best represented by aged willows. But there are a few trees which emerge from this general obscurity. Foremost stand the Cedars of Lebanon. In ancient times the sides of that mountain were covered with them. Now they are only found in one small hollow on its north-western slope. But there can be little doubt that they were always confined to the range of Lebanon, and therefore, properly speaking, were not trees of Palestine at all. The expression of Keble—

“Far o'er the cedar shade some tower of giant old,”

never could have been true of the woods and ruins of Judæa. It was the very remoteness of this noble tree, combined with

its majestic height and sweeping branches, that made it, one may almost say, an object of religious reverence. It is hardly ever named without the addition, either of the lofty mountain where it grew,—“the cedars of Lebanon,”—or of some epithet implying its grandeur and glory,—“the trees of the Lord,” the “cedars which He hath planted,” “the tall cedars,” “the cedars high and lifted up,” “whose height is like the height of the cedars,” “spread abroad like the cedar,” “with fair branches,” “with a shadowing shroud,” “of an high stature,” “his top among the thick boughs,” “his height exalted above all the trees of the field,” “his boughs multiplied, his branches long,” “fair in his greatness,” “in the length of his branches,” “by the multitude of his branches.” These expressions clearly indicate that to them the cedar was a portent, a grand and awful work of God. The words would never have been used had it been a familiar sight amongst their ordinary gardens, as it is in ours. The Maronite clergy for many years celebrated worship under their branches, as though they formed a natural temple; and now have erected a chapel on the spot, which is frequented by numbers on the Feast of the Transfiguration. This may now be a homage to the extreme antiquity of those which are left; but it may also be a continuation of the ancient feeling towards them which filled the hearts of the poets of Israel. Another more practical indication of their size, as compared to any Palestine timber, is the fact that from the earliest times they have been used for all the great works of Jewish architecture. They were so employed for Solomon’s Temple, and again for the Temple of Zerubabel, when nothing but sheer necessity could have induced the impoverished people to send so far for their timber. They were used yet once again, probably for the last time, in Justinian’s Church of the Virgin at Jerusalem. When the ceiling of the Church of Bethlehem, once of cedar, was last repaired, the rafters were no longer from the forests of Lebanon, but gifts from our own oaks by King Edward IV.

Passing from these trees, which, secluded as they are in their retired nook on the heights of Lebanon, could therefore illustrate the scenery of Palestine only by contrast, we come to those which must always have presented striking objects in the view, wherever they appeared. The first were those to which the Hebrews in Palestine emphatically gave the name of “the tree,” or “the strong tree,” namely, the “Turkish oak” (*el* or *elah*, in Arabic *Sindian*), and those to which the same name was given with a very slight variation of inflexion (*allon*)—the turpentine or terebinth, in Arabio

butm. The trees are different in kind; but their general appearance is so similar, as well as the name which the Hebrews (doubtless from this similarity) applied to both, that they may both be considered together. Probably the most remarkable specimen of the oak which the traveller sees is that called "the oak of Abraham," near Hebron, and of which an elaborate account is given by Dr. Robinson. A familiar example of the terebinth is that on the west of Jerusalem near the Jaffa gate, which forms a marked object in any view including that portion of the city. They are both tall and spreading trees, with dark green foliage; and by far the largest in height and breadth of any in Palestine. But these, too, are rare; and this also is indicated by the allusions to them in the Old Testament. In a less degree than the cedars of Lebanon, but more frequently from their being brought into closer contact with the history of Israel, they are described as invested with a kind of religious sanctity, and as landmarks of the country, to a degree which would not be possible in more thickly wooded regions. They were no unfitting image of the remnants of the ancient giant race, which had been "destroyed from before Israel"—"the Amorite, whose height was like the height of the cedars, and he was *strong as the oaks*." Each successive step of the first patriarchal migration is marked by a halt under more of these towering trees. Under the oak of Moreh at Shechem, and the oak of Mamre at Hebron, was built the altar and pitched the tent of Abraham. And each of these aged trees became the centre of a long succession of historical recollection. Underneath the oak of Moreh, or its successor, Jacob buried, as in a consecrated spot, the images and the ornaments of his Mesopotamian retainers. In the same place, as it would seem, did Joshua set up the "great stone" that was "by the sanctuary of the Lord"; and the tree, or the spot, appears to have been known in the time of the Judges, as the traditional site of these two events, by the double name of the "oak of the enchantments" and "the oak of the pillar." Still more remarkable was the history of the "oak of Mamre." There are here indeed two rival claimants. The LXX, translating the word *allon* by *δρῦς*, evidently regard it as identical with *elah*, and therefore as an oak; and it is curious that the only large tree now existing in the neighbourhood is that already alluded to as the chief of a group of *ilexes* in the valley of Eschol, about a mile from Hebron; and is, in all probability, the same, or in the same situation, as that alluded to in the twelfth century by Sæwulf, and in the thirteenth and fourteenth by Mandeville

and Sanutus, as possessed of extraordinary virtues, and the subject of a singular legend. But the tradition in the time of Josephus was attached to a terebinth. None such now remains; but there can be little doubt that it stood within the ancient enclosure which he mentions, and of which ruins still remain to the north of Hebron, under the name of "Abraham's house." It was a gigantic tree, supposed to be coeval with the Creation. In the time of Constantine it was hung with images and with a picture representing the entertainment of the Angels; and underneath its shade was held a fair, in which Christians, Jews, and Arabs assembled every summer to traffic, and to honour, each with his own rites, the sacred tree and its accompanying figures. Constantine abolished the worship and the images, but the tree, with the fair, remained to the time of Theodosius. It gave its name to the spot, and was still standing within the church which was built around it till the seventh century; and in later times marvellous tales were told of its having sprung from the staff of one of the angelic visitants, and of its blazing with fire yet remaining always fresh. The neighbouring field is still called "The Place of the Terebinth."

These are the two most remarkable of the trees mentioned. But there are also others. The "oak of Bethel," under which Deborah the nurse of Jacob was interred, was known by the name of the 'terebinth of tears,' and sometimes of 'Tabor'; a landmark to wayfarers over the central hills of Palestine. The terebinth near Kedesh, under which the nomad tribe of the Kenites was encamped in the north, may even be the tree which caused the terebinth to be taken as a type of the tribe of Naphtali, by whose sanctuary it stood. And in all these cases, as they had at first been marked out as natural resting-places for the patriarchal or Arab encampments, so they were afterwards in all probability the sacred trees and the sacred groves under which altars were built, partly to the True God, partly to Astarte. One such grove, apparently with the remains of a sacred edifice, exists at Hazori, near Banias; another, of singular beauty, on the hill of the lesser sources of the Jordan, at the ancient sanctuary of Dan; a third, near Bludân, in the Anti-Lebanon, still the scene of an ancient superstitious rite.

These instances are all more or less isolated. There is one district, however, where the oaks flourished and still flourish in such abundance as to constitute almost a forest. On the tablelands of Gilead are the thick oak-woods of Bashan, often alluded to in the Prophets as presenting the most familiar image of forest scenery; famous in history,

as the scene of the capture and death of Absalom, when he was caught amongst the tangled branches of one of their largest trees.

Another tree, which breaks the uniformity of the Syrian landscape by the rarity of its occurrence, no less than by its beauty, is the Palm. It is a curious fact that this stately tree, so intimately connected with our associations of Judæa by the Roman coins, which represent her seated in captivity under its shade, is now almost unknown to her hills and valleys. Two or three in the gardens of Jerusalem, some few at Nablûs, one or two in the plain of Esdraelon, comprise nearly all the instances of the palm in central Palestine. In former times it was doubtless more common. In the valley of the Jordan, one of the most striking features used to be the immense palm-grove, seven miles long, which surrounded Jericho; of which large remains were still visible in the seventh century and the twelfth, some even in the seventeenth. En-gedi, too, on the western side of the same lake, was known in early times as Hazazon-Tamar—"the felling of palm trees." Relics of its grove are still to be seen, in the trunks of the palms washed up on the shores of the Dead Sea, preserved by the salt with which a long submersion in those strange waters has impregnated them. Now, not one is to be seen in the deep thicket which surrounds its spring, and at Jericho even the solitary palm, for many years observed by travellers as the only remnant of its former glory, has disappeared. On Olivet, too, where now nothing is to be seen but the olive and the fig-tree, there must have been at least some palms in ancient days. In the time of Ezra they went forth "unto the mount" to fetch for the Feast of Tabernacles "olive-branches, and pine-branches, and myrtle-branches, and palm-branches, and branches of thick trees." Bethany, "the house of dates," in all probability derives its name from the same cause, and with this agrees the fact that the crowd which escorted our Lord to Jerusalem from Bethany "took branches of palm trees." Still, it is probable that even then the palm was rarely found on the high land which forms the main portion of historical Palestine. It is emphatically, as we have seen in the account of Sinai, the "tree" of the Desert. It is always spoken of in Rabbinical writers as a tree of the valleys, not of the mountains. It grows naturally, and, were it cultivated, might doubtless grow again in the tropical climate of the Valley of the Jordan. It is still found in great abundance on the maritime plains of Philistia and Phœnicia; and probably from the palm-groves, which still strike the eye of the traveller

in the neighbourhood of Gaza, Jaffa, Acre, Sidon, and Beirût and which there probably first met the eye of the Western world, whether Greek, Roman, or Mediæval, came the name of Phœnicia or "the Land of Palms." Hence too, at least in recent times, came the branches, which distinguished the Pilgrims of Palestine from those of Rome, Compostella, and Canterbury, by the name of "Palmer." But the climate of the hill country must always have been too cold for their frequent growth. Those on Olivet most likely were in gardens; the very fact of the name of the "City of Palm-trees," applied as a distinguishing epithet to Jericho; the allusion to the palm-tree of En-gedi, as though found there and not elsewhere; the mention of the palm-tree of Deborah at Bethel, as a well-known and solitary landmark—probably the same spot as that called Baal-Tamar, "the sanctuary of the palm"—all indicate that the palm was on the whole then, as now, the exception and not the rule.

Combined with the palm in ancient times was the Sycamore. This too was a tree of the plain,—chiefly of the plain of the sea-coast—also, as we know by one celebrated instance, in the plain of Jericho. As Jericho derived its name from the palms, so did Sycaminopolis—the modern Caïpha,—from the grove of sycamores, some of which still remain in its neighbourhood.

The large, dark-leaved, wide-spread tree called the "Carob," common in the forests of Galilee, is not directly named in the Scriptures, nor is it frequent in the rest of Palestine. But it has two points of connection with the Sacred History. Its pods are undoubtedly "the husks" of the Prodigal Son and of the swine which he tended. And a legend (founded perhaps on the popular name of "locust-tree" given to the Carob) has confounded them with the locusts which were the food of the Baptist. Two or three carob-trees, memorials or causes of this belief, are still pointed out in the hills a few miles west of Jerusalem, traditionally but erroneously called "the Wilderness of St. John."

There is one other tree, only to be found in the valley of the Jordan, but too beautiful to be entirely passed over; the Oleander, with its bright blossoms and dark-green leaves, giving the aspect of a rich garden to any spot where it grows. It is rarely if ever alluded to in the Scriptures. But it may be the "tree planted by the 'streams' of water, which bringeth forth his fruit in due season," and "whose leaf shall not wither," and it may be "the rose-plant in Jericho," "the rose growing by the brook of the field"—celebrated by the son of Sirach.

X. The geological structure of Palestine, as of Greece, is almost entirely limestone. The few exceptions are in the Valley of the Jordan, which must be considered in its own place. This rocky character of the whole country has not been without its historical results.

1. Not only does the thirsty character of the whole East give a peculiar expression to any places where water may be had, but the rocky soil preserves their identity, and the Wells of Palestine serve as the links by which each successive age is bound to the other, in a manner which at first sight would be thought almost incredible. The name by which they are called of itself indicates their permanent character. The "well" of the Hebrew and the Arab is carefully distinguished from the "spring." The *spring* (*ain*) is the bright open source—the "eye" of the landscape, such as bubbles up amongst the crags of Sinai, or rushes forth in a copious stream from En-gedi or from Jericho. But the *well* (*beer*) is the deep hole *bored* far under the rocky surface by the art of man—the earliest traces of that art which these regions exhibit. By these orifices at the foot of the hills, surrounded by their broad margin of smooth stone or marble, a rough mass of stone covering the top, have always been gathered whatever signs of animation or civilisation the neighbourhood afforded. They were the scenes of the earliest contentions of the shepherd-patriarchs with the inhabitants of the land; the places of meeting with the women who came down to draw water from their rocky depths; of Eliezer with Rebekah, of Jacob with Rachel, of Moses with Ziporah, of Christ with the woman of Samaria. They were the natural halting-places of great caravans, or wayfaring men, as when Moses gathered together the people to the well of Moab, which the princes dug with their sceptred staves, and therefore the resort of the plunderers of the Desert—of "the noise of archers in the places of drawing water." What they were ages ago in each of these respects they are still. The shepherds may still be seen leading their flocks of sheep and goats to their margin; the women still come with their pitchers and talk to those "who sit by the well"; the traveller still looks forward to it as his resting-place for the night, if it be in a place of safety; or, if it be in the neighbourhood of the wilder Bedouins, is hurried on by his dragoon or his escort without halting a moment; and thus, by their means, not only is the image of the ancient life of the country preserved, but the scenes of sacred events are identified, which under any other circumstances would have perished. The wells of Beersheba in the wide frontier-valley

of Palestine are indisputable witnesses of the life of Abraham. The well of Jacob, at Shechem, is a monument of the earliest and of the latest events of sacred history, of the caution of the prudent patriarch, no less than of the freedom of the Gospel there proclaimed by Christ.

2. Next to the wells of Syria, the most authentic memorials of past times are the Sepulchres, and partly for the same reason.

The tombs of ancient Greece and Rome lined the public roads with funeral pillars or towers. Grassy graves and marble monuments fill the churchyards and churches of Christian Europe. But the sepulchres of Palestine were, like the habitations of its earliest inhabitants, hewn out of the living limestone rock, and therefore indestructible as the rock itself. In this respect they resembled, though on a smaller scale, the tombs of Upper Egypt; and as there the traveller of the nineteenth century is confronted with the names and records of men who lived thousands of years ago, so also, in the excavations of the valleys which surround or approach Shiloh, Shechem, Bethel, and Jerusalem, he knows that he sees what were the last resting-places of the generations contemporary with Joshua, Samuel, and David. And the example of Egypt shows that the identification of these sepulchres even with their individual occupants is not so improbable as might be otherwise supposed. If the graves of Rameses and Osirei can still be ascertained, there is nothing improbable in the thought that the tombs of the patriarchs may have survived the lapse of twenty or thirty centuries. The rocky cave on Mount Hor must be at least the spot believed by Josephus to mark the grave of Aaron. The tomb of Joseph must be near one of the two monuments pointed out as such in the opening of the vale of Shechem. The sepulchre which is called the tomb of Rachel exactly agrees with the spot described as "a little way" from Bethlehem. The tomb of David, which was known with certainty at the time of the Christian era, may perhaps still be found under the mosque which bears his name on the modern Zion. Above all, the Cave of Machpelah is concealed, beyond all reasonable doubt, by the mosque at Hebron. But with these exceptions, we must rest satisfied rather with the general than the particular interest of the tombs of Palestine. The proof of identity in each special instance depends almost entirely on the locality. Greek and Hebrew inscriptions have been found here and there in Jewish sepulchres, but (in this respect how unlike Egypt) not a single letter which can with certainty be referred to an ancient period; and tradition is, in this class of monu-

ments, found to be unusually fallacious. Although some of those which are described as genuine by Jewish authorities can neither be rejected nor received with positive assurance, such as the alleged sepulchres of Deborah, Barak, Abinoam, Jael, and Heber, at Kedesh-Naphtali; and of Phinehas, Eleazar, and Joshua, in the eastern ranges of Shechem; yet the passion of the Mussulman conquerors of Syria for erecting mosques over the tombs of celebrated saints (and such to them are all the heroes of the Old Testament) has created so many fictitious sepulchres as to throw doubt on all. Such are the tombs of Seth and Noah, in the vale of the Lebanon; of Moses, on the west of the Jordan, in direct contradiction to the Mosaic narrative; of Samuel, on the top of Neby-Samwil; of Sidon and Zebulun near Sidon and Tyre; of Hosea, in Gilead; of Jonah, thrice over, in Judæa, in Phœnicia, and at Nineveh.

Even the most genuine sepulchres are received as such by the highest Mussulman authorities on grounds the most puerile. The mosque of Hebron is justly claimed by them as the sanctuary of the tomb of Abraham, but their reason for believing it is thus gravely stated in the "Torch of Hearts," a work written by the learned Ali, son of Jafer ar-Rayz, "on the authenticity of the tombs of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." "I rely," he says, "on the testimony of Abû Horâirah, who thus expresses himself:—It was said by the Apostle of God: 'When the angel Gabriel made me take the nocturnal flight to Jerusalem, we passed over the tomb of Abraham, and he said, Descend, and make a prayer with two genuflexions, for here is the sepulchre of thy father Abraham. Then we passed Bethlehem, and he said, Descend, for here was born thy brother Jesus. Then we came to Jerusalem.'"

It may be well to notice the probable cause of this uncertainty of Jewish, as contrasted with the certainty of Egyptian and, we might add, of European tradition on the subject of tombs. However strongly the reverence for sacred graves may have been developed in the Jews of later times, the ancient Israelites never seem to have entertained the same feeling of regard for the resting-places or the remains of their illustrious dead, as was carried to so high a pitch in the earlier Pagan and in the later Christian world. "Let me bury my dead out of my sight"—"No man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day,"—express, if not the general feeling of the Jewish nation, at least the general spirit of the Old Testament. Every one knows the most signal instance in which this indifference was manifested. Somewhere, doubtless, near the walls of the old Jerusalem, or buried under its ruins, is the "new sepulchre hewn in the rock," where "the body of Jesus

was laid," but the precise spot, never indicated by the Evangelists, was probably unknown to the next generation, and will, in all likelihood, remain a matter of doubt always. In this respect the controversy regarding the Holy Sepulchre is an illustration of a general fact in sacred topography. Modern pilgrims are troubled at the supposition that such a locality should have been lost. The Israelites and the early Christians would have been surprised if it had been preserved.

3. But the tombs are only one class of a general peculiarity, resulting from the physical structure of Palestine.

Like all limestone formations, the hills of Palestine abound in caves. How great a part the caverns of Greece played in the history and mythology of that country is well known. In one respect, indeed, those of Palestine were never likely to have been of the same importance, because, not being stalactitic, they could not so forcibly suggest to the Canaanite wanderers the images of sylvan deities, which the Grecian shepherds naturally found in the grottoes of Parnassus and Hymettus. But from other points of view we never lose sight of them. In these innumerable rents, and cavities, and holes, we see the origin of the sepulchres, which still, partly natural, and partly artificial, perforate the rocky walls of the Judæan valleys; the long line of tombs, of which I have just spoken, beginning with the cave of Machpelah and ending with the grave of Lazarus—which was "a cave, and a stone lay upon it"—and "the sepulchre hewn in the rock, wherein never man before was laid." We see in them the shelter of the people of the land, in the terrible visitations of old, as when "Lot went up out of Zoar, and dwelt in the mountain, . . . for he feared to dwell in Zoar, and dwelt in a cave"; or as when "in the days of Uzziah, king of Judah, they fled before the earthquake to the 'ravine' of the mountains"; to the rocky fissures safer, even though themselves rent by like convulsions, than the habitations of man. "Enter into the rock," so wrote Isaiah, probably in the expectation or the recollection of this very catastrophe, "and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of His majesty. . . . They shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, and the 'clefts of the cliffs,' for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of His majesty, when He ariseth to shake terribly the earth." We see in them, also, the hiding-places which served sometimes for the defence of robbers and insurgents, sometimes for the refuge of those "of whom the world was not worthy"; the prototype of the catacombs of the early Christians, of the caverns of the Vaudois and the Covenanters. The cave of the five kings at Makkedah; the "caves and dens

and strongholds " and " rocks " and " pits " and " holes," in which the Israelites took shelter from the Midianites in the time of Gideon, from the Philistines in the time of Saul ; the cleft of the cliff Etam, into which Samson went down to escape the vengeance of his enemies ; the caves of David at Adullam, and at Maon and of Saul at En-gedi ; the cave in which Obadiah hid the prophets of the Lord ; the caves of the robber-hordes above the plain of Gennesareth ; the sepulchral caves of the Gadarene demoniacs ; the cave of Jotapata, where Josephus and his countrymen concealed themselves in their last struggle, —continue from first to last what has truly been called the " cave-life " of the Israelite nation. The stream of their national existence, like the actual streams of the Grecian rivers, from time to time disappears from the light of day, and runs underground in these subterraneous recesses, to burst forth again when the appointed moment arrives ; a striking type, as it is a remarkable instance, of the preservation of the spiritual life of the Chosen People, " burning, but not consumed," " chastened, but not killed."

In older times, there is no proof that these ancient grottoes were used for worship, either Canaanitish or Israelite. The " green trees," the " high places," served alike for the altars of the Lord, and for those of Baal and Ashtaroth. The free and open sky for the one worship, the unrestricted sight of the sun and the host of heaven for the other, were alike alien to the sepulchral darkness of the holes and caverns of the rocks. The one instance of a cave dedicated to religious worship, before the fall of the Jewish nation, is that at the sources of the Jordan, consecrated by foreign settlers as a sanctuary of their own Grecian Pan. But the moment that the religion of Palestine fell into the hands of Europeans, it is hardly too much to say that, as far as sacred traditions are concerned, it became " a religion of caves "—of those very caves which in earlier times had been unhallowed by any religious influence whatever. Wherever a sacred association had to be fixed, a cave was immediately selected or found as its home. First in antiquity is the grotto of Bethlehem, already in the second century regarded by popular belief as the scene of the Nativity. Next comes the grotto on Mount Olivet, selected as the scene of our Lord's last conversations before the Ascension. These two caves, as Eusebius emphatically asserts, were the first seats of the worship established by the Empress Helena, to which was shortly afterwards added a third, the sacred cave of the Sepulchre. To these were rapidly added the cave of the Invention of the Cross, the cave of the Annunciation at Nazareth, the cave of the Agony at

Gethsemane, the cave of the Baptist in the "wilderness of St. John," the cave of the shepherds of Bethlehem. And then again, partly perhaps the cause, partly the effect of this consecration of grottoes, began the caves of hermits. There was the cave of St. Pelagia on Mount Olivet, the cave of St. Jerome, St. Paula, and St. Eustochium at Bethlehem, the cave of St. Saba in the ravines of the Kedron, the remarkable cells hewn or found in the precipices of the Quarantania or Mount of the Temptation above Jericho. In some few instances this selection of grottoes would coincide with the events thus intended to be perpetuated, as for example the hiding-places of the prophets on Carmel, and the sepulchres of the patriarchs and of our Lord. But in most instances the choice is made without the sanction, in some instances in defiance, of the sacred narrative. No one would infer from the mention of the "inn," or "house" of the Nativity, or of the entrance of the Angel of the Annunciation to Mary, that those events took place in caves. The very fact that in the celebrated legend it is a house, and not a grotto, which is transplanted to Loretto, is an indication of what would be the natural belief. All our common feelings are repugnant to the transference of the scenes of the Agony and Ascension from the free and open sides of the mountain to the narrow seclusion of subterranean excavations. It is possible, as we are often reminded, that the very fact of caverns being so frequently used for places of dwelling and resort in Palestine would account for the absence of a more specific allusion to them; for grottoes are stables at Bethlehem still; and the lower stories of houses at Nazareth are excavated in the rock. But the more probable explanation is to be found in the fact, that after the devastating storm of the Roman conquest had swept away the traces of sacred recollections in human habitations, the inhabitants or pilgrims who came to seek them would seek and find them in the most strongly marked features of the neighbourhood. These, as we have seen, would be the caves. Helena, by the consecration of two of the most remarkable, would set the example; the practice of the hermits, already begun in the rock-hewn tombs of Egypt, would encourage the belief of this sanctity. And thus the universality of the connection between grottoes and sacred events, which in later times provokes suspicion, in early times would only render the minds of pilgrims more callous to the improbabilities of each particular instance.

4. I have dwelt at length on the history of the caves, because it is the only instance of a close connection between the history or the religion of Palestine and any of its more special natural

features. In some few cases, the local legends may be traced to similar peculiarities.

(1) The stones called "Elijah's melons," on Mount Carmel, and "the Virgin Mary's peas," near Bethlehem, are instances of crystallisation well known in limestone formations. They are so called as being the supposed produce of those two plots turned into stone, from the refusal of the owners to supply the wants of the prophet and the saint. Another celebrated example may be noticed in the petrified lentils of the workmen at the great Pyramid, as seen by Strabo at its base,¹ and as still visible at the present day. In Palestine the traces of these once well-known relics have now almost entirely disappeared.

(2) Another peculiarity of the limestone rock has given birth to the legendary scene of the destruction of Sennacherib's army. Two pits were formerly pointed out near Bethlehem as the grave of the Assyrian host. One still remains. It is an irregular opening in the rocky ground, exactly similar to those which may be seen by hundreds, in the wild limestone district called the Karst, above Trieste. The real scene of the event is probably elsewhere.

(3) The limestone, which is usually white or grey, is occasionally streaked with red. It is in these reddish veins that the pilgrims fancied they saw the marks of the drops of blood in the so-called Scala Santa; or on the rock near Jerusalem, of late years pointed out as the scene of the martyrdom of Stephen.

(4) The black and white stones, usually called volcanic, found along the shores of the sea of Galilee, have been transformed by Jewish fancy into the traces of the tears of Jacob in search of Joseph.

(5) It is not of the nature of limestone rocks to assume fantastic forms, and in this respect the contrast between the legends of Palestine and Sinai is most apparent. Some few however there are; their very slightness indicating that they have not been the occasion, but only the handles of the stories appended to them. The cavity of the footmark on Mount Olivet; the supposed entombment of Adam's skull in Golgotha; the sinuous mark of the Virgin's girdle by Gethsemane; the petrification of the ass at Bethany; the impression of Elijah's form on the rocky bank by the roadside, near the convent of Mar Elias, between Bethlehem and Jerusalem, are

¹ Strabo, xvii. These petrified lentils were probably the same as the petrified fruits said to have been in the possession of Omar Ibn Abd al-Aziz, Caliph of Egypt, in the 99th year of the Hejira. In this version of the story, they were supposed to be the relics of the general petrification of lentils which had supported Pharaoh at the time of the Exodus. Weil's Legends, pp. 121, 122.

perhaps the only objects in which the form of the rocks can be supposed to have suggested the legends. But another place will occur for speaking of these more particularly.

It is worth while to enumerate these instances, trifling as they are, in order to illustrate the slightness of foundation which the natural features of Palestine afford, for the mythology almost inevitably springing out of so long a series of remarkable events. And this is in fact the final conclusion which is to be drawn from the character, or rather want of character, presented by the general scenery. If the first feeling be disappointment, yet the second may well be thankfulness. There is little in these hills and valleys on which the imagination can fasten. Whilst the great seats of Greek and Roman religion, at Delphi and Lebadea, by the lakes of Alba and of Aricia, strike even the indifferent traveller as deeply impressive, Shiloh and Bethel on the other hand, so long the sanctuaries and oracles of God, almost escape the notice even of the zealous antiquarian in the maze of undistinguished hills which encompass them. The first view of Olivet impresses us chiefly by its bare matter-of-fact appearance ; the first approach to the hills of Judæa reminds the English traveller not of the most but of the least striking portions of the mountains of his own country. Yet all this renders the Holy Land the fitting cradle of a religion which expressed itself not through the voices of rustling forests, or the clefts of mysterious precipices, but through the souls and hearts of men ; which was destined to have no home on earth, least of all in its own birthplace ; which has attained its full dimensions only in proportion as it has travelled further from its original source, to the daily life and homes of nations as far removed from Palestine in thought and feeling as they are in climate and latitude ; which alone of all religions claims to be founded not on fancy or feeling, but on Fact and Truth.

CHAPTER III

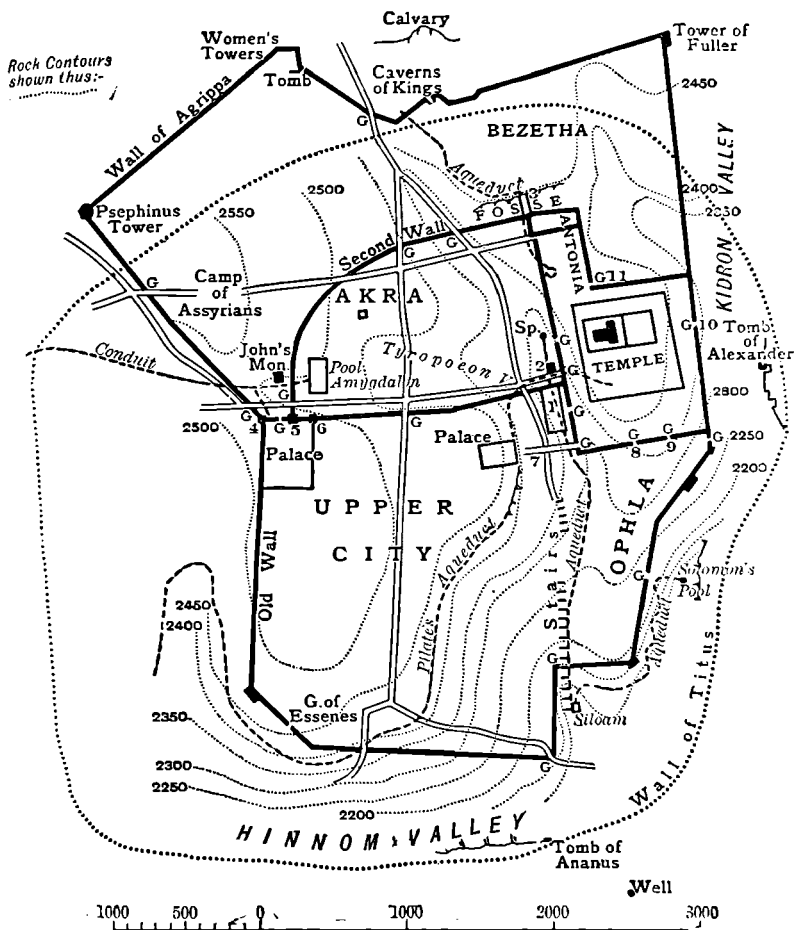
JUDÆA AND JERUSALEM

THE southern frontier of Palestine almost imperceptibly loses itself in the desert of Sinai. It is sometimes called the land of "Goshen," or the "frontier," doubtless from the same reason as the more famous tract between the cultivated Egypt and the Arabian desert, in which the Israelites dwelt before the Exodus. But it is more commonly known as "the south," "the south country." Abraham "went up out of Egypt *into the south*"; "he went on his journeys *from the south* even unto Bethel"; "Isaac dwelt in the *south country*." Here, in the wide pastures between the hills and the actual Desert, the Patriarchs fed their flocks; here were the wells—the first regular wells that are met by the traveller as he emerges from the wilderness—Moladah, Lahai-Roi, and, above all, Beersheba. The exact limits of this "southern frontier" are, of course, difficult to be determined. Its main sweep, however, was through the vast undulating plain which contains the greater part of these wells, immediately under the hills of Judæa, now known as the Wâdy Kibâb, probably what in former times was called the "valley," i.e. the 'torrent-bed' or Wâdy of Gerar. After the Patriarchal times, it has but few recollections. It was indeed the first approach of the Israelites to their promised home, when the spies ascended from Kadesh "by the south," but not that by which they finally entered. It was then still what it had been in the days of Abraham—a nomadic country, though with less illustrious sheykhs; "the Amalekites dwelt in the land of the south," and after the occupation of Canaan by Joshua, "the children of the Kenite, Moses' father-in-law," with a true Bedouin instinct, "went up into the wilderness of Judah, which lieth in the south of Arad," and between them the country was shared. And the latest notices of this region agree with the earliest. The Amalekites of the Desert were still there, in the reign of Saul, with the Kenites

amongst them, "with their sheep, and oxen, and lambs"; and again, in the close of his reign, they broke in once more upon the country from which he had driven them, upon "the south of the Cherethites and the south of Caleb, and burned Ziklag with fire." So little were the inhabitants of the "south" distinguishable from the Arab tribes of the wilderness, that David was able to represent his plunder of "sheep, oxen, asses, and camels" equally as the property of either. Nabal, who dwelt on the southern Carmel, was a borderer on the "wilderness"; his riches were his "three thousand sheep and a thousand goats"; his fear, in that dry region, was as much for his "water" as for his "bread." Most of the habitable places in these parts were called "*Hazer*"; that is, they were merely the unwall'd villages of Bedouins. The names of some indicate that they were stations of passage, like those which now are to be seen on the great line of Indian transit between Cairo and Suez. In "*Beth-marcaboth*," the 'house of chariots,' and "*Hazar-susim*," the 'village of horses,' we recognise the dépôts and stations for the "horses" and "chariots" such as those which in Solomon's time went to and fro between Egypt and Palestine.

To Simeon, the fierce and lawless tribe, the dry "south" was given, for "out of the portion of Judah was the inheritance of the children of Simeon; for the part of the children of Judah was too much for them; therefore the children of Simeon had their inheritance within the inheritance of them." In the prophecy of Jacob he is "divided and scattered"; in that of Moses he is omitted altogether. Amongst these Bedouin villages his lot was cast; and as time rolled on, the tribe gradually crossed the imperceptible boundary between civilisation and barbarism, between Palestine and the Desert, and, in "the days of Hezekiah," they wandered forth to the east to seek pasture for their flocks, and "smote the tents" of the pastoral tribes who "had dwelt there of old"; and roved along across the 'Arabah till they arrived at the "Mount Seir"—the range of Petra—and "smote the rest of the Amalekites, and dwelt there unto this day."

In the midst of this wild frontier, ruins still appear on the rising grounds as if of ancient cities; such as may have been Arad, the abode of the southernmost Canaanite king; and Kirjath-sannah, so called, doubtless, from its palm-trees; though also known by the appellation of Debir, or Kirjath-sepher, "the city of the Oracle," or the "Book." It was in the capture of this fortress that Othniel performed the feat of arms which won for him the daughter of Caleb. But the speech of Achsah to her father was the best reason for



JERUSALEM IN A.D. 70

REFERENCES

1 The Xystos	5 The Tower Phasaelus	9 The Triple Gate
2 The Council House	6 " " Mariamne	10 The Shushan Gate
3 The Pool Strouthios	7 The Bridge	11 The Gate Tadi
4 The Tower Hippicus	8 The Double Gate	

G = Gate

the slight notice of this Desert tract in later times, and is the best introduction to the real territory of Judah, on which we are now to enter—"Give me a blessing, for thou hast given me a *south* land; give me also *springs of water*." The wells of Beersheba were enough for the Patriarchs, the Amalekites, and the Kenites, but they were not enough for the daughter of Judah, and the house of the mighty Caleb.

II. The "hill country"—"the mountain country," as it is called, of "Judah" in earlier, of "Judæa" in later times—is the part of Palestine which best exemplifies its characteristic scenery; the rounded hills, the broad valleys, the scanty vegetation, the villages or fortresses, sometimes standing more frequently in ruins, on the hill tops; the wells in every valley, the vestiges of terraces, whether for corn or wine. Here, in this wide valley tract—the largest of the territorial divisions of the country—the "Lion of Judah" entrenched himself, to guard the southern frontier of the Chosen Land, with Simeon, Dan, and Benjamin nestled around him. Well might he be so named in this wild country, more than half a wilderness, the lair of the savage beasts,¹ of which the traces gradually disappear as we advance into the interior. Fixed there and never dislodged except by the ruin of the whole nation, "he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion—who shall rouse him up?" Throughout the troubled period of the Judges, from Othniel to Samson, Judah dwelt undisturbed within those mountain fastnesses. In these grey hills, and in their spacious caverns, David hid himself when he fled to the mountains like one of their own native partridges, and, with his band of freebooters, maintained himself against the whole force of his enemy. The tribes of the east and of the north were swept away by the Assyrian kings, Galilee and Samaria fell before the Roman conquerors, whilst Judah still remained erect; the last, because the most impregnable, of the tribes of Israel.

On these mountain tops were gathered all the cities and villages of Judah and Benjamin; in this respect contrasted, as we shall see, with the situation of the towns of the more northern tribes. The position of each is so like the other, that it is difficult to distinguish them when seen; useless

¹ The "lions" of Scripture occur usually in or near those mountains—for example that of Samson, and that of the Prophet of Bethel, and "the lion and the bear" of David's shepherd-youth. Compare, too, the frequency of names derived from wild beasts in those parts—"Shual"—"Shaalbim" (foxes and jackals), Josh. xv. 28; xix. 3, 42; Judg. i. 35; compare also Judg. xv. 4: "Lebaoth" (lionesses), Josh. xv. 32; xix. 6; the Ravine of Hyenas (Zeboim), 1 Sam. xvii. 18; Valley of Stags (Ajalon), Judg. i. 35; Josh. xix. 42. The only wild animal that we saw was a hyena on the southern Carmel.

to characterise them in description. Hence, although when the names are preserved their identification is certain, when the name is lost, as in the case of Modin, we must be satisfied with the selection of any one of the many heights which, according to the description of the monument of the Maccabees, can be seen from the sea. Two eminences stand out from the rest, marked by their peculiar conformation. One is the square-shaped mountain east of Bethlehem, known by the name of "the Frank Mountain," from the baseless but not unnatural story that it was the last refuge of the Crusaders; in fact, connected with the Jewish history only as the fortress and burial-place of Herod the Great. The other, which will be best noticed in its connection with the shores of the Dead Sea, is the towering pinnacle known by the name of Masada, or "the Fortress," and used as such from the earliest to the latest times.

But amidst this host of "fenced cities of Judah," one may be specially selected, not only on account of its surpassing interest, but because its very claim to notice is founded on the fact that it was but the ordinary type of a Judæan village, not distinguished by size or situation from any amongst "the thousands of Judah." All the characteristics of BETHLEHEM are essentially of this nature. Its confined position on the narrow ridge of the long grey hill would leave "no room" for the crowded travellers to find shelter. Its elevation would naturally lead the early Christians to connect it with the words of Isaiah, "He shall dwell on high, in a lofty cave of the strong rock." Its southern situation made it always a resting-place, probably the first halting-place from Jerusalem, on the way to Egypt. "By Bethlehem" in ancient times was the caravanserai or khan of Chimham, son of Barzillai, for those who would "go to enter into Egypt"; and from Bethlehem, it may be, from that same caravanserai, Joseph "arose and took the young child and his mother and departed into Egypt." The familiar well appears close by the gate, for whose water David longed. Eastward extend the wild hills, where the flocks and herds of David, and of Amos, and of "the shepherds abiding with their flocks by night," may have wandered. Amongst these hills is the long succession of rocky vaults, probably the "cave of Adullam," to which David retired, in the neighbourhood of his ancient home. Below lie the corn-fields; the scene of Ruth's adventures, from which it derives its name, the "house of bread." Along its slopes may be traced the vineyards of Judah, here kept up with greater energy because its inhabitants are Christian.

The mention of this last feature introduces us to another

peculiarity of Judæa. Here, more than elsewhere in Palestine, are to be seen on the sides of the hills the vineyards, marked by their watch-towers and walls seated on their ancient terraces—the earliest and latest symbol of Judah. The elevation of the hills and table-lands of Judah is the true climate of the vine. He “bound his foal to the vine, and his ass’s colt unto the choice vine; he washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes.” It was from the Judæan valley of Eshcol, “the torrent of the cluster,” that the spies cut down the gigantic cluster of grapes. “A vineyard on ‘a hill of olives,’ ” with the “fence,” and “the stones gathered out,” and “the tower in the midst of it,” is the natural figure which, both in the prophetic and evangelical records, represents the kingdom of Judah. The “vine” was the emblem of the nation on the coins of the Maccabees, and in the colossal cluster of golden grapes which overhung the porch of the second Temple; and the grapes of Judah still mark the tombstones of the Hebrew race in the oldest of their European cemeteries, at Prague.

The vineyards and the green strips of vegetation, which thus break the grey surface of the hills, are so many threads to guide us to the chief centres of history. Hebron, according to the Jewish tradition, was the primeval seat of the vine; it was also the earliest seat of civilised life, not only of Judah, but of Palestine. Its very name indicates “community” or “society.” It was the ancient city of Ephron the Hittite, in whose “gate” he and the elders received the offer of Abraham, when as yet no other fixed habitation of man was known in Central Palestine. It was the first home of Abraham and the Patriarchs; their one permanent resting-place when they were gradually exchanging the pastoral for the agricultural life. In its neighbourhood can be traced, by a continuous tradition, the site of the venerable tree under which Abraham pitched his tent, and of the double cavern in which he and his family were deposited, and perhaps still remain. It was the city of Arba, the old Canaanite chief, with his three giant sons, under whose walls the trembling spies stole through the land by the adjacent valley of Eshcol. Here Caleb chose his portion, when, at the head of his valiant tribe, he drove out the old inhabitants, and called the whole surrounding territory after his own name; and here, under David, and at a later period under Absalom, the tribe of Judah always rallied when it asserted its independent existence against the rest of the Israelite nation. It needs but few words to give the secret of this early selection, of this long continuance, of the metropolitan city of Judah. Every

traveller from the Desert will have been struck by the sight of that pleasant vale, with its orchards and vineyards, and numberless wells, and in earlier times we must add the grove of terebinths or oaks, which then attracted from far the eye of the wandering tribes. This fertility was in part owing to its elevation into the cooler and the more watered region above the dry and withered valleys of the rest of Judæa. Commanding this fertile valley, rose Hebron on its crested hill. Beneath was the burial-place of the founders of their race. Caleb must have seen the spot, afterwards his own, when with the spies he passed through this very valley. A few miles south of it lies the deep green glen, marked by the upper and the lower "bubblings" of the spring which Achsah claimed from Caleb as her portion. When David returned from the chase of the Amalekite plunderers on the Desert frontier, and doubted "to which of the cities of Judah he should go up" from the wilderness, the natural features of the place, as well as the oracle of God, answered clearly and distinctly "Unto Hebron."

If Hebron and Bethlehem are the special memorials of David, there is one spot between the two which calls to mind in a lively form the works of the peaceful reign which succeeded. In the long green vale of Urtâs, unusually green amongst the rocky knolls of Judæa, Solomon "planted him vineyards and made him gardens and a 'paradise,' and planted trees in them of all kinds of fruits, and made him reservoirs of water to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees." From these gardens came, in part at least, the imagery of the Canticles; and in these, probably more than anywhere else, the wise king cultivated his knowledge of trees, from the transplanted cedar to the native hyssop. The great reservoirs still remain; and the huge square hill in its neighbourhood, by Europeans called "the Frank Mountain," is known to the Arabs only as the "Jebel el-Fureidis," the "Mountain of the Little Paradise," evidently from its vicinity to the gardens of the Wâdy Urtâs, which in the lament of Solomon are expressly called by this very name.

III. But David's early predilections could not restrain him to Hebron; still less could Solomon's passing fancy make a new capital, as did that of the kings of northern Palestine, out of a palace of pleasure.

Far removed in outward appearance from these, and in some respects from all the cities of Judæa, was the metropolis of Judah—of the Jewish monarchy—of Palestine—in one sense, of the whole world—JERUSALEM. It will be

convenient first to give its general aspect expressed as nearly as possible in words written from the spot.

The first sight of Jerusalem as seen from the south the first moment when from the ridge of hills which divide the valley of Rephaim from the valley of Bethlehem one sees the white line crowning the horizon, and knows that it is Jerusalem—is a moment never to be forgotten. But there is nothing in the view itself to excite your feelings. Nor is there even when the Mount of Olives heaves in sight, nor when “the horses’ hoofs ring on the stones of the streets of Jerusalem.” Nor is there in the surrounding outline of hills on the distant horizon. Nebi-Samuel is indeed a high and distinguished point, and Ramah and Gibeah both stand out, but they and all the rest in some degree partake of that featureless character which belongs to all the hills of Judæa.

In one respect no one need quarrel with this first aspect of Jerusalem. So far as localities have any concern with religion, it is well to feel that Christianity, even in its first origin, was nurtured in no romantic scenery; that the discourses in the walks to and from Bethany, and in earlier times the Psalms and Prophecies of David and Isaiah, were not as in Greece the offspring of oracular cliffs and grottoes, but the simple outpouring of souls which thought of nothing but God and man. It is not, however, inconsistent with this view to add that, though not romantic—though at first sight bare and prosaic in the extreme—there does at last grow up about Jerusalem a beauty as poetical as that which hangs over Athens and Rome. First, it is in the highest degree *venerable*. Modern houses it is true there are, the interiors of the streets are modern; the old city itself (and I felt a constant satisfaction in the thought) lies buried twenty, thirty, forty feet below those wretched shops and receptacles for Anglo-Oriental conveniences. But still, as you look at it from any commanding point, within or without the walls, you are struck by the grey ruinous masses of which it is made up; it is the ruin, in fact, of the old Jerusalem on which you look,—the stones, the columns—the very soil on which you tread is the accumulation of nearly three thousand years. And as with the city, so it is with the view of the country round it. There is, as I have said, no beauty of form or outline, but there is nothing to disturb the thought of the hoary age of those ancient hills; and the interest of the past, even to the hardest mind, will in spite of themselves invest them with a glory of their own. . . .

The view of the Moab mountains is constantly intermingled

with the views of Jerusalem itself. From almost every point there was visible that long purple wall, rising out of its unfathomable depths, to us even more interesting than to the old Jebusites or Israelites. They knew the tribes who lived there; they had once dwelt there themselves. But to the inhabitants of modern Jerusalem, of whom comparatively few have ever visited the other side of the Jordan, it is the end of the world; and to them, to us, these mountains have almost the effect of a distant view of the sea; the hues constantly changing, this or that precipitous rock coming out clear in the morning or evening shade—there, the form of what may possibly be Pisgah, dimly shadowed out by surrounding valleys—here the point of Kerak, the capital of Moab and fortress of the Crusaders—and then at times all wrapt in deep haze, the mountains overhanging the valley of the shadow of death, and all the more striking from their contrast with the grey or green colours of the hills and streets and walls through which you catch the glimpse of them. Next, there are the ravines of the city. This is its great charm. The Dean of St. Paul's once observed to me that he thought Luxembourg must be like Jerusalem in situation. And so to a certain extent it is. I do not mean that the ravines of Jerusalem are so deep and abrupt as those of Luxembourg, but there is the same contrast between the baldness of the level approach, the walls of the city appearing on the edge of the table-land, and then the two great ravines of Hinnom and Jehoshaphat opening between you and the city; and again the two lesser ravines, rival claimants to the name of Tyropœon, intersecting the city itself. In this respect I never saw a town so situated, for here it is not merely the fortress, but the city, which is thus surrounded and entangled with natural fosses; and this when seen from the walls, especially from the walls on the northern side, and when combined with the light and shade of evening, gives the whole place a variety of colour and of level fully sufficient to relieve the monotony which else it would share with other eastern cities. And, thirdly, it must be remembered that there is one approach which is really grand, namely, from Jericho and Bethany. It is the approach by which the army of Pompey advanced,—the first European army that ever confronted it,—and it is the approach of the triumphal entry of the Gospels. Probably the first impression of every one coming from the north, the west, and the south, may be summed up in the simple expression used by one of the modern travellers,—“I am strangely affected, but greatly disappointed.” But no human being could be disappointed who

first saw Jerusalem from the east. The beauty consists in this, that you then burst at once on the two great ravines which cut the city off from the surrounding table-land, and that then only you have a complete view of the Mosque of Omar. The other buildings of Jerusalem which emerge from the mass of grey ruin and white stones are few, and for the most part unattractive. The white mass of the Armenian convent on the south, and the dome of the Mosque of David—the Castle, with Herod's tower on the south-west corner—the two domes, black and white, which surmount the Holy Sepulchre and the Basilica of Constantine—the green corn-field which covers the ruins of the Palace of the Knights of St. John—the long yellow mass of the Latin convent at the north-west corner and the grey tower of the Mosque of the Dervishes on the traditional site of the palace of Herod Antipas, in the north-east corner—these are the only objects which break from various points the sloping or level lines of the city of the Crusaders and Saracens. But none of these is enough to elevate its character. What, however, these fail to effect, is in one instance effected by a glance at the Mosque of Omar. From whatever point that graceful dome with its beautiful precinct emerges to view, it at once dignifies the whole city. And when from Olivet, or from the Governor's house, or from the north-east wall, you see the platform on which it stands, it is a scene hardly to be surpassed. A dome graceful as that of St. Peter's, though of course on a far smaller scale, rising from an elaborately finished circular edifice—this edifice raised on a square marble platform rising on the highest ridge of a green slope, which descends from it north, south, and east to the walls surrounding the whole enclosure—platform and enclosure diversified by lesser domes and fountains, by cypresses, and olives, and planes, and palms—the whole as secluded and quiet as the interior of some college or cathedral garden, only enlivened by the white figures of veiled women stealing like ghosts up and down the green slope, or by the turbaned heads bowed low in the various niches for prayer—this is the Mosque of Omar: the Haram es-Sherif, "the noble sanctuary," the second most sacred spot in the Mahometan world—that is, the next after Mecca; the second most beautiful mosque—that is, the next after Cordova. . . . I for one felt almost disposed to console myself for the exclusion by the additional interest which the sight derives from the knowledge that no European foot, except by stealth or favour, had ever trodden within these precincts since the Crusaders were driven out, and that their deep seclusion was as real as it appeared. It

needed no sight of the daggers of the black Dervishes who stand at the gates, to tell you that the Mosque was undisturbed and inviolably sacred.

I. This is, in its main points, the modern aspect of the Holy City. Let us take these features in detail, and draw from them whatever light they throw on its long history.

1. It is one of the peculiarities of Jerusalem, that it became the capital late in the career of the nation. Rome, Athens, Egyptian Thebes ; the other ancient centres of national life in Palestine itself, Hebron, Bethel, Shechem ; extend back to the earliest periods of their respective history. But in those times Jerusalem was still an unknown and heathen fortress in the midst of the land. There is something almost affecting in the thought, how many of those earlier events took place around it ; how often Joshua, and Deborah, and Samuel, and Saul, and David, must have passed and repassed the hills, and gazed on the towers of the city, unconscious of the fate reserved for her in all subsequent time ; how, as we shall see afterwards, the very worship of the Chosen People was for many years conducted within sight of their future sanctuary ; as if drawn towards it by an irresistible impulse, yet withheld from entering its walls. "Thy birth and thy nativity," such is the language of the bitter retrospect of Ezekiel, "is of the land of Canaan ; thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother a Hittite ; and as for thy nativity, in the day thou wast born . . . thou wast not salted at all, nor swaddled at all. None eye pitied thee, to do any of these unto thee, to have compassion upon thee : but thou wast cast out in the open field, to the loathing of thy person, in the day that thou wast born."

Yet the same circumstance, which afterwards contributed to the eminence of Jerusalem, in some degree accounts for its long previous obscurity. It was the only exception, so far as we know, to the rule, otherwise universal, that the aboriginal inhabitants of Palestine lingered not in the hills, but in the plains. After every other part of the mountains of Ephraim and Judah had been cleared of its Canaanite population, Jebus still remained in the hands of the ancient tribe which probably took its name from the dry rock on which their fortress stood. And the causes, which for so many centuries preserved this remnant of the early inhabitants of the country, were in great part the same as those which made it both the first object of David's conquest when he found himself seated on the throne of Hebron, and the capital of his kingdom for all future generations.

The situation of Jerusalem is in several respects singular amongst the cities of Palestine. Its elevation is remarkable, occasioned, not from its being on the summit of one of the numerous hills of Judæa, like most of the towns and villages, but because it is on the edge of one of the highest table-lands of the country. Hebron, indeed, is higher still, by some hundred feet: and from the south, accordingly, the approach to Jerusalem is by a slight descent. But from every other side, the ascent is perpetual; and, to the traveller approaching Jerusalem from the west or east, it must always have presented the appearance, beyond any other capital of the then known world—we may add, beyond any important city that has ever existed on the earth—of a mountain city; breathing, as compared with the sultry plains of the Jordan or of the coast, a mountain air; enthroned, as compared with Jericho or Damascus, Gaza, or Tyre, on a mountain fastness. In this respect, it concentrated in itself the character of the whole country of which it was to be the capital—the “mountain throne,” the “mountain sanctuary,” of God. “The ‘mount’ of God is as the ‘mount’ of Bashan; an high mount as the mount of Bashan. Why leap ye so, ye high ‘mountains’? this is the ‘mountain’ which God desireth to dwell in.” “Thou hast ascended up on high, thou hast led captivity captive.” “His foundation is in the holy mountains.” “They that trust in the Lord shall be as the mount Zion, which may not be removed, but standeth fast for ever.” “God is in the midst of her, therefore shall she not be removed.” It was emphatically the lair of the lion of Judah, of “Ariel,” the Lion of God. “In Judah is God known; his name is great in Israel. In Salem is his ‘leafy covert,’ and his ‘rocky den’ in Zion. . . . Thou art more glorious and excellent than the ‘mountains of the robbers.’” And this wild and fastness-like character of Jerusalem was concentrated yet again in the fortress, the “stronghold” of Zion. That point, the highest in the city, the height which most readily catches the eye from every quarter, is emphatically the “hill-fort,” the “rocky hold” of Jerusalem—the refuge where first the Jebusite, and then the Lion of God, stood at bay against the hunters.

2. This brings us to the second feature which tends to account for its early selection or future growth as the capital of Palestine. As the traveller advances toward Jerusalem, from the west and south, over the featureless undulating plain, two deep valleys suddenly disclose themselves to view, one on the south, the larger and deeper on the north, which then sweeping round the eastern side of the city to

meet the southern ravine, passes on by still narrower clefts through its long descent to the Dead Sea. The deepest and darkest of the two defiles was, doubtless, for that reason known as "The Black Valley" (Kedron), in former times probably deeper and darker than at present, when the accumulation of ruins and rubbish from above must have raised its ancient level. The other, wider and greener, was "the ravine" (Ge), in which probably some ancient hero had encamped,—"the son of Hinnom"; and from the name thus compounded, "Ge Ben-Hinnom," "Ge-Hinnom," was formed the word "Gehenna,"¹ and thus what Milton truly calls "the pleasant valley of Hinnom" has through its late associations given its name to the place of future torment. These deep ravines, which thus separate Jerusalem from the rocky plateau of which it forms a part, are a rare feature in the general scenery of the Holy Land. Something of the same effect is produced by those vast rents which under the name of "Tajo" surround or divide Toledo, Ronda, Alhama, and Granada, on the table-lands which crown the summits of the Spanish mountains. But in Palestine, Jerusalem alone is so entrenched, and from this cause derives, in great measure, her early strength and subsequent greatness. When David appeared under the walls of Jebus, the "old inhabitants of the land," the last remnant of their race that clung to their mountain home, exulting in the strength of those ancient "everlasting gates" which no conqueror had yet burst open, looked proudly down on the army below, and said, "Except thou take away the blind and the lame, thou shalt not come in hither; thinking, David cannot come in hither." The blind and the lame, they thought, were sufficient to maintain what nature had so strongly defended. It was the often repeated story of the capture of fortresses through what seemed their strongest, and therefore became their weakest, point, "*Præruptum, eoque neglectum*." Such was the fate of Sardis, and of Rome, and such was the fate of Jebus. David turned to his host below, and said, "Whoever smiteth the Jebusites first, 'and dasheth them on the precipice,' . . . and the lame and the blind that are hated of David's soul, he shall be chief and captain." Joab first climbed that steep ascent, and won the chieftainship of David's hosts; and the "ancient everlasting gates" "lifted up their heads," and "David dwelt in the stronghold of Zion, and called it the City of David."

3. What these ravines were in determining its earliest

¹ Josh. xv. 8. In the Mohammedan traditions the name of "Gehenna" is applied to the Valley of the Kedron. Ibn Batutah, 124.

defences, they have been ever since. It is obvious that the deep depressions which thus secured the city must, like the Jordan valley to the whole country, have always acted as its natural defence. But they also determined its natural boundaries. The city, wherever else it spread, could never overleap the valley of the Kedron or of Hinnom; and those two fosses, so to speak, became accordingly, as in the analogous case of the ancient towns of Etruria, the Necropolis of Jerusalem. This distinction made it again doubly impossible for the city of the living to protrude itself into the city of the dead; and, as the southern ravine had already given a name to the infernal fires of the other world, so, in Mussulman and Mediæval traditions, the Valley of the Kedron was identified with the Valley of Jehoshaphat or of the "Divine Judgment," and was long regarded by the pilgrims of both religions as the destined scene of the Judgment of the World. The compression between these two valleys probably occasioned the words of the Psalmist, "Jerusalem is built as a city that is at unity in itself." It is an expression not inapplicable even to the modern city, as seen from the east. But it was still more appropriate to the original city, if, as seems probable, the valley of Tyropœon formed in earlier times a fosse within a fosse, shutting in Zion and Moriah into one compact mass, not more than half a mile in breadth.

But this compactness and smallness—though in itself a fitting characteristic of the capital of that territory which, as we have seen, was remarkable for the same reason amongst the nations of the then known world—was not such as to exclude future growth. Hemmed in as it was on three sides by the ravines, on the western side it was comparatively open. A slight depression, indeed, runs beneath what is now its wall on that side; still, to speak generally, it is joined by its western and north-western sides to the large table-land which rises in the midst of Judæa, extending from the ridge of St. Elias on the south to the ridge of Bireh on the north, from the hills of Gibeon on the west to the Mount of Olives on the east. In this point, again, its situation is peculiar. Almost all the other cities of Palestine were placed, like Hebron, or Samaria, or Jezreel, on the crest of some hill, or like Shechem, within some narrow valley which admitted of little expansion. But Jerusalem had always an outlet on the west and north; and though it was not till the latest period of her existence that the walls, under Herod Agrippa, were pushed far beyond their ancient limits in those directions, yet the gardens and orchards and suburbs must even in the reign of Solomon have stretched themselves over the plain.

And this plain was encompassed with a barrier of heights which shut out the view of Jerusalem till within a very short distance of the city, and must always have acted as a defence to it.

4. It is probable that these are the heights alluded to in the well-known verse, "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so is the Lord round about His people." It is true that this image is not realised, as most persons familiar with our European scenery would wish and expect it to be realised. Jerusalem is not literally shut in by mountains, except on the eastern side, where it may be said to be enclosed by the arms of Olivet, with its outlying ridges on the north-east and south-east. Any one facing Jerusalem westward, northward, or southward, will always see the city itself on an elevation higher than the hills in its immediate neighbourhood, its towers and walls standing out against the sky, and not against any high background such as that which encloses the mountain towns and villages of our own Cumbrian or Westmoreland valleys. Nor, again, is the plain on which it stands enclosed by a continuous though distant circle of mountains, like that which gives its peculiar charm to Athens and Innspruck. The mountains in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem are of unequal height, and only in two or three instances—Neby-Samwil, Er-Ram, and Tuleil el-Ful—rising to any considerable elevation. Even Olivet is only a hundred and eighty feet above the top of Mount Zion. Still, they act as a shelter; they must be surmounted before the traveller can see, or the invader attack, the Holy City; and the distant line of Moab would always seem to rise as a wall against invaders from the remote east. It is these mountains, expressly including those beyond the Jordan, which are mentioned as "standing round about Jerusalem" in another and more terrible sense, when, on the night of the assault of Jerusalem by the Roman armies, they "echoed back" the screams of the inhabitants of the captured city and the victorious shouts of the soldiers of Titus. The situation of Jerusalem was thus not unlike, on a small scale, to that of Rome; saving the great difference that Rome was in a well-watered plain, leading direct to the sea, whereas Jerusalem was on a bare table-land, in the heart of the country. But each was situated on its own cluster of steep hills; each had room for future expansion in the surrounding level; each, too, had its nearer and its more remote barriers of protecting hills—Rome its Janiculum hard by, and its Apennine and Alban mountains in the distance; Jerusalem, its Olivet hard by, and, on the outposts of its plain, Mizpeh, Gibeon, and Ramah, and the ridge which divides it from Bethlehem.

5. This last characteristic of Jerusalem brings us to one more feature, namely, its central situation. First, it was pre-eminently central with regard to the two great tribes of the south, which at the time when the choice was made by David were the chief tribes of the whole nation, the only two which contained a royal house—Judah and Benjamin. So long as Judah maintained its ground alone, Hebron was its natural capital; but from the moment that it became the head of the nation, another home had to be sought nearer its neighbour, at this time its rival tribe. Such a spot exactly was Jebus, or Jerusalem. The ancient city, as belonging to the aboriginal inhabitants, had been excluded equally from the boundaries of either tribe. The limits of Judah reached along the plain up to the edge of the valley of Hinnom, and then abruptly paused. The limits of Benjamin in like manner crept over Olivet to the same point. But the rocky mass on which the Jebusite fortress stood was neutral ground in the very meeting-point of the two tribes. From the summit of the Mount of Olives—almost from the towers of Zion—could be seen Gibeah, the capital of Benjamin, on its conical hill to the north; and the distant hills, though not the actual city, of Hebron, to the south.

Yet again, Jerusalem was on the ridge, the broadest and most strongly marked ridge of the backbone of the complicated hills, which extend through the whole country from the Desert to the plain of Esdraelon. Every wanderer, every conqueror, every traveller, who has trod the central route of Palestine from north to south must have passed through the table-land of Jerusalem. It was the water-shed between the streams, or rather the torrent-beds, which find their way eastward to the Jordan and those which pass westward to the Mediterranean. Abraham, as he journeyed from Bethel to Hebron; Jacob, as he wandered on his lonely exile from Beersheba to Bethel; the Levite, on his way from Bethlehem to Gibeah; Joshua, as he forced his way from Jericho, and met the kings in battle at Gibeon; the Philistines, as they came up from the maritime plain, and pitched in Michmash; no less than Pompey, when, in later times, he came up from the Valley of the Jordan; or the Crusaders, when they came from Tyre, with the express purpose of attacking Jerusalem,—must all have crossed the territory of Jebus.

II. From what may be called the external situation of Jerusalem, we pass to its internal relations. And here we exchange a sphere of perfect certainty for a mass of topographical controversy unequalled for its extent, for its confusion, and for its bitterness. If the materials, however slight, on which

our judgment was to be formed were all before us, it might be worth while to attempt to unravel the entanglement. But the reverse is the case. The data exist, perhaps in abundance, but they are inaccessible. When Jerusalem can be excavated, we shall be able to argue; till then the dispute is for the most part as hopeless as was that concerning the Roman Forum, before the discovery of the pedestal of the column of Phocas. But without descending into the controverted details, two or three broad facts emerge, which may be stated without fear of future contradiction.

1. Whatever may be the adjustment of the names of the heights on which Jerusalem stands, the peculiarity imparted to its general aspect and to its history by these various heights is incontestable. Even in the earlier times, when the city was still compact and narrow, there are traces of its double form. An upper and a lower city,—possibly the dry rock of “Jebus,” or “Zion,” the “City of David,” as distinct from the “Mountain of the Vision” (Moriah), the “City of Solomon,” in whose centre arose the perennial spring,—are dimly discerned in the first period of Jerusalem. But it was in its latest period that this multiplicity of eminences, which it shares, though in a smaller compass, with Rome and Constantinople, came into play. Then, as now, the broken surface of the slopes of Jerusalem arrested the attention both of Tacitus and Josephus—“the irregular outline,” the “high hills,” the winding of the ascending and descending walls, were present to them, as they have been to the lively imagination of the modern poet and historian to whose lot it has fallen to describe the last days of the Holy City. But it was from more than a mere artistic interest that these several points of the broken ground of Jerusalem were so carefully recorded. In the earlier sieges, so far as the history is concerned, the city might have stood on a single eminence, like Ashdod or Samaria. But in the last siege by Titus, everything turns on the variety and number of posts which the four hills of Jerusalem presented, not merely to the besieged against the besiegers, and to the besiegers against the besieged, but to the besieged against each other. If, in its earlier days, in its more natural aspect Jerusalem was the likeness of a city that is at unity with itself, in later times its divergent summits curiously represent to us the fatal type of the house which fell because it was divided against itself.

2. Whatever differences have arisen about the other hills of Jerusalem, there is no question that the mount on which the so-called Mosque of Omar stands, overhanging the Valley of the Kedron, has from the time of Solomon, if not of David,

been regarded as the most sacred ground in Jerusalem. And on this hill, whatever may be the controversies respecting the apportionment of its several parts, or the traces of the various buildings which from the time of Solomon downwards have been reared on its rocky sides and surface, two natural objects remain, each of the highest historical interest. High in the centre of the platform rises the remarkable rock now covered by the dome of "the Sakrah." It is irregular in its form, and measures about sixty feet in one direction and fifty feet in the other. It projects about five feet above the marble pavement, and the pavement of the mosque is twelve feet above the general level of the enclosure, making this rise seventeen feet above the ground. . . . It appears to be the natural surface of Mount Moriah; in a few places there are marks of chiselling; but its south-east corner is an excavated chamber, to which there is a descent by a flight of stone steps and an aperture through the rocky roof. This chamber is irregular in form, its average height is seven feet; it is capable of holding about fifty persons. In the centre of the rocky cave there is a circular slab of marble, which on being struck makes a hollow sound, thereby showing that there is a well, or excavation, beneath.

This mass of rock must always have been an essential feature or a strange disfigurement of the Temple area. The time for arriving at a positive conclusion respecting it is not yet come. But it may be worth while to give the various explanations respecting it, fabulous or historical, during the successive stages of its known history.

(a) The Christians, before the Mussulman occupation of Syria, regarded it as the rock of the Holy of Holies, and as such—so different was the feeling of the Christian world with regard to the Old Testament between the fifth century and our own—used every effort to defile it.

(b) By the successors of Caliph Omar, if not by the Caliph himself, it was invested with a sanctity only less than that of the Kaaba of Mecca; believed to be the rock of Jacob's pillow at Bethel; the stone of prophecy, which would have fled on the extinction of that gift, but which was forcibly detained by the angels in anticipation of the visit of Mahomet to Jerusalem in his nocturnal flight, when it bowed to receive him, and retained the impression of his feet as he mounted the celestial Borak. Immense stress is laid by Mussulmans on its miraculous suspension above the ground, and in this belief in its suspended state is probably to be found the origin of the fable of the suspension of the Prophet's tomb. The white plaster on the inside walls for the most part conceals the point

of junction with the rocky platform of the mountain ; but in the south-east corner the identification of the rocky wall and the rocky floor is visible and decisive. It is believed that within the cave every prayer is granted, and that in the well rest the souls of the departed, between death and the Resurrection.¹

(c) Recovered by the Crusaders, it was exhibited as the scene of the Apparition of the Angel to Zacharias, and of the Circumcision of Christ. The footmark of Mahomet was then represented as the trace left when He went out of the Temple to escape the fury of the Jews.

(d) In modern times it has been the centre of the most conflicting theories of sacred topography. Mr. Fergusson (chiefly from architectural arguments) has maintained that the dome of the Sakrah is the Church of Constantine, and consequently that the rock beneath is the rock of the Holy Sepulchre. Mr. Falconer, Mr. Thrupp, and Mr. Lewin suppose it to be the rock, or part of the rock, on which stood the tower of Antonia. Professor Willis urges its claim to be the rock overhanging the threshing-floor of Araunah, selected by David, and afterwards continued by Solomon and by Zerubbabel, as the "unhewn stone" on which to build the Altar ; the cave within being the sink described in the Talmud as that into which the blood and offal of the sacrifices were drained off. Undoubtedly if the measurements of the area would allow of it, this last hypothesis would be the most satisfactory, except so far as it fails to produce adequate examples of a rock so high and so rugged used for the purposes of an altar.

Meanwhile the rock remains, whatever be its origin, the most curious monument of Old Jerusalem, and not the least so from the unrivalled variety of associations which it has gathered to itself in the vicissitudes of centuries.

All accounts combine in asserting that the water of the two pools of Siloam, as well as that of the many fountains of the "Mosque of Omar," proceeds from a spring or reservoir of water beneath the Temple-vaults. There was no period of its history when such a provision would not have been important to the Temple for the ablutions of the Jewish, no less than of the Mussulman, worship ; or to the city, which else was dry even to a proverb. It was the treasure of Jerusalem, its

¹ The belief was that the living could hold converse with these souls at the mouth of the well about any disputed matter which lay in the power of the dead to solve. It was closed, because a mother going to speak to her dead son was so much agitated at the sound of his voice from below that she threw herself into the well to join him, and disappeared. This was the story related to me at Jerusalem. A less pleasing version is given by Catherwood (*Bartlett's Walks*, p. 154). Compare the story told of Spiridon and his daughter (*Sozomen*, i. 11).

support through its numerous sieges, the "fons perennis aquæ" of Tacitus—the source of Milton's

" Brook that flowed
Hard by the oracle of God."

But more than this, it was the image which entered into the very heart of the prophetic idea of Jerusalem. "There is a river [a perennial river], the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High." "All my fresh springs shall be in thee." "Draw water out of the wells of salvation." It is the source of all the freshness and verdure of the vale of Hinnom. In Ezekiel's vision the thought is expanded into a vast cataract flowing out through the Temple-rock eastward and westward into the ravines of Hinnom and Kedron, till they swell into a mighty river, fertilising the desert of the Dead Sea. And with still greater distinctness the thought appears again, and for the last time, in the discourse, when in the courts of the Temple, "in the last day, that great day of the feast [of Tabernacles], Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, . . . out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."

3. In every approach to the modern Jerusalem, the first and most striking feature—in the approach from the south, the only striking feature—is the long line of walls and towers. Most eastern cities are entered gradually. Cairo, Damascus, Beirût, have outstepped the limits of their ancient fortifications, and the lesser towns, such as Hebron and Nablûs, have not that protection. But Jerusalem is in the singular position of a city of sufficient importance, if not for its size, at least for its dignity, to have deserved a circuit of walls, whilst it is, at the same time, so exposed to the assaults of the wild villagers and still wilder Bedouins of the neighbourhood, that it has not ventured to pass beyond its fortifications. The same terror which has collected the entire population of Palestine from isolated houses into villages has confined the population of its capital within the city walls. With the exception of the caves and hovels of the almost savage inhabitants of Siloam, no ordinary habitation can be fixed outside; the town is entirely enclosed, the gates locked at night, and the present walls (which date from the time of the great Ottoman Sultan, Selim I., conqueror of Egypt in the year of the European Reformation) thus become an essential feature in every view of the place from within or from without.

This to a certain extent must have been the case always: Jerusalem must at all times have been in a state of insecurity

too great to allow of any neglect of her fortifications. From first to last, History and Poetry are always recurring to the mention of her walls and gates and towers. "Walk about Zion, go round about her, tell the towers thereof; mark well her bulwarks." David, Solomon, Hezekiah are all concerned in the fortifications of the city of the Monarchy. To have raised the walls of the city of the Restoration was the chief glory of Nehemiah. Herod's walls and towers, called after the favourites of his court and family, were amongst his most celebrated works. The Temple itself was a fortress of massive foundations and gigantic gateways on every side; the walls great and high, with the gates of precious stone, furnished the chief images of the Heavenly Jerusalem, both in the Old and New Testament; and the idea of the "chief corner-stone," and of the "stones" of the living Temple of God, which pervades the Evangelical and Apostolical imagery, was suggested, in the first instance, by the vast masses of stone which, whether of the date of Solomon or Herod, form so imposing a part of the existing walls of the ancient Temple-area. But this was not the only distinction which set off the outward aspect of the city against the other towns of Palestine. Of these the modern walls give, as has been observed, some notion. Not so, however, the modern buildings. With the one exception of the Mosque of Omar, it is difficult to raise up to the mind's eye, from the ruins of the present Jerusalem, the magnificent sight which, in the times both of the Davidic and the Herodian monarchy, must have presented itself to any spectator. Other residences of regal luxury arose elsewhere,—as we shall see in Shechem and Samaria,—but Jerusalem only was a city of palaces. Compared with the other villages and towns of Palestine, contrasted with the mountain-wilderness of its own immediate neighbourhood, it is always spoken of as a splendid and dazzling spectacle. What was the architecture, what the colour, what the form of these palaces, we know not; even the Temple is only to be restored by imperfect guesses. But it was this general aspect which excited the admiration of Psalmists and prophets—"Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth is Mount Zion"; "on the sides of the north is the city of the Great King"; "God is well known in her palaces"; "consider her palaces." And after its adornment by Herod the Great, it is probable that no city of the East except Antioch, no city of the West except Rome, equalled the external splendour of Jerusalem.

This was the ancient peculiarity of its appearance. The modern peculiarity is still more characteristic. If, as we have before observed, Palestine is a land of ruins, still more

emphatically may it be said that Jerusalem is a city of ruins. Here and there a regular street, or a well-built European house emerges from the general crash, but the general appearance is that of a city which has been burnt down in some great conflagration; and this impression is increased to the highest degree when, on penetrating below the surface, the very soil on which the city stands is found to be composed of ruins of houses, aqueducts, and pillars, reaching to a depth of thirty or forty feet below the foundations of the present houses. This circumstance is important, not only as imparting to the city its remarkable form and colour, but also as telling the story of its eventful course. The old Jerusalem is buried in the overthrow of her seventeen captures. Even if the city were to be rebuilt once more, the soil on which her new foundations must be laid would bear witness to the faithfulness of the image of her earlier desolation: "the stones of the sanctuary poured out at the top of every street"; "they have made Jerusalem a heap of stones"; "not one stone shall be left upon another, that shall not be thrown down."

The ruinous state of Jerusalem is, doubtless, in chief part owing to the hand of man. But here, as elsewhere in Palestine, we must not overlook the effect of earthquake. Situated on its high mountain-plateau, it is said to be more free from this calamity than the cities in the Jordan valley or on the sea-coast. But the very fact of this comparative exemption must make the occurrence of these visitations more remarkable; and we are told that "scarcely a year passes without a shock"; that sometimes the city has been wholly destroyed.¹ Of such manifestations at Jerusalem, there have been two so memorable as to have left enduring traces in the sacred records. One was the tremendous earthquake, already mentioned, in the close of the reign of Uzziah. A long tradition preserved the recollection of the event, and connected it directly with the personal calamity of the unfortunate king. "It was," so Josephus tells the story, "just as Uzziah was entering the Temple that the building suddenly started asunder; the light flashed through, and at the same moment the leprosy rushed into the king's face. The hills around felt the shock, and a memorial of the crash was long preserved in a large fragment of rock, or landslip, which, rolling down from the western hill [probably that now called the Mount of Evil Counsel], blocked up the royal gardens between that hill and the Mount of Olives, at the junction of the two valleys,

¹ Tobler's *Denkblätter aus Jerusalem*, p. 34. I was told that on one of these occasions, as a family were seated at their midday meal, the dome-shaped roof suddenly opened—showed the blue sky, and again closed.

by the spring of Enrogel." No traces of this convulsion are now visible, and by a singular omission, characteristic of the soberness of spirit elsewhere observable in the sacred writers, it is not noticed in the historical books of the Old Testament. But the Prophetical visions of that period are full of the imagery of a visitation which brought before them in so powerful a manner the presence of God. To Amos, it seemed as though the Lion of God were roaring from the caverns of the lair of Zion. To Zechariah, the rending of the hills, as described by Josephus, was an image of the yet more terrible rending of the Mount of Olives, which should "cleave in the midst thereof towards the east and towards the west—a very great 'ravine'; and half of the mountain shall move towards the north, and half of it towards the south; and ye shall flee to the 'ravine' of the mountains, for ye shall flee like as ye fled from before the earthquake, in the days of Uzziah King of Judah." And, if this ancient earthquake was made so powerful a means of reviving the religious feelings of the nation, there is a still grander significance in the like accompaniment of the greatest event which Jerusalem ever witnessed. Then, also, there was "darkness over all the land" at noonday, even as in the time of Amos, "the day of the Lord was darkness and not light, very dark and no brightness in it," "the veil of the Temple," even as on the former occasion the Temple itself, "was rent in twain from the top to the bottom," "the earth did quake, and the rocks rent," even as those of old in the ravine of Hinnom; at the same moment, as it would seem, "the graves were opened"—the long tiers of sepulchres in the valley of the Kedron—"and they that saw the earthquake feared greatly." Such concomitants are indeed eclipsed by the moral greatness of the events which they encompass. But the fact that they are known to have occurred on the same ground gives additional force and expression both to the accuracy and to the awfulness of the narrative.

III. It has been already observed that "the 'mountains' which stand round about Jerusalem" are for the most part too remote to enter into any consideration of the situation or internal relations of the city itself. There are none on the south nearer than the ridge of St. Elias, none on the west nearer than Neby-Samwil, none on the north nearer than Gibeah or Ramah. But on the east the city is immediately enclosed by a long ridge, itself with four distinct summits, one outlier starting off to the north, and another to the south. This ridge is that known both in the Old and the New Testa-

ment as the Mount of Olives or of the Olive-garden. Its four summits are now distinguished by traditional names :—

1. The "Galilee," from the supposition that there the Angels stood and said, "Ye men of Galilee"; or that it was the "Galilee" to which Christ retired after the resurrection.
2. The "Ascension," covered by the village and mosque and church of the Jebel et-Tûr (the Arabic name for Olivet, as for all elevated summits), on the supposed scene of that event.
3. The "Prophets," from the curious catacomb called the "Prophets' Tombs" on its side.
4. "The Mount of Offence," so called from Solomon's idol-worship. The northern outlier has been in modern times usually called "Scopus"; on the supposition of its identity with the hill so called in the siege of Titus; the southern, the "Hill of Evil Counsel," marked from far by the single wind-driven tree called the "Tree of Judas." From every roof of the city the long ridge of Olivet forms a familiar feature—so near, so immediately overhanging the town, that it almost seems to be within it. Even in the more distant view from the summit of Neby-Samwil the two are so closely intermingled that it is difficult at first sight to part the outline of the village on the top of Olivet from the outline of the town and walls of Jerusalem itself.

The olives and oliveyards, from which it derived its name, must in earlier times have clothed it far more completely than at present. Now it is only in the deeper and more secluded slope leading up to the northernmost summit that these venerable trees spread into anything like a forest. And in those times—as we see from the name of Bethany (House of Dates), and from the allusions after the Captivity and in the Gospel History—myrtle-groves, pines, and palm-trees, all of which have now disappeared, must have made it a constant resort for pleasure and seclusion. Two gigantic cedars, probably amongst the very few in Palestine, stood near its summit, under which were four shops where pigeons were sold for purification. The olive and fig now alone remain; the olive, still in more or less abundance, the fig here and there on the roadside; but both enough to justify the Mussulman's belief, that in the oath in the Koran, "By the olive and the fig," the Almighty swears by his favoured city of Jerusalem, with this adjacent mountain.

So close a proximity at once makes us expect to find the history of the Mount of Olives inseparably united with the history of the Holy City. To a certain extent this was the case. The name by which it is sometimes called, "the mountain before (*i.e.* east of) the city"; or "the mountain" simply, indicates its near position. It was the open ground,

for pleasure, for worship, for any purpose that it might serve ; the "Park," the "Ceramicus," the "Campus Martius" of Jerusalem. Its green slopes, as seen in the early spring, stand out in refreshing contrast to the dreary and withered ruins of the city at its foot. It was also, from its situation, the bulwark against any enemy approaching from the east ; the thoroughfare of any going or coming in the direction of the great Jordan valley. It was also in the earlier times of Jewish history, when elevation and sanctity of position were almost identical, the sacred place of the vicinity of Jerusalem. Long before the conquest of Jebus by David, the northern summit of Olivet had, it would seem, under the name of Nob, been selected as the seat of the Tabernacle after the destruction of Shiloh and the loss of the Ark. Close within sight of the unconquered fortress of the Jebusites, the worship of Israel was there conducted during all the earlier years of Saul, and even after the destruction of the Sanctuary by his violence the sanctity of the summit of Olivet was still respected. David, before the Temple was built, was wont to "worship God at the top of the Mount." Solomon, when, in his later years, he tolerated or adopted the idolatrous rites of his foreign wives, made "high places" of the three summits on "the right-hand [that is, on the south side] of the Mount of Corruption." And this Mount of Corruption—apparently the same northern summit of Nob—was the spot where the sacrifice of the "red heifer" was performed, as the only sacrifice which was to take place outside the camp in the wilderness, and which therefore, being by analogy excluded from the Temple-courts, was celebrated on the summit of Olivet.

With the exception of these general allusions, there is but one event in the Old Testament which lends any interest to its heights. It was by the "ascent of 'the Olives'" that David went up, on his flight from Jerusalem to Mahanaim, at the news of Absalom's revolt. It was at the "top of the Mount" that he met Hushai, and had his last view of the rebellious city. It was a little way past the top that he encountered Ziba and the asses, laden with provisions. It was as he descended the rough road on the other side that "Shimei went along on the side of the 'mountain,' over against him, and threw stones at him, and cast dust."

This mournful procession—affecting as it is, and linked with every stage of the ascent and descent—stands alone in the earlier history of the Mount of Olives. Its lasting glory belongs not to the Old Dispensation, but to the New. Its very barrenness of interest in earlier times sets forth the

abundance of those associations which it derives from the closing scenes of the Sacred History. Nothing, perhaps, brings before us more strikingly the contrast of Jewish and Christian feeling, the abrupt and inharmonious termination of the Jewish dispensation—if we exclude the culminating point of the Gospel History—than to contrast the blank which Olivet presents to the Jewish pilgrims of the middle ages, only dignified by the sacrifice of “the red heifer” ; and the vision too great for words, which it offers to the Christian traveller of all times, as the most detailed and the most authentic abiding-place of Jesus Christ. By one of those strange coincidences, whether accidental or borrowed, which occasionally appear in the Rabbinical writings, it is said in the Mishna, that the Shechinah, or Presence of God, after having finally retired from Jerusalem, “dwelt” three years and a half on the Mount of Olives, to see whether the Jewish people would or would not repent, calling, “Return to me, O my sons, and I will return to you” ; “Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near” ; and then, when all was in vain, returned to its own place. Whether or not this story has a direct allusion to the ministrations of Christ, it is a true expression of His relation respectively to Jerusalem and to Olivet. It is useless to seek for traces of His presence in the streets of the since ten times captured city. It is impossible not to find them in the free space of the Mount of Olives.

Let us briefly go through the points which occur in the Sacred History, of the last days of Christ, during which alone He appears for any continuous period in Jerusalem and its neighbourhood. From Bethany we must begin. A wild mountain-hamlet, screened by an intervening ridge from the view of the top of Olivet, is perched on a broken plateau of rock, the last collection of human habitations before the desert-hills which reach to Jericho. This is the modern village of El-Azarieh, which derives its name from its clustering round the traditional site of the one house and grave which gave it an undying interest. High in the distance are the Peræan mountains ; the foreground is the deep descent to the Jordan Valley. On the further side of that dark abyss Martha and Mary knew that Christ was abiding when they sent their messenger ; up that long ascent they had often watched His approach—up that long ascent He came when, outside the village, Martha and Mary met Him, and the Jews stood round weeping.¹

¹ I have said nothing of the alleged tomb of Lazarus, having nothing to add to the statements of other travellers, and nothing to deduce from

Up that same ascent He came, also, at the beginning of the week of His Passion. One night He halted in the village, as of old; the village and the Desert were then all alive, as they still are once every year at the Greek Easter, with the crowd of Paschal pilgrims moving to and fro between Bethany and Jerusalem. In the morning, He set forth on His journey. Three pathways lead, and probably always led, from Bethany to Jerusalem; one, a long circuit over the northern shoulder of Mount Olivet, down the valley which parts it from Scopus; another a steep footpath over the summit; the third, the natural continuation of the road by which mounted travellers always approach the city from Jericho, over the southern shoulder, between the summit which contains the Tombs of the Prophets and that called the "Mount of Offence." There can be no doubt that this last is the road of the Entry of Christ, not only because, as just stated, it is, and must always have been, the usual approach for horsemen and for large caravans, such as then were concerned, but also because this is the only one of the three approaches which meets the requirements of the narrative which follows.

Two vast streams of people met on that day. The one poured out from the city, and as they came through the gardens whose clusters of palm rose on the southern corner of Olivet, they cut down the long branches, as was their wont at the Feast of Tabernacles, and moved upwards towards Bethany, with loud shouts of welcome. From Bethany streamed forth the crowds who had assembled there on the previous night, and who came testifying to the great event at the sepulchre of Lazarus. The road soon loses sight of Bethany. It is now a rough, but still broad and well-defined mountain track, winding over rock and loose stones; a steep declivity below on the left; the sloping shoulder of Olivet above on the right; fig-trees below and above, here and there growing out of the rocky soil. Along the road the multitudes threw down the boughs severed from the olive-trees through which they were forcing their way, or spread out a rude matting formed of the palm-branches which they had already cut as they came out. The larger portion those statements. It may be worth mentioning—that I have not seen elsewhere described—that about a quarter of an hour's walk from the village, on a rocky knoll S.E. of the road, are ruins of what the Arabs call the House of Martha. In the midst of these fragments the rock rises into a block resembling the back of an animal with its head buried in the earth. This is said to be "the Ass on which Isa [Jesus] rode. He rode it to Martha's house and then turned it into stone." The tradition is curious: first as an instance of the coarse extravagance which pervades most of the Mussulman versions of Christian history, and secondly as a dim reflection of the Gospel narrative.

—those perhaps who escorted Him from Bethany—unwrapped their loose cloaks from their shoulders, and stretched them along the rough path, to form a momentary carpet as He approached. The two streams met midway. Half of the vast mass, turning round, preceded ; the other half followed. Bethany is hardly left in the rear before the long procession must have swept up and over the ridge, where first begins “the descent of the Mount of Olives” towards Jerusalem. At this point the first view is caught of the south-eastern corner of the city. The Temple and the more northern portions are hid by the slope of Olivet on the right ; what is seen is only Mount Zion, now for the most part a rough field, crowned with the Mosque of David and the angle of the western walls, but then covered with houses to its base, surmounted by the Castle of Herod, on the supposed site of the palace of David, from which that portion of Jerusalem, emphatically “The City of David,” derived its name. It was at this precise point, “as He drew near, at the descent of the Mount of Olives,”—may it not have been from the sight thus opening upon them ?—that the hymn of triumph, the earliest hymn of Christian devotion, burst forth from the multitude, “Hosanna to the Son of *David* ! Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord. Blessed is the kingdom that cometh of our father *David*. Hosanna . . . peace . . . glory in the highest.” There was a pause as the shout rang through the long defile ; and, as the Pharisees who stood by in the crowd complained, He pointed to the “stones” which, strewn beneath their feet, would immediately “cry out” if “these were to hold their peace.”

Again the procession advanced. The road descends a slight declivity, and the glimpse of the city is again withdrawn behind the intervening ridge of Olivet. A few moments, and the path mounts again ; it climbs a rugged ascent, it reaches a ledge of smooth rock, and in an instant the whole city bursts into view. As now the dome of the Mosque El-Aksa rises like a ghost from the earth before the traveller stands on the ledge, so then must have risen the Temple-tower ; as now the vast enclosure of the Mussulman sanctuary, so then must have spread the Temple-courts ; as now the grey town on its broken hills, so then the magnificent city, with its background—long since vanished away—of gardens and suburbs on the western plateau behind. Immediately below was the Valley of the Kedron, here seen in its greatest depth as it joins the Valley of Hinnom, and thus giving full effect to the great peculiarity of Jerusalem seen only on its eastern side—its situation as of a city rising out of a deep

abyss. It is hardly possible to doubt that this rise and turn of the road, this rocky ledge, was the exact point where the multitude paused again, and "He, when He beheld the city, wept over it."

Nowhere else on the Mount of Olives is there a view like this. By the two other approaches above mentioned, over the summit and over the northern shoulder of the hill, the city reveals itself gradually; there is no partial glimpse, like that which has been just described, as agreeing so well with the first outbreak of popular acclamation, still less is there any point where, as here, the city and Temple would suddenly burst into view, producing the sudden and affecting impression described in the Gospel narrative. And this precise coincidence is the more remarkable because the traditional route of the Triumphal Entry is over the summit of Olivet; and the traditional spot of the Lamentation is at a place half-way down the mountain, to which the description is wholly inapplicable, whilst no tradition attaches to this, the only road by which a large procession could have come; and this, almost the only spot of the Mount of Olives which the Gospel narrative fixes with exact certainty, is almost the only unmarked spot,—undefiled or unhallowed by mosque or church, chapel or tower—left to speak for itself, that here the Lord stayed His onward march, and here His eyes beheld what is still the most impressive view which the neighbourhood of Jerusalem furnishes, and the tears rushed forth at the sight.

After this scene, which, with the one exception of the conversation at the Well of Jacob, stands alone in the Gospel history for the vividness and precision of its localisation, it is hardly worth while to dwell on the spots elsewhere pointed out by tradition or probability on the rest of the Mountain. They belong, for the most part, to the "Holy Places" of later pilgrimage, not to the authentic illustrations of the Sacred History. It is enough to know that to the gardens and olive-yards which then, as now,—but probably with greater richness of foliage, and greater security of walls and watch-towers,—covered the slopes of the hill, He resorted, as His countrymen must always have resorted, for retirement and refreshment from the crowded streets of the city. On one of the rocky banks of the mountain, immediately "over against the Temple," He sat, and saw the sun go down over the city,¹

¹ Such at least is the probable inference from Luke xxi. 37, that He was usually in the Temple for the daytime, and retired to the mountain in the evening.

From the circumstance that the gates of the city are closed at sunset, few travellers have ever seen this view of Jerusalem at the most impressive moment of the day. The only recorded instance is in Bartlett's Jerusalem

and foretold its final doom. Bethany, on the further side, was the home to which he retired ; any of the fig-trees which spring out of the rocky soil on either side of the road might be the one which bore no fruit. On the wild uplands which immediately overhang the village, He finally withdrew from the eyes of His disciples, in a seclusion which, perhaps, could nowhere else be found so near the stir of a mighty city ; the long ridge of Olivet screening those hills, and those hills the village beneath them, from all sound or sight of the city behind ; the view opening only on the wide waste of desert-rocks and ever-descending valleys into the depths of the distant Jordan and its mysterious lake. At this point, the last interview took place. "He led them out as far as Bethany" ; and they "returned," probably by the direct road, over the summit of Mount Olivet. The appropriateness of the real scene presents a singular contrast to the inappropriateness of that fixed by a later fancy, "seeking for a sign," on the broad top of the mountain, out of sight of Bethany, and in full sight of Jerusalem, and thus in equal contradiction to the letter and the spirit of the Gospel narrative.

These are all the points which can be certainly connected with the life of Christ in Jerusalem and its neighbourhood. Yet, perhaps, there is a general conclusion left by the whole, more instructive than any detail.

At the sight of Delphi, there is one thought which rises, even above the deep solemnity of the spot, and that is the sense of its vacancy and desertion. The scene seemed, as I saw it many years ago, to be the exact echo of Milton's noble lines—

" The oracles are dumb,
No voice or hideous hum
Runs thro' the arched roof in words deceiving :
Apollo from his shrine
Can no more divine,
With hollow shriek the steep of Delphos leaving."

Something akin to this sense of vacancy, though from a wholly different point of view, is that finally left on the mind after exploring the neighbourhood of Jerusalem. At first, there cannot but be something of a shock in seeing, before

Revisited, p. 115. " Beautiful as this view was in the morning, it was far more striking when the sun, about to sink in the west, cast a rich slanting glow along the level grassy area, and marble platform of the Temple enclosure, touching with gold the edge of the Dome of the Rock, and the light arabesque fountains with which the area is studded ; while the eastern walls and the deep valley below are thrown into a deep and solemn shadow, creeping, as the orb sinks lower, further and further towards the summit (of Olivet), irradiated with one parting gleam of roseate light, after all below was sunk in obscurity."

our eyes and under our feet, places in comparison with whose sanctity the High Altar of St. Peter's would seem profane. Yet gradually this thought dissolves, and another comes in its place. These localities have, indeed, no real connection with Him. It is true that they bring the scene vividly before us; that, in many instances, as we shall see hereafter, they illustrate His words and works in detail. But the more we gaze at them, the more do we feel that this interest and instruction are secondary, not primary: their value is imaginative and historical, not religious. The desolation and degradation, which have so often left on those who visit Jerusalem the impression of an accursed city, read in this sense a true lesson:—"He is not here: He is risen."

CHAPTER IV

THE HEIGHTS AND THE PASSES OF BENJAMIN

JERUSALEM, as we have seen, was on the very outskirts of Judah, only excluded from the territory of Benjamin by the circumstance that at the division of the land by Joshua, Jebus was not yet conquered. Indeed, in the blessing on Benjamin it would appear to be reckoned as his portion. "The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety, and the 'Most High' shall cover him all the day long, and he shall dwell between his shoulders,"—that is, between the rocky sides of Jerusalem. The southern frontier of the Benjamites ran through the ravine of Hinnom, and on them, if not exclusively, yet in common with the tribe of Judah, rested the charge of "driving out the Jebusites that inhabited Jerusalem."

This peculiar relation to Jerusalem may be traced in the whole history of Benjamin. It was the frontier tribe, and covered the debatable ground between the great rival families, and afterwards kingdoms, of Judah and Ephraim. Alternately, it seems to have followed the fortunes of each. In earlier times it certainly clung to the kindred tribes of Joseph, which had been its associates in the passage through the wilderness. It took its place with Ephraim and Manasseh in the gathering of the tribes under Deborah and Barak. The bitterest enemies of the house of David—Saul, Shimei and Sheba—were Benjamites. It is expressly included under the house of Joseph, at the beginning of the national disruption as well as during its continuance. Two of its most important towns, Bethel and Jericho, were within the territory of the northern kingdom. On the other hand, besides the fact that Jerusalem belonged to Judah, there must have been a portion at least which remained faithful to the house of David, in order to justify the expression that Rehoboam "assembled all the house of Judah and the tribe of Benjamin "

to fight against Jeroboam; Ramah, though once occupied by the kings of Samaria, seems to have been more generally included within the limits of Judah; and, finally, after the return from the Captivity, the chiefs of Judah and Benjamin always appear together at the head of the restored people.

Small as the tribe was, this ambiguous situation gave it considerable importance, an importance which was increased by a further peculiarity of the Benjamite territory. Of all the tribes of Israel, none, except perhaps Manasseh, contained such important passes of communication into the adjacent plains; none possessed such conspicuous heights, whether for defence or for "high places" of worship. These advantages, in the hands of a hardy and warlike tribe, ensured an independence to Benjamin, which the Hebrew records constantly contrast with its numerical feebleness and limited territory; "Little Benjamin their ruler," "Am not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel?" In his mountain passes—the ancient haunt of beasts of prey, Benjamin "ravined as a wolf in the morning," descended into the rich plains of Philistia on the one side, and of the Jordan on the other, and "returned in the evening to divide the spoil." In the troubled period of the Judges, the tribe of Benjamin maintained a struggle, unaided, and for some time with success, against the whole of the rest of the nation. And to the latest times they never could forget that they had given birth to the first king. Even down to the times of the New Testament, the name of Saul was still preserved in their families; and when a far greater of that name appealed to his descent, or to the past history of his nation, a glow of satisfaction is visible in the marked emphasis with which he alludes to the "stock of Israel, the tribe of Benjamin," and to God's gift of "Saul, the son of 'Kis,' a man of the tribe of Benjamin."

I. Let us examine this peculiarity of position in detail, so far as it elucidates the events which have occurred on the territory of this illustrious tribe. I have already said that the tableland on which Jerusalem is situated extends for some miles into the heart of the territory of Benjamin. Along this watershed, the direct road from Jerusalem to the north is now and must always have been carried. But it is not on this ridge itself that the passes of Benjamin occur. They run, like all the valleys which deserve this name, in southern and central Palestine, not from north to south, but from east to west, or west to east; often, as Dr. Robinson observes, overlapping each other's heads in the centre of the tableland from which they take their departure.

From the Valley of the Jordan, accordingly, on the one

hand, and from the Maritime Plain, on the other, two main ascents may be selected, in which almost all the important military operations of central Palestine are concentrated.

1. Jericho was the key of the eastern pass. From this point, the most direct, and without doubt the ancient road into the interior of the country, was through the deep ravine now called the Wâdy Harith, which runs parallel to the deep chasm of the Wâdy Kelt and the Wâdy Suweinit, and then climbs into the heart of the mountains of Benjamin, till it meets the central ridge of the country at Bethel. Indefinite as this description, in our imperfect state of information, must necessarily be, it agrees well with all the ancient notices of the communication between Jericho and the interior, in the Old Testament. At the Christian era it was apparently superseded by the present road by Bethany to Jerusalem, of which I shall speak hereafter.

(a) The first great ascent was that of Joshua. Jericho had been taken; and the next step was to penetrate into the hills above. It was a critical moment, for it was exactly at the similar stage of their approach to Palestine from the south, that the Israelites had met with the severe repulse at Hormah, which had driven them back into the desert for forty years. "Joshua," accordingly, "sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is beside Bethaven, on the east side of Bethel, and spake unto them, saying, Go up and view the country." The precise position of Ai is unknown; but this indication points out its probable site in the wild entanglement of hill and valley at the head of the Wâdy Harith. The two attempts of the Israelites that followed upon the report of the spies are quite in accordance with the natural features of the pass. In the first attempt, the inhabitants of Ai, taking advantage of their strong position on the heights, drove the invaders "from before the gate," . . . and smote them in "the going down" of the steep descent. In the second attempt, after the Israelites had been reassured by the execution of Achan "in the valley of Achor,"—probably one of the valleys opening into the Ghor,—the attack was conducted on different principles. An ambush was placed by night high up in the Wâdy Harith, between Ai and Bethel. Joshua himself took up his position on the north side of "the ravine," apparently the deep chasm through which the Wâdy Harith, as before described, descends to the Wâdy Kelt. From this point the army descended into the valley, Joshua himself, it would seem, remaining on the heights; and, decoyed by them, the King of Ai with his forces pursued them as before into the "desert" valley of the Jordan; whilst the ambush,

at the signal of Joshua's uplifted spear, rushed down on the city ; and then, amidst the mingled attack at the head of the pass from behind, and the return of the main body from the desert of the Jordan, the whole population of Ai was destroyed. A heap of ruins on its site, and a huge cairn over the grave of its last king, remained long afterwards as the sole memorials of the destroyed city.

(b) The next time that the pass of Ai appears is in a situation of events almost exactly reversed. The lowest depression which the Israelite state ever reached before the Captivity, was in the disastrous period during the first struggles of the monarchy, when the Philistines, after the great victory over the sons of Eli, became the virtual masters of the country ; and not content with defending their own rich plain, ascended the passes from the west, and pitched in the heart of the mountains of Benjamin, in " Michmash, eastward from Beth-aven." The designation of the site of Michmash is so similar to that which is used to describe Ai, as inevitably to suggest the conjecture that it was the successor, if not to its actual site, at least to its general position ; and this agrees with the identification of the two in the conflicting traditions of the inhabitants of the modern village, by whose name (Mükhmâs) the ancient Michmash is now represented. Before the face of this terrible visitation, the people fled in all directions. Some even took refuge beyond the Jordan. Most were sheltered in those hiding-places which all parts of Palestine, but especially the broken ridges of this neighbourhood, abundantly afford. The rocks are perforated in every direction with " caves " and " holes," and " pits,"—crevices and fissures sunk deep in the rocky soil, such as those in which the Israelites are described as concealing themselves. The name of Michmash (" hidden treasure ") seems to be derived from this natural peculiarity. Saul himself remained on the verge of his kingdom, in the vale of the Jordan, at Gilgal. East and west, and north, through the three valleys which radiate from the uplands of Michmash—to Ophrah on the north, through the pass of Beth-horon on the west, and down " the ravine of the hyenas," " toward the wilderness " of the Jordan on the east,—the spoilers went forth out of the camp of the Philistines.

At last the spirit of the people revived. On the top of one of those conical hills which have been remarked as characteristic of the Benjamite territory, in his native Gibeah, Saul ventured to entrench himself with Samuel and Ahiah ; where Jonathan had already been at the time when his father was driven from his previous post at Michmash by the Philistine

inroad. From this point to the enemy's camp was about three miles, and between them lay the deep gorge of the Wâdy Suweinit, or Harith, here called "the passage of Michmash," which is described as running between two jagged points, or "teeth of the cliff," as the Hebrew idiom expressly calls them; the one called the "Shining" (Bozez), probably from some such appearance in the chalky cliff; the other, "the Thorn" (Seneh), probably from some solitary acacia on its top. Immediately above, the garrison of the Philistines would seem to have been situated. It was up the steep sides of this ravine that Jonathan and his armour-bearer made their adventurous approach, and, aided by the sudden panic, and by the simultaneous terror of the shock of an earthquake, the two heroes succeeded in dispersing the whole host. From every quarter the Hebrews took advantage of their enemies. From the top of Gibeah, the watchman saw, and the King and the High-priest heard, the signs of the wild confusion. In the camp of the Philistines the Israelite deserters turned against them. From the mountains of Ephraim on the north, the Israelites, who had hid themselves, "followed hard after them in the battle." "So the Lord saved Israel that day, and the battle passed over to Beth-aven" (that is, Bethel). It passed over to the central ridge of Palestine; it passed through the forest, now destroyed, where, from the droppings of the wild honey on the ground, the fainting warrior refreshed his parched lips; it passed over to the other side, from the eastern pass of Michmash to the western pass of Aijalon, through which they fled into their plains; "and the people smote the Philistines." Then Saul "went up" again into his native hills, "and the Philistines went to their own place"; and from that day, till the fatal rout of Gilboa, Israel was secure.

(c) There is yet one more passage of sacred poetry, if not of sacred history, which brings shortly before us the importance of the pass of Michmash. In the magnificent description of the advance of Sennacherib upon Jerusalem, contained in the 10th chapter of the Prophecies of Isaiah, every step of his approach is represented, in order to give greater force to the sudden check which is in store for him. Whether he actually entered Judæa by this road, or (as might perhaps be inferred, from the mention of Lachish as the point from which he eventually came up) by Esdraelon and the Maritime Plain, the selection of this route by the prophet shows that it was the ordinary approach. "He is come to Aiath, he is passed to 'the precipice'; at Michmash he hath laid up his 'baggage.' They are gone over the passage; they have taken up their lodging at Geba." This is the first day of the advance of the

enemy. The great ravine is surmounted—they are encamped in the heart of the land ; and the next morning dawns upon a terror-stricken neighbourhood. “ Ramah is afraid ; Gibeah of Saul is fled : lift up thy voice, O daughter of Gallim : cause it to be heard unto Laish, O poor Anathoth. Madmenah is removed ; the inhabitants of Gebim gather themselves to flee. As yet shall he remain at Nob that day.” It is a short march of about seven miles ; but it has been long enough to scatter right and left the population of all the most famous cities and villages of Benjamin ; and the evening finds him at Nob, apparently the sacred place, already mentioned, on the northern corner of Olivet, actually within sight of the Holy City. “ He shall shake his hand against the mount of the daughter of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem.” But this is the end. “ Behold, the Lord, the Lord of hosts, shall lop the bough with terror, . . . and he shall cut down the thickest of the forest with iron, and Lebanon shall fall by a mighty one. And,” in the place of that proud cedar, “ there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots.”

2. From the eastern we now turn to the western passes of Benjamin, at Beth-horon. Indeed, the incidents of the one almost involve the incidents of the other. “ From Michmash to Ajalon ” was the necessary result of a victory which drove the enemy straight across the country.

The character of the descent from the hill-country of Judæa into the plain of Philistia, is very different from that of the precipitous ravines which lead down into the great depression of the Jordan. The usual route of modern travellers from the western plain is a gradual ascent through the rounded hills, and deep, though not abrupt valleys, which, beginning at the ancient fortress now called the “ Castle of the Penitent Thief ” (*Castellum Boni Latronis*, corrupted into “ *Lad-roon* ”), continues till it emerges on the open tableland of Jerusalem ; and it is probably somewhere in this road, or its adjacent valleys, that we are to look for the scenes of the return of the Ark from the Philistines to Kirjath-jearim, and for the “ valley of ‘ the Terebinth, ’ ” in which they were defeated after David’s victory over Goliath. But this was not the usual route in ancient times, nor is it the most important in its bearing on the general course of Jewish history. Straight from the plain of Sharon a wide valley of corn-fields runs straight up into the hills, which here assume something of a bolder and higher form than usual. This is the valley of “ Ajalon,” or “ of Stags,” of which the name is still preserved in a little village on its southern side, and of

which the signification is said to be still justified by the gazelles which the peasants hunt on its mountain slopes. The valley is slightly broken by a low ridge, on which stands the village of Beit-Nuba. Passing by two more hamlets, Beit-Sireh and Beit-Likhi, another ridge is crossed, and another village; and from thence begins a gradual ascent, through a narrower valley, at the foot of which, though on an eminence, marked by a few palms, stands the village of Beit-ur el-tathi, whilst at the summit and eastern extremity of the pass stands the village of Beit-ur el-foka. This is the pass of the Nether and Upper Beth-horon, "the House of Caves," of which there are still traces, though, perhaps, not enough to account for so emphatic a name. Three or four deep caverns are said to exist in a hill immediately south of Upper Beth-horon. From the Upper Beth-horon another descent and ascent leads to a ridge which commands the heights above El-Jib,—the modern village, which thus retains the name of Gibeon; and then once more a slight descent reaches that village, and from the village is mounted the high point, called Neby-Samwil, from which is obtained the first view of Jerusalem and its wide tableland.

These details give the main points of the scene of the most important battle in the Sacred History.

On achieving the victory of Ai, the first march of the conquering army, so far as we can gather it from the narrative, was straight to the holy mountains of Ebal and Gerizim. But the seat of the nation was still at the scene of its first entrance, deep down in the Jordan valley at Gilgal. There Joshua received the two embassies from the Gibeonites; first, that which entrapped him into the hasty league, and next, that which summoned him to their defence. This summons was as urgent as words can describe. It was a struggle of life and death for which his aid was demanded; not only for Gibeon, but for the Israelites. They had hitherto only encountered the outskirts of the Canaanitish tribes. Now they were to meet the whole force of the hills of southern Palestine. "The King of Jerusalem, the King of Hebron, the King of Jarmuth, the King of Lachish, the King of Eglon,"—two of them the rulers of the chief cities of the whole country,—"gathered themselves together, and went up, they and all their hosts, and encamped before Gibeon. And the men of Gibeon sent unto Joshua to the camp to Gilgal, saying, Slack not thy hand from thy servants; come up to us quickly, and save us, and help us: for all the kings of the Amorites that dwell in the mountains are gathered together against us."

Not a moment was to be lost. As in the battle of Marathon, everything depended on the suddenness of the blow which should break in pieces the hostile confederation. On the former occasion of Joshua's visit to Gibeon, it had been a three days' journey from Gilgal, as according to the slow pace of eastern armies and caravans it might well be. But now by a forced march "Joshua came unto them suddenly, and went up from Gilgal all night." When the sun rose behind him, he was already in the open ground at the foot of the heights of Gibeon, where the kings were encamped. As often before and after, so now, "not a man could stand before" the awe and the panic of the sudden sound of that terrible shout, the sudden appearance of that undaunted host, who came with the assurance "not to fear, nor to be dismayed, but to be strong and of a good courage: for the Lord had delivered their enemies into their hands." The Canaanites fled down the western pass, and "the Lord discomfited them before Israel, and slew them with a great slaughter at Gibeon, and chased them along the way that *goeth up* to Beth-horon." This was the first stage of the flight—in the long ascent which had been indicated from Gibeon towards Beth-horon the Upper. "And it came to pass as they fled from before Israel, and were in the *going down* of Beth-horon, that the Lord cast great stones from heaven upon them unto Azekah." This was the second stage of the flight. The fugitives had outstripped the pursuers; they had crossed the high ridge of Beth-horon the Upper; they were in full flight down the descent to Beth-horon the Nether; when, as afterwards in the fight of Barak against Sisera, one of the fearful tempests which from time to time sweep over the hills of Palestine, burst upon the disordered army, and "they were more which died with hailstones than they whom the children of Israel slew with the sword."

It is at this point that "the Book of Jasher" presents us with that sublime picture, which however variously it always has been and perhaps always will be interpreted, we may here take as we find it there expressed. On the summit of the pass where is now the hamlet of the Upper Beth-horon, looking far down the deep descent of all the westward valleys, with the broad green vale of Ajalon unfolding in the distance into the open plain, with the yet wider expanse of the Mediterranean Sea beyond, stood the Israelite chief. Below him was rushing down in wild confusion the Amorite host. Around him were "all his people of war and all his mighty men of valour." Behind him were the hills which hid Gibeon—the now rescued Gibeon—from his sight. But the sun

stood high above those hills,—“in the midst of heaven” ; for the day had now far advanced since he had emerged from his night march through the passes of Ai ; and in front, over the western vale of Ajalon, was the faint figure of the crescent moon visible above the hailstorm, which was fast driving up from the sea in the valleys below. Was the enemy to escape in safety, or was the speed with which Joshua had “come quickly and saved and helped” his defenceless allies, to be still rewarded before the close of that day by a signal and decisive victory ?

Doubtless with outstretched hand and spear, “the hand that he drew not back, when he reached out the spear, until he had utterly destroyed the inhabitants of Ai,” “then spake Joshua to the Lord in the day when the Lord delivered the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel,

“‘Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon ;

“‘And thou Moon, in the valley of Ajalon.’

“And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies.”¹

So ended the second stage of the flight. The third is less distinct, from a variation in the text of the narrative. But following what seems the most probable reading, the pursuit still continued ; “and the Lord smote them to Azekah and unto Makkedah, and these five kings fled and hid themselves in a cave at Makkedah.” But Joshua halted not when he was told : the same speed was still required, the victory was not yet won. “Roll great stones,” he said, “upon the mouth of the cave, and set men by it for to keep them : and stay ye not, but pursue after your enemies, and smite the hindmost of them ; suffer them not to enter into their cities : for the Lord hath delivered them into your hand.” We know not precisely the position of Makkedah, but it must have been probably at the point where the mountains sink into the plain that this struggle took place ; and thither at last to the camp at Makkedah “all the people of Israel returned in peace ; none moved his tongue against any of the people of Israel.” There was enacted, as it would seem, the last act of the same eventful day ; the five kings were brought out and slain, and hanged on five trees until the evening, when at last that memorable Sun went down. “It came to pass at the time of the going down of the sun, that Joshua

¹ The Mussulmans’ version of this event is that it was the battle which conquered Jericho, and that the day was Friday, and was lengthened in order to avoid the violation of the Sabbath, which would have begun at sunset ; hence, it was said, the sacredness of the Mussulman Friday. Buckingham heard this story from the Arabs at Jericho.

commanded, and they took them down off the trees, and cast them into the cave wherein they had been hid, and laid great stones in the cave's mouth. . . . And that day Joshua took Makkedah, and smote it with the edge of the sword, and the king thereof he utterly destroyed, them, and all the souls that were therein; he let none remain." And then followed the rapid succession of victory and extermination which swept the whole of southern Palestine into the hands of Israel. The possession of every place, sacred for them and for all future ages, from the plain of Esdraelon to the southern Desert—Shechem, Shiloh, Gibeon, Bethlehem, Hebron,—was, with the one exception of Jerusalem, involved in the issue of that conflict. "And all these kings and their land did Joshua take *at one time*, because the Lord God of Israel fought for Israel. And Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, unto the camp to Gilgal."

In comparison with this scene, to which "there was no day like, before or after it," it seems trivial to descend to any lesser events which illustrate the same points. But this pass was, as might naturally be expected from its position, the scene of one, if not two, battles with the Philistines at the commencement of David's reign. And the recollection of that first victory of their race may well have inspired Judas Maccabæus, who, himself a native of the neighbouring hills, won his earliest fame in this same "going up and coming down of Beth-horon," where in like manner "the residue" of the defeated army fled into "the plain," "into the land of the Philistines unto Gazera." And again, over the same plain was carried the great Roman road from Cæsarea to Jerusalem, up which Cestius advanced at the first onset of the Roman armies on the capital of Judæa, and down which he and the whole force were driven by the insurgent Jews. By a singular coincidence the same scene thus witnessed the first and the last great victory that crowned the Jewish arms at the interval of nearly fifteen hundred years. From their camp at Gibeon, the Romans, as the Canaanites before them, were dislodged; they fled in similar confusion down the ravine to Beth-horon, the steep cliffs and the rugged road rendering their cavalry unavailable against the merciless fury of their pursuers; they were only saved,—as the Canaanites were not saved,—by the too rapid descent of the shades of night over the mountains, and under the cover of those shades they escaped to Antipatris in the plain below. Ages afterwards, the Crusading armies, in the vain hope of reaching Jerusalem, advanced up the same valleys from their quarters at Ascalon and Jaffa, and the last eastern point at which

Richard encamped was at Beit-Nuba, in the wide vale of Ajalon. A well near the village of Ajalon bears the name of Bîr el-Khebir, "the well of the hero." It is a strange complexity of associations which renders it doubtful whether "the hero" so handed down by tradition be the great leader of the hosts of Israel, or the flower of English chivalry.

II. From the passes of the tribe of Benjamin we turn by a natural connection to those remarkable heights which guard their entrance into the tableland, and which diversify with their pointed summits that tableland itself. The very names of the towns of Benjamin indicate how eminently they partook of this general characteristic of the position of Judæan cities—Gibeah—Geba—Gibeon, all signifying "hill,"—Ramah, "the high place,"—Mizpeh, "the watch-tower." And it has been already observed how from these heights to the north of Jerusalem, is in all likelihood derived the ancient image of God "standing about his people." On most of them it is needless to enlarge. El-Bireh, "The well," the ancient Beeroth, is remarkable as the first halting-place of caravans on the northern road from Jerusalem, and therefore, not improbably, the scene of the event to which its monastic tradition lays claim,—the place where the "parents" of Jesus "sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance, and when they found him not, turned back again to Jerusalem." Er-Ram, marked by the village and green patch on its summit—the most conspicuous object from a distance in the approach to Jerusalem from the south—is certainly "Ramah of Benjamin." Tuleil el-Fûl, distinguished by its curiously knobbed and double top, is in all probability Gibeah, the birth-place of Saul, and during his reign the capital of his tribe and kingdom, and from him deriving the name of "Gibeah of Saul," as before "of Benjamin";—"the hill of Benjamin," or "of Saul." Just out of sight of Jerusalem, Anathoth, the birth-place of Jeremiah, looks down on the Dead Sea. Jeba, on the wild hills between Gibeah and Michmash, is clearly "Geba," famous as the scene of Jonathan's first exploit against the Philistines. From its summit is seen northward the white chalky height of Rûmmôn, overhanging the Jordan "wilderness," "the 'cliff' Rimmon," where the remnant of the Benjamites maintained themselves in the general ruin of their tribe. Further still, is the dark conical hill of Taiyibeh, with its village perched aloft, like those of the Apennines, the probable representative of Ophrah of Benjamin; in later times "the city called *Ephraim*" "near to the wilderness," to which our Lord retired after the raising of Lazarus,

1. But two of these heights stand out in historical importance from all the rest. Of all the points of interest about Jerusalem, none perhaps gains so much from an actual visit to Palestine as the lofty peaked eminence which fills up the north-west corner of the tableland; seen in every direction, the highest elevation in the whole country south of Hermon, commanding a view far wider than that of Olivet, inasmuch as it includes the western plain and Mediterranean Sea on one side, as well as Olivet and Jerusalem in the distance backed by the range of Moab. It is in fact the point from which travellers mounting by the ancient route through the pass of Beth-horon obtained their earliest glimpse of the interior of the hills of Palestine. "It is a very fair and delicious place," says Maundeville, "and it is called Mount-Joy, because it gives joy to pilgrims' hearts; for from that place men first see Jerusalem." And it was probably on that height that Richard Cœur de Lion, advancing from his camp in the valley of Ajalon, stood in sight of Jerusalem, but buried his face in his armour, with the noble exclamation, "Ah! Lord God, I pray that I may never see Thy Holy City, if so be that I may not rescue it from the hands of Thine enemies."

It can only be from the uncertainty of its ancient identity that it has been passed over by modern travellers in comparative silence. At present it bears the name of Neby-Samwil, which is derived from the Mussulman tradition—now perpetuated by a mosque and tomb—that here lies buried the prophet Samuel. In the time of the Crusaders it was regarded—not unnaturally, if they merely considered the grandeur of the position—as the site of the great sanctuary of Shiloh. In the manifest impossibilities of either of these assumptions, it has by the latest investigators been identified with Mizpeh.

But a closer examination of its position will probably lead to a more certain and satisfactory result. It stands, as we have already seen, at the head of the pass of Beth-horon; and on a lower eminence at its northern roots, one of those rounded hills which characterise especially the western formation of Judæa, rises the village of El-Jib, which, both by its name and situation, is incontestably identified with the ancient Gibeon. Gibeon was the head of the powerful Hivite league which included three of the adjacent towns, Beeroth, Kirjath-jearim, and Chephirah; and this circumstance, with its important post as the key of the pass of Beth-horon, made it "a great city," and, though not under royal government, equal in rank to "one of the royal cities"; celebrated for

its strength and wisdom of its inhabitants. Hence it was that the raising of the siege of Gibeon, as already described in the account of the battle of Beth-horon, was so vital to the conquest of Canaan. But the chief fame of Gibeon in later times was not derived from the city itself, but from the "great high place" hard by; whither, after the destruction of its seat at Nob or Olivet, the tabernacle was brought, and where it remained till it was thence removed to Jerusalem by Solomon. It can hardly be doubted that to this great sanctuary the lofty height of Neby-Samwil, towering immediately over the town of El-Jib, exactly corresponds. The tabernacle would be appropriately transferred to this eminence, when it could no longer remain at Nob on the opposite ridge of Olivet; and, if this peak were thus the "great high place" of Solomon's worship, a significance is given to what otherwise would be a blank and nameless feature in a region where all the less conspicuous hills are distinguished by some historical name. This would then be a ground for the sanctity with which the Mussulman and Christian traditions have invested it, as the Ramah and the Shiloh of Samuel, even though those traditions themselves are without foundation. In Epiphanius' time it still bore the name of the Mountain of Gibeon; and from its conspicuous height the name of "Gibeon" ("belonging to a hill") was naturally derived to a city itself, which lay always where its modern representative lies now, on the lower eminence. From thence the Gibeonites "hewed the wood" of the adjacent valley, and "drew the water" from the springs and tanks with which its immediate neighbourhood abounds, and carried them up to the sacred Tent; and there attended the "altar of the Lord," which, from its proud elevation, overlooked the wide domain of Israel.

The same point—although here one must speak more doubtfully—was probably "the hill of God," which, from its commanding situation, was garrisoned by the Philistines in the time of Samuel to guard the pass, and on which, for a similar reason, though with a different object, the prophets assembled on "the high place," whence they were descending when Saul met them on his return from the neighbourhood of Bethlehem to his own home at Gibeah. Probably, too, it is "the mountain" where the Gibeonites hung up the seven sons of Saul "before the Lord," that is, before the tabernacle on its summit, in revenge for the massacre of their kindred by Saul.

2. From the sanctuary which guarded the entrance into Judæa from the west, we advance naturally to the still greater

sanctuary which guarded it on the north and east. As the passage of Beth-horon led up to Gibeon, so the passage of Michmash and Ai led up to Bethel. Bethel lay in the direct thoroughfare of Palestine; whether the course of a conqueror or a traveller brought him through the long valley so often described from the bed of the Jordan, or through the mountains of Judah, Benjamin, and Ephraim, north and south, he could not avoid seeing the heights of Bethel. Hence arises what may be called its peculiar antiquity of interest. It thus comprises (with the single exception of Shechem) a longer series of remarkable scenes of Sacred History than has fallen to the lot of any other spot in Palestine.

It was the first place where Abraham is said to have "pitched his tent" when he "journeyed" "through the land," "going on still toward the south," on his way to Egypt; and to the same spot, "even to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, unto the place of the altar which he had made there at the first" (so emphatically is the locality marked), he came again, on his return from Egypt, as to the familiar scene of his first encampment. The tent and altar were not, however, strictly speaking, at Bethel, but on "the mountain east of Bethel, having Bethel on the west, and Ai on the east." This is a precision the more to be noticed, because it makes the whole difference in the truth and vividness of the remarkable scene which follows. Immediately east of the low grey hills, on which the Canaanitish Luz and the Jewish Bethel afterwards stood, rises,—as the highest of a succession of eminences, each now marked by some vestige of ancient edifices,—a conspicuous hill; its topmost summit resting, as it were, on the rocky slopes below, and distinguished from them by the olive-grove which clusters over its broad surface above. From this height, thus offering a natural base for the patriarchal altar, and a fitting shade for the patriarchal tent, Abraham and Lot must be conceived as taking the wide survey of the country "on the right hand and on the left," such as can be enjoyed from no other point in the neighbourhood. To the east there rises in the foreground the jagged range of the hills above Jericho; in the distance the dark wall of Moab; between them lies the wide valley of the Jordan, its course marked by the tract of forest in which its rushing stream is enveloped; and down to this valley a long and deep ravine, now, as always, the main line of communication by which it is approached from the central hills of Palestine—a ravine rich with vine, olive, and fig, winding its way through ancient reservoirs and sepulchres, remains of a civilisation now extinct, but in the

times of the patriarchs not yet begun. To the south and the west the view commanded the bleak hills of Judæa, varied by the heights crowned with what were afterwards the cities of Benjamin, and overhanging what in a later day was to be Jerusalem, and in the far distance the southern range on whose slope is Hebron. Northward are the hills which divide Judæa from the rich plains of Samaria.

This is the view which was to Abraham what Pisgah was afterwards to his great descendant. This was to the two lords of Palestine, then almost "free before them, where to choose," what in Grecian legends is represented under the figure of the Choice of Hercules; in the fables of Islâm under the story of the Prophet turning back from Damascus. "And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the 'round' of 'the' Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere . . . even as the garden of the Lord, like unto Egypt." He saw not, indeed, the tropical fertility and copious streams along its course. But he knew of its fame, as of the garden of Eden, as of the valley of the Nile; no crust of salt, no volcanic convulsions had as yet blasted its verdure, or touched the secure civilisation of the early Phœnician settlements which had struck root within its deep abyss. "Then Lot chose him all the 'round' of 'the' Jordan, and Lot journeyed east; and they separated themselves one from the other . . . and Lot dwelt in the cities of the 'round' of 'the' Jordan, and pitched his tent towards Sodom. But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly. And the Lord said unto Abram after that Lot had separated from him, 'Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art, northward and southward, and eastward and westward; for all the land which thou seest, to thee I will give it, and to thy seed for ever . . . and I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth, so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed be numbered. Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee.'" Those bleak hills were indeed to be the site of cities whose names would be held in honour after the very ruins of the seats of a corrupt civilisation in the garden of the Jordan had been swept away; that dreary view, unfolded then in its primeval desolation before the eyes of the now solitary Patriarch, would be indeed peopled with a mighty nation through many generations; with mighty recollections "like the dust of the earth in number, for ever."

The next scene is less easily identified. Yet thus much may be said. The western slopes of the ridge just described are crossed by the track which the thoroughfare of centuries

has worn in the central route of Palestine. This track winds through an uneven valley, covered, as with gravestones, by large sheets of bare rock ; some few here and there standing up like the cromlechs of Druidical monuments. It is impossible not to recall, in this "stony territory," the wanderer who "went out from Beersheba and went toward Haran ; and he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set ; and he took of the stones of that place and put them for his pillow, and lay down in that place to sleep." Then rose the vision of the night. The stones around seemed to form themselves into the steps of a vast 'staircase' "whose foot was set upon the earth"—on the bare sheet of rocky ground on which the sleeper lay, "and whose top reached to heaven"—into the depths of the starry sky, which, in that wide and open space, with no intervening tree or tent, was stretched over his head. "And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and said, Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not ; and he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place ; this is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." Such was the beginning of Beth-El, "the House of God," the place which bore, amidst all the subsequent sanctuaries of the Holy Land, the distinctive name which has since spread to every holy place throughout the world ; its connection with the scene is best expressed in the wanderer's own words, "The Lord is in this place, and I knew it not." There is, indeed, nothing to indicate the Divine Presence ; no *religio loci*, no awful shades, no lofty hills. Bare wild rocks, a beaten thoroughfare, are the only features of this primeval sanctuary of God. Nature itself there teaches us, that if He could, in such a scene, so emphatically reveal Himself to the houseless exile, He "is with him," and with His true servants, everywhere, and will 'keep them *in all places* whither they go."

From that rude beginning—the rough "stone that Jacob set up for a pillar"—grew the sanctuary of Bethel. First, rose the altar which he himself built there on his return. Beneath was the 'Oak of Tears,' beside which, in the valley below, Deborah was buried. Then it became the seat of the assemblies gathered there in the time of the Judges. Finally, when it seemed on the point of being superseded by the new sanctuary at Jerusalem, it assumed a fresh importance as the Holy Place of the northern kingdom.

It is in this last aspect that its remaining history is remarkable. In ancient times, before the conquest of Joshua, there had already existed on the spot a Canaanitish city named Luz, situated on the western slope of the mountain of Abraham's

altar; the same, probably, whose inhabitants came forth to assist their neighbours of Ai when attacked by Joshua. It was not taken at that time, and seems long to have resisted the invaders. At last it fell before the arms, not of the little tribe of Benjamin, within whose territory it was included, but of the powerful house of Joseph, who attacked it from the north, and who thus acquired possession of it for their descendants, though properly speaking it had been allotted to Benjamin. In this respect there is a singular analogy between Bethel and Jerusalem. Each, situated in the tribe of Benjamin, resisted, by a strong position, the first shock of the conquest; and being ultimately taken, not by that tribe itself, but the one by Judah on the south, the other by Ephraim on the north, passed out of the history of Benjamin into that of these two powerful neighbours. And the frontier which at Jerusalem had been originally drawn by the ravine of the Kedron and of Hinnom, at Bethel was drawn by the gorge of the Wady Harith, which has been so often mentioned as the pass from Jericho, and which in later times served the purpose of the southern boundary of the northern kingdom. Bethel thus became doubly important to the new state; first as a strong frontier-fortress, but still more as a sanctuary, founded on the holiest recollections, and in a great measure supplying the place which Shiloh had of old filled in the same great tribe of Ephraim. What structure there may have been in former ages commemorating the Vision of Jacob, it is impossible now to determine. The "House of God," the "Beth-El," described as the scene of the assemblies in the period of the Judges, was probably some rude monument of primitive times, bearing the same relation to the Temple which Jeroboam afterwards built near or round it, as the original sanctuary of the Mahometan world—known by the very same name, *Beit-Allah*, the "House of God"—bears to the elaborate enclosure with which Mussulman devotion has since surrounded it. On both of the two lower eminences which overhang the modern village are ruins which may possibly indicate the site of Jeroboam's Temple. Above it, on the east, are the higher "mountains and hills," to which (in the language of Hosea) the inhabitants of Bethel would in the day of their shame call to "cover" and to "fall on them." It was built, we cannot doubt, with all the splendour which his acquaintance with Egyptian worship, and his desire to emulate the glory of the rival sanctuary of Jerusalem, would necessarily dictate. It was, we know, regarded emphatically as "the king's sanctuary," as "the king's house"; with "a high priest," and "the noise of

songs," and "the melody of viols," and "burnt-offerings and meat-offerings," and "feast days," and "solemn assemblies." And it was on the greatest of those feast days, "the fifteenth day of the eighth month," which Jeroboam had "devised out of his own heart," in imitation of the great Feast of Tabernacles which Solomon had chosen for the festival of the dedication of the Temple on Mount Moriah, that Jeroboam took his place by the altar which stood before the statue of the Golden Calf, and was interrupted at the very moment of inauguration by the sudden and awful apparition of the Man of God from Judah. In that story and its consequences is contained almost all that we know of the later history of Bethel. The schools of the prophets still lingered round the sacred place, when Elijah passed through it down the long defile—then mentioned for the last time in history—on his way to Jericho. But the chief association which the Jews of Jerusalem attached to it was of the rival and idolatrous Temple. The very name of Beth-el, the "House of God," was in the times of the later prophets exchanged for "Bethaven"—the "House of Idols"; and, when Josiah passed through, it was to destroy, and not to build up. The "altar" and "the high place" of Jeroboam, and the grove and worship of Astarte that had grown up round it, he razed and burned. And "as Josiah turned," we are told, "he spied the sepulchres that were there in the Mount." The "Mount" doubtless is the same as the "mountain" on the east of Bethel, described in the history of Abraham. The "sepulchres" must be the numerous rock-hewn tombs still visible in the whole descent from that "mountain" to the Wâdy Harith. In one of these, though we know not which, lay side by side the bones of the two prophets—the aged Prophet of Bethel and his brother and victim, the "Man of God from Judah," and they were left to repose. From that time the desolation foretold by Amos and Hosea has never been disturbed; and Beth-el, the "House of God," has become literally Beth-aven, the "house of naught."

NOTE ON RAMAH AND MIZPEH.

I.—THE RAMAH OF SAMUEL.

THERE is no general interest in discussing the precise situation of Ramah, the birth-place, residence, and burial-place of Samuel, further than what attaches to anything relating to the life of so remarkable a man. But the question is invested with an incidental interest which may make it worth a few

moments' investigation. It is, without exception, the most complicated and disputed problem of sacred topography. It is almost the only instance in which the text of the Scriptural narrative (1 Sam. ix. 1—x. 10) seems to be at variance with the existing localities.

All that we know certainly about the place is, that it was on an eminence, as its name of "Ramah" implies, and was situated somewhere south of Gibeah, the birth-place of Saul; as it is hardly possible to avoid identifying the city where Saul found Samuel with the usual residence of that prophet. This, which is not stated expressly in the Old Testament, is taken for granted by Josephus. From the dual termination to the name *Ramathaim*—by which it is called in the Hebrew and LXX text of 1 Sam. i. 1, and by Josephus always, and from which the New Testament name of *Arimathea* seems to be derived—it might be inferred that it was an eminence with a double height. To this spot there are no less than eight claimants:

1. *Ramleh*; the chief modern city of the plain of Philistia, and selected as the spot by Christian tradition. Its situation in the level plain, though on a slight eminence, is much against its identity; and the name, which at first sight appears similar, is the Arabic word for "sandy," and is in all probability derived from the sandy tract in which it stands. (See Chapter VI.) Still it is remarkable that Eusebius and Jerome speak of *Ramathaim* as near Lydda, to which no other site corresponds.

2. *Neby-Samwil*; the height above Gibeon. This has its height and the Mussulman tradition in its favour.

3. *Er-Ram*; or "Ramah of Benjamin," on the road from Jerusalem to Bethel. This has the name in its favour.

These two sites labour under the objection that they are north and not south of Rachel's tomb: and therefore that Saul could never have passed by that tomb in going from either of them to Gibeah. *Er-Râm* is, besides, close to Gibeah, which is against 1 Sam. x. 10.

4. "Ramah"; a hill, a short distance north of Bethlehem, which, according to some accounts, is so called by the peasants. This is fixed upon by Mr. Finn, the English Consul at Jerusalem. (See Bonar, *Land of Promise*, p. 114.)

5. The *Frank Mountain*, or *Jebel el-Fureidis*, a little south-east of Bethlehem. This is fixed upon by Gesenius.

6. The ruins called *Râmet el-Khûlîl*, by Josephus called the "Terebinth of Abraham" (mentioned in Chapter I. part ii. § 21), a little north of Hebron. This is fixed upon by Mr. Wolcott and M. Van de Velde.

7. *Sôba* ; a town on a hill, in the mountains west of Bethlehem. This is fixed upon by Dr. Robinson.

8. A village called *Ramê*, three and a half miles west of Sanur, which Schwarz (p. 157) endeavours to identify with Ramathaim by altering the reading of Dothaim in Judith iv. 5, 6, 7.

Of these, the fourth, sixth, and eighth have the identity of name in their favour, and the seventh may have derived its present name from Zophim. The fifth has only its commanding position, and the argument that if it be not Ramah, then it is unknown to the Old Testament.

All of these, except the eighth, are equally compatible with the journey by Rachel's tomb, but all are equally excluded if Ramah must be sought among the mountains of Ephraim. Of the two difficulties, however, the latter is the least insuperable. It is easier to suppose that Elkanah may have migrated from Mount Ephraim, than to explain away the stages of the return of Saul. And it must be added, that if a position in Mount Ephraim be required, it must entirely exclude Ramleh, and probably Er-Râm and Neby-Samwil. The context of Jer. xxxi. 15 implies that the Ramah of the Prophet was in the northern kingdom, probably Ramah of Benjamin. The context of Matt. ii. 18, on the other hand, implies that the Ramah of the Evangelist was in sight of Bethlehem.

The words translated "by *Zelzah*," in 1 Sam. x. 2, are by the LXX rendered an expression of joy on the part of the men who announced the finding of the asses. "Thou shalt meet two men *leaping violently*—ἀλλομένους μεγάλα." The other clause, however, "*in the border of Benjamin*," is important, as showing how far south this boundary reached. Probably it was extended just far enough to include the tomb of their great ancestress. Of the two remaining stages of Saul's journey (1 Sam. x. 1-10), "the 'oak' of Tabor" may possibly be the famous "oak of Deborah," Gen. xxxv. 8 ; and "the hill of God" (Gibeah-Elohim) may be Gibeon, Gibeah of Saul, or Bethel.

II.—MIZPEH.

If Neby-Samwil be the high place of Gibeon, then Mizpeh, which Dr. Robinson planted there, must be sought elsewhere. One spot immediately suggests itself. Mizpeh—always with the article, "*the Mizpeh*"—is in Hebrew, what *Scopus* is in Greek, "*the watch-tower*." Wherever *Scopus* was,—and we know that it was some eminence on the north of the city, whence the city and temple were visible—there it is most

natural to place *Mizpeh*. Such a position will meet every requirement of the notices of Mizpeh—the assemblies held there by Samuel; the fortification of it by Asa with the stones removed from ‘the Mount’ of Benjamin; the seat of the Chaldæan governor after the capture of Jerusalem; the wailing-place of the Maccabees.

CHAPTER V

EPHRAIM AND MANASSEH

THE narrow territory of Benjamin soon melts into the hills which reach to the plain of Esdraelon ; and which, from the great tribe which there had its chief seat, are known by the name of "the mountains of Ephraim."

Their character is marked by two peculiarities. First, they are the central mass of the hills of Palestine, nearly equidistant from the northern and southern boundary of the whole country ; and, secondly, the closely set structure, and the rocky soil of the hills of Judah and Benjamin, though still continued to a great extent, are here for the first time occasionally broken up into wide plains in the heart of the mountains, and diversified both in hill and valley by streams of running water and by continuous tracts of verdure and vegetation. It was this central tract and this "good land" that was naturally allotted to the powerful house of Joseph in the first division of the country. We are so familiar with the supremacy of the tribe of Judah, that we are apt to forget that it was of comparatively recent date. For more than four hundred years—a period equal in length to that which elapsed between the Norman Conquest and the Wars of the Roses—Ephraim, with its two dependent tribes of Manasseh and Benjamin, exercised undisputed pre-eminence. Joshua, the first conqueror ; Gideon, the greatest of the judges, whose brothers were "as the children of kings," and whose children all but established hereditary monarchy in their own line ; Saul, the first king—belong to one or other of these three tribes.

It was not till the close of the first period of Jewish history that God "refused the tabernacle of Joseph, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim : but chose the tribe of Judah, even the Mount Zion which He loved." That haughty spirit which could brook no equal or superior, which chafed against the rise even of the kindred tribe of Manasseh in the person of Gideon and Jephthah, and yet more against the growing

dominion of Judah in David and Solomon, till it threw off the yoke altogether, and established an independent kingdom—would naturally claim, and could not rightly be refused, the choicest portion of the land. As “Judah” under Caleb was to “abide in their coasts on the south,” so “the house of Joseph” under Joshua was to “abide in their coasts on the north.” Not till these were fixed could the other tribes be thought of. “For the precious things of heaven, for the dew, and for the deep that coucheth beneath, and for the precious fruits brought forth by the sun, and for the precious things put forth by the moon, and for the chief things of the ancient mountains, and for the precious things of the lasting hills, and for the precious things of the earth, and the fulness thereof . . . let the blessing come upon the head of Joseph, and upon the top of the head of him that was separated from his brethren.” If Judah was the wild lion that guarded the south, and couched in the fastness of Zion, so Ephraim was to be the more peaceful, but not less powerful buffalo, who was to rove the rich vales of central Palestine, and defend the frontier of the north; “his glory is like the firstling of his bullock, and his horns are like the horns of ‘buffaloes’: with them shall he push the people together to the ends of the earth, and they are the ten thousands of Ephraim, and they are the thousands of Manasseh.” In the fulness of their pride and strength, they demanded of their great chieftain Joshua, “Why hast thou given me but one lot and one portion to inherit, seeing I am a great people, forasmuch as the Lord has blessed me hitherto?—the ‘mountain’ is not enough for us.” But Joshua answered them with no less wisdom than patriotism, that what more they won must be by their own exertions against the Canaanites of the plain: “Thou art a great people, and hast great power, thou shalt not have one lot only; but the mountains shall be thine; for it is a ‘forest,’ and thou shalt cut it down; and the outgoings of it shall be thine: for thou shalt drive out the Canaanites, though they have iron chariots, and though they be strong.”

The “mountain” was theirs—“the mountains of Ephraim”; and to their secure heights even the members of other tribes resorted for shelter and for power. Ehud the Benjamite, when he armed his countrymen against Moab, “blew his trumpet in the mountain of Ephraim,” as in the rallying-place of the nation, “and the children of Israel went down with him from the mount,” into the valley of the Jordan, “and he before them.” Deborah, though, as it would seem, herself of the northern tribes, “dwelt between Ramah and Bethel in Mount Ephraim.” Tola, of Issachar, judged Israel

in Shamir in Mount Ephraim. Samuel, too, was of "Ramathaim-zophim of Mount Ephraim."

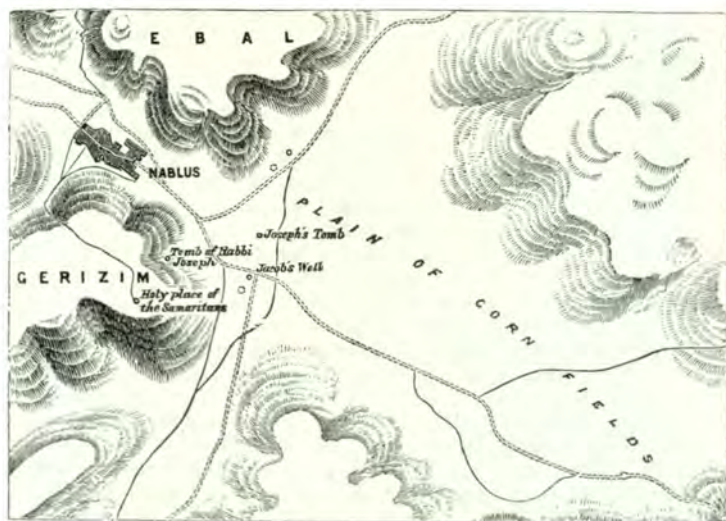
I. But the connection between the peculiarities of this country and its history are, as in Judah, most strikingly exemplified by a view of its sacred and capital cities. The great sanctuary of the house of Joseph, and, during the whole period of their supremacy, of the nation also, was Shiloh. Perhaps there is no place in Palestine that more forcibly exemplifies the remark often made in these pages, contrasting the sacred localities of Palestine with those of Greece. Delphi, Lebadea, the Styx, Mycenæ, are so strongly marked by every accompaniment of external nature, as at once to proclaim their position as the natural, the inevitable seats of the oracles of the nation. But Shiloh is so utterly featureless, that, had it not been for the preservation of its name (Seilûn), and for the extreme precision with which its situation is described in the Book of Judges, the spot could never have been identified; and, indeed, from the time of Jerome till the year 1838, its real site was completely forgotten, and its name was transferred, as we have seen, to that commanding height of Gibeon, which a later age naturally conceived to be a more congenial spot for the sacred place, where for so many centuries was "the tent which He had pitched among men,"—

"Our living Dread, who dwells
In Silo, his bright Sanctuary."

Its ruins are scattered over a slight eminence which rises in one of those softer and wider plains before noticed as characteristic of this part of Palestine, a little removed from the great central route of the country; its antiquity marked by the ruins of the ancient well, probably the very one by which the "daughters of Shiloh" danced in the yearly festival, when the remnant of the neighbouring tribe of Benjamin descended from their hills to carry them off; and also by the approach from the east through a valley of rock-hewn sepulchres, some of which, in all probability, must have been the last resting-place of the unfortunate house of Eli. Its selection as the sanctuary may partly have arisen from its comparative seclusion, still more from its central situation. The most hallowed spot of that vicinity, Bethel, which might else have been more naturally chosen, was at this time still in the hands of the Canaanites; and thus, left to choose the encampment of the Sacred Tent, not by old associations, but according to the dictates of convenience, the conquerors fixed on this retired spot in the heart of the country, where the allotment of the territory could be most conveniently made,

north, south, east, and west, to the different tribes, and there the Ark remained down to the fatal day when its home was uprooted by the Philistines. But Shiloh, though it was the sanctuary, was not the capital, of Ephraim. It was hardly even a city in its first origin. It was rather the last halt of the many encampments of their past life. The "tabernacle," "the tent," that last relic of the nomad existence of the chosen people, is the feature always dwelt upon in the notices of Shiloh. And with this curiously agrees the description of the sanctuary of Shiloh in the Rabbinical traditions, as of "a structure of low stone walls, with the tent drawn over the top." This exactly answers to the Bedouin villages of the present day, where the stone enclosures often remain, long after the tribes which they sheltered, and the tents which they supported, have vanished away; the point of transition precisely corresponding to the history of the origin of Shiloh, between the wandering and the settled life. Among the nomadic Buddhists of the Kalmucks a Sacred Tent is still the only place of worship.

II. It was in a more permanent home that the chiefs of the new nation took up their final abode. The situation of SHECHEM is soon described. From the hills through which the main route of Palestine must always have run, and amongst which Shiloh is secluded, the traveller descends into a wide plain, the widest and the most beautiful of the plains of the Ephraimite mountains, one mass of corn unbroken by boundary or hedge, from the midst of which start up olive-trees, themselves unenclosed as the fields in which they stand. Over the hills which close the northern end of this plain, far away in the distance, is caught the first glimpse of the snowy ridge of Hermon. Its western side is bounded by the abutments of two mountain ranges, running from west to east. These ranges are Gerizim and Ebal; and up the opening between them, not seen from the plain, lies the modern town of Nâblus. This is one of the few instances in which the Roman, or rather the Greek, name has superseded in popular language the ancient Semitic appellation—"Nâblus" being the corruption of "Neapolis," the "New Town" founded by Vespasian after the ruin of the older Shechem, which probably lay further eastward, and therefore nearer to the opening of the valley. Nâblus is the most beautiful, perhaps it might be said the only very beautiful, spot in central Palestine. M. Van de Velde, who approached this valley from the richer scenery of the north, is not less struck by it than those who contrast it with the barren hills of Judæa. After speaking of the grandeur of the gorge of the Leontes, and of the hills of



SKETCH-MAP OF THE SITUATION OF SHECHEM (NÂBLUS).

Lebanon ; of the wild oak-forest and brushwood of Naphtali ; of the mountain-streams of Asher ; of Carmel, with its wilderness of timber-trees and shrubs, of plants and bushes. he says, "The Vale of Shechem differs from them all. Here there is no wilderness, here there are no wild thickets, yet there is always verdure ; always shade, not of the oak, the terebinth, and the carob-tree, but of the olive-grove—so soft in colour, so picturesque in form, that for its sake we can willingly dispense with all other wood. Here there are no impetuous mountain torrents, yet there is water ; water, too, in more copious supplies than anywhere else in the land." "There is a singularity," he adds, "about the Vale of Shechem, and that is the peculiar colouring which objects assume in it. You know that wherever there is water, the air becomes charged with watery particles ; and that distant objects, beheld through that medium, seem to be enveloped in a pale blue or grey mist, such as contributes not a little to give a charm to the landscape. But it is precisely these atmospheric tints that we miss so much in Palestine. Fiery tints are to be seen both in the morning and the evening, and glittering violet or purple-coloured hues where the light falls next to the long deep shadows ; but there is an absence of colouring, and of that charming dusky haze in which objects assume such softly blended forms, and in which also the transition in colour from the foreground to the farthest distance loses the hardness of outline peculiar to the perfect transparency of an eastern sky. It is otherwise in the Vale of Shechem, at least in the morning and the evening. Here the exhalations remain hovering among the branches and leaves of the olive-trees, and hence that lovely bluish haze. The valley is far from broad, not exceeding in some places a few hundred feet. This you find generally enclosed on all sides : there likewise the vapours are condensed. And so you advance under the shade of the foliage along the living waters, and charmed by the melody of a host of singing birds—for they, too, know where to find their best quarters—while the perspective fades away, and is lost in the damp vapoury atmosphere." It need hardly be said that it is from its abundant supply of water that this beauty is derived : twenty-seven springs, each known by its peculiar name, besides a crowd of smaller sources, pour their treasures into the valley, and have thus secured the perennial glory of its green grassy sward, its olive-groves, its orchards of fig, and vine, and pomegranate. These are the features, so unlike to those of Jerusalem, which we have now to trace as they burst upon us in different points of view through the various stages of

the history of Shechem, as of a face once familiar, often disappearing, yet again and again appearing through the vicissitudes of youth and age, through public and private life; changing, yet still the same, and connecting events and scenes in themselves widely different.

1. It first dawns upon us in the dimness of the Patriarchal age, as the first spot on which Abraham halted when he had crossed the Jordan, on his way from Chaldæa, to the land which God should give him. It was the "place of Shechem." Shechem itself, it would seem, was not yet built; all was still in its primeval state. Yet there was enough of those noble groves to attract the wanderer's steps. Under the "' terebinths ' of Moreb," now superseded by the more useful olive-trees, Abraham rested and built the first altar which the Holy Land had known.

2. What is thus faintly discerned in the life of the earlier Patriarch comes out clearly in the life of his descendant Jacob. From the heights of Gilead, through the deep rent of the valley of the Zerka, or Jabbok, which forms one of the most remarkable features in the eastward view from the summit of Gerizim, Jacob descended with his "two bands"; probably by the same route as that through which his ancestor, from the same region of Mesopotamia, had entered the land. He advanced through the valley, which, leading direct from the northern fords of the Jordan, opens on the wide corn-plain already described, and pitched his tent before the city; and the spot where he had at last found a home after his long wanderings became the first possession of himself and his race in Palestine. "He bought 'the' parcel of 'the' field, where he had spread his tent," "of the children of Hamor, Shochem's father, for an hundred pieces of money."

The wide "field"—"the cultivated field," as it is thus distinctively called—indicates by the mere fact of its selection the transition of the Patriarch from the Bedouin shepherd into the civilised and agricultural settler. In that "field" he remained. With the prudence characteristic of his whole life, he never advanced into the narrow valley between the mountains, where the city of Shochem itself stood; he and his sons still had their cattle in "the field"; it was only the rashness of his children which drew them into the neighbourhood of the city, "to see the daughters of the land," and to avenge the insult to their house.

3. The same causes which had rendered Shechem and its neighbourhood the primeval possession of Israel in Palestine, rendered it naturally the first capital, when his descendants, emerging like him from the Bedouin life of their desert-

wanderings, advanced from the last of their tent-encampments at Shiloh to fix themselves as a powerful nation in the heart of the country. Its central position, and its peculiar fertility, made it the natural seat of settled habitation in the north, even to a greater degree than the Vale of Mamre and Eshcol ensured, as we have seen, the same early privilege for Hebron in the south. "Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by 'the spring'; whose branches run over the wall." This is the great benediction of the possession of Jacob's favourite son. "So exceeding verdant and fruitful" (to use the words of Maundrell, in whom the sight of this valley awakened a connection of thought unusual for himself and his age), "that it may well be looked upon as a standing token of the tender affection of that good Patriarch to the best of sons." But besides these natural advantages, the place was also consecrated by its ancient sanctuary. It was not merely the corn-fields and the valleys, nor even the sacred terebinths, nor yet the burial-place of the embalmed remains of Joseph, that gave its main interest to Shechem in the eyes of a true Israelite. High above the fertile vale rose the long rocky ridge of Mount Gerizim, facing the equally long and rocky range of Ebal. From the highest, that is, the eastern summit of that ridge, not equal in actual elevation to Jerusalem, but much more considerable than the Mount of Olives, above the level from which it rises, a wide view embraces the Mediterranean Sea on the west, the snowy heights of Hermon on the north, and on the east the wall of the trans-Jordanic mountains, broken by the deep cleft of the Jabbok. The mountain that commands this view, which is to Ephraim what that from Gibeon or Olivet is to Judæa, was from very early times a sacred place. It is difficult to disentangle the more ancient traditions from those which have been accumulated round it by the Samaritans of a later age; but it is in the highest degree probable that here, and not at Jerusalem, was the point to which the oldest recollections of Palestine pointed as the scene of Abraham's encounter with Melchizedek, and the sacrifice of Isaac; that the smooth sheet of rock on the top of the mountain, with the cave beside it, was from the most ancient times a seat of primitive worship, and is the most authentic remnant of such worship now existing in Palestine. It is possible that something similar once existed, or may even still exist on the twin height of Ebal. At any rate, these two mountains, with the green valley between them, are described as sacred places, hovering before the minds of the Israelites, even before their entrance into Palestine, and as being at once

occupied by them with this view, as soon as they entered. "When the Lord thy God hath brought thee in unto the land whither thou goest to possess it, . . . thou shalt put the blessing upon Mount Gerizim, and the curse upon Mount Ebal. Are they not on the other side Jordan, . . . in the land of the Canaanites, which dwell in the 'desert' over against Gilgal, 'near' the 'terebinths' of Moreh?" And accordingly, the curses and blessings are said to have been delivered on this spot in the very first days of the entrance, as though they had found their way at once from the Valley of the Jordan to this their sacred mountain, "The border of his sanctuary; the mountain which his right hand had purchased."

With these combined forces of natural advantage and religious association, it is not surprising that during the whole of the early period of the settlement in Canaan, Shechem maintained its hold on the people. It was the seat of the chief national assemblies. Within its ancient precincts, even after the erection of Jerusalem into the capital, the custom was still preserved of inaugurating a new reign. "And Rehoboam went to Shechem: for all Israel were come to Shechem to make him king."

4. One episode in the history of Shechem which took place during this period is recorded in such detail, and is so illustrative of all the points we have noticed, that it must be briefly mentioned—the narrative of Abimelech's conspiracy to make himself king; the formation of the league of cities, under the protection of Baal-Berith, the 'god of the league,' and the insurrection of the original Canaanites of Shechem against the conquerors. One after another these features are introduced; the adjacent forest of Mount Zalmon; the terebinths of Jacob; the "field" before the city; the "shadows of the mountain-tops." Most striking, too, is the appropriateness of the parable of Jotham—the first of the Biblical parables; deriving, like its more famous successors, additional force from the scene of its delivery. He addressed the Shechemites, we are told, as he stood "in the top of Mount Gerizim." This can hardly mean the summit, which is too far removed from the town, both in distance and in height, to allow of such a juxtaposition. But a lofty rock protrudes from the north-eastern flank of Gerizim, immediately overhanging what must have been the site of the ancient city. From thence Jotham might easily make himself heard, and readily escape down the mountain side. The *dramatis personæ* of his parable were all before him. First, there was the olive, the special tree of Nâblus, clearly marked out as the rightful sovereign; next to this would follow the rarer but

still commanding fig-tree, and the trailing festoons of the vine ; last of all, the briar or bramble, whose worthless branches are still used for the fire-wood of the sacrificial oven, and whose unsightly bareness contrasts on the hillside with the rich verdure of his nobler brethren.

This is the last appearance of the primitive Shechem in the Jewish history. It was razed to the ground by Abimelech, and the place is no more mentioned till its revival in the monarchy.

5. Shechem, during its revival under Jeroboam, as the capital of the northern kingdom, furnishes no occasion of remark ; but its local recollections were gathered up in considerable force when, under the contemptuous name of "Sychar," it became, after the return from the exile, the seat of the mixed settlers commonly called Samaritans. Through all these vicissitudes, Gerizim, the oldest sanctuary in Palestine, retained its sanctity to the end. Probably in no other locality has the same worship been sustained with so little change or interruption for so great a series of years as in this mountain, from the time of Abraham to the present day. In their humble synagogue, at the foot of the mountain, the Samaritans still worship—the oldest and the smallest sect in the world ; distinguished by their noble physiognomy and stately appearance from all other branches of the race of Israel. In their prostrations at the elevation of their revered copy of the Pentateuch, they throw themselves on their faces in the direction, not of Priest or Law, or any object within the building, but obliquely towards the eastern summit of Mount Gerizim. And up the side of the mountain, and on its long ridge, is to be traced the pathway by which they ascend to the sacred spots where they alone, of all the Jewish race, yearly celebrate the Paschal Sacrifice.

6. One more scene remains which supplies to this portion of Palestine associations like those which Olivet and Bethany supply to Judæa, and which sums up in so remarkable a manner all the successive points presented in the history of Shechem, that, often as it has been depicted, it must briefly be told again. At the mouth of the Valley of Shechem, two slight breaks are visible in the midst of the vast plains of corn—one a white Mussulman chapel, the other a few fragments of stone. The first of these covers the alleged tomb of Joseph, buried thus in the "parcel of ground" which his father bequeathed especially to him, his favourite son. The second marks the undisputed site of the well, now neglected and choked up by the ruins which have fallen into it ; but still with every claim to be considered the original

well, sunk deep into the rocky ground by "our father Jacob," who had retained enough of the customs of the earlier families of Abraham and Isaac to mark his first possession by digging a well, "to give drink thereof to himself, his children, and his cattle." This at least was the tradition of the place in the last days of the Jewish people, and its position adds probability to the conclusion; indicating, as has been well observed, that it was there dug by one who could not trust to the fresh springs so near in the adjacent vale, which still belonged to the hostile or strange Canaanites. If this be so, we have here an actually existing monument of the prudential character of the old Patriarch—as though we saw him offering the mess of pottage, or compassing his ends with Laban, or guarding against the sudden attack of Esau; fearful lest, he "being few in number, the inhabitants of the land should gather themselves together against him, and slay him and his house." By a singular fate, this authentic and expressive memorial of the earliest dawn of Jewish history became the memorial no less authentic and expressive of its sacred close. Of all the *special* localities of our Lord's life in Palestine, this is almost the only one absolutely undisputed. By the edge of this well, in the touching language of the ancient hymn, "Quærens me, sedisti lassus." Here, on the great road through which "He must needs go" when "He left Judæa, and departed into Galilee," He halted, as travellers still halt, in the noon or evening of the spring-day by the side of the well, amongst the relics of a former age. Up that passage through the valley, His disciples "went away into the city," which He did not enter. Down the same gorge came the women to draw water, according to the unchanged custom of the East; which still, in the lively concourse of veiled figures round the wayside wells, reproduces the image of Rebekah, and Rachel, and Zipporah. Above them, as they talked, rose "this mountain" of Gerizim, crowned by the Temple, of which the vestiges still remain, where the fathers of the Samaritan sect "said men ought to worship," and to which still, after so many centuries, their descendants turn as to the only sacred spot in the universe: the strongest example of local worship now existing in the world in the very face of the principle there first announced, that the sacredness of local worship was at an end. And round about them, as He and she thus sate or stood by the well, spread far and wide the noble plain of waving corn. It was still winter, or early spring—"four months yet to the harvest"—and the bright golden ears of those fields had not yet "whitened" their unbroken expanse of verdure.

He gazed upon them ; and we almost seem to see how the glorious vision of the distant harvest of the Gentile world, with each successive turn of the conversation, unfolded itself more and more distinctly before Him, as He sate (so we gather from the narrative) absorbed in the opening prospect, silent amidst His silent and astonished disciples.

III. Jerusalem and Shechem are the only ancient cities which have reached the dignity of capitals of Palestine. And as in Judah no rival city ever rose till the time of the Herods, the whole splendour of the southern monarchy was concentrated in Jerusalem, and contributed to that magnificence which has before been described as probably excelling any sight of the kind within the Holy Land. But in the northern kingdom, the sovereigns followed the tendency by which princes of all times have been led to build sumptuous palaces, and select pleasant residences, apart from the great seats of state. This difference between the two kingdoms was doubtless in part occasioned by the stronger hold which the City of David possessed on the minds both of princes and people than could be the case in the less firmly established monarchy of Shechem. But it would also be fostered by the difference between the two regions. Except Hebron there was no spot to which a king of Judah would naturally be attracted, either by the beauty or the fertility of its situation. Solomon's Gardens in the Wâdy Urtâs were, as we have seen, the peculiar resort of the most luxurious of the Jewish kings. The new capital which Herod founded for the Roman province of Judæa, under the name of Cæsarea, was created with an especial view to intercourse with the West, which in early times had no existence. But in the territory of Ephraim, the fertile plains, and to a certain extent wooded hills, which have been often noticed as its characteristic ornaments, at once gave an opening to the formation of parks and pleasure-grounds similar to those which were the "Paradises" of Assyrian and Persian monarchs. One of these was Tirzah, of unknown site, but evidently near Shechem, and of proverbial beauty, selected by the first sovereign, Jeroboam, and then during three short reigns the habitual residence of the royal house. Another was Jezreel, during the reign of Ahab ; of which I shall speak hereafter. But the chief was Samaria. Six miles from Shechem, following the course of the same green and watered valley, the traveller finds himself in a wide basin, encircled with hills, on a lower level than the Valley of Shechem, and almost on the edge of the great maritime plain. In the centre of this basin rises an oblong hill, with steep yet accessible sides, and a long flat top. This

was "the mountain *Shromron*" (corrupted through the Chaldee *Shemrin* into the Greek *Samaria*), which Omri bought of Shemer for the great sum of two talents of silver, "and built on the 'mountain,' and called the name of the city which he built, 'Shromron,' after the name of Shemer, owner of the 'mountain.'" What Omri in all probability built as a mere palatial residence became the capital of the kingdom instead of Shechem. It was as though Versailles had taken the place of Paris, or Windsor of London. But in this case the change was effected by the admirable choice of Omri in selecting a position which, as has been truly observed, combined, in a union not elsewhere found in Palestine, strength, beauty, and fertility. Its fertility and beauty are shared to a great extent with Shechem, in this respect the common characteristics of these later capitals, all probably alike included in the bitter praise of the prophet, "Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim, whose glorious beauty is a fading flower, which are on the head of the fat 'ravines' of them that are overcome with wine." But having these advantages which Shechem had, it had others which Shechem had not. Situated on its steep height, in a plain itself girt in by hills, it was enabled, not less promptly than Jerusalem, to resist the successive assaults made upon it by the Syrian and Assyrian armies. The first were baffled altogether; the second took it only after a three years' siege—that is, three times as long as that which reduced Jerusalem. The local circumstances of the earlier sieges are well brought out by M. Van de Velde. "As the mountains around the hill of Shemer are higher than that hill itself, the enemy must have been able to discover clearly the internal condition of the besieged Samaria. . . . The inhabitants, whether they turned their eyes upwards or downwards to the surrounding hills, or into the valley, must have seen all full of enemies . . . thirty and two kings and horses and chariots. The mountains and the adjacent circle of hills were so densely occupied by the enemy that not a man could pass through to bring provisions to the beleaguered city. The Syrians on the hills must have been able from where they stood plainly to distinguish the famishing inhabitants." On that beautiful eminence, looking far over the plain of Sharon and the Mediterranean Sea to the west, and over its own fertile vale to the east, the kings of Israel reigned in a luxury which, for the very reason of its being like that of more Eastern sovereigns, was sure not to be permanent in a race destined for higher purposes. The vast temple of Baal was there erected, which Jehu destroyed: and, in later times, Herod chose it alone out of the ancient

capitals of the north, to adorn with the name and with the temple of Augustus, from which time it assumed the appellation which with a slight change it has borne ever since, "Sebaste." And now, although its existence has been brought fully to light only within the last few years, it still exhibits some relics of ancient architectural beauty. A long avenue of broken pillars, apparently the main street of Herod's city, here, as at Palmyra and Damascus, adorned by a colonnade on each side, still lines the topmost terrace of the hill. The gothic ruin of the church of St. John the Baptist, parent of the numerous churches which bear his name throughout the West, remains over what Christians and the Mussulman inhabitants still revere as the grave "of the Prophet John, son of Zacharias," round which, in the days of Jerome, the same wild orgies were performed which are now to be seen round "the Holy Sepulchre." The doubtful tradition, which thus links together on the summit of Samaria the names of the Baptist and his murderer, is amongst the very few solemn recollections which attach to this spot. It is possible that the reservoir which still exists in the precincts of that edifice, half church, half mosque, may be the "pool" beside which Naboth and his sons perished (as the murderers of Ishbosheth by the pool of Hebron), and in which the blood-stained chariot of Ahab was washed after the fatal fight of Ramoth-Gilead. But there is no place of equal eminence in Palestine, with so few great recollections. Compared with Shechem or Jerusalem, it is a mere growth of pleasure and convenience; the city of luxurious princes, not of patriarchs and prophets, priests and kings.

IV. As the central hills of Palestine terminate on the east and west in the maritime plain and the Valley of the Jordan, so on the north they descend through long broken passes to the edge of the great plain of Esdraelon. Valleys of considerable depth, though never contracted to defiles, lead down from one to the other. Here and there they open into a wider upland plain. One such is that called the plain of Sanur, out of which rise, like the isolated rocks from the Carse of Stirling, several steep hills, the most commanding summit being crowned by the strong fortress of Sanur. Through these passes, occasionally guarded by strongholds, the lines of communication must have run between the north and the south: in these passes "the horns of Joseph, the ten thousands of Ephraim, and the thousands of Manasseh," were to repulse the invaders from the north. Manasseh, extending along the whole of this long ridge, and then stretching across the Jordan to join the pastoral division of the same tribe, which reached

into the distant hills of Bashan and Gilead, was the frontier and the outpost of Ephraim. Of the eastern portion there will be another occasion to speak. But the chief historical importance of the western portion lies in its occupation of the Passes of Esdraelon. They are very little known; and in speaking of them, almost all travellers are compelled to draw conclusions from the one well-known descent from Sebaste through Sanur to Jenin. But the general nature of the ground cannot be doubted. Whenever the plain of Esdraelon has been occupied by hostile forces, it must have been from the hills of Manasseh that they were overlooked. On this turns the whole history of the great hero of Manasseh, Gideon, who amongst these hills was raised up to descend on the Midianite host. Hence, too, in the strange mixture of truth and fiction contained in the Apocryphal book of Judith, the whole stress of the defence of Palestine against Holofernes is laid on the same tribe; they were "charged to keep the passages of the hill country, for by them there was an entrance into Judæa, and it was easy to stop them that would come up, because the passage was straight for two men at the most." A pass so narrow as is here intimated probably does not exist in this part of Palestine. But the general effect of the description is correct; and although Bethulia, the city besieged by Holofernes, is unknown, perhaps even a mere invention, yet there is one place mentioned as the point on which all the defences turned, and of which the notices agree with those in other parts of the Jewish history, namely Dothain. This appears to have been identified by the modern name of Dotan, a little on the west of what is now the usual descent on the plain from the hills. It is a green knoll, rising out of a flat grass field, interspersed with ancient cisterns. Its first appearance—not, however, without some doubt—is in the story of Joseph. He left "the 'valley' of Hebron"—sought his brothers at Shechem—heard of them from a man in the cultivated "field," so often mentioned—and found them at Dothain, or the 'Two Wells.' Into one of these wells, as it would seem, his brethren cast him, when, coming up from Esdraelon, they saw the Arabian merchants on their way from the mountains beyond the Jordan join the great Egyptian route along the maritime plain. The next appearance is more certain. At Dothain, or (as it is here written, in a contracted form) Dothan, Elisha was living when the Syrian army with its chariots and horses came up, no doubt from Esdraelon, on its way to Samaria.

NOTE.

MOUNT GERIZIM.

Two complete accounts have been given of Mount Gerizim,—one by Dr. Robinson, who saw it in 1838; the other by M. de Saulcy, who saw it in 1851. I have ventured here and there to add a few confirmations or illustrations of my remarks from the mouth of the Samaritan, Jacob es-Shellaby, who acted as our guide in 1851.

The mountain is ascended by two well-worn tracks, one leading from the town of Nâblus at its western extremity, the other from the valley on its northern side, near one of the two spots pointed out as Joseph's tomb. It is on the eastern extremity of the ridge that the "holy places" of the Samaritans are collected. First, there occurs the small hole in the rocky ground where the lamb is roasted on the evening of the Passover; next, the large stone structure, supposed by M. de Saulcy to be the remains of the Samaritan temple, and by Dr. Robinson to be the ruins of the fortress of Justinian; but in either case occupying the site of the ancient temple. In one of the towers of this edifice, on the north-east angle, is the tomb of a Mussulman saint, Sheykh Ghranem. Under the southern wall of this castle or temple, is a line of rocky slabs, called the "ten stones," in commemoration of the ten (or twelve) stones brought by Joshua, or of the ten tribes of the northern kingdom. They have every appearance of a large rocky platform: the twelve (for there are twelve distinctly marked) divided each from each by natural fissures. It was also pointed out to him as the "burning-place" of the victims (Har-rakah). Beyond this platform, and still further to the east, is a smooth surface of rock, sloping down to a hole on its south side. The rock, according to the present story, is the holy place; the scene of Abraham's sacrifice; the Bethel of Jacob; the spot where the Ark rested; the hole in the Holy of Holies. But it can hardly be doubted that it is the original sanctuary, and that the hole is an aperture for the sewerage of the blood of victims; and it thus furnishes an illustration of the threshing-floor of Araunah, on which the altar of David and Solomon was built, with the cavity underneath for the reception of the blood and garbage.

I have stated that there is every probability that Gerizim, and not Jerusalem, is the scene of two of the most remarkable events in the history of Abraham.

1. The meeting with Melchizedek (Gen. xiv. 17, 18) is expressly stated in the fragment of Theodotus preserved by

Eusebius, to have occurred in "Ar-Gerizim," the "Mountain of the Most High." It is clear that this, as in the analogous case of Ar-Mageddon, is simply the Greek version of "the mountain of Gerizim," the uniform mode of designating that eminence. So I observed that Jacob es-Shellaby always called it "Ar-Gerizim" in Arabic. That it should have been thus early set apart as the "mountain of the *Most High*," is natural, from the commanding appearance which it presents, especially as seen from the plain of Philistia and Sharon, up which, in all probability, the old Gerizites, from whom it derives its name, must have swept from the Desert. And its elevation above the neighbouring hills is so great as naturally to deserve the supremacy which Josephus gives it, of "the highest of all the mountains of Samaria."

This traditional selection of Gerizim as the scene of the meeting with Melchizedek is further confirmed by all the circumstances of the narrative. Abraham was returning from his victory over the eastern kings at Dan, at the head of the Valley of Jordan, when he was welcomed by the king of Sodom "at the valley of Shaveh, which is the king's 'valley,' " or, as the Septuagint renders it, "of the kings," probably in allusion to this very meeting. This valley is mentioned once again expressly as "the king's valley," where Absalom had erected his tomb. It was conjectured in later times that this valley was the ravine of the Kedron on the east of Jerusalem; and the conjecture has been perpetuated by the name of Absalom's tomb attached to the most conspicuous of the monuments in that ravine. But the context in both places leads to the conclusion that the place was somewhere near the Valley of the Jordan, probably on its eastern side, where the death of Absalom occurred, and where it would therefore be mentioned as a singular coincidence that he had erected his monument near the scene of his end. The only other occasion on which the word "Shaveh" is used (meaning, apparently, a dale, or level space), occurs in these same parts, in the northern extremity of Moab, "Shaveh-Kiriathaim." In such a level space in one of the valleys, Abraham would naturally be met by the grateful king of Sodom. And at this same spot would also appear the king of the neighbouring town of Salem, of which the name possibly occurs again in the same vicinity in the history of Jacob; then again, after a long interval, in Judith iv. 4; then in the history of John the Baptist, and still lingers in a village seen from the summit of Gerizim in the valley which leads out of the plain of Shechem towards the Jordan. He was also priest of the Most High God—that is the very name, as we have seen, under which God was

worshipped on the summit of Gerizim—and to him, as the royal guardian and minister of the most ancient and conspicuous sanctuary of Palestine, Abraham paid the tenth of the recently acquired spoil.

2. What is affirmed by the Gentile tradition with regard to the connection of Gerizim with Melchizedek is affirmed by the Samaritan tradition with regard to its connection with the sacrifice of Isaac. "Beyond all doubt" (this is the form in which the story is told amongst the Samaritans themselves) "Isaac was offered on Ar-Gerizim. Abraham said, 'Let us go up and sacrifice on the mountain.' He took out a rope to fasten his son; but Isaac said 'No: I will lie still.' Thrice the knife refused to cut. Then God from heaven called to Gabriel, 'Go down and save Isaac, or I will destroy thee from among the Angels.' From the seventh heaven Gabriel called and pointed to the ram. The place of the ram's capture is still shown near the Holy Place." The Jewish tradition, as represented by Josephus, transfers the scene to the hill on which the temple was afterwards erected at Jerusalem, and this belief has been perpetuated in Christian times as attached to a spot in the garden of the Abyssinian Convent, not indeed on Mount Moriah, but immediately to the east of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, with the intention of connecting the sacrifice of Isaac with the Crucifixion. An ancient thorn-tree, covered with the rags of pilgrims, is still shown as the thicket in which the ram was caught. But the Samaritan tradition is here again confirmed by the circumstances of the story. Abraham was "in the land of the Philistines." From the south of the plain he would advance, till on the morning of "the third day," in the plain of Sharon, the massive height of Gerizim is visible "afar off," and from thence half a day would bring him to its summit. Exactly such a view is to be had in that plain; and on the other hand, no such view or impression can fairly be said to exist on the road from the south to Jerusalem, even if what is at most a journey of two days could be extended to three. The towers of Jerusalem are indeed seen from the ridge of Mar Elias, at the distance of three miles; but there is no elevation, nothing corresponding to the "place afar off" to which Abraham "*lifted up* his eyes." And the special locality which Jewish tradition has assigned for the place, and whose name is the chief guarantee for the tradition—Mount Moriah, the Hill of the Temple—is not visible till the traveller is close upon it, at the southern edge of the valley of Hinnom, from whence he looks down upon it, as on a lower eminence. And when from the circumstances we pass to the name, the argument based upon it in

favour of Jerusalem is at least equally balanced by the argument which it yields in favour of Gerizim. The name of Moriah, as applied to the Temple hill, refers to the vision of David after the plague. "Solomon began to build the house in the Mount of 'the appearance' (*moriah*) [of the Lord], where He *appeared* (*nireah*) unto David his father." Some such play on the word is apparent also in Gen. xxii. 8, 14, "God *will see*"—"in the mountain the Lord *shall see*," where the Hebrew word employed (Jehovah *jireh*) is from the same root. But in the case of the mountain of Abraham's sacrifice, it was probably in the first instance derived from its conspicuous position as "*seen from afar off*"; and the name was thus applied not merely to "one of the mountains," but to the whole "land"—an expression entirely inapplicable to the contracted eminence of the Temple. The LXX, moreover, evidently unconscious of its identification with the Mount of Jerusalem, translates it, τὴν γὰρ τὴν ὑψηλὴν, "the high land,"—a term exactly agreeing with the appearance which the hills of Ephraim, and especially Gerizim, present to a traveller advancing up the maritime plain, and also with the before-mentioned expression of Theodotus—"the mountain of the Most High." It is impossible here not to ask whether a trace of the name of Moriah, as applied to Gerizim, and its neighbourhood, may not be found in the term "*Moreh*," applied in Gen. xii. 6 to the grove of terebinths in the same vicinity, of which the same translation is given by the LXX, as of Moriah—τὴν δρυὶν τὴν ὑψηλὴν, "the *high* oak." Hebrew scholars must determine how far the difference of the radical letters of מריה and מורה is an insuperable objection to its identification. In Gen. xxii. the Samaritans actually read Moreh for Moriah; and the LXX, Aquila, Symmachus, and Jerome, all translate the word by "lofty" or "conspicuous," which would be a just translation of "*Moreh*," not of "*Moriah*." See Bleek, in Theologische Studien und Kritiken, 1831, p. 520.

Mr. Grove has pointed out to me a probable confirmation of this view in Amos vii. 9, 16, where "the high places of *Isaac*" and "the house of *Isaac*" are mentioned as amongst the sanctuaries of the *northern* kingdom.

CHAPTER VI

THE MARITIME PLAIN

WE have now reached what was in fact the northern frontier of the chief home of the chosen people. All the main historical events of their domestic history passed in the mountains of Ephraim and of Judah. This clump of hills was the focus of the national life. All the parts of Palestine that lay round it to the west, to the north, and to the east were comparatively foreign ; the south, as we have seen, ended in the Desert.

The point to which we have thus attained, overlooking from the outposts of Manasseh the great battle-field of Esdraelon, compels us to make a retrograde movement and consider the Maritime Plain extending along the western coast, with which the plain of Esdraelon stands in close connection.

I. Beginning from the southern Desert, the first division of this plain, which comprised the territory of the ancient Philistines, is uniformly termed in the Old Testament, *The Low Country* ("Shephelah"). The boundaries of their territory, though indefinite, may be measured by their five great cities ; of which Ekron is the furthest north, and Gaza the furthest south. Two parallel tracts divide the flat plain : the sandy tract (Ramleh), on which stand the maritime cities ; and the cultivated tract, which presents for the most part an unbroken mass of corn, out of which rise here and there slight eminences in the midst of gardens and orchards, the seats of the more inland cities. Gath has entirely disappeared, but Ekron, Ashdod, Gaza, and Ascalon retain their names ; and the three last have sites sufficiently commanding to justify their ancient fame. The four points thus indicated in the Philistine territory—its seaboard, its strongholds, its fertility, its level plain—explain much of the Philistine history.

1. Without losing ourselves in doubtful discussions as to their origin, it is obvious that the Philistines were emphatically "strangers." They were "strangers" from beyond the

western sea, whether from Asia Minor, as seems to be implied in the name of Caphtor (according to the LXX, Cappadocia), or from the nearer island of Crete, as seems to be implied in their appellation of Cherethites. To such colonists the southern shores of Palestine offered a home. On those shores they long retained their ancient seafaring worship. Dagon, the "Fish-god," was honoured with stately temples even in the inland cities of Gaza and Ashdod; Derceto, the Fish-goddess, was worshipped at Ascalon; and near Jaffa, the modern village of Beit-Dejan preserves the name of another "House of Dagon," of which the ancient records make no mention. It is remarkable that of their own seafaring habits there is no authentic trace. Jaffa or Joppa was the only port on their coast, and that apparently was always in the hands of the Israelites. Within its narrow limits the neighbouring tribe of Dan "remained in ships," during the conflict of the central and northern tribes with Sisera. To the port of Jaffa came the rafts for Solomon's Temple, and from that port Jonah embarked on his distant voyage. But though the Philistines themselves made no apparent use of the sea, their maritime situation must account for the curious fact, that from this foreign and hostile race the Holy Land acquired the name by which it is most commonly known in the Western world. PALESTINE, or "the land of the Philistines," was the part of Judæa with which the Greeks were first and chiefly acquainted, as they followed in the track of the Egyptian Pharaohs and Ptolemies along this narrow strip of Syria, or as their vessels may occasionally have touched at Jaffa. And thus by a process similar, though converse to that by which the Romans gave the name of Asia and Africa to the two small provinces which they first possessed on those two continents, or the English applied the name of the whole Teutonic race (Dutch) to that people of Germany which lay immediately opposite their own shores, the title of "Philistia," or "Palestine," was transferred from the well-known frontier to the unknown interior of the whole country.

2. The cities have been already enumerated. There is nothing specially to distinguish them each from each. They rise above the plain on their respective hills; Gaza, Ashdod, and Ekron withdrawn from the coast, Ascalon and Jaffa situated upon it. They are all remarkable for the extreme beauty and profusion of the gardens which surround them—the scarlet blossoms of the pomegranates, the enormous oranges which gild the green foliage of their famous groves. Well might Jaffa, "the beautiful," be so called; well might

Ascalon be deemed the haunt of the Syrian Venus. Her temple is destroyed, but the Sacred Doves—sacred by immemorial legends on the spot, and celebrated there even as late as Eusebius—still fill with their cooings the luxuriant gardens which grow in the sandy hollow within the ruined walls. These cities, thus situated on the grand route of the invaders of Palestine from north or south, have always played a part in resisting the attacks of besieging armies. The longest siege recorded in history was that conducted for twenty-seven years by Psammetichus against Ashdod. Gaza, protected both by its eminence and by the sandy tract reaching up to the base of the hill on which it stands, provoked the siege which has left so deep a stain on the character of Alexander. In Ascalon was entrenched the hero of the last gleam of history which has thrown its light over the plains of Philistia. Within the walls and towers still standing, Richard held his court; and the white-faced hill which, seen from their heights, forms so conspicuous an object in the eastern part of the plain is the “Blanche-Garde” of the Crusading chroniclers, which witnessed his chief adventures.

3. But the most striking and characteristic feature of Philistia is its immense plain of cornfields, stretching from the edge of the sandy tract right up to the very wall of the hills of Judah, which look down its whole length from north to south. These rich fields must have been the great source at once of the power and the value of Philistia; the cause of its frequent aggressions on Israel, and of the unceasing efforts of Israel to master the territory. It was, in fact, a “little Egypt.” As in earlier ages the tribes of Palestine, when pressed by famine, went down to the Valley of the Nile, so in later ages, when there was a famine in the hills of Samaria and the plain of Esdraelon, the Shunammite went with her household “and sojourned in the land of the Philistines seven years.” In that plain of corn, and those walls of rock, lies the junction of Philistine and Israelite history, which is the peculiarity of the tribe of Dan. This region is what the kings of Sidon regarded as “the root of Dan.” These are the fields of “standing corn,” “with “vineyards and olives” amongst them, into which the Danite hero sent down the “three hundred ‘jackals’” from the neighbouring hills. In the dark openings here and there seen from far in the face of those blue hills, were the fortresses of Dan, whence Samson “went down” into the plain. Through these same openings, after the fall of Goliath, the Philistines poured back and fled to the gates of Ekron, and through these the milch-kine, lowing as they went, carried back the Ark to

the hills of Judah. In the caves which pierce the sides of the limestone cliffs of Lekieh and Deir-Dubbân on the edge of the plain, may probably be found the refuge of Samson in the "cliff" Etam, before his victory with the jawbone; as perhaps afterwards of David in the cave of Adullam. It is not often that on the same scene events so romantic have been enacted at such an interval of time, as the deeds of strength which were wrought in this plain by him, "before whose lion ramp the bold Askalonite fell," and those of our own Cœur de Lion.

4. As these plains form the point of junction and contrast with the hills of Judah on the west, so they form a point of junction and similarity with the wide pastures of the Desert on the south. This free access from the wilderness to the unprotected frontier of Philistia is what in more recent times has always attached its fortunes more or less to those southern regions. Gaza was and is the frontier city of Syria and the Desert, on the south-west, as Damascus on the north-east; and standing as it does on its solitary eminence with no protection but its surrounding sand and mud, it was unable to restrain the advance of any enemy from that quarter. Hence the frequent march of the Egyptian kings through 'the low country.' Hence the possession of this plain by the Edomite Arabs, who, taking Eleutheropolis for their capital, occupied it under the name of Idumæa, during the period of the Herods. Hence the insecurity of these parts at the present day from the unchecked incursions of the Bedouin tribes; reproducing a likeness of the desolations which, probably from the same cause, befell this same region at the close of the Jewish monarchy. "O Canaan, the land of the Philistines, I will even destroy thee that there shall be no inhabitant, and the sea coast shall be dwellings and 'cisterns' for shepherds, and folds for flocks."

II. The corn-fields of Philistia, as we advance further north, melt into a plain, less level and less fertile, though still strongly marked off from the mountain-wall of Ephraim, as that of Philistia was from the hills of Judah and Dan. This is "Sharon," a name of the same root as that used to designate the tablelands beyond the Jordan ("Mishor"), and derived from its smoothness—that is, apparently, its freedom from rock and stone. Like the Philistine plain it is divided into the "Ramleh," or sandy tract along the sea-shore, and the cultivated tract further inland, here called "Khassab," the "reedy"; apparently from the high reeds which grow along the banks of some of the streams which here fall into the Mediterranean; one of them always having

borne that name—"Kahah" or the "reedy." It is interspersed with cornfields and thinly studded with trees, the remnants, apparently, of a great forest which existed here down to the second century. Eastward the hills of Ephraim look down upon it—the huge rounded ranges of Ebal and Gerizim towering above the rest; and at their feet the wooded cone, on the summit of which stood Samaria. But its chief fame then, as now, was for its excellence as a pasture-land. Its wide undulations are sprinkled with Bedouin tents and vast flocks of sheep; the true successors of "the herds which were fed in Sharon," in David's reign, under "Shitrai the Sharonite," and of "the folds of flocks," which Isaiah foretold in "Sharon," as the mark of the restored Israel. Probably this very fact, then as now, rendered it insecure, and therefore unfrequented by the Israelites of the mountain country above; at any rate during the whole period of the Old Dispensation no one historical name or event is attached to this district. The only town that marked the region in early times is Dor, with its surrounding district of "Naphath-Dor." It was the northernmost limit of the tribe of Dan; but it was better known as the furthest southern settlement of the Canaanites joining on to that line of seaport towns which extends henceforth in regular succession along the coast as far as Aradus, or Arvad. Its situation, with its little harbour enclosed within the wild rocks rising over the shell-strewn beach, and covered by the fragments of the later city of Tantûra, is still a striking feature on the lonely shore.

But it was the fate of Sharon, as of some other parts of Palestine, after centuries of obscurity to receive a new life under the Roman Empire. From being the least distinguished tract it rose in the reign of Herod almost to the first importance. On a rocky ledge, somewhat resembling that of Ascalon on the south, and Dor on the north, rise the ruins of Cæsarea, now the most desolate site in Palestine. Like the vast fragments of St. Andrews in Scotland, they run out into the waves of the Mediterranean Sea which dashes over the prostrate columns and huge masses of masonry; but, unlike St. Andrews—unlike in this respect to most Eastern ruins—no sign of human habitation is to be found within the circuit of its deserted walls, no village or even hovel remains on the site of what was once the capital of Palestine. With his usual magnificence of conception, Herod the Great determined to relieve the inhospitable barrier which the coast of his country opposed to the Western world, by making an artificial port and attaching to it the chief city of his kingdom. The divergence of Eastern and Western ideas is well illustrated

by the contrast between this Roman metropolis and those native capitals of Hebron, Jerusalem, Shechem, and Samaria, which we have already examined. Whatever differences distinguished those older cities from each other, they had this in common, that they were all completely inland. To have planted the centres of national and religious life on the sea-shore was a thought which never seems to have entered even into the imperial mind of Solomon. Far away at Ezion-Geber on the Gulf of Akaba, was the chief emporium of his trade. Even Jaffa only received the rafts which floated down the coast from Tyre. To describe the capital as a place "where shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass by," is not, as according to Western notions it would be, an expression of weakness and danger, but of prosperity and security. But in Herod this ancient Oriental dread of the sea had no existence. He had himself been across the Mediterranean to Rome, and on his alliance with Rome his own power depended; and when, after his death, his kingdom became a Roman province, the city which he had called by the name of his Imperial patron was still continued as the seat of the Roman governor, for the same reason as that which induced him to select the site—its maritime situation. From that sea-girt city, Pontius Pilate came yearly across the plain of Sharon, and up the hills, to keep guard on the Festivals at Jerusalem. In the theatre, built by his father—looking out, doubtless, after the manner of all Greek theatres, over the wide expanse of sea—Herod Agrippa was struck with his mortal disease.

The chief, indeed the only important link which Cæsarea possesses with Sacred History is that which is at once explained by the fact of its being the seat of government. Of all the regions of Palestine there is none which is so closely connected with the Apostolic history as this tract of coast between Gaza and Acre, and especially the neighbourhood of Cæsarea. After the first few years or months of the Church of the Apostles, the scene of their labours was removed from the ancient sanctuaries of their race "in Judæa and Samaria" to "the uttermost parts of the land." Partly, no doubt, the half-Gentile cities of the coast were more secure than the centres of national fanaticism in the interior; partly in the growing consciousness of the greatness of their mission, these vast Gentile populations had for them an increasing attraction, powerful enough to break through the old associations which had at first bound them to the scenes of their country's past history and of their Lord's ministrations.

Philip, after his interview with the Ethiopian pilgrim on

the road to Gaza, "was found at Ashdod, and passing through preached in all the cities till he came to Cæsarea," and there with his four daughters he made his home. Peter "came down" from the mountains of Samaria "to the saints which dwelt at Lydda; and all they that dwelt at Lydda and Saron saw him and turned to the Lord": and "forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa," he "arose and went" thither to comfort the disciples mourning for the loss of Dorcas; and there "he tarried many days" with the tanner, Simon, whose "house was by the sea-side." On the flat roof of that house—overlooking the waves of the western sea, as they dash against the emerging rocks of the shallow and narrow harbour—the vision appeared which opened to the nations far beyond the horizon of that sea "the gates of the kingdom of Heaven," and which called the Apostle to make the memorable journey along the sandy ridge of the coast, to find on the morrow the first Gentile convert in the Roman garrison at Cæsarea. And lastly, it was in the castle of Cæsarea that Paul spent his two last years in the Holy Land, before he finally left the East for Rome and Spain. He was brought thither from Jerusalem, down the pass, already described, of Beth-horon, under cover of the night, with the double escort of spearmen and of horsemen. They reached Antipatris at dawn—on the edge of the plain; and then the spearmen, needed for defence in the pass, and useless in the passage through the plain, returned to Jerusalem, leaving the mounted guard to gallop with their prisoner across the level ground to Cæsarea.

These movements of the Apostles, no doubt, are connected only by the slightest thread with the ground over which they pass. The sight of the places throws but a very faint light on the history of the primitive advance of Christianity. Yet it is not without importance to see the reason why they so turned around this hitherto unknown spot, and thus to trace back to its origin the first contact of the religion of the East with the power of the West. It is as if Christianity already felt its European destiny strong within it, and, by a sort of prophetic anticipation, gathered its early energies round those regions of the Holy Land which were most European and least Asiatic.

III. The plain of Sharon contracts beyond Dor, and there now appears rising at its extremity the long ridge of Carmel closing up its northern horizon. Round the promontory of Carmel runs a broad beach, which, uninterrupted by the advance of tides, must always have afforded an easy outlet for the Philistine armies, for the kings of Egypt, for the

forces of the Crusaders, to the bay of Accho or Acre. This bay with its adjacent plain, opening between Carmel and the hills of Galilee, and forming the embouchure, so to speak, of the great plain of Esdraelon, may be regarded in some respects as a continuation of the maritime tract which we have been hitherto following. There is still the same tract of white sand-hills, through which the two short streams of the Kishon and the Belus fall into the sea; and, beyond, a rich soil, perhaps the best cultivated and producing the most luxuriant crops, both of corn and weeds, of any in Palestine. On the south of the plain rises the long ridge of Carmel, its western end crowned by the French convent; on the north the bluff promontory of the Ladder of the Tyrians, the modern Râs-en-Nâkûra, differs from Carmel in that it leaves no beach between itself and the sea, and thus, by cutting off all communication round its base, acts as the natural barrier between the bay of Acre and the maritime plain to the north—in other words, between Palestine and Phœnicia. Acre, therefore, is the northernmost city of the Holy Land, on the western coast, and gathers round it whatever interest attaches to this corner of the country. As in the case of Cæsarea, and for a similar reason, that interest is of a recent date, and thus, reversing the fate of all the other cities of Palestine, has grown and not decayed with the lapse of years. It is indeed of far older origin than Cæsarea, being one of the Canaanitish settlements, from which the Israelites had been unable to expel the old inhabitants; and it is a remarkable instance of the tenacity with which a Semitic name has outlived the foreign appellation impressed upon it. Ptolemais—the title which it bore for the many centuries of Greek and Roman sway—dropped off the moment that sway was broken, and in the modern name of Acre, the ancient Accho, derived from the “heated sandy” tract on which the town was built, reasserted its rights. But with the single exception of St. Paul’s landing there when he commenced his last land journey to Jerusalem, it has no connection with the course of the Sacred History. Asher was the tribe to whose lot the rich plain of Acre fell—he “dipped his foot in oil”; his “bread was fat, and he yielded royal dainties.” But he dwelt among the Canaanites; he could not drive out the inhabitants of Accho, or of Achzib; he gave no judge or warrior to Israel. One name only of the tribe of Asher shines out of the general obscurity—the aged widow, who in the very close of the Jewish history “departed not from the Temple at Jerusalem, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.” With this one exception,

the contemptuous allusion in the Song of Deborah sums up the whole history of Asher when, in the great gathering of the tribes against Sisera, "Asher continued on the sea-shore and abode in his 'creeks.'" So insignificant was the tribe to which was assigned the fortress which Napoleon called the key of Palestine; so slight is the only allusion, the only word that the Old Testament contains for that deep indentation of the coast, which to our eyes forms so remarkable a feature in the map of Palestine, a feature in the nomenclature of which the languages of the West are so prolific. Thither however, as to a natural and familiar haven, the European navigators of a later time eagerly came. Bad as the harbour was, yet the mere fact of a recess in that long coast invited them; and Caïpha, at the opposite corner of the bay under the shelter of Mount Carmel, served as a roadstead. And when, as in later times, foreign rice became the staple food of the country, the importance of Acre, the only avenue by which it could regularly enter, was carried to the highest pitch. "The lord of Acre may, if it so please him, cause a famine to be felt even over all Syria. The possession of Acre extended the influence of the famous Djezzar Pacha even to Jerusalem." The peculiarity therefore of the story of Acre lies in its many sieges—by Baldwin, by Saladin, by Richard, by Khalil, in the middle ages; by Napoleon, by Ibrahim Pacha, and by Sir Robert Stopford, in later times. It is thus the one city of Palestine which has acquired distinct relations with the Western world of modern history, analogous to those of Cæsarea with the Western world of ancient history. But the singular fate which it enjoyed at the close of the Crusades gives it a special interest never to be forgotten by those who in the short space of an hour's walk can pass round its broken walls. Within that narrow circuit—between the Saracen armies on one side, and the roar of the Mediterranean Sea on the other—were cooped up the remnant of the Crusading armies, after they had been driven from every other part of Palestine. Within that circuit "the kings of Jerusalem and Cyprus, of the house of Lusignan; the princes of Antioch; the counts of Tripoli and Sidon; the great masters of the Hospital, the Temple, and the Teutonic Orders; the Republics of Venice, Genoa, and Pisa; the Pope's legate; the kings of France and England, assumed an independent command. Seventeen tribunals exercised the power of life and death." All the eyes of Europe were then fixed on that spot. Acre contained in itself a complete miniature of feudal Europe and Latin Christendom.

IV. With the northern extremity of the plain of Acre the

coast of the Holy Land is naturally terminated by the promontories of the Tyrian Ladder (Râs en-Nâkûra) and the White Cape (Râs el-Abyad); the first deriving its name from the fact that it was the entrance into the Phœnician territory, the latter from its white rocks.

But though thus separated both historically and geographically from Palestine, the plain of Phœnicia in all essential features furnishes so natural a continuation of the maritime plain of Judæa and Samaria, that it will be best considered here. The double tract—of sand along the shore, of cultivated land under the hills—still continues. The towns, too, resemble in their situation all those which we have hitherto noticed along the coast: standing out on rocky promontories, with very small harbours, natural or artificial. If there were any difference to be observed which might in any degree account for the far greater celebrity obtained by these cities in commerce and navigation, it would be that the promontories of Tyre, Sidon, and Beirût project further, and thus form something more of a protection, or of a sea-girt situation, than those of Ascalon, Jaffa, Dor, or Acre. Perhaps, also, the groves and gardens which surround the ports from which these promontories start are, especially at Beirût and Sidon, more extensive and luxuriant even than those at Jaffa. This long line of coast, then, from the White Cape far up to Arvad—a length equal to that of the whole of Palestine from Dan to Beersheba—is the famous country, second only to Palestine itself in its effect on the ancient world, called by the Hebrews, partly perhaps in allusion to its level plain, "*Canaan*," or "the Lowland," the more remarkable for its situation under the highlands of Lebanon; called by the Greeks PHŒNICIA, or the "Land of Palms," from the palm-groves which appear indeed at intervals all along the western coast, but here more than elsewhere.

So completely was the line of demarcation observed, which the Tyrian promontories interposed between Phœnicia and Palestine, that their histories hardly touch. Their relations were always peaceful: Solomon traded with Hiram; Ahab married the daughter of Ethbaal; but the incessant wars, which brought the Assyrians from the north, and the Philistines from the south, into the heart of Judæa, never produced any contact with the great commercial states of this secluded tract. Not till the very last days of the Jewish monarchy do we find any invasion of Jewish territory by the Phœnician kings. Jaffa and Dor, with their rich tract of adjacent cornland, were then wrenched from the tribe of Dan and added to the Sidonian territory, and from that time the southern

boundary of Phœnicia was extended indefinitely along the coast to one or both of those two cities.

Two exceptions, proving the rule, introduce higher visions into this primeval region of commerce and of letters. Overlooking the shore, whence Grecian fable imagined that Europa had taken flight; seated aloft on the top and side of one of the hills, the long line of which skirts the plain of Phœnicia; conspicuous from far by the white domes of its many tombs of Mussulman saints, is the modern village of Sûrafend, the ancient Zarephath. Over those hills, in the great famine which fell alike on both Palestine and Phœnicia, came the great Israelite Prophet into the territory of the heathen Tyrians, and partook of the hospitality of the widowed mother. A curious distortion of the story still lingers in the Mussulman traditions of the neighbourhood. Close on the sea-shore stands one of these sepulchral chapels dedicated to "El-Khudr," the Mohamedan representative of Elijah. There is no tomb inside, only hangings before a recess. This variation from the usual type of Mussulman sepulchres is "because El-Khudr is not yet dead; he flies round and round the world, and those chapels are built wherever he has appeared. Every Thursday night and Friday morning there is a light so strong within the chapel that none can enter."

Long afterwards, another Syro-Phœnician woman welcomed the approach of a greater Prophet in the same neighbourhood. We know not the spot. Mediæval tradition points to the ancient reservoir south of Tyre, called "the head of the spring"—"Râs el-Ain." He rested, it was said, on a large rock, and sent Peter and John to bring him some water thence, which he drank, and blessed the beautiful spot whence it came. At any rate somewhere within the Tyrian border the Lord's feet trod on Gentile ground, so far as we know, for the first and only time since Joseph "took the young child" back from Egypt. And onwards He went "through Sidon," and crossed the high Lebanon range on His return to his usual haunts.

But the very rarity of this intercourse with Palestine may justify a few words on the connection which bound so closely together the plain of Phœnicia and the fortunes of its own inhabitants. First, its sea-board, with such little harbours as its headlands furnish, naturally made it the earliest outlet of Asiatic enterprise. From this coast the inhabitants of that old continent must have made their discoveries; and for the first beginnings of such voyages, as in the analogous case of Greece, the smallness of the ports was not a sufficient objection. No one who has seen Munychia and Phalerum

need be surprised at the narrow space of the havens of Tyre and Sidon. Secondly, there was the protection of the vast range of Lebanon. This at once gave to the northern coast of Phœnicia a security which the southern coast of Philistia has never enjoyed. The Bedouin tribes, no doubt, occasionally cross the Tyrian Ladder or the Galilean hills into Phœnicia, but their incursions must be very rare compared with those to which Philistia has been subject, in early times from the mountaineers of Judæa, in later times from the Arabs of the Sinaitic Desert. Thirdly, the ranges of Lebanon send across the narrow strip of Phœnicia streams of a size and depth wholly unknown to Palestine. The Leontes, as we have seen, one of the four rivers of the Lebanon, though not equal in its effect on the country which it waters to the other three, is yet the largest river in Syria, the largest river which the traveller from Egypt will have seen since he left the Nile. And the more northern rivers, the "pleasant Bostrenus"—the modern Auwaly, hard by Sidon: the clear Lycus—River of the Wolf or Dog; the romantic rivers of the Adonis and Kadisha—are amongst "the streams from Lebanon" which must always have kept Phœnicia fresh and fertile.

If from the country generally we turn to its more celebrated cities, there are several marked characteristics which belong to all of them, and which distinguish them from the cities of the southern plain. First, though none of them possess harbours in the modern sense of the word, they have all certain approximations to it. Tyre and Arvad stood on islands; and Sidon, Berytus (Beirut), and Tripoli (Tarabulus) on promontories, with a chain of islets in front or at their side. These islands served in ancient times, and might to a still greater degree serve in modern times, for a protection from the storms of the Mediterranean. The modern town of Sûr (Tyre) has very much shrunk within its ancient limits. Not only has the town on the mainland disappeared, but a large part of the island—that is, what was the island before Alexander joined it to the shore by the present long sandy isthmus—lies bare and uninhabited; fragments of columns tangled together in the waves; large fragments, too, of masonry of the walls of the old port; huge walls of an ancient castle, and also of the old cathedral. In this last lie, far away from Hohenstauffen or Salzburg, the bones of the great Emperor Frederic Barbarossa, brought thither after the long funeral procession which passed down the coast from Tarsus to Tyre, to lay his remains besides the dust of a yet greater man—Origen. On this rugged rock (*tsur*) the earliest

sanctuary of Tyre, as of her own colony of Gades, was reared ; and from it was derived the name of *Tyre*, or, according to its ancient Hebrew and modern Arabic name, *Tsur*, and *Sûr*—which, in all probability, led the Greeks to transfer the appellation of this, their first acquaintance, to the whole land of SYRIA. It is possible that the junction of the island of Tyre to the mainland, effected by Alexander's mole, suggested to him the formation of the double harbour of Alexandria, by uniting to the mainland the island of Pharos. It is said that the junction of the island of Ruad, or Arvad, to the mainland by like means would render that ancient seaport the most available harbour in Syria.

Secondly, Beirût, Tripoli, and especially Tyre and Sidon, enjoy the advantage of peculiarly fertile tracts immediately adjoining. The gardens of Sidon are conspicuous even from a distance. The plain of Tyre, with the copious springs of Râs el-Ain, has always been famous as one of the richest districts of the Turkish Empire.

Thirdly, there were attached to some of them special natural productions of value. The purple shell-fish, on their rocky promontories—said still to be found at Tantûrah—furnished the Phœnician merchants one of their chief articles of trade. Sidon derives its name from the convenience of its projecting point for the first sea-fishermen to “catch” the “fish” of the Mediterranean, and even the rock of Tyre still answers the same purpose. Amongst all these cities, it is on Tyre that the attention of the Biblical student is chiefly fixed. Its main features can still be distinguished and illustrated by the situation of kindred cities elsewhere. The massive remains of the ancient walls of Arvad, nearly surrounding the island of the modern Ruad, give some notion of the defences of Tyre. The limited size of the island led both in Tyre and Arvad to an arrangement which must have rendered them a striking exception to most Oriental and to most ancient cities. For the sake of economising the narrow space, the houses of both were built up, fearless of earthquakes, to the height of many stories, recalling, says Strabo, the aspect of the gigantic mansions of the Augustan Rome. With this lofty mass of edifices towering on its sea-girt rock, Tyre might well be thought a fit type of the ancient Queen of Commerce ; and the prophet naturally spoke of her as a floating palace ; as a ship moored by the long strand ; “in the midst of the seas,” with her “masts of cedar,” her “sails of fine linen, blue and purple,” her “mariners, rowers, and pilots.”

There is one point of view in which this whole coast is

specially remarkable. "A mournful and solitary silence now prevails along the shore which once resounded with the world's debate." This sentence, with which Gibbon solemnly closes his chapter on the Crusades, well sums up the general impression still left by the six days' ride from Beirût to Ascalon ; and it is no matter of surprise that in this impression travellers have felt a response to the strains in which Isaiah and Ezekiel foretold the desolation of Tyre and Sidon. In one sense, and that the highest, this feeling is just. The Phœnician power which the Prophets denounced has entirely perished ; even whilst "the world's debate" of the middle ages gave a new animation to these shores, the brilliant Tyre of Alexander and Barbarossa had no real connection with the Tyre of Hiram : and perhaps no greater stretch of imagination in ancient history is required than to conceive how the two small towns of Tyre and Sidon, as they now exist, could have been the parent cities of Carthage and Cadiz, the traders with Spain and Britain, the wonders of the East for luxury and magnificence. So total a destruction, for all political purposes, of the two great commercial states of the ancient world has been frequently held up to commercial states in the modern world, as showing the precarious tenure by which purely mercantile greatness is held ; and in this respect the prophecies of the Hebrew seers were a real revelation of the coming fortunes of the world, the more remarkable because experience had not yet justified such a result. But 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. Sidon has probably never ceased to be a populous, and, on the whole, a flourishing town : small, indeed, as compared with its ancient grandeur, but never desolate, or without some portion of its old traffic ; and still encompassed round and round with the lines of its red silk manufacture. Tyre may perhaps have been in a state of ruin shortly after the Chaldean, and subsequently after the Greek conquest of Syria. But it has been always speedily rebuilt ; and the magnificent columns which strew its shores and its streets at the present day attest its splendour during a long portion of its existence—through the period not only of its ancient, but of its mediæval, history. After the termination of the Crusades, it still remained a seat of European factories ; and though confined within a very small part of the ancient city, it is still a thriving and well-inhabited village, with a considerable traffic in millstones, conveyed from Hermon in long caravans, and thence exported to Alexandria. The period during which it sunk to the lowest ebb was from the close of the

seventeenth to the beginning of the present century ; and the comparative desolation which it then exhibited no doubt presented some of the imagery on which so much stress has been laid, in order to convey the impression of its being a desolate rock, only used for the drying of fishermen's nets. But as this was not the case before that period, and is certainly not the case now, it is idle to seek for the fulfilment of the ancient prediction within those limits ; and the ruin of the empire of Tyre, combined with the revival and continuance of the town of Tyre, is thus a striking instance of the moral and poetical, as distinct from the literal and prosaic, accomplishments of the Prophetical scriptures. The same argument applies with greater or less force to the prophecies against Ascalon, Damascus, and Petra, as well as to those of which the fulfilment is supposed to be yet future. If the revival of these cities, after their temporary destruction, shows that we are not to press the letter of prophecy beyond its professed object, so also the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans shows that no expectations of its future prosperity can be founded on prophecies uttered long before that time in reference to its restoration by Ezra. It is possible that, in the changes of the Turkish empire, Palestine may again become a civilised country, under Greek or Latin influences ; that the Jewish race, so wonderfully preserved, may yet have another stage of national existence opened to them ; that they may once more obtain possession of their native land, and invest it with an interest greater than it could have under any other circumstances. But the localities of Syria, no less than common sense and piety, warn us against confounding these speculations with divine revelations, or against staking the truth of Christianity and the authority of the Sacred Records on the chances of local and political revolutions. The curse on Ascalon must have expired before the time when it became the residence of the Herods and the court of the Crusaders. If Petra under the Roman empire rose into a great thoroughfare of Eastern traffic, and is now again, after a long interval of desertion, the yearly resort of European travellers, it is clear that the words " None shall pass through it for ever and ever " cannot be extended beyond the fall of the race of Esau. In like manner the curtain of prophecy falls on the Holy City, when " Jerusalem was trodden down " by the armies of Titus. Its successive revivals under Hadrian, Constantine, Omar, and Godfrey, as well as its present degradation, and its future vicissitudes, are alike beyond the scope of the Sacred Volume.

NOTE A.

HOUSE OF SIMON AT JAFFA.

ONE of the few localities which can claim to represent an historical scene of the New Testament is the site of the house of Simon, the tanner, at Jaffa. The house itself is a comparatively modern building, with no pretensions to interest or antiquity. The outer door is from the street in which stand the Latin and Armenian convents, but no church or convent appears to have been built on the site, and no other place is shown as such. The house is occupied by Mussulmans, and regarded by them as sacred; a small mosque or praying-place is in one of the rooms, which is said, by the occupants, to commemorate the fact that "the Lord Jesus here asked God for a meal, and the table came down at once," a remarkable instance of the vulgar corruption of miracles so common in Mussulman traditions, and in this case curious as an evident confusion of the Mahometan versions of the Feeding of the Five Thousand, and of the Last Supper, with the Vision of Peter. Such a tradition, even from the fact of its distortion, and from its want of European sanction, has some claim to be heard. And this claim is remarkably confirmed by the circumstances of the situation. The house is close "on the sea-shore"; the waves beat against the low wall of its courtyard. In the courtyard is a spring of fresh water, such as must always have been needed for the purposes of tanning, and which, though now no longer so used, is reported to have been so used in a tradition which describes the premises to have been long employed as a tannery. It is curious that two other celebrated localities may be still identified in the same manner. One is in Jerusalem. At the southern end of the Church of the Sepulchre stood the palace of the Knights of St. John. When Saladin took the Holy City, it is said that he determined to render the site of the palace for ever contemptible, by turning it into a tannery. And a tannery still remains, with its offensive sights and smells, amongst what are the undoubted remains of that ancient home of European chivalry. Another case is nearer home. Every one knows the story of the parentage of William the Conqueror, how his father, under the romantic cliff of Falaise, saw Arlette amongst the tanneries. There, again, the tanneries still take advantage of the running streams which creep round the foot of the rock,—living memorials of the ancient story.

The rude staircase to the roof of the modern house, flat now as of old, leads us to the view which gives all that is

needed for the accompaniments of the hour. There is the wide noonday heaven above; in front is the long bright sweep of the Mediterranean Sea, its nearer waves broken by the reefs famous in ancient Gentile legends as the rocks of Andromeda. Fishermen are standing and wading amongst them—such as might have been there of old, recalling to the Apostle his long-forgotten nets by the Lake of Gennesareth, the first promise of his future call to be “a fisher of men.”

NOTE B.

VILLAGES OF SHARON.

It may be expedient to give here two or three notices of places, not as being directly connected with Sacred History, but as having been omitted in previous accounts.

About three hours N. of Jaffa is a village on the sandy ridge of the “Ramleh,” “*El-Haram Ali ibn-Aleim*,” “the sanctuary of Ali the son of Aleim,” so called from the mosque and tomb of that saint, whose story as related to us by the keeper of the mosque is as follows: “He was a dervish in the adjacent village of Arsuf, Sultan of all the dervishes of all the country round. The villagers thought not at all about God. When Sultan Bibars (from Egypt) came to besiege it, Ali—who lived in the town on alms that were given to him—baffled him by catching all the cannon-balls in his hands. A dervish from the besieging army, after some time, came to ask him the cause of the failure of all their attacks. Ali replied, ‘Will the Sultan make me a good mosque and tomb, and is he a good Mussulman?’ ‘Yes,’ answered the dervish. ‘Send him then to me, disguised as a dervish.’ The Sultan Bibars came and promised to build for Ali the mosque and tomb; and Ali stipulated for twenty-four hours before the cannonading was to begin anew. He then warned the people of Arsuf to become Mussulmans, threatening the fall of the town if they refused to listen to him. They disbelieved him; the twenty-four hours elapsed—the cannonading recommenced—Ali no longer intercepted the balls, and the town was destroyed.”

The ruins of Arsuf are still visible on an eminence a little north of “*El-Haram*,” with a fosse on the land-side, and walls on the sea-side. The mosque of the “*Haram*” professes to be the one built by Sultan Bibars in accordance with his promise, and the tomb which stands in the court of the mosque to have been built for the saint before his death, the body having been let down into the vault below through the two ends of the tomb, which are now walled up.

Schwarz, confounding *Eli* and *Ali*, supposes the inhabitants

to represent this as the grave of *Eli*. He says that on one side of the tombstone is a Hebrew, and the other a Samaritan, inscription; and that the Samaritans constantly go to perform their devotions at it.

Um-Khalid is one of the chief villages of the plain of Sharon, and the height above it commands one of the most striking views of the mountains of Ephraim, the very view in all likelihood intended in the description of Abraham's approach to Mount Gerizim, when "he saw the place afar off." It is so called from a great female saint, "Sittah Saba, the mother of Khalid," whose tomb is marked, not as usual by a mosque, but by a large enclosure in which it stands in the open air, under the shade of an enormous fig-tree. The ancient and Hebrew name of Antipatris, which is situated about ten miles from Um-Khalid, was Caphar Saba, which is still preserved in the Arabic Kefr-Sâba. The not unnatural belief of the peasants of Um-Khalid is, that this name is derived from the Lady Saba who lies buried under their own fig-tree. It would be a curious question to know whether this is an accidental coincidence, or whether there was a real Hebrew or Syrian worthy in earlier times who has been thus connected with the later Arabian traditions of Khalid of Damascus.

NOTE C.

PHŒNICIAN ANTIQUITIES ON THE MARITIME PLAIN.

THE Phœnician plain, far beyond any part of Palestine Proper, is strewn with the distinct fragments of older civilisation. One of these is the "Tomb of Hiram," which has been shortly described by Robinson (iii. 384), and Van de Velde (i. 184); and engraved as a frontispiece to Captain Allen's work on the Dead Sea. It stands inland amongst wild rocky hills, about three miles from Tyre. It is a single grey sarcophagus hollowed out so as just to admit a body. A large oblong stone is placed over it, so as completely to cover it, the only entrance being an aperture knocked through at its eastern extremity. The whole rests on a rude pedestal of upright unhewn stones. There are other broken stones in the neighbourhood. Our guide from Tyre (professing to derive his information from an Arabic work on Tyre called "Torad") said "that it was the tomb of King Hiram, buried at the eastern gate of old Tyre, which thence reached down the hill towards the sea."

Another monument of unknown age is a circle of upright stones—as of Stonehenge—which rises amongst the bushes near the shore, about an hour N. of the mouth of the Khâsimiyeh or Litâny, near Adlûn. These must be what

M. Van de Velde (i. 203) saw from a distance, and what his guide told him "were men turned into stone for scoffing at *Nabi Zur*." *Nabi Zur* (of whom he here and elsewhere speaks) is evidently the Prophet *Zur*," i.e. the founder (Eponymus) of Tyre—as *Nabi Sidoon* of Sidon. A similar circle appears to exist under the name of Hadjar-Lasbah near the Dead Sea (De Sauley, ii. 69). They are curious as probably examples or illustrations of the monumental stones so often mentioned in the Old Testament.

To these must now be added the sarcophagus of Esmunazar, King of Sidon, found in the royal burial-place near Sidon, and now by the munificence of the Duc de Luynes deposited in the Louvre. It is remarkable as bearing the only Phœnician inscription yet discovered in Phœnicia. The inscription, which is double, consists chiefly of an imprecation much in the style, and occasionally in the very words, of the Hebrew Prophets, on any one who shall remove the sarcophagus or its cover from the place of interment.

The Duc de Luynes, who has published a learned commentary on the whole inscription, arrives at the conclusion that Esmunazar lived at the end of the seventh century before the Christian era, and therefore in the last times of the Jewish monarchy. Near the close of the inscription, Esmunazar expresses his gratitude to the God Milcom for having enabled him to conquer "Dor and Japha, and wide-spread lands of corn in the root of Dan." The Duke in his commentary (p. 34) makes Dan to be the northern colony (see Chapter XI.), and Dor and Japha to be respectively Hammoth-dor (Josh. xxi. 32) of Naphtali, and Japhia of Zebulun (Josh. xix. 12). But Esmunazar could hardly have attached such importance to these two obscure, only once-named towns. Nor have they any connection even with the northern Dan. The two cities must surely be Dor and Jaffa, already described in this chapter, celebrated as seaports, and both included in the territory of Dan. With this also will best agree the further designations of "lands of corn" if this translation of דָּגָן אֲרָצוֹת is adopted. To this the ample cornfields of Sharon and Philistia would correspond as well as the rough hills of Zebulun and Naphtali correspond ill. Is it not, however, possible that the word "Dagan" rendered "corn," may be "Dagon," and that the lands thus described as granted by Milcom may derive this appellation from "Dagon" the Philistine and maritime god?

With the southern limit thus ascribed to the Phœnicians agrees the definition of their boundary both by Herodotus and Pliny.

CHAPTER VII

THE JORDAN AND THE DEAD SEA

THE history of the Jordan cannot be viewed without a consideration of the physical peculiarities which mark its relation to Palestine and to the world, and which must here be once for all noticed in detail.

It is a characteristic of all the four rivers of the Lebanon, that they are almost precluded by the circumstances of their rise from attaining their natural outlet in the sea. To compare their position with that of rivers and mountains on a far larger scale, it is as if the Amazon and Orinoco, after being confined within the lines of the Andes, were either lost in the Pampas without reaching the Atlantic, or by a violent turn in their course escaped into the Pacific. The Orontes and Leontes both flow parallel to the Mediterranean, for the greater part of their channels, shut out from it by the high wall of Lebanon. At the last moment, as it were, of their existence, they make a sudden turn westward, and descend into the sea. The Orontes finds its outlet by doubling back upon itself, so that its course for the last thirty miles is parallel to the great body of its own stream. The Leontes, though with a less rapid change, has to force its way through the narrow pass produced by the sudden offshoot which Anti-Libanus throws out westward, as if with the very object of preventing its escape. The Barada alone issues into what would have been the natural exit for all—the plain of Syria, on the way to the Indian Ocean. But the basin-like character of that plain, combined with the effect of the burning waste beyond, stops short its career in wide marshy lakes, a day's journey beyond the city of Damascus.

The Jordan combines in itself the peculiarities which belong to the other three. Rising in the fork of the two ranges of Anti-Libanus, it first runs by necessity within these two enclosing walls, parallel to the Mediterranean from north to south, as the Orontes from south to north. Its streams—

for in this stage it can hardly be called a single river—are first received into the high lake of Merom, which might seem destined to absorb its waters, as in the case just mentioned of the river of Damascus. But two causes prolong its existence, first the continual supply which its own stream and that lake itself receive from the adjacent springs in the limestone cliffs of Lebanon, secondly, and in a more remarkable degree, the depression in the valley which begins here, and opens a course for the river to descend in its collected volume, and with increased rapidity downwards for three hundred feet into the Sea of Galilee. Again it might seem to have met with its end, but again it plunges through twenty-seven rapids, through a fall of a thousand feet, through what is the lowest and final stage of its course. Like the Leontes and Orontes, it would now seem intent on making every effort to escape, darting first to the right, then to the left, then to the right again, and thus descending so deviously and capriciously as to present the unparalleled spectacle of a course only sixty miles in actual length, increased to two hundred by the infinite multiplication of its windings. But unlike the northern rivers of the Lebanon, the Jordan is doubly and trebly confined as well within its own successive terraces, as within the two high mountain-walls which accompany it on either side with undeviating regularity till they see it fall into its lowest depth in the Dead Sea. From this, its last receptacle, the Jordan emerges no more.

It has thus three distinct stages—the first ending in the Lake of Merom, the second in the Sea of Galilee, and the third in the Dead Sea. The two earlier stages will be noticed as we ascend its course. The third stage, on which we now enter—the “great plain” of the later Jews; the “Aulôn” or “channel” of the Greek geographers; the “Ghor” or “sunken plain” of the modern Arabs—as it is the one in which the peculiar characteristics of the region are most signally exhibited, so it is the only one in which the river itself is connected with the Sacred History.

The singular relations of the Jordan to the rest of the world were unknown to the Israelites. But its strange results as affecting their own country were familiar to them as to us: and must have heightened in every age the charm which hangs over the mysterious valley. They must have been struck at all times by its great depression, to the depth of no less than three thousand feet below the mountains of Judæa, which is marked by the never-failing notice of the “going up” from, or the “going down” to its level, in the numerous allusions to the journeys up and down those high

mountain-passes, from the first invasion of Joshua to the last journey of our Lord. They must have known habitually what to us is known only through two adventurous expeditions—the swift descent of the stream as it leaves the Sea of Galilee, from which in all probability is derived the one name by which it is called in the Old Testament "the Jordan" or "the Descender." They must have been struck, too, by the innumerable windings which in this descent it carves for itself in its deep bed—"a gigantic green serpent" as seen from the adjacent heights threading its tortuous way through its tropical jungle. They knew well the beauty and richness of this mazy line of forest, "the pride of the Jordan," the haunt of the lions, who from the neighbouring Desert sheltered themselves in the reedy covert. They carefully marked in their geographical vocabulary the singular contrast so well described by Josephus, between the naked Desert on the one hand, and on the other hand the rich vegetation along the winding banks of the river, and in the circles produced by its tributary streams. Throughout the several narratives of the Old Testament the distinction is always observed between the inhabited "round" or "circles" of the Jordan, and the uninhabited "Desert" through which it flows.

And, lastly, it must have been impossible to overlook the singularity of the river, not merely in its ordinary aspect, but in the more eccentric phenomena which more or less powerfully affected its historical character. How far there are to be found any traces of strictly volcanic agency in the limestone bed of the Jordan-valley is still a question. But, such as there are, they are found here in a greater degree than anywhere else in Palestine; and if the agency which they seem to indicate was manifested in earlier times with greater force than at present, it would be the more impressive from its rarity. Of this nature are the masses of bitumen which give their name to the "Asphaltic" Lake; the warm springs, which, at Hammath, on the Lake of Galilee, and at Callirhoe, on the Dead Sea, burst forth from the sides of the hills; the remains of lava which are said to exist on the shores of both lakes; the earthquakes which have within the memory of man shaken down the cities of Safed and Tiberias on the northern lake, which St. Jerome describes as having in his own time destroyed Kerak in the Eastern neighbourhood of the southern lake. That some such means were employed in the catastrophe of the Five Cities is now generally acknowledged. If any of the other extraordinary convulsions—such as the withdrawal of the waters of the Jordan, the overthrow of Jericho, and the earthquake which

afterwards in the same neighbourhood struck a panic into the Philistine host—should have been effected by similar means, the student of the Old Testament will discover in the indications which still exist a remarkable illustration and confirmation of the historical character of the Sacred Records ; the more so, because the secondary causes of such phenomena must to the historians themselves have been wholly unknown.

Two general remarks occur before descending into the detail of the several scenes of the history of the Jordan. On the one hand, it is the only river deserving of the name which flows south of the Lebanon. Those which fall into it from the eastern hills, the Hieromax, the Jabbok, and the Arnon, are too remote from historical Palestine to be of importance. The few streams which flow westward into the Mediterranean, such as the Belus, the Kishon, and those of the Plain of Sharon, are too insignificant ever to have attracted attention, in comparison with the full volume of water poured by the Jordan in an unfailling supply through the whole length of the country. As such it was emphatically The River of Palestine ; and its name is thus used in the Book of Job as the synonym of a perennial stream. But on the other hand, in contrast to the rivers of other countries, the Jordan, from its leaving the Sea of Galilee to its end, adds hardly a single element of civilisation to the long tract through which it rushes. Whilst Damascus, whilst Antioch, whilst Egypt, derive their very existence from their respective rivers, the Jordan presents the singular spectacle of a river almost wholly useless, so far as civilised man is concerned, through the long ages of its history. It is, indeed, still the "Sheriat el-Khebir," the "great watering-place" of the Bedouin tribes ; and so it must always have been. But it is the river of a Desert. "The Desert," as we have seen, is the ordinary name by which its valley was known ; hardly a single city or village rose upon its actual banks. Within the narrow range of its own bed it produces a rank mass of vegetation, but this luxuriant line of verdure only sets off more completely the contrast of life with death, which is its characteristic feature.

This singular fate of the Jordan is the direct result of the depression of its channel. The depth of the valley in the bottom of which it flows prevents its waters from escaping, like those of the Nile, to fertilise anything beyond its own immediate bed ; but the tropical temperature to which its whole plain is thus exposed, whilst calling out into almost unnatural vigour whatever vegetation receives the life-giving

touch of its waters, withers up every particle of verdure that is found beyond their reach. As a separation of Israel from the surrounding country, as a boundary between the two main divisions of the tribes, as an image of water in a dry and thirsty soil, it played an important part; but not as the scene of great events, or the seat of great cities. Its contact with the history of the people is exceptional, not ordinary, confined to rare and remote occasions, the more remarkable from their very rarity.

I. These instances we may now proceed to examine. The earliest is one which at first might seem to militate against what has just been said. There was once a time, in the far distance of patriarchal ages, when the Jordan was not thus isolated. At the time of the first migration of the herdsmen of Chaldæa into the hills of Palestine, when Abraham and Lot looked down from the mountain of Bethel on the deep descent beneath them, and Lot chose for himself the 'round' of the Jordan, that 'round' was different from anything that we now see. It was "well watered everywhere as the garden of the Lord, and like the land of Egypt." And this description is filled out in detail by subsequent allusions. It is described as a deep "valley," distinguished from the surrounding "desert" by its fertile "fields." If any credence is to be attached to the geological conclusions of the last fifty years, there must have been already a lake at its extremity, such as that which terminates the course of the Barada at Damascus, or of the Kowik at Aleppo. Then, as now, it must have received in some form or other the fresh streams of the Jordan, of the Arnon, of En-ge-di, of Callirhoe; and, at the southern end, as Dr. Robinson has observed, more living brooks than are to be found so near together in all the rest of Palestine. On the banks of one or some of these streams there would seem to have been an oasis or collection of oases, like that which is still from the same causes to be found on a smaller scale in the groves of En-ge-di and of Jericho, and in the Plain of Gennesareth, or, on a larger scale, in the Paradise of Damascus. Along the edge of this lake or valley, Gentile and Jewish records combine in placing the earliest seat of Phœnician civilisation. "The Tyrians," such is the account of Justin, "first dwelt by the Assyrian [or Syrian] lake before they removed to Sidon." Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboim, with Lasha (probably Laish by the sources of the Jordan), are mentioned as the first settlements of the Canaanites on the east of Palestine, as Sidon and the maritime cities on the west. When Lot descended from Bethel, "the cities of the 'round' " of the Jordan formed a nucleus of civilised

life, before any city except Hebron had sprung up in Central Palestine.

1. On those cities, as on the most promising spoil, the kings of the remote East descended; as Damascus on the north of Palestine, so were these on the south. For twelve years they were subject to Chedorlaomer, king of Elam, and in the thirteenth they rebelled. Then took place the first recorded invasion of Palestine by Assyria, embracing in its sweep the whole range of mountains east of the Jordan down to Petra on the south, and the wilderness of Amalek on the west. The final struggle was in the Vale of Siddim. In that "Valley of the Fields" was fought the first battle of Palestine: two of the five kings were slain in the conflict, and the routed army fled up the steep passes of the enclosing hills. The victors carried off their spoil and captives, and retreated up the long valley of the Jordan on their homeward march. Far up the valley, at the very source of its river, just as they were on the point of crossing the range of Hermon, they were overtaken by the avenger. "Abram the Hebrew," with his three hundred and eighteen armed slaves, and his ally Mamre of Hebron, was upon their track; at that point, then the Sidonian Laish, but afterwards the Israelite Dan, he attacked them by night, and chased them over the mountain-ridge far into the plain of Damascus.

2. This is the earliest authentic record of Canaanite history and exhibits the vale of the Jordan as it was never exhibited again. Even that record contains indications, like the earthquake at Pompeii which preceded the volcano of Vesuvius, of a change close at hand. Pits of bitumen are there described as existing in the vale of Siddim. The name of Sodom (*burning*), if it be not derived from the subsequent catastrophe, shows, like the "Phlegrean" fields of Campania, that the marks of fire had already passed over the doomed valley. The name of Bela, the old name of Zoar, was understood by Jewish tradition—perhaps fancifully, yet certainly in accordance with probability—to allude to the fact of its frequent subversion by earthquakes. In what precise manner "the Lord overthrew the cities" is not clearly indicated in the records either of Scripture or of natural remains. The great difference of level between the bottoms of the northern and the southern ends of the lake, the former being a depth of thirteen hundred, the latter only of thirteen feet, below the surface, confirms the theory that the southern end is of recent formation, and, if so, was submerged at the time of the fall of the cities; and that the vale of Siddim included the whole of the bay south of the promontory which now almost closes

up its northern portion. But, as Reland long ago pointed out, there is no reason, either in Scripture or history, for supposing that the cities themselves were destroyed by submersion, or were submerged at all; and the mode of the catastrophe is emphatically and repeatedly described to be not water, but fire. It is possible that M. de Saulcy may have exaggerated in some instances the traces of sites and of names along the shores; but there is nothing incredible in the fact that he should have discovered the spots which were believed in the time of Josephus, Strabo, Tacitus, and the writers of the New Testament, to contain the vestiges of the devoted cities, "set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire," not beneath the waters of the lake, but on its barren shores. And if the salt mountain at the southern extremity could be conceived to have been thrown up within historical times, there is nothing impossible in the supposition that this eruption may have accompanied the catastrophe of Sodom, and have borne its part in the consequences expressly ascribed to that event. More than this cannot be determined without more exact knowledge than we now possess.

A great mass of legend and exaggeration, partly the effect, partly the cause of the old belie that the cities were buried under the Dead Sea, has been gradually removed in recent years. The glittering surface of the lake, with the thin mist of its own evaporations floating over its surface, will now no more be taken for a gloomy sea, sending forth sulphureous exhalations. The birds which pass over it without injury have long ago destroyed the belief that no living creature could survive the baneful atmosphere which hung upon its waters. But it has still its manifold interest, both physical and historical. Viewed merely in a scientific point of view, it is one of the most remarkable spots of the world. First, it may be regarded as one of the most curious of inland seas. It is thirteen hundred feet below the level of the Mediterranean Sea, and thus the most depressed sheet of water in the world; as the Lake Sir-i-kol, where the Oxus rises

"In his high mountain cradle in Pamere,"

—is the most elevated. Its basin is a steaming cauldron—a bowl, as it has been well described, which, from the peculiar temperature and deep cavity in which it is situated, can never be filled to overflowing. The river, itself exposed to the same withering influences, is not copious enough to furnish a supply equal to the demand made by the rapid evaporation. Further, this basin is the Gordian knot of all the theories which have

been raised to account for the phenomena of the Jordan-valley. From the moment that Burckhardt discovered the valley of the Arabah between the Dead Sea and the Red Sea, an hypothesis was naturally formed that this had been the original outlet of the Jordan into the latter sea, till its waters were detained by the sudden formation of the Dead Sea in the same convulsion, as it was supposed, that overthrew the five cities. But such a theory is no longer tenable, since it has been found that the waters of the Arabah flow into the Dead Sea from a watershed almost midway between the two seas, and that the Red Sea is on the same level as the Mediterranean, namely, more than thirteen hundred feet above the Dead Sea and Jordan-valley. It is clear that the cavity of the Dead Sea belongs to the same general conformation of country that produced both the Valley of the Jordan and the Arabah, and that therefore its first formation must be traced to a period long before historical times. A convulsion of such magnitude as not only to create a new lake, but to depress the Valley of the Jordan many hundred feet below the level of the Mediterranean, and elevate the valley of the Arabah considerably above that level, must have shattered Palestine to its centre, and left upon the historical traditions of the time an indelible impression, of which, it is needless to say, not a trace is actually to be found. It seems to be concluded as most probable that the whole valley, from the base of Hermon to the Red Sea, was once an arm of the Indian Ocean, which has gradually subsided, leaving the three lakes in its bed, with their connecting river.

But, in connection with the Sacred History, its excessive saltiness¹ is even more remarkable than its deep depression. This peculiarity is, it is believed, mainly occasioned by the huge barrier of fossil-salt at its south-western corner, and heightened by the rapid evaporation of the fresh water poured

¹ Milner, in Petermann's Atlas, p. 30; Ansted's Elementary Geology, p. 38. It is sometimes supposed that the Dead Sea is the saltiest water in the world. This is not quite accurate. The scale seems to be as follows:—Rain-water is the purest of all, then river-water, then fresh-water lakes, then the Baltic and the Sea of Azof, then the Ocean, then the Mediterranean, then the Caspian and Aral, then the Dead Sea, last the Lakes of Elton and Urumia. The saline particles in the water of the ocean are 4 per cent. That of the Dead Sea contain 26½ per cent. That of Lake Elton (which is situated on the steppes east of the Volga, and supplies a great part of the salt of Russia) contains 29 per cent. The exact proportions of the waters of Lake Urumia are not stated. But Moritz Wagner, in his travels in Persia, ii. 136, Leipsic, 1852 (quoted by Fallmerayer, Todte Meer, p. 54), says that the salt and iodine of the water of this lake far surpass those of the Dead Sea. He also describes its exceeding buoyancy, and the fact, that whilst fish is found in neither lake, crustaceous animalculæ are found in the Urumia (p. 137), as madrepores are said to have been in the Dead Sea. Humboldt's Ansichten der Natur, ii. 91; Fallmerayer, p. 55.

into it. Other like phenomena, though in a less striking form, exist elsewhere. In the Old World there are two great series of salt-lakes to be found. One is that which extends along the tablelands of Central Asia, of which the chief are the Caspian, the Aral, the Urumia, the Roozla, and the Elton. The other is that which, beginning in the Verde Islands, appears at irregular intervals along the great African Desert, till it terminates in this, the last and most eastern of the series. In the New World the great salt-lake of Utah, by its physical likeness to its Syrian prototype, has actually confirmed the belief of the Mormon settlers that on its shores they have found a second Land of Promise, and in its river a second Jordan. But, without entering into its wider relations, this aspect is important as that which most forcibly impressed the Sacred writers. To them it was "the salt sea," and nothing more. They exhibit hardly a trace of the exaggerations of later times. And so it is in fact. It is not gloom, but desolation which is the prevailing characteristic of the Sea of Death. Follow the course of the Jordan to its end. How different from the first burst of its waters in Mount Hermon, amongst the groves of Dan and Paneas! How different from the "riotous prodigality of life" which has marked its downward course, almost to the very termination of its existence! Gradually, within the last mile from the Dead Sea, its verdure dies away, and the river melts into its grave in a tame and sluggish stream, still, however, of sufficient force to carry its brown waters far into the bright green sea. Along the desert shore, the white crust of salt indicates the cause of sterility. Thus the few living creatures which the Jordan washes down into the waters of the sea are destroyed. Hence arises the unnatural buoyancy and the intolerable nausea to taste and touch, which raise to the highest pitch the contrast between its clear, bitter waves and the soft, fresh, turbid stream of its parent river. Strewn along its desolate margin lie the most striking memorials of this last conflict of life and death; trunks and branches of trees, torn down from the thickets of the river-jungle by the violence of the Jordan, thrust out into the sea, and thrown up again by its waves, dead and barren as itself. The dead beach, so unlike the shell-covered shores of the two seas between which it lies, the Sea of Tiberias and the Gulf of Akaba, shelves gradually into the calm waters. A deep haze—that which to earlier ages gave the appearance of the "smoke going up for ever and ever"—veils its southern extremity, and almost gives it the dim horizon of a real sea. In the nearer view rises the low island close to its northern end, and the long promontory projecting from the eastern

side, which divides it into its two unequal parts. This is all that I saw, and all that most pilgrims and travellers have seen of the Dead Sea. Beyond, at its south-western corner, rises the mountain of rock-salt; and on its sides stand out the columnar fragment or fragments, doubtless presenting the same appearance as that which Josephus describes as the pillar of Lot's wife, existing in his own day, and seen by himself. The district immediately around this mountain is described as being white as snow, from the salt strewed at the base of the hill. The shore of the lake is a marsh, almost approaching to quicksand. But the eastern corner of this southern plain, where the salt has not yet penetrated, is still green with thickets of thorn, such as those which mark the oasis of Jericho at the northern extremity of the lake. Here they probably represent the last relics of the luxuriant vegetation of the Vale of Siddim.

Often as the sea has been described by later writers, classical and modern, there is but one passage in the Old Testament where its peculiarities are fully brought before us. In the vision which reveals to Ezekiel the regeneration of the kingdom of God, the prophet in the Temple-court sees the perennial spring of the Sacred Hill rising into a full and overflowing fountain beside the altar, and pouring forth a vast stream over the wide enclosure. He goes round to the eastern gate of the Temple, overhanging the defile of Kedron,—the waters have reached the gateway, and are rushing in a cataract down into the valley below. Into the valley the Prophet descends; and the waters rise higher and higher, till the dry course of Kedron becomes a mighty river; and innumerable trees spring up along its sterile banks; and through the deep defile and its tributary courses, the waters issue out towards the 'circles' of the Jordan; they "go down" through all the long descent into the 'desert-plain' of Jordan and reach the "sea." And when the stream—one, yet divided as it rushes through the mountain passes—forces its way into that dead lake, "the waters shall be healed"; everywhere they shall teem with life; the living creatures washed by the Jordan into the sea, which else would die at once, shall live as the fresh stream touches them; there shall be a multitude of fish, even as "the fish of the great sea," the Mediterranean; the fishermen standing all along its rocky shores from Englain to En-ge-di; only the marshes at its southern end, where the healing stream cannot penetrate, will still be given up to their old salt and barrenness. The imagery of this vision is often used in illustration of the spread of philanthropic or missionary beneficence; but its full force, as the Prophet

first delivered it, can only be appreciated by those who have seen the desolate basin of the Salt Sea, and marked the features of its strange vicinity.

There is one peculiarity, to which I have before adverted, which would naturally suggest some of the details of this striking imagery, the abundance of copious springs which from the limestone hills of Palestine pour forth their waters into the Jordan-valley. Two of them are mentioned by name in this very description. One, En-eglaim, "the spring of calves," is named only here, but is probably the same as the hot spring at the north-east end of the lake, better known by the name of Callirhoe, to which Herod the Great resorted in his last illness for its healing virtues. The other is the more celebrated En-gedi, the one spot of life besides the five cities which has from age to age maintained an independent existence and interest on the shores of the Dead Sea. Midway down the precipice, on the western bank of the lake, the clear stream breaks out on a high platform elevated 400 feet above the shore, and scattering rich vegetation all around, descends through the cliffs to the sea. This is En-gedi, "the spring of the wild goat," or gazelle; so called from the numerous ibexes, or Syrian chamois, which inhabit these cliffs. The oasis which it forms amidst the naked limestone precipices, must be one of the most striking natural scenes in Palestine. It was the site of the ancient city, known by the name of the "city of palms," or of "the felling of palms" (Hazazon-Tamar), doubtless from the grove of palms which then stood, but which has since entirely disappeared, around the rushing fountain above. There, at the time of Chedorlaomer's great invasion, the settlement of Amorites was attacked by the Assyrian army, immediately before its descent into the plain, and final victory over the kings of the five cities. In that same fastness dwelt, as it would seem, in later times, a branch of the Kenite tribe, in "the city of palms"; their eagle's "nest" "in the 'cliff'"—in the numerous caverns with which the cliffs of En-gedi abound. And in those same caverns David with his followers afterwards took refuge, and in one of them occurred the encounter with Saul, so romantic, and yet so true to the peculiar customs of the East. Yet again, at a still later time, the first hermits of Palestine—the solitary sect of the Essenes—had their chief seat at En-gedi; as afterwards the earliest Christian monastery of Palestine was planted not far distant, in the valley of the Kedron,—the secluded Convent of St. Saba, the dwelling and burial-place of St. John of Damascus. And yet once more, visible from the heights above En-gedi, towers the tremendous stronghold,

"The Fastness," as it was emphatically called, in which the treasures of Jerusalem were deposited for security in the troubled times of the monarchy, and in which the last remnant of the insurgents assembled at the close of the war of Titus, and destroyed themselves and their families rather than surrender to the conquerors.

II. The history of the Jordan gradually carries us upwards on its course. In order to understand fully the scenes which follow, we must form an accurate conception of its stage between the Dead Sea and the Sea of Galilee. Through this whole interval, the river runs between successive terraces, one, two, or three, according as the hills approach more or less near to its banks. It is crossed by three, or at most four, well-known fords. The first and second are marked by remains of Roman bridges, immediately below the Sea of Galilee, and again, immediately above its confluence with the Jabbok; the third and fourth occur just above and below the present bathing-place of the pilgrims opposite Jericho. No important streams join it on its western side; on its eastern side two, of almost equal magnitude, the Hieromax and the Jabbok. It is below the confluence of the latter stream that the rapid descent begins. What may be its general character above this point is little known. But, south of the confluence it begins to wear the aspect well known to all travellers, and important in connection with the historical events which it has witnessed. The higher terraces on each side, immediately under the ranges of mountains, are occupied by masses of vegetation, of which I shall have occasion to speak again more particularly. This region is succeeded by the desert-plain, or "Arabah," properly so called, and from this desert-plain begin the regular descents to the bed of the Jordan. Of these, the first is over a long line of white argillaceous hills, somewhat resembling those in the Wâdy Feiran, down to a flat occupied chiefly with low shrubs of *agnus-castus*. The second descent is upon a still lower flat, occupied chiefly with a jungle of tamarisks and willows, and this last flat is, in most parts of the river's course, the bed of the river itself. Nearer its mouth there is yet a third descent, consisting of a brake of canes and reeds. The actual stream of the Jordan, as it flows between these banks, is from sixty to a hundred feet wide, and varies from six to four feet in depth. Where it is widest, the bottom is mud; where narrowest, rock or sand. Of these terraces, the only one, probably, which is continuous through its whole course, is that of the jungle. Higher up the stream the canes and reeds cease to form a continuous brake. The argillaceous hills on the eastern side approach

so near the river, that they probably occupy the place of the highest terrace of *agnus-castus* on the west. But the long line of the jungle never ceases, and, as the valley contracts in its upper channel, sometimes extends across its whole width.

1. The course of the river, thus diversified, is confined between the two ranges of hills, which, like those of the Nile-valley, extend with more or less regularity along the shores of the Dead Sea, and even to the Gulf of Akaba. In most parts of the Jordan, the plain thus enclosed is not more than eight miles in breadth, but immediately above the Dead Sea the mountains on each side retire, leaving a larger plain than usual; probably a distance of more than twelve miles across from range to range. It is this plain which becomes the scene of the next great events in the history of the river; and it is fortunately that of which the physical features are best known to travellers. We must imagine the Israelite host encamped on its eastern side. The place is so minutely specified, that it may be fixed in spite of the obscurity which still rests on the further bank of the Jordan. It was in the "desert-plain" of Moab, so called, probably, in contradistinction to the cultivated "fields" on the tableland above. It was in the long belt of acacia groves (*shittim*) which, on the eastern as on the western side of the Jordan, mark with a line of verdure the upper terraces of the valley. These groves indicate at once the issue of the springs from the roots of the eastern hills, and the tropical climate to which the Israelites had now descended, and which brought them under these wild and thorny shades—probably for the first time since they had left them in the wilderness of Sinai. Their tents were pitched "from Abel-Shittim" on the north "to Beth-Jeshimoth" on the south; from the 'meadow'¹ which marked the limit of those 'groves,' to the 'hamlet' or 'house,' which stood in the 'waste' on the shores of the Dead Sea. They looked straight across the Jordan to the green spot of Jericho on the western bank. High above them rose the mountains to which their descendants gave the name of "Abarim,"—'those on the further side,' the eastern wall of the valley, on whose tops they had so long sojourned in their long struggle with the Amorites of Heshbon.

From these lofty summits were unfolded two successive views, of the valley below, of the camp, of the opposite hills—

¹ *Abel-Shittim* ('meadow of the acacias')—of which the name is preserved in "Abila,"—is described by Josephus as still existing in his time on the spot, embosomed in palms, at the distance of six miles or more (60 stadia) from the Jordan. (*Ant.* IV. viii. 1; V. i. 1.) Possibly it is the same as appears once or twice in the Jewish war. (*Bell. Jud.* II. xiii. 2; IV. vii. 6.)

awakening thoughts most diverse to the two seers, but of almost equal interest to future times. From the "high places" there dedicated to Baal, from the 'bare hill' on "the top of the rocks," and lastly, from the cultivated "field" of Zophim, on "the top of Pisgah," "from the top of Peor, that looketh 'on the face of the waste,'" the Assyrian Prophet, with the King of Moab by his side, looked over the wide prospect:—

"He watch'd, till morning's ray
On lake and meadow lay,
And willow-shaded streams that silent sweep
Amid their banner'd lines,
Where, by their several signs,
The desert-wearied tribes in sight of Canaan sleep."

He saw in that vast encampment amongst 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. Ephraim was there with "the strength of the 'wild bull'" of the north; Judah, "crouching, like the lion" of the south; "a people dwelling alone," yet a mighty nation—"who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel?" He looked round from his high post over the tablelands of Moab, to the line of mountains stretching away to Edom, on the south; over the high platform of the Desert beyond the Dead Sea, where dwelt the tribe of Amalek, then "first of the nations"; over the Kenite, not yet removed from his clefts in the rocks of En-gedi, full in front of the Prophet's view. And for each his dirge of lamentation went up; till at the thought of his own distant land of "Asshur," of the land beyond the Euphrates, of the dim vision of ships coming from the Western sea which lay behind the hills of Palestine, "to afflict Asshur and to afflict Eber"—he burst into the bitter cry, "Alas, who shall live when God doeth this!" and he rose up and returned to his place.

The view of Balaam from the top of Pisgah and of Peor is the first of those which have made the name celebrated. But it is the second view, which within so short a time succeeded to it, whilst Israel was still encamped in the acacia groves, that has become a proverb throughout the world. To these same mountains of Abarim, to the top of Pisgah, to a high place dedicated to the heathen Nebo, as Balaam's standing-place had been consecrated to Peor, "Moses went up from the 'desert-plain' of Moab over against Jericho." In

the long line of those eastern mountains which so constantly meet the view of the traveller in all the western parts of Palestine, the eye vainly strives to discern any point emerging from this horizontal platform, which may be fixed as the top of Nebo. Nothing but a fuller description than has ever yet been given of these regions can determine the spot where the great lawgiver and leader of his people looked down upon their embattled ranks, and over the "land which he was to see with his eyes, but was not to go in thither." But the general account leaves no doubt that the place intended is some elevation immediately over the last stage of the Jordan.¹ Northward, his eye turned to "all the land of Gilead," continuing the same eastern barrier as that on which he himself stood, till it ended, far beyond his sight, in Dan. Westward, there were on the northern horizon, the distant hills of "all Naphtali." Coming nearer, was "the land of Ephraim and Manasseh." Immediately opposite, was "all the land of Judah"; beyond which, though unseen, lay "the utmost sea" and the Desert of "the south,"—Jerusalem itself, in all probability, distinctly visible through the opening of the descent to Jericho. These were the four great masses of the future inheritance of his people, on which the narrative fixes our attention. Immediately below him was the 'round' of the plain of Jericho, with its oasis of palm-trees, and far away on his left, though hardly visible, the last inhabited spot before the great Desert—"Zoar." It was a view, doubtless, which in its full extent was to be imagined rather than actually seen. In this respect the Pisgah-prospect is a striking illustration of all the prophetic visions of the Sacred Writings. The foreground of the picture alone was clearly discernible; its dim distances were to be supplied by what was beyond, though suggested by what was within, the range of the actual prospect of the seer. But between him and that "good land" the deep valley of the Jordan intervened. "So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord." In language less simple, but hardly less touching, the Jewish historian adds—"As he was bidding

¹ No name like Pisgah is now known on the eastern side; but Jerome expressly asserts that it was familiar to the travellers of his day (*De loc. Heb.*, voc. *Abarim*) and that Nebo was pointed out six miles from Hesbon (*Ib.* voc. *Naban*). Burckhardt in travelling through the country selected Jebel-'Attârûs, apparently from its conspicuous position, as the most likely spot. "There is," he says, "a large heap of stones on the summit, overshadowed by a wild pistachio tree." He also describes the mountain as "very barren," and "with an uneven plain on the top." But he gives no details by which to judge of its general appearance, nor the slightest indication of the view from the top. (*Travels in Syria*, i. p. 372). It is true that this is not strictly "over against Jericho," but this objection would not be fatal if the stop were otherwise appropriate.

farewell to Eleazer and Joshua, whilst he was yet talking with them, a cloud suddenly stood over him, and he vanished in a ravine." "He died in the mount whither he had gone up, and he was gathered unto his people, as Aaron his brother had died on Mount Hor, and was gathered to his people." His tomb, however, was not, like Aaron's, on the high mountain summit, an object of pilgrimage for future ages. "He died in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord, and he buried him in a 'ravine' in the land of Moab before Bethpeor, but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day." In a ravine before Bethpeor,—that is, in front of the height from which Balaam's last prophecy had been delivered; and so, doubtless, somewhere in the gorges of Pisgah. But beyond this, "no man knew." It is the first instance on record of the providential obliteration—so remarkably exemplified afterwards in the Gospel history—of the "holy places" of Palestine; the providential safeguard against their elevation to a sanctity which might endanger the real holiness of the history and religion which they served to commemorate. It is curious that, in spite of the mystery in which the grave of Moses was thus enveloped, a traditional sanctuary has arisen, not indeed on Mount Pisgah, but on a height immediately on the opposite side of the Dead Sea—a rude mosque, which is revered by the Mussulman world, as covering the tomb of "the Prophet Moses." It is so sacred, that, lonely as its situation is, its entrance is rigidly barred against unbelievers, and its votaries are so numerous, that the authorities of Jerusalem have, by a stroke of policy, fixed the days of the pilgrimage thither at the same time as the Greek Easter; so that at the very moment when Jerusalem might, it was feared, be in danger of a surprise from the influx of Christian pilgrims, a body of Mussulman pilgrims might be on the spot to defend the Holy City.

From the heights of Pisgah we descend again to the encampment in the groves which had just witnessed the licentious rites of Midian. And now the day was come for the greatest crisis that had taken place since the passage of the Red Sea. They were to "pass over the Jordan, to go in and possess the land which the Lord their God gave them to possess it." For the first time, they descended from the upper terraces of the valley, "they removed from 'the acacia groves,'" and "came to the Jordan, and lodged there before they passed over." The exact spot is unknown; it certainly cannot be that which the Greek tradition has fixed, where the eastern banks are sheer precipices, of ten or fifteen feet high. Probably it was either immediately above or below, where the

cliffs break away ; above, at the fords, or below, where the river assumes the tamer character which has been before described, on its exit to the Dead Sea. Wherever was the point, however, it must have been the largest river that they had seen since they left the banks of the Nile. The size of the stream, too, must have been more conspicuous, if we take to the full the expression of the historian, that the Jordan was then in a state of flood—"overflowing all his banks at the time of the barley harvest." It was the same phenomenon which is described again in David's reign, when the adventurous Gadites passed the stream—"in the first month, when it had overflowed all its banks." The time of the year, which must have corresponded to our April or May, is the same as that when it is usually visited by travellers ; and as no extensive inundation has ever been witnessed by them, it is probable that the utmost that can be here implied is the rise of the river to the top of the lowest of its terraces, that, namely, which is occupied by the jungle ; and the difference between this increase and what is now witnessed may be either from the river having worn a deeper channel, or from the greater fall of rain in earlier times, or from both causes combined. That it could not have been more than this is implied both by the double passage of the spies four days before, and by the subsequent passage of the Gadites under the same circumstances in the time of David. That some change has taken place is slightly confirmed by two facts still observable. First, the remains of an ancient dyke have been seen at the issue of the river from the southern end of the Sea of Tiberias. Secondly, whereas it would appear in ancient times that the fords of the river were few and well marked, it seems that there are now many hundreds of places where a passage can be made over the rocks in the channel without wetting the feet.

On the broken edge of the river—so the scene which follows is placed before us by the narrative—the band of priests stood with the ark upon their shoulders. At a distance of nearly a mile in the rear stood the great mass of the army. Suddenly the full bed of the Jordan was dried before them. High up the river, "very far" "in Adam, the city which is beside Zaretan,"—that is, at a distance of nearly thirty miles from the place of the Israelite encampment,—"the waters which 'rushed' down from above," from the Sea of Galilee, stood, and rose up in a barrier ; and "those that came down towards the sea of the 'Desert,' the salt sea, failed and were cut off." The scene presented to us, therefore, is of the river-bed dried up from north to south, through all its windings,

far beyond the actual passage—an image which, however it may be explained, is important to bear in mind, to avoid a confused notion which is often formed from a supposed parallel with the passage of the Red Sea. Then they “*came up* out of” the deep channel of the Jordan, and pitched their tents in the ‘desert-plains’ which immediately succeed on its western side to the lines of vegetation that accompany the course of the river.

2. The first stage of the conquest of Palestine, which now follows, cannot be understood without fully representing the situation of JERICHO, one of the most important cities of Palestine, the capital, as it may be called, of the Valley of the Jordan, and the only important city in its whole course. That importance is derived from two causes. First, it stands at the entrance of the main passes from this valley into the interior of Palestine, the one branching off to the south-west towards Olivet, which commands the approach to Jerusalem; the other to the north-west, towards Michmash, which commands the approach to Ai and Bethel. It was thus the key—the “*Chiavenna*”—of Palestine to any invader from this quarter. Secondly, it enjoys the full benefit of one, if not two, of those copious streams which, as we have seen, form the chief sources of such fertility as the Valley of the Jordan contains. The usual, that is the south-western, approach to Jericho exhibits this in the most striking form. After traversing for six hours the almost total desolation which marks the long descent from Jerusalem to the Valley of the Jordan, over bare limestone hills, the eye is suddenly caught by the sight of a thread of verdure at the bottom of a deep glen, the most romantic in the whole of Palestine, almost recalling by its depth and narrowness the defile of the Sîk on the approach to Petra. This green thread is the course of the torrent now called Kelt, possibly the ancient Cherith, and, if so, doubtless deriving its name from the manner in which its course is “cut” through these tremendous precipices. To any who has seen the Barada, on the approach to Damascus, the sight of the Wâdy Kelt at once suggests by anticipation the prospect which awaits him as he issues from the desert-hills. It bursts through the opening, and in the desert-plain of the Jordan far and wide extends the green circle of tangled thickets, in the midst of which are the hovels of the modern village, beside which stood, in ancient times, the great city of Jericho. It is not, however, only or chiefly to the torrent stream of the Kelt, that Jericho owes its oasis. A little to the north of the issue of that stream into the plain, rise, out of the foot of the same limestone range, two living springs—

one now, as always, called Dûk ; the other and larger, as well as more celebrated, now called the spring " of the Sultan," or " of Elisha." From these springs trickle clear rills through glades of tangled forest-shrub, which, but for their rank luxuriance and Oriental vegetation, almost recall the scenery of England. "*As You Like It*," says one of the most graphic and accurate of Eastern travellers, " was in my head all day." It is these streams, with their accompanying richness, that procured for Jericho, during the various stages of its existence, its long prosperity and grandeur.

Beautiful as the spot is now in utter neglect, it must have been far more so when it was first seen by the Israelite host at Gilgal. Gilgal—the rising ground where, at Joshua's command, they " rolled " away the reproach of their uncircumcision—was about five miles distant from the river banks ; at the eastern outskirts, therefore, of the great forest. Jericho itself stood at its western extremity, immediately where the springs issue from the hills. From that scene of their earliest settlement in Palestine, they looked out over the intervening forest to what was to be the first prize of the conquest. The forest itself did not then consist, as now, merely of the picturesque thorn, but was a vast grove of majestic palms, nearly three miles broad, and eight miles long. Even the solitary relic of the palm-forest, seen as late as 1838, has now disappeared. But as Joshua witnessed it, it must have recalled to him the magnificent palm-groves of Egypt, such as may now be seen stretching along the shores of the Nile at Memphis. Amidst this forest—as is, to a certain extent, the case even now—would have been seen, stretching through its open spaces, fields of ripe corn ; for it was " the time of the barley harvest," and on the morrow after the passover, they ate for the first time " of the old corn of the land and parched corn in the self-same day." Above the topmost trees would be seen the high walls and towers of the city, which from that grove derived its proud name, " Jericho, the city of palms," " high, and fenced up to heaven "—the walls over which the spies had been let down, and which were now to fall before their victorious countrymen. Behind the city rose the jagged range of the white limestone mountains of Judæa, here presenting one of the few varied and beautiful outlines that can be seen amongst the southern hills of Palestine. This range is " the mountain " to which the spies had fled, whilst their pursuers vainly sought them on the way to the Jordan ; there they had been concealed, doubtless in the caverns with which the side of the mountain is perforated, the same which in later ages afforded shelter to the hermits who there took up their

abode, in the belief that this was the mountain of the Forty Days' Fast of the Temptation—the "Quarantania," from which it still derives its name.

The same causes which made Jericho of such importance in this first stage of the Hebrew conquest, would also render necessary its complete destruction, with the curse on its re-builder. A place of such strength was not to be left to be occupied by any hostile force that might take possession of it. But, again, these same causes occasioned its successive restorations, which exceed, probably, those of any other city in Palestine, except Jerusalem. First, although the actual site of Jericho long lay desolate, yet Gilgal, the scene of their first encampment, not two miles distant, which enjoyed the same general advantages of the shade and the streams of the noble forest, became the first regular settlement of Israel. The ground of Gilgal was the first that was pronounced "holy." On its hill, during the long wars in the interior of Palestine, the Tabernacle remained, till it found its resting-place in Shiloh. And in those sacred groves were celebrated, in later times, the solemn assemblies of Samuel and of Saul, and of David on his return from exile. But Jericho itself, in the reign of Ahab, if not before, rose from its ruins. A school of prophets gathered round the spot almost immediately, and in the glimpses of their history we catch the same natural features with which the story of the first capture has already made us familiar. Elijah and Elisha came to it from Bethel, down the same pass by the valley of Ai that in other times was the route of invading armies into the interior of Palestine. From Jericho, "they two went on" to the banks of the Jordan, whilst the sons of the prophets stood on the upper terraces, "afar off"; and there, nearly at the same spot where Moses had vanished from the eyes of his countrymen, Elijah also was withdrawn—as the prophets imagined) carried away to "one of the mountains," or "one of the 'ravines,'" which line the eastern wilderness, into which they knew he had retired. Elisha was left on the spot alone, but it was his natural home. He was himself a native of one of those rich plots of meadow ground which are found in the upper stages of the Jordan valley. At Abel-Meholah, he was first seen behind his oxen, when Elijah passed up the valley on his way from the southern desert of Sinai to the northern desert of Damascus. At Gilgal was his frequent abode. The spring whose "waters" he "healed" is probably that which now bears his name. He too "went up" the ascent through the pass to Bethel, where, in the forest now destroyed, lurked the two she-bears. Naaman, at his command, "went down" to the Jordan, mur-

muring at the contrast of its turbid "waters" with the clear "rivers" of his native Damascus. Into the jungle on the banks of the river the sons of the prophets descended to cut boughs for their huts, and "as one was felling a beam" from the branches which overhung the stream, "the axe-head fell into the water."

The third stage in the history of Jericho is that in which its palm-groves and gardens of balsam were given by Antony to Cleopatra. They were first farmed for her, and then redeemed for himself by Herod the Great, who made this one of his princely residences, in which he was living at the time of his death. It was this Roman Jericho through which Christ passed on his final journey to Jerusalem; passed along the road beside which stood the sycomore tree; went up into the wild dreary mountains; caught from the summit of the pass the first glimpse of the line of trees and houses on the summit of Olivet; and so went His way through the long ascent, the scene of His own parable of the Good Samaritan, till He reached the friendly home perched aloft on the mountain side—the village of Bethany.

3. Was this wilderness of His last approach—so we naturally ask—the same as that which witnessed His earliest trials? Was the reach of the Jordan, which Joshua and Elijah crossed, the same as that which was consecrated by His first entrance into his public ministry? It is difficult to determine. But the indications of the narrative point to a locality further north than the scene which the tradition of the Greek and Latin Churches—influenced, doubtless, in part, by the convenience of a spot near Jerusalem—has selected, "In the wilderness of Judæa," "In all the country about Jordan,"—are the general expressions of the first three Evangelists, which would apply to the whole of the southern valley of the Jordan. St. John, however, with greater precision, adds, "in *Beth-abara* (the house of passage) *beyond Jordan*," which seems to confine "the wilderness" generally to the eastern bank, and the special locality to the more northern ford, near Succoth, the same by which Jacob had crossed from Mahanaim, by which the Midianites endeavoured to escape in their flight from Gideon, and where Jephthah slew the Ephraimites. And on a subsequent occasion John is described as baptizing in *Ænon* ("the springs"), "near to Salim," which would probably be the same "Salem" as that near Shechem,—close to the passage of the Jordan near Succoth, and far away from that near Jericho. Hence, on the one hand, from the Jordan to Nazareth, apparently occupied only a day, and on the other hand, the return from this same spot to Bethany,

took at least two days. In each case this length of time accords well with the relative distance from Succoth, but would be entirely inapplicable to Jericho.

If this be so, the scenery of the exact spot of John's baptism, though visited by two or three travellers, has never been described. This is, perhaps, of less importance, because the images, and even associations of the whole valley are so similar, that what applies to one spot must, more or less, apply to all. The "wilderness" of the desert-plain, whether on the western or eastern side, is the most marked in the whole country, and never has been inhabited, except for the purposes of ascetic seclusion, as by the Essenes, and the hermits of later times. Wide as was the moral and spiritual difference between the two great Prophets of the Jordan wilderness, and the wild ascetics of later times, yet it is for this very reason important to bear in mind the outward likeness which sets off this inward contrast. Travellers know well the startling appearance of the savage figures, who, whether as Bedouins or Dervishes, still haunt the solitary places of the East, with a "cloak,"—the usual striped Bedouin blanket—"woven of camel's hair, thrown over the shoulders, and tied in front on the breast; naked, except at the waist, round which is a girdle of skin; the hair flowing loose about the head." This was precisely the description of Elijah, whose last appearance had been on this very wilderness, before he finally vanished from the eyes of his disciple. This, too, was the aspect of his great representative, when he came, in the same place, dwelling, like the sons of the prophets, in a leafy covert woven of the branches of the Jordan-forest, preaching, in "raiment of camel's hair," with a "leathern girdle round his loins," eating the "locusts" of the desert, and the "wild honey" or "manna" which dropped from the tamarisks of the desert-region, or which distilled from the palm-groves of Jericho. To the same wilderness, probably that on the eastern side, Jesus is described as "led up" by the Spirit—up into the desert-hills whence Moses had seen the view of all the "kingdoms" of Palestine—"with the wild beasts" which lurked in the bed of the Jordan, or in the caves of the hills—"where John was baptizing, beyond Jordan."

If from the general scene we turn to the special locality of the river banks, the reason of John's selection is at once explained. He came "baptizing," that is, signifying to those who came to him, as he plunged them under the rapid torrent, the forgiveness and forsaking of their former sins. It was in itself no new ceremony. Ablutions, in the East, have always been more or less a part of religious worship—easily performed,

and always welcome. Every synagogue, if possible, was by the side of a stream or spring; every mosque, still, requires a fountain or basin for lustrations in its court. But John needed more than this. He taught, not under roof or shelter of sacred buildings, but far from the natural haunts of men. He proclaimed repentance, not only to handfuls of men here and there, but to the whole nation. No common spring or tank would meet the necessities of the multitudes "who, from Jerusalem and all Judæa, and all the region round about Jordan, came to him confessing their sins." The Jordan, by the very peculiarity of its position, which, as before observed, renders its functions so unlike those of other Eastern streams, now seemed to have met with its fit purpose. It was the one river of Palestine, sacred in its recollections, abundant in its waters; and yet, at the same time, the river, not of cities, but of the wilderness; the scene of the preaching of those who dwelt not in kings' palaces, nor wore soft clothing. On the banks of the rushing stream the multitudes gathered—the priests and scribes from Jerusalem, down the pass of Adummim; the publicans from Jericho on the south, and the Lake of Gennesareth on the north; the soldiers on their way from Damascus to Petra, through the Ghor, in the war with the Arab chief Hareth; the peasants from Galilee, with ONE from Nazareth, through the opening of the plain of Esdraelon. The tall "reeds" or canes in the jungle waved, "shaken by the wind"; the pebbles of the bare clay hills lay around, to which the Baptist pointed as capable of being transformed into "the children of Abraham"; at their feet rushed the refreshing stream of the never-failing river. There began that sacred rite, which has since spread throughout the world, through the vast baptisteries of the southern and Oriental Churches, gradually dwindling to the little fonts of the north and west; the plunges beneath the water diminishing to the few drops which, by a wise exercise of Christian freedom, are now in most Churches the sole representative of the full stream of the Descending River.

The interest which thus attaches to the Jordan is one which it possesses to an extent probably enjoyed by no other sacred locality in the Holy Land. In the mosaics of the earliest churches at Rome and Ravenna, before Christian and Pagan Art were yet divided, the Jordan appears as a river-god pouring his streams out of his urn. The first Christian Emperor had always hoped to receive his long-deferred baptism in the Jordan, up to the moment when the hand of death struck him at Nicomedia. The name of the river has, in Spain and Italy, by a natural association, been turned into a

common Christian name for children at the hour of the baptism which served to connect them with it. Protestants, as well as Greeks and Latins, have delighted to carry off its waters for the same sacred purpose, to the remotest regions of the West. Of all the practices—superstitions, if we choose so to call them—of the Oriental Churches in Palestine, none is more innocent or natural than the ceremony repeated year by year at the Greek Easter—the bathing of the pilgrims in the Jordan. It has often been witnessed by European travellers. I venture to describe it from my own recollections, for the sake both of the general illustration which it furnishes of the present forms of Oriental Christianity, and also as presenting the nearest likeness that can now be seen in the same general scenery to the multitudinous baptisms of John. Once a year—on the Monday in Passion Week—the desolation of the Plain of Jericho is broken by the descent from the Judæan hills of five, six, or eight thousand pilgrims, who are now, from all parts of the old Byzantine Empire, gathered within the walls of Jerusalem. The Turkish governor is with them, an escort of Turkish soldiers accompanies them, to protect them down the desert-hills, against the robbers who, from the days of the Good Samaritan downwards, have infested the solitary pass. It was for the purpose of defending the pilgrims down these passes that the nine knights banded together who formed the first nucleus of the Order of the Templars. On a bare space beside the tangled thickets of the modern Jericho,—distinguished by the square tower, now the castle of its chief and called by pilgrims the “House of Zacchæus,”—the vast encampment is spread out, recalling the image of the tents which Israel here first pitched by Gilgal. Two hours before dawn, the rude Eastern kettle-drum rouses the sleeping multitude. It is to move onwards to the Jordan, so as to accomplish the object before the great heat of the lower valley becomes intolerable. Over the intervening Desert, the wide crowd advances in almost perfect silence. Above is the bright Paschal Moon, before them moves a bright flare of torches, on each side huge watchfires break the darkness of the night, and act as beacons for the successive descents of the road. The sun breaks over the eastern hills as the head of the cavalcade reaches the brink of the Jordan. Then it is, for the first time, that the European traveller sees the Sacred River, rushing through its thicket of tamarisk, poplar, willow, and agnus-castus, with rapid eddies, and of a turbid yellow colour, like the Tiber at Rome, and about as broad—sixty or eighty feet. The chief features of the scene are the white cliffs and green thickets on each bank, though at this spot

they break away, on the western side, so as to leave an open space for the descent of the pilgrims. Beautiful as the scene is, it is impossible not to feel a momentary disappointment at the conviction, produced by the first glance, that it cannot be the spot either of the passage of Joshua, or of the baptism of John. The high eastern banks (not to mention the other considerations named before) preclude both events. But in a few moments the great body of the pilgrims, now distinctly visible in the breaking day, appear on the ridge of the last terrace. None, or hardly any, are on foot. Horse, mule, ass, and camel, in promiscuous confusion, bearing whole families on their backs—a father, mother, and three children, perhaps, on a single camel, occupy the vacant spaces between and above the jungle in all directions.

If the traveller expects a wild burst of enthusiasm, such as that of the Greeks when they caught the first glimpse of the sea, or the German armies at the sight of the Rhine, he will be disappointed. Nothing is more remarkable in the whole pilgrimage to the Jordan, from first to last, than the absence of any such displays. Nowhere is more clearly seen that deliberative business-like aspect of their devotion, so well described in Eothen, unrelieved by any expression of emotion, unless, perhaps, a slight tinge of merriment. They dismount, and set to work to perform their bath; most on the open space, some further up amongst the thickets; some plunging in naked—most, however, with white dresses, which they bring with them, and which, having been so used, are kept for their winding-sheets. Most of the bathers keep within the shelter of the bank, where the water is about four feet in depth, though with a bottom of very deep mud. The Coptic pilgrims are curiously distinguished from the rest by the boldness with which they dart into the main current, striking the water after their fashion alternately with their two arms, and playing with the eddies, which hurry them down and across, as if they were in the cataracts of their own Nile; crashing through the thick boughs of the jungle which, on the eastern bank of the stream, intercepts their progress, and then re-crossing the river higher up, where they can wade, assisted by long poles which they have cut from the opposite thickets. It is remarkable, considering the mixed assemblage of men and women, in such a scene, that there is so little appearance of levity or indecorum. A primitive domestic character pervades in a singular form the whole transaction. The families which have come on their single mule or camel now bathe together, with the utmost gravity; the father receiving from the mother the infant, which has been brought to receive

the one immersion which will suffice for the rest of its life, and thus, by a curious economy of resources, save it from the expense and danger of a future pilgrimage in after-years. In about two hours the shores are cleared ; with the same quiet they remount their camels and horses ; and before the noon-day heat has set in, are again encamped on the upper plain of Jericho. . . . Once more they may be seen. At the dead of night, the drum again wakes them for their homeward march. The torches again go before ; behind follows the vast multitude, mounted, passing in profound silence over that silent plain—so silent that, but for the tinkling of the drum, its departure would hardly be perceptible. The troops stay on the ground to the end, to guard the rear, and when the last roll of the drum announces that the last soldier is gone, the whole plain returns again to its perfect solitude.

CHAPTER VIII

PERÆA, AND THE TRANS-JORDANIC TRIBES

WHO that has ever travelled in Palestine has not longed to cross the Jordan-valley to those mysterious hills which close every eastward view with their long horizontal outline, their overshadowing height, their deep purple shade? It is this which probably constitutes the most novel feature of the Holy Land to any one who first sees it with his own eyes. Partly from the slightly historical interest which attaches to Eastern compared with Western Palestine, partly from the few visits paid to those insecure regions, it has usually happened that general descriptions of the country almost omit to notice the one elevating and solemn background of all that is poor and mean in the scenery of Palestine, properly so called. To those who, like myself, have been unable to cross the Jordan and explore those unknown heights, this distant view is the sole impression left by the mountain range of Ammon and Moab. But it is an impression which may assist them in forming some notion of the interior of the region, as described by those who have had better fortune and more abundant leisure.

I. The mountains rise from the valley of the Jordan to the height, it is believed, of two or three thousand feet, and this gives them, when seen from the western side, the appearance of a much greater actual elevation than they really possess; as though they rose high above the mountains of Judæa on which the spectator stands. As they are approached from the Ghor, the horizontal outline which they always wear when seen from a distance is broken; and it is described, that when their summits are attained, a wholly new scene bursts upon the view; unlike anything which could be expected from below—unlike anything in Western Palestine. A wide tableland appears tossed about in wild confusion of undulating downs, clothed with rich grass throughout; in the southern parts trees are thinly scattered here and there, aged trees

covered with lichen, as if the relics of a primeval forest long since cleared away ; the northern parts still abound in magnificent woods of sycomore, beech, terebinth, ilex, and enormous fig-trees. These downs are broken by three deep defiles, through which the three rivers of the Yarmûk, the Jabbok, and the Arnon, fall into the valley of the Jordan and Dead Sea. On the east, they melt away into the vast red plain which, by a gradual descent, joins the level of the plain of the Haurân, and of the Assyrian desert. This is the general picture given of the trans-Jordanic territory.

II. What is the history of which this is the theatre ? First, its mere outline, even as seen from the western side of the Jordan, suggests the fact that those heights everywhere visible in central Palestine must have commanded the first view of the Promised Land in all approaches from the east. It is said by those who have visited those parts, that one remarkable effect produced is the changed aspect of the hills of Judah and Ephraim. Their monotonous character is lost, and the range when seen as a whole is in the highest degree diversified and impressive. And the wide openings in the western hills, as they ascend from the Jordan-valley, give such extensive glimpses into the heart of the country, that not merely the general range, but particular localities can be discerned with ease. From a point above the Dead Sea, Bethlehem and Jerusalem can both be seen in the same prospect. From the Castle of Rubad, north of the Jabbok, are distinctly visible Lebanon, the Sea of Galilee, Esdraelon in its full extent, Carmel, the Mediterranean, and the whole range of Judah and Ephraim. "It is the finest view," to use the words of the traveller from whom most of the information contained in this chapter is derived, "that I ever saw in any part of the world." This view, so multiplied and so beautiful, must have been the very prospect which presented itself to the eyes, first of Abraham, and then of Jacob, as they descended from these summits on their way from Mesopotamia ; it must have been substantially the same as that which was unfolded before the eyes of Balaam and Moses, when, as we have seen, the Sacred Narrative draws out these several features in the utmost detail. It is in all probability the view which furnished the framework of the vision of "all the kingdoms of the world" which was revealed in a moment of time to Him who was driven up from the valley below to these mountains at the opening of His public ministry. Difficult as it may be to decide the precise spot intended by the name of Pisgah, the accounts given of these trans-Jordanic heights show that this matters little ; the whole range is one vast

Pisgah, with the deep shades of the Jordan-valley beneath, the Land of Promise beyond ; whilst close around lies the beautiful country, so long the halting-place though not the permanent home of Israel, after his weary passage through the Arabian Desert.

III. For, again, it was the frontier-land of Palestine, and therefore, through all its history, the first conquered, the first lost, by the hosts of Israel. The great table-lands, the 'cultivated fields' of Moab and Ammon, as distinct from the "wilderness" into which these lands die on the east, and the 'desert-plains' of Moab in the Jordan-valley at the foot of the mountains,—were the rich prize first wrested from Moab and Ammon by the Amorite kings, and from them by the Israelites under Moses ; Ammon and Moab themselves remaining uninjured in the border of the wilderness which they still occupied. This first stage of the conquest of Canaan is too briefly described to receive any detailed elucidation from the localities, even if they were better known than they are. All that we can discern is the approach of Israel through the eastern Desert skirting the confines of Moab and Ammon ; and at last meeting the Amorite king "in the wilderness" at Jahaz. There was fought the first pitched battle between Israel and Canaan, and the victory was followed by the subjugation of the whole kingdom, from the torrent of the Arnon on the south, to the torrent of the Jabbok on the north. Eastward the unconquered tribe of Ammon still compressed their limits ; but the whole of the rich pasture was theirs, up to the point where it melts away into the steppes of the wilderness. Within the range of this ancient kingdom of Sihon were planted the tribes of Reuben and Gad. Another step had to be taken before a fitting settlement could be procured for the powerful fragment of Manasseh, which had joined its fortunes to these two tribes. The mountains of Bashan inclose a circular tableland, since called from its rocky ground, "Trachonitis," or the rough, "Leja," or the rocky, but in that earlier time "Argob" —or (apparently from the ring of rock around it) "Chebel" or "the rope." In this fastness lingered the "remnant" of the aboriginal race of giants which Ammon had already dispossessed from the south. Against this ancient people, headed by their giant king Og, advanced the hosts of Israel, in alliance with Ammon, thirsting doubtless for revenge upon their former enemy. Og was drawn from the tableland of Argob into the plain, and immediately at the entrance into his natural citadel at Edrei—a spot still retaining nearly the same name—was fought the decisive battle which broke his power ; Ammon carried away the trophy of the king's

gigantic bedstead ; but to Israel fell the territory of the high mountain-tract of Gilead and Bashan, from the deep ravine of the Jabbok up to the base of Hermon. Moab and Ammon still remained independent allies, south and east of the Israelite settlements. Both fell before David ; Moab, evidently the weaker, first ; Ammon, not without a long resistance, which made the siege and fall of its capital, Rabbath-Ammon, the crowning act of David's conquests. The ruins which now adorn the "royal city" are of a later Roman date ; but the commanding position of the citadel remains ; and the unusual sight of a living stream, abounding in fish, marks the significance of Joab's song of victory—"I have fought against Rabbah, and have taken the city of waters."

As it was thus first occupied by the Israelites, so it subsequently became the border-land between Palestine and the nations of eastern Asia. From its midway position it necessarily bore the brunt of all the incursions of the Syrians of Damascus, when Ramoth-Gilead became the scene of so many sieges and battles, as the fortress for which both kingdoms contended ; and for the same reason it was the first to resist and the first to fall before the arms of the Assyrian Tiglath-Pileser. In this respect the range of Gilead remained faithful to the description given by the two Patriarchs who of old parted on its summit ; as the boundary line between the tribes of Canaan and those of Mesopotamia : "This heap is a witness between me and thee this day. . . . The God of Abraham, and the God of Nahor, judge betwixt us."

IV. From this aspect of the country, we naturally pass to its isolation from the rest of Palestine. However much connected by vicinity and race with their western kinsmen the dwellers in eastern Palestine have always been distinct. It has been to the main body of the people, what Scotland or Ireland has been to the chief course of English history. Inhabited from the earliest times by races of a stock separate and even hostile, the tablelands east of the Jordan were never occupied by the nations on the west, except through acts of aggression and conquest. The Amorite chiefs, Og and Sihon, established themselves on the acclivities of these heights, but only to be themselves dislodged in turn by the Israelites ; the Amorite kings of Palestine proper not striking a blow in defence of their trans-Jordanic brethren. And the Israelite tribes who settled there hardly ever exercised any influence over their countrymen on the western banks, were carried into captivity long before them, and were succeeded by settlers not of Jewish, but of Gentile origin ; and the whole country is, as has been already observed, a comparatively

unknown region to the present inhabitants of Palestine. This separation is in part owing to the great natural rent which the Jordan has created between the two districts ; but it is also owing to some peculiarities of the country itself.

V. It was the forest-land, the pasture-land of Palestine. The smooth downs received a special name, expressive of their contrast with the rough and rocky soil of the west. The "oaks" of Bashan, which still fill the traveller with admiration, were to the prophets and psalmists of Israel the chief glory of the vegetation of their common country. The vast herds of wild cattle which then wandered through the woods, as those of Scotland through its ancient forests, were, in like manner, at once the terror and pride of the Israelite,—"the fat bulls of Bashan." The King of Moab was but a great "sheepmaster," and "rendered" for tribute "an hundred thousand lambs, and an hundred thousand rams with the wool." And still the countless herds and flocks may be seen, droves of cattle moving on like troops of soldiers, descending at sunset to drink of the springs—literally, in the language of the Prophet, "rams and lambs, and goats, and bullocks, all of them fatlings of Bashan."

It is striking to remember, that with this land in their possession—a land of which travellers say, that in beauty and fertility it as far surpasses western Palestine as Devonshire surpasses Cornwall—the Israelites nevertheless pressed forwards through the Jordan-valley, up the precipitous ravines of Jericho and Ai ; and settled in the rugged mountains of Judah and Ephraim, never to return to those beautiful regions which had been their first home in the Promised Land. "The Lord had made them ride on the high places of the earth, that they might eat the increase of the fields ; and he made them to suck honey out of the 'cliff' and oil out of the flinty rock ; butter of 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 . . . the pure blood of the grape." So, we are told, spoke their Prophet-leader, whilst they were still in enjoyment of this rich country. Yet forwards they went. It was the same high calling—whether we name it impulse, destiny, or Providence—which had already drawn Abraham from Mesopotamia, and Moses from the Court of Memphis. They knew not what was before them, they knew not what depended on their crossing the Jordan, on their becoming a settled and agricultural, instead of a nomadic, people—on their reaching to the shores of the sea, and from those shores receiving the influences of the Western world, and sending forth to that Western world their influences in

return. They knew not ; but we know ; and the more we hear of the beauty of the trans-Jordanic territory, the greater is the wonder,—the greater, we may almost say, should be our thankfulness,—that they exchanged it for Palestine itself ; inferior as it might naturally have seemed to them, in every point, except for the high purposes to which they were called, and for which their permanent settlement on the eastern side of the Jordan would, humanly speaking, have wholly unfitted them.

What a change would thus have been made in their destiny is best seen by following up the history of the tribes which did so separate themselves from their brethren.

The great excellence of the eastern tableland was, as has been said, in pasture and in forest, “a place for cattle.” In the encampment of Israel two tribes, Reuben and Gad, were pre-eminently pastoral. They had “a very great multitude of cattle.” For this they desired the land, and for this it was given to them, “that they might build cities for their little ones, and *folds for their sheep*.” In no other case is the relation between the territory and its occupiers so expressly laid down, and such it continued to be to the end. From first to last they alone of the tribes never emerged from the state of their Patriarchal ancestors. When Joshua bade them return to their possessions, it was not to their “houses,” but to their “tents.” When, on their return, they reached the Jordan, the boundary between themselves and their more settled brethren, they erected, like true Children of the Desert, the huge stone of division to mark the frontier, which their more civilised kinsmen mistook for an altar ; just as Jacob and Laban had in earlier times raised a similar cairn on the heights of Gilead ; just as the traveller now sees the “Hajr 'Alawin,”—the pile of stones that denotes the boundary of the 'Alawin and of the Tawarah tribes—at the head of the Gulf of 'Akaba. Of their subsequent history this is still the prevailing feature. Reuben is the most purely nomadic, and, therefore, the most transitory. He is to the eastern tribes what Simeon is to the western. “Unstable as water,” he vanishes away into a mere Arabian tribe ; “his men are few,”—it is all that he can do “to live and not die.” We hear of nothing beyond the multiplication of “their cattle in the land of Gilead,” their “wars” with the Bedouin “sons of Hagar,” their spoils of “camels fifty thousand, and of sheep two hundred and fifty thousand, and of asses two thousand.” In the great struggles of the nation he never took part. The complaint against him in the Song of Deborah is the summary of his whole history. “By the ‘streams’ of Reuben,”—

that is, by the fresh streams which descend from the eastern hills into the Jordan and the Dead Sea, on whose banks the Bedouin chiefs then, as now, met to debate—"in the 'streams' of Reuben great were the 'decrees.' Why dwellest thou among the sheep 'troughs' to hear the 'pipings' of the flocks? By the 'streams' of Reuben great were the searchings of heart." Gad has a more distinctive character, something of the lion-like aspect of Judah. In the forest region south of the Jabbok, "he dwelt as a lion." Out of his tribe came the eleven valiant chiefs who crossed the fords of the Jordan in flood-time to join the outlawed David, "whose faces were like the faces of lions, and were as swift as the 'gazelles' upon the mountains." These heroes were but the Bedouins of their time. The very name of Gad expressed the wild aspect which he presented to the wild tribes of the east. "Gad is a 'troop of plunderers'; a troop of plunderers shall 'plunder' him, but he shall 'plunder' at the last." The northern outposts of the eastern tribes were entrusted to that portion of Manasseh which had originally attacked and expelled the Amorite inhabitants from Gilead. The same martial spirit which fitted the western Manasseh to defend the passes of Esdraelon fitted "Machir, the firstborn of Manasseh, the father of Gilead," to defend the passes of Haurân and Anti-Libanus; "because he was a man of war, therefore he had Gilead and Bashan." But he partook also of the pastoral character common to Gad and Reuben. The sixty, or the thirty, "towns" of Jair, the ancient chief of the tribe of Manasseh, were not called cities, but Bedouin 'villages or tents.' Such as was the general character of the tribe, were also its individual heroes, who, at rare intervals, acquired a national importance. How much more intelligible does Jephthah become, when we remember that he was raised up, not from the regular settlements of Judah and Ephraim, but from the half-civilised region of the eastern tribes; in the wildness of his freebooting life, in the rashness and ignorance of his vow, in the savage vengeance which he exacted from the insolence of Ephraim, a Bedouin chief rather than an Israelitish Judge. And, yet more, how lively an image do we form of the grandest and the most romantic character that Israel ever produced—Elijah the Tishbite—when we recollect that he, too, came from the forests of Gilead, and found his first refuge in the clefts of the 'Cherith'; that the shaggy hair, the rough camel's hair mantle girt by the leathern girdle round his naked body; the fleetness of foot, with which, "when the hand of the Lord was upon him," he outran the chariot of Ahab; the sudden appearances and

disappearances, which baffled all the zeal of his enemies and his friends to discover him; the long wanderings into the Desert of Southern Arabia to "Horeb, the Mount of God"; all are special characteristics of the Bedouin life, which were dignified but not destroyed by his high prophetic mission. And the fact that this special mission was entrusted, not to a dweller in royal city or Prophetic school, but to one who, in manner of life and in outward aspect, and to a great extent by his place of birth, was a genuine son of the Desert, is in remarkable accordance with the dispensations of Providence both in earlier and later times. Elijah the Gileadite, in his witness for the unity of God against the idolatries of Phœnicia, was the fitting successor of those who had been the heralds of the same truth before; the wandering chief from Ur of the Chaldees, the Arabian Shepherd in Mount Sinai.

VI. There is one final and touching interest with which the "land beyond the Jordan" is invested, by virtue of its position, as a portion, and yet not a portion, of the land of Israel. It was emphatically the land of exile,—the refuge of exiles. One place there was in its beautiful uplands, consecrated by the presence of God in primeval times. "Mahanaim" marked the spot where Jacob had divided his people into "two 'hosts,'" and seen the "Two Hosts" of the angelic vision. To this scene of the great crisis in their ancestor's life the thoughts of his descendants returned in after-years, whenever foreign conquest or civil discord drove them from their native hills on the west of the Jordan. The first instance was when Abner rallied the Israelites round the unfortunate Ishbosheth, after the rout of Gilboa, and "brought him over" the Jordan "to Mahanaim." The second was when David fled from Absalom. Then, for the only time since the conquest, the whole interest of Israelite history is transferred to the trans-Jordanic territory. The scenes of that mournful period are but imperfectly brought before us; but so far as they are, they agree with all that we know of the localities. David crossed the Jordan by the fords of Jericho, and ascended the eastern heights till he came to Mahanaim. The people that came with him spread themselves out beyond the cultivated tablelands into the "wilderness" of the steppes of Haurân. Whilst they were there, "hungry and weary and thirsty," the chiefs of the surrounding tribes, Shobi of Ammon, and Machir and Barzillai of Manasseh, brought the produce which formed the pride of their rich lands and pastures—"wheat and barley, and flour, and parched corn, and beans, and lentiles, and parched pulse, and *honey*, and *butter*, and *sheep*, and *cheese of kine*." The "'forest' of Ephraim," in which

the decisive battle was fought, was, as the narrative implies, also on the east of the Jordan, and if so, the thick woods of oak and terebinth curiously illustrate the defeat and death of Absalom; "the 'forest' devouring more people than the sword," and the prince himself caught in "the thick boughs of 'the' great 'terebinth.'"

The refuge that the trans-Jordanic hills afforded to David they afforded also to David's greater Son. "Peræa,"—"the land beyond" (the Jordan),—as it was called in the Greek nomenclature of its Roman conquerors, still occupied the same relation, secluded and retired from the busy world which filled the neighbourhood of Jerusalem and of the Sea of Galilee. Thither, as we have seen, our Lord probably retired after His baptism; thither, also, in the interval of danger which immediately preceded the end of His earthly course; to those hills, rising beyond the deep valley of the Jordan, as to the world beyond the grave, the eyes of Martha and Mary were turned, waiting for the coming of their Lord.

To this same characteristic is to be traced its last historical significance. Somewhere on the slopes of Gilead, near the scene of Jacob's first view of the land of his descendants and of the capital of the exiled David, was Pella, so called by the Macedonian Greeks from the springing fountain, which likened it to the birth-place of their own Alexander. This was the city well known in Christian history as the refuge of the little band which here took shelter when the armies of Titus gathered round Jerusalem. The view from it is thus described: "In the foreground at my feet was the Jordan, flowing through its wood of terebinths. On the other side rose gently the plain of Beisan, surmounted by the high eminence of that name. In the distance were the mountains of Gilboa. . . . Between Gilboa and the mountains of Galilee the eye wanders over the wild plain of Jezreel, till it rests upon the faint blue cliffs of the extremity of Carmel which forms its western boundary."

We may dwell on this view, for it is one which must have been again and again reproduced under like circumstances. From these heights Abner in his flight from the Philistines, and David in his flight from Absalom, and the Israelites on their way to Babylon, and the Christian Jews of Pella, caught the last glimpse of their familiar mountains. There is one plaintive strain which sums up all these feelings,—the 42nd Psalm. Its date and authorship are uncertain, but the place is beyond doubt the trans-Jordanic hills, which always behold, as they are always beheld from, western Palestine. As, before the eyes of the exile, the 'gazelle' of the forests of Gilead

panted after the fresh streams of water which thence descend to the Jordan, so his soul panted after God, from whose outward presence he was shut out. The river, with its winding rapids, "deep calling to deep," lay between him and his home. All that he could now do was to remember the past, as he stood "in the land of Jordan," as he saw the peaks of "Hermon," as he found himself on the eastern heights of Mizar, which reminded him of his banishment and solitude. As we began, so we end this brief account of the Peræan hills. They are the "Pisgah" of the earlier history: to the later history they occupy the pathetic relation that has been immortalised in the name of the long ridge from which the first and the last view of Granada is obtained; they are "the Last Sigh" of the Israelite exile.

CHAPTER IX

THE PLAIN OF ESDRAELON

ON descending from the hills of Manasseh, the traveller leaves the province of Samaria, and enters on that of Galilee, embracing two spheres of wonderful, though most different, interest,—the great battle-field of Jewish history, and the chief scene of Our Lord's ministrations. It is the former of these two distinct spheres that first claims our attention.

To any one who has traversed the almost undistinguishable undulations of hill and valley from Hebron to Samaria, it is a striking contrast and relief to come upon a natural feature so remarkable as the plain of Esdraelon. No better test of Dr. Robinson's high geographical powers can be given than an ocular comparison of his description of this plain with its actual localities. There are various points from which it can be seen to great advantage. The heights above Jenin, the summit of Tabor, and the eastern end of Carmel, may be especially mentioned. Its peculiarities are briefly told. It is a wide rent of about twelve miles in width, between the mass of southern Palestine which we have just left, and the bolder mountains of northern Palestine, which are in fact the roots of Lebanon. It consists of an uneven plain, running right from the shores of the Mediterranean Sea on the west, to the valley of the Jordan on the east. Its central and widest portion reaches straight across without interruption from the hills of Samaria to those of Galilee. This is what, for the sake of distinction, may be specially termed "the plain of Megiddo." On the west and the east, though never losing its free and open character, it is broken and contracted. On the west it is narrowed into a pass through which flows its chief stream, the Kishon; and beyond this the plain opens out again, as already described, round the bay of Acre, watered by a stream of shorter course, the Belus, descending from the hills of Galilee immediately above. On the east it rises into a slight elevation which forms the watershed of the country,—a peculiarity which it shares with the vale of Shechem and

the vale of Coele-Syria, where the rise which divides the streams is equally imperceptible. From thence, on the one side, descends the Kishon ; its winding course, from which it derives its name, indicating at the same time the almost uninterrupted level through which it passes. Its perennial spring, a full rushing stream, is only five miles from the sea. On the other side, towards the Jordan, descend three branches having much the same relation to the main body of the plain as the "legs," as they are called, of Como and Lecco bear to the main body of the Lake of Como. Each of these branches is bounded by nearly isolated ranges, rising out of the plain itself, namely, Mount Gilboa, that commonly called Little Hermon by English travellers, but "Dûhy" by the natives, and Mount Tabor, which is an offshoot from the hills of Galilee. The southernmost of these branches is a cul-de-sac. The central branch makes a rapid descent to the Jordan, and is more properly known by the name of the "Valley of Jezreel," which, in its Greek form of "Esdraelon," has been communicated to the whole plain. The northernmost branch, between Little Hermon and Tabor, also descends to the Jordan, but, in so doing, opens to the north-east into a side-plain, as it were, enclosed between the hills of Galilee and those which immediately skirt the Sea of Tiberias, and distinguished by the mountain called the Horns of Hattin.

The aspect of the plain itself in spring-time is of a vast waving cornfield ; olive-trees here and there springing from it. Perhaps its greatest peculiarity is the sight of a prospect so wide, so long, and so rich, with so slight a trace of water. The Kishon is till within a few miles of its mouth a mere winter torrent. The ranges of Gilboa and Little Hermon, as well as the two masses of hill which bound it on the north and south, are almost entirely bare. Of the two great exceptions, Carmel on the south-west, and Tabor on the north-east, I shall speak separately. In all of them, however, at least as viewed from the heights of Manasseh, a more varied outline is presented, which indicates an approach to a new form of country. Lastly, the plain and the mountain-sides are dotted with villages, almost all retaining their ancient names, and situated for the most part, (not like those of Judæa on hill-tops, or Samaria in deep valleys, but) as in Philistia, on the slopes of the ranges which intersect and bound the plain, or else on slight eminences rising out of it. Many of these were in the possession of the Canaanites, and two of them, Megiddo and Bethshan, the one guarding the western, the other the eastern end of the plain, remained strongholds down to the times of the Romans, under the names of Leg and Scythopolis.

These are the general features of this famous plain. Their connection with its history is obvious.

I. First, a glance at its situation will show that, to a certain extent, though not in an equal degree, it formed the same kind of separation between the mass of Central Palestine and the tribes of the extreme north, as the Valley of the Jordan effected between the same mass and the trans-Jordanic tribes on the east. We shall have occasion to recur to this point in speaking of Galilee, properly so called.

II. Secondly, it must always have been the main passage for egress and regress of those nations, whether civilised or migratory, who, repelled from the mountain fastnesses of Palestine, took up their position for attack or defence in the level country. And bounded as it is by the hills of Palestine on both north and south, it would naturally become the arena of war between the lowlanders who trusted in their chariots, and the Israelite highlanders of the neighbouring heights. To this cause mainly it owes its celebrity, as the battle-field of the world, which has, through its adoption into the language of the Apocalypse, passed into a universal proverb. If that mysterious book proceeded from the hand of a Galilean fisherman, it is the more easy to understand why, with the scene of those many battles constantly before him, he should have drawn the figurative name of the final conflict between the hosts of good and evil from "the place which is called in the Hebrew tongue, Armageddon," that is, 'the city or mountain of Megiddo.'

It is remarkable, that none of the battles which secured the conquest of Palestine to the Israelites were fought in this field. Most, as we have seen, took place in the south; one only in the north, and that far away from Esdraelon. This was but a natural consequence of the general inferiority of the cavalry of Israel. Whenever the Israelites in aggressive movements could choose their arena, they selected their own element, the mountains and the mountain-passes. The battles of Esdraelon, on the other hand, were almost all forced upon them by adverse or invading armies; and though some of their chief victories were won here, yet this plain is associated to the mind of an Israelite with mournful at least as much as with joyful recollections: two kings perished on its soil; and the two saddest dirges of the Jewish nation were evoked by the defeats of Gilboa and Megiddo. Accordingly, it is not till the time when the Canaanitish nations had begun to recover from the panic left by the victorious arms of Joshua, that we find the beginnings of the long series of the battles of Esdraelon which have lasted ever since.

1. The first of these occasions was that in which "the Lord delivered Sisera into the hand of Barak." The double account of that great event in prose and verse enables us to fix with unusual precision its several points and circumstances. The oppressor was Jabin, king of Hazor, successor and namesake of the chief who had roused the northern confederation against Joshua. The northern regions, therefore, of Palestine, in the neighbourhood of his own capital, the northern tribes, Zebulun, Naphtali and Issachar, were those which he would chiefly harass. On them accordingly the brunt of the battle fell. But they were joined also by the adjacent tribes of Central Palestine—Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin. Those only of the extreme west, south, and east, were wanting. Both armies descended alike from the mountains of Naphtali, but they were "drawn" to opposite points in the plain. Barak and Deborah, with their small body of devoted troops, were gathered on the broad summit of Tabor; the host of Sisera, with its nine hundred iron chariots, naturally took up its position on the level plain of Megiddo, on its south-western extremity by the banks of the Kishon, and near Taanach, the name of which is still preserved in a village on the slope of the hills skirting the plain on the south. It was one of the towns which the Canaanites had still retained; and it would, therefore, be a natural rallying point for the great Canaanite host of Jabin, hard by "the waters of Megiddo," probably the streams that flow from the hills on which Megiddo stands into the channel of the Kishon. The Prophetess, on the summit of Tabor, gave the signal of the battle, when Barak was to rush down from his secure position and attack the army in the plain. At this critical moment (so Josephus directly informs us, and so we learn indirectly from the Song of Deborah), a tremendous storm of sleet and hail gathered from the east, and burst over the plain of Esdraelon, driving full in the faces of the advancing Canaanites. "The stars in their courses fought against Sisera," and as "the rains descended," "the wind blew," and "the flood came"—the flood of the torrent; and "the stream" rose in its bed, and "beat vehemently" against the chariots and horses entangled on its level shores, and "the 'torrent' of Kishon swept them away; that ancient 'torrent,' the 'torrent' Kishon." In that wild confusion, when the strength of the Canaanite "was trodden down," and "the horsehoofs were broken by the means of the pransings, the pransings of their mighty ones," the captain of the host sprang down from his war-chariot, and fled away on his feet. He fled into the northern mountains, to a spot which he hoped would be friendly. In the upland basin of Kedesh,

far away from their settlements of the south, a tribe of the Bedouin Kenites had pitched their black tents under an ancient oak or terebinth, deriving its name, it would seem, from the strange sight of their encampment amidst the regular cities and villages of the mountains. It is needless to pursue the story; all the world knows the sight which Jael, the chieftainess of the house of Heber, showed to Barak, when she lifted up the curtain of the tent, and showed him his enemy dead, with the tent-peg driven through his temples.

2. The next battle was of a very different kind, and one of which the present aspect of the plain can give a clearer image. No one in present days has passed this plain without seeing or hearing of the assaults of the Bedouin Arabs, as they stream in from the adjacent Desert. Here and there, by the well-side, or amongst the bushes of the mountains, their tents or their wild figures may always be seen, the terror alike of the peaceful villager and the defenceless traveller. What we now see on a small scale constantly is but a miniature representation of the one great visitation which lived for ages afterwards in the memory of the Jewish people; the invasion, not of the civilised nations of Assyria or Egypt, or of the Canaanite cities, but of the wild population of the Desert itself, "the Midianites, the Amalekites, and the Children of the East." They came up with all the accompaniments of Bedouin life, "with their cattle, their tents, and their camels"; they came up and "encamped" against the Israelites, after "Israel had sown," and "destroyed the increase of the earth," and all the cattle [in the maritime plain] "till thou come unto Gaza; as 'locusts' for multitude both they and their camels without number." The very aspect and bearing of their sheykhs is preserved to us. The two lesser chiefs ("princes" as they are called in our version) in their names of Oreb and Zeeb, "the Raven" and "the Wolf," present curious counterparts of the title of "the Leopard," now given to their modern successor, Abd-el-Aziz, chief of the Bedouins beyond the Jordan. The two higher sheykhs or "kings," Zebah and Zalmunna, are mounted on dromedaries, themselves gay with scarlet mantles, and crescent-ornaments and golden earrings, their dromedaries with ornaments and chains like themselves; and, as in outward appearance, so in the high spirit and lofty bearing which they showed at their last hour, they truly represented the Arabs who scour the same regions at the present day.

Such an incursion produced on the Israelites amongst their ordinary wars a similar impression to that of the invasion of the Huns amongst the comparatively civilised invasions of the

Teutonic tribes. They fled into their mountain fastnesses and caves as the only refuge ; the wheat even of the upland valleys of Manasseh had to be concealed from the rapacious plunderers. The whole country was thus for the first time in the hands of the Arabs. But it was in the plain of Esdraelon that then, as now, the Children of the Desert fixed their head-quarters. "In the valley of Jezreel," that is, in the central eastern branch of the plain, commanding the long descent to the Jordan, and thus to their own eastern deserts, "they lay all along the valley like 'locusts' for multitude," and "their camels"—unwonted sight in the pastures of Palestine—"were without number, as the sand by the sea-side" on the wide margin of the Bay of Acre, "for multitude." As in the invasion of Sisera, so now, the nearest tribes were those which were first moved by a sense of their common danger. To the noblest of the tribe of Manasseh—to one whose appearance was "as the son of a king," and whose brothers, already ruthlessly slain by the wild invaders on the adjacent heights of Tabor, were "each one like the children of kings"—was entrusted the charge of gathering together the forces of his countrymen. All Manasseh was with him ; and from the other side of the plain there came Zebulun and Naphtali, and even the reluctant Asher to join him. On the slope of Mount Gilboa the Israelites were encamped by a spring, possibly the same as that elsewhere called 'the spring of Jezreel,' but here, from the well-known trial by which Gideon tested the energy of his army, called "the 'spring' of trembling." On the northern side of the valley, but apparently deeper down in the descent towards the Jordan, by one of those slight eminences which have been before described as characteristic of the whole plain, was spread the host of the Midianites. It was night when from the mountain side Gideon and his servant descended to the vast encampment. All along the valley, within and around the tents, the thousands of Arabs lay wrapt in sleep, or resting from their day's plunder, and their innumerable camels couched for the night in deep repose round about them. One of the sleepers, startled from his slumbers, was telling his dream to his fellow,—a characteristic and expressive dream for a Bedouin, even without its terrible interpretation ; that a cake of barley bread, from those rich corn-fields, those numerous threshing-floors of the peaceful inhabitants whom they had conquered, rolled into the camp of Midian and struck a tent, and overturned it, so that it lay along on the ground. Reassured by this good omen, Gideon returned for his three hundred trusty followers, the trumpets were blown, the torches blazed forth, the shout of Israel,

always terrible, always like "the shout of a king," broke through the stillness of the midnight air; and the sleepers sprang from their rest, and ran hither and thither with the dissonant "cries" so peculiar to the Arab race. "And the Lord set every man's sword against his fellow, even through all the host"; and the host fled headlong down the descent to the Jordan, to the spots known as the 'house of the Acacia' (Beth-shittah), and the 'margin' of the 'meadow of the dance' (Abel-meholah). These spots were in the Jordan-valley, as their names indicate, under the mountains of Ephraim. To the Ephraimites, therefore, messengers were sent to intercept the northern fords of the Jordan at Beth-barah. There the second conflict took place, and Oreb and Zeeb were seized and put to the sword, the one on a rock, the other at a winepress, on the spot where they were taken. The two higher sheykhs, Zebah and Zalmunna, had already passed before the Ephraimites appeared; Gideon, therefore, who had now reached the fords from the scene of his former victory, pursued them into the eastern territory of his own tribe Manasseh. The first village which he reached in the Jordan-valley was that which from the "booths" of Jacob's ancient encampment bore the name of Succoth: the next higher up in the hills, with its lofty watch-tower, was that which from the vision of the same patriarch bore the name of Peniel, the 'Face of God.' Far up in the eastern Desert—amongst their own Bedouin countrymen "dwelling in tents"—"the host" of Zebah and Zalmunna "was secure" when Gideon burst upon them. Here a third victory completed the conquest. The two chiefs were caught and slain; the tower of Peniel was raised; and the princes of Succoth were scourged with the thorny branches of the acacia groves of their own valley."

This success was perhaps the most signal ever obtained by the arms of Israel; at least, the one which most lived in the memory of the people. The 'spring' of Gideon's encampment, the rock and the winepress which witnessed the death of the two Midianite chiefs, were called after the names then received; and the Psalmists and Prophets long afterwards referred with exultation to the fall of "Oreb and Zeeb, of Zebah and Zalmunna, who said, Let us take to ourselves the 'pastures' of God in possession"—"the breaking of the rod of the oppressor, as in the day of Midian." Gideon himself was by it raised to almost royal state, and the establishment of the hereditary monarchy all but anticipated in him and his family.

3. From the most memorable victory we pass to the most

memorable defeat of Israel. The next great engagement which took place in this plain, and nearly on the same spot, was that of Saul with the Philistines. The Philistines, twice defeated in the mountains of Judæa, appear to have gathered all their strength for a final effort, and having marched up the sea-coast, to have encamped, like the Midianites, in that part of the plain properly called "the valley of Jezreel." Their encampment was fixed on the northern side of the valley, on a spot in one passage called Aphek, and in another Shunem. The name of Aphek has perished, but that of Shunem is preserved, with a slight alteration, in a village which still exists on the slope of the range called Little Hermon; possibly the same as the "Hill of Moreh," on the north of the valley, under which had been pitched the tents of Zebah and Zalmunna. On the opposite side, nearly on the site of Gideon's camp, on the rise of Mount Gilboa, hard by the "spring of Jezreel," was the army of Saul, the Israelites as usual keeping to the heights, whilst their enemies clung to the plain. It was whilst the two armies were in this position, that Saul made the disguised and adventurous journey by night over the shoulder of the ridge on which the Philistines were encamped, to visit the Witch at Endor, situated immediately on the other side of the range, and immediately facing Tabor. Large caves and rock-hewn tombs still perforate the rocky sides of the hill. The mention of the "house" of the necromancer forbids us to press these caverns into connection with the narrative.

The onset took place the next morning. The Philistines instantly drove the Israelites up the slopes of Gilboa, and however widely the rout may have carried the mass of the fugitives down the valley to the Jordan, the thick of the fight must have been on the heights themselves; for it was "on Mount Gilboa" that the wild Amalekite, wandering like his modern countrymen over the upland waste, "chanced" to see the dying king; and "on Mount Gilboa" the corpses of Saul and his three sons were found by the Philistines the next day. So truly has David caught the peculiarity and position of the scene which he had himself visited only a few days before the battle—"The beauty of Israel is slain upon *thy high places*:" "O Jonathan, thou wast slain upon *thine high places*," as though the bitterness of death and defeat were aggravated by being not in the broad and hostile plain, but on their own familiar and friendly mountains. And with an equally striking touch of truth, as the image of that bare and bleak and jagged ridge rose before him with its one green strip of tableland, where probably the last struggle was fought, —the more bare and bleak from its unusual contrast with the

fertile plain from which it springs—he broke out into the pathetic strain: “Ye mountains of Gilboa, let there be no rain, neither let there be dew upon you, nor *fields of offerings*: for there the shield of the mighty was vilely cast away,—the shield of Saul, as though he had not been anointed with oil.”

On the slope of this range—still looking down into the Valley of Jezreel, but commanding also the view of the Jordan—a high spur of rock projects, on which stands the village of Beisân, once the city of Bethshan. It was one of the Canaanite strongholds which had never been taken by the Israelites, and accordingly was at once open to the victorious Philistines. They stripped and dismembered the royal corpse. The head was sent to the great Temple of Dagon, probably at Ashdod; but the armour was dedicated in the Temple of the Canaanite Ashtaroth at Bethshan, and the headless body with the corpses of his three sons fastened to the wall, overhanging the open place in front of the city gate. That wall overlooked the valley of the Jordan, into which the Valley of Jezreel there opens. In the hills of Gilead, which are seen rising immediately beyond, was a town which Saul had once saved from a cruel enemy. The inhabitants of Jabesh-Gilead remembered their benefactor. Their “valiant men” came under cover of the “night,” across the Jordan, carried off the bodies, and buried them under ‘the terebinth’ of their own city, where they lay till they were disinterred by David to be buried in their ancestral cave at Zelah in Benjamin.

4. Two more battles, hardly less mournful than that of Saul, close the series. The one fatal to the kingdom of Israel, the other to the kingdom of Judah. The first is but glanced at in the prophetic, without any notice of it in the historical books. When Shalmanezar came up against Hosea, “the bow of Israel,”—the archery for which the northern tribes were still famous—“was broken in the Valley of Jezreel.” The particular spot is also indicated. Shalmanezar laid waste Beth-Arbel, and dashed its inhabitants against the stones. This is most probably Arbel, described by Eusebius as nine miles from Legio. The second battle is told in greater detail. It was in the last days of the Jewish monarchy, when the northern kingdom had been already destroyed, that Palestine was first exposed to the disastrous fate which involved her in so long a series of troubles from this time forward—that of being the debatable ground between Egypt and the further East; first, under the Pharaohs and the rulers of Babylon; then under the Ptolemies and Seleucidæ. “In the days of Josiah, Pharaoh-Necho king of Egypt, went up against the king of Assyria to the Euphrates,”—possibly landing his

army at Accho, more probably, as the expression seems to indicate, following the track of his predecessor Psammethichus, and advancing up the maritime plain till he turned into the plain of Esdraelon, thence to penetrate into the passes of the Lebanon. "King Josiah," in self-defence, and perhaps as an ally of the Assyrian king, "went against him." The engagement took place in the central portion of the plain—the scene of Sisera's defeat—"the plain of Megiddo." The "Egyptian archers," in their long array, so well known from their sculptured monuments, "shot at King Josiah," as he rode in state in his royal chariot, and "he was sore wounded," and placed in his "second chariot" of reserve, and carried to Jerusalem to die. In that one tragical event, all other notices of the battle are absorbed. The exact scene of the encounter is not known. It would seem, however, to have been at a spot called, after the name of a Syrian divinity, "Hadad-Rimmon," that the king fell. On this consecrated place were uttered the lamentations, continued at Jerusalem by one whose strains were only inferior in pathos to those of David over Saul; "and all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah, and Jeremiah lamented for Josiah; and all the singing men and the singing women spake of Josiah in their lamentations to this day, and made them an ordinance in Israel: and, behold, they are written in the Lamentations."

Other battles there have been in later times—in the Crusades, and in the wars of Napoleon—which confirm the ancient celebrity of the Plain of Esdraelon; but of these one only deserves to be named in conjunction with those of which I have been speaking—that of Hattin, which will be best considered elsewhere.

III. But there is another aspect under which the Plain of Esdraelon must be considered. Every traveller has remarked on the richness of its soil and the exuberance of its crops. Once more the palm appears, waving its stately tresses over the village enclosures. These enclosures are divided each from each by masses of wild artichoke. The very weeds are a sign of what in better hands the vast plain might become. The thoroughfare which it forms for every passage, from east to west, from north to south, made it in peaceful times the most available and eligible possession of Palestine. It was the frontier of Zebulun—"Rejoice, O Zebulun, in thy goings out." But it was the special portion of Issachar; and in its condition, thus exposed to the good and evil fate of the beaten highway of Palestine, we read the fortunes of the tribe which, for the sake of this possession, consented to sink into the half-nomadic state of the Bedouins who wandered

over it,—into the condition of tributaries to the Canaanite tribes, whose iron chariots drove victoriously through it. “Rejoice, O Issachar, in thy *tents* . . . they shall suck of the abundance of the seas [from Acre], and of the [glassy] treasures hid in the sands [of the torrent Belus]. . . . Issachar is a strong ass, couching down between two ‘troughs’: and he saw that rest was good, and the land that it was pleasant; and bowed his shoulder to bear, and became a servant unto tribute.” In the gathering of the northern tribes against Sisera and the Midianites, the name of Issachar is omitted; and although, in the former crisis, they were not wholly absent, yet it was only “the ‘chiefs’ of Issachar” who “were with Deborah.” But still they were looked up to—perhaps on account of this very choice of land—as “men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do”; and they with the neighbouring tribes, were foremost in sending to David, on his accession, all the good things that their soil produced, “bread, and meat, and meal, cakes of figs, bunches of raisins, and wine, and oil, on asses, and on camels, and on mules, and on oxen, . . . for there was joy in Israel.”

In accordance with this general character of the plain were some of its special localities. The park-like aspect which has already been noticed in the hills between Shechem and Samaria, breaks out again in this fertile district. The same luxuriant character which had rendered this whole region the favourite haunt of the four northern tribes, rendered it also the favourite resort of the later kings of Israel. Of all the numerous villages that now rise out of the plain on the gentle swells which break its level surface, the most commanding in situation is the modern Zerin, the ancient “Jezreel,” the ‘seed’ or ‘sowing-place of God,’—a name in itself indicative of the richness of the neighbouring soil. As Baasha had chosen Tirzah, as Omri had chosen Samaria, so Ahab chose Jezreel as his regal residence. It never indeed superseded his father’s capital at Samaria, as that had superseded Shechem; but it was the chief seat of his dynasty for three successive reigns; and its importance is evident, from the fact that it gave its name to the whole plain, of which it thus became the chief city. It is now a mere collection of hovels. But its situation at the opening of the central eastern valley, so often described, commanding the view towards Carmel on one side, and to the Jordan on the other, still justifies its selection by Ahab and his Queen, as the seat of their court, and its natural features still illustrate the most striking incidents in the scenes in which it appears in the Sacred History, of the overthrow of the house of Ahab. We see how up the valley from the Jordan, Jehu’s

troop might be seen advancing from Ramoth-Gilead ; how in Naboth's "field" the two sovereigns met the relentless soldier ; how, whilst Joram died on the spot, Ahaziah drove down the westward plain, towards the mountain-pass by the beautiful village of Engannim, but was overtaken in the ascent, and died of his wounds at Megiddo ; how in the open place, which, as usual in Eastern towns, lay before the gates of Jezreel, the body of the Queen was trampled under the hoofs of Jehu's horses ; how the dogs gathered round it, as even to this day, in the wretched village now seated on the ruins of the once splendid city of Jezreel, they prowl on the mounds without the walls for the offal and carrion thrown out to them to consume ; how, as he passed on his way to Samaria, he encountered in the plain of Esdraelon the wild figure of the Bedouin Kenite from Jabesh beyond the Jordan—Jehonadab, the son of Rechab.

These characteristics of the plain—perhaps the most secular in sacred history—are not the only or the highest associations with which its natural features are connected. Two points still remain—the most interesting in its whole expanse.

IV. Two mountains, the glory of the tribe of Issachar, stand out among the bare and rugged hills of Palestine, and even among those of their own immediate neighbourhood, remarkable for the verdure which climbs—a rare sight in Eastern scenery—to their very summits. One of these is Tabor. This strange and beautiful mountain is distinguished alike in form and in character from all around it. As seen, where it is usually first seen by the traveller, from the north-west of the plain, it towers like a dome, as seen from the east, like a long arched mound, over the monotonous undulations of the surrounding hills, from which it stands completely isolated, except by a narrow neck of rising ground, uniting it to the mountain-range of Galilee. It is not what Europeans would call a wooded hill, because its trees stand all apart from each other. But it is so thickly studded with them, as to rise from the plain like a mass of verdure. Its sides much resemble the scattered glades in the outskirts of the New Forest. Its summit, a broken oblong, is an alternation of shade and greenward, that seems made for a national festivity ; broad and varied, and commanding wide views of the plain from end to end.

This description of itself tells us that it is not that peaked height which we imagine as the scene of the great event with which later traditions have connected it. The Transfiguration, as we shall elsewhere find, probably took place far away. But we see in its insulated situation the probable origin of the

mistake which transferred to the mountain of the Transfiguration the word "apart," which is really intended only for the disciples; we see also, everywhere scattered around, the ruins of the town and fortress, which existing here, as it seems, at the very time of the Gospel History, render the truth of the tradition next to impossible. Still, if it must lose that last crowning glory, those glades and those ruins recall to us its older associations undisturbed. The fortress, defended and repaired by Josephus, carries us back to the selection of this strong position for the encampment of Barak, before his descent upon Sisera. The open glades on its wide summit carry us back yet earlier to a time, of which the very memory has perished, when it was the sanctuary of the northern tribes, if not of the whole nation. The aspect of these glades, so fitted, as I have said, for festive assemblies, exactly agrees with Herder's view, that Tabor is intended, when it is said of Issachar and Zebulun, that "they shall call the people unto the *mountain*; there shall they offer sacrifices of righteousness." It is true that, amidst the changes and wars which disordered the relations of the tribes, nothing afterwards is expressly said of the sacredness of Tabor. But in the gathering of the northern tribes, first under Barak, and again, as it would seem, under the brothers of Gideon, and long afterwards, in "the net spread abroad on Tabor," by the idolatrous priests of Issachar, some trace is discernible of the original purpose for which its striking situation and its pleasant forests so well adapted it. At any rate, we can understand how, when Psalmists and Prophets saw in the wide view from its summit the snowy top of Hermon in the far north, and Carmel in the west, they could truly feel "Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice in Thy name;" that surely "as Tabor is among the mountains, and Carmel by the sea," God's judgments would come.

V. This brings us to the second great historical mountain of Esdraelon. "As Tabor" is through its peculiar form an elevation "among the mountains"—so is "Carmel," with its long projecting ridge, "by the sea." The name of Tabor is probably derived from its height; that of Carmel is certainly taken from the garden-like appearance which it shares with Tabor alone, and which, as it has no peculiarity of shape, is its chief distinction. By this, its protracted range of eighteen miles in length, bounding the whole of the southern corner of the great plain, is marked out from the surrounding scenery. Rocky dells, with deep jungles of copse, are found there alone in Palestine. And 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.

It is not the bluff promontory running into the sea, and crowned by its Convent, that represents, or even professes to represent, the scene which is the chief pride of the history of Carmel. The Convent derives its interest not from any connection, real or pretended, with the Prophet Elijah, but from the celebrated order of Barefooted monks that has sprung from it, and carried the name of Carmel into the monasteries of Europe. The large caves, indeed, which exist under the western cliffs, frequented by Christians, Jews, and Mussulmans, who have there left memorials in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, and in the niches and prayer-mats of Arab devotion—may have been the shelter of Elijah and the persecuted prophets. The winding path through the rocks to the sea-shore below must have been that by which Pythagoras, according to the idea of his biographer—himself a pilgrim to this "haunted strand"—descended, to embark in the Egyptian ship which he saw sailing beneath him. Either on this same point of Mount Carmel, or at the modern village of Caipha immediately below it, was the village of Ecbatana, in which Cambyses died on his return from Egypt to Persia, thus unexpectedly realising the prophecy that he should perish at Ecbatana. The Convent itself is of comparatively recent date, the last effort of the Crusades; an offshoot of the fortress of Acre in the adjacent bay, founded by St. Louis in his brief and only visit to the shores of Palestine, and still bearing the sign of its French origin, in the French flag which is unfurled on its towers, whenever a French vessel appears in sight on the Syrian waters.

But it could never have been here that the great sacrifice took place which formed the crisis in Elijah's life, and which is brought before us with such minuteness of detail as to invite us to a full contemplation of all its circumstances. Carmel, as we have seen, is not so much a mountain as a ridge, an upland park, extending for many miles into the interior of the country. At the eastern extremity, which is also the highest point of the whole ridge, is a spot marked out alike by tradition and by natural features as one of the most authentic localities of the Old Testament history. The tradition is unusually trustworthy. It is perhaps the only case in Palestine in which the recollection of an alleged event has been actually retained in the native Arabic nomencla-

ture. Many names of towns have been so preserved, but here is no town, only a shapeless ruin, yet the spot has a name, "El-Maharrakah," "the Burning," or "the Sacrifice." The Druses, some of whom inhabit the neighbouring villages, come here from a distance to perform a yearly sacrifice; and though it is possible that this practice may have originated the name, yet it is more probable that the practice itself arose from some earlier tradition attached to the spot. Nor has the tradition, whatever it be, any connection with the convent, which would in that case either have been founded nearer to the scene, or have fixed the scene nearer to itself. Indeed, it is a proof of the superiority of the Latin to the Greek monastic orders, that instead of inventing a spot, after the manner of the monks of Sinai, within the neighbourhood of their own walks, the monks of Carmel have left undisturbed the associations of a spot so remote from their convent, that none of its existing members have visited it more than once in their stay.

But, be the tradition good or bad, the localities adapt themselves to the event in almost every particular. The summit thus marked out is the extreme eastern point of the range, commanding the last view of the sea behind, and the first view of the great plain in front, just where the glades of forest, the "excellency of Carmel," sink into the usual barrenness of the hills and vales of Palestine. There, on the highest ridge of the mountain, may well have stood, on its sacred "high place," the altar of the Lord which Jezebel had cast down. Close beneath, on a wide upland sweep, under the shade of ancient olives, and above a well of water, said to be perennial, and which may therefore have escaped the general drought, and have been able to furnish water for the trenches round the altar, must have been ranged, on one side the king and people, with the eight hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and Astarte, and on the other side the solitary and commanding figure of the Prophet of the Lord. Full before them opened the whole plain of Esdraelon, with Tabor and its kindred ranges in the distance; on the rising ground, at the opening of its valley, the city of Jezreel, with Ahab's palace and Jezebel's temple distinctly visible; in the nearer foreground, immediately under the base of the mountain, was clearly seen the winding stream of the Kishon, working its way through the narrow pass of the hills into the Bay of Acre. Such a scene with such recollections of the past, with such sights of the present, was indeed a fitting theatre for a conflict more momentous than any which their ancestors had fought in the plain below. This is not the place to enlarge upon the intense

solemnity and significance of that conflict which lasted on the mountain-height from morning till noon, from noon till the time of the evening sacrifice. It ended at last in the level plain below, where Elijah "brought" the defeated prophets "down" the steep sides of the mountain "to the 'torrent' of the Kishon, and slew them there."

The closing scene still remains. From the slaughter by the side of the Kishon, the King "went up" at Elijah's bidding once again to the peaceful glades of Carmel, to join in the sacrificial feast. And Elijah too ascended to "the top of the mountain," and there, with his face upon the earth, remained wrapt in prayer, whilst his servant mounted to the highest point of all, whence there is a wide view of the blue reach of the Mediterranean Sea, over the western shoulder of the ridge. The sun was now gone down, but the cloudless sky was lit up with the long bright glow which succeeds an eastern sunset. Seven times the servant climbed and looked, and seven times there was nothing; the sky was still clear, the sea was still calm. At last, out of the far horizon there rose a little cloud—the first that had for days and months passed across the heavens—and it grew in the deepening shades of evening, and at last the whole sky was overcast, and the forests of Carmel shook in the welcome sound of those mighty winds which in Eastern regions precede a coming tempest. Each from his separate height, the King and the Prophet descended. And the King mounted his chariot at the foot of the mountain, lest the long-hoped-for rain should swell the torrent of the Kishon, as in the days when it swept away the host of Sisera; and "the hand of the Lord was upon Elijah," and he girt his mantle round his loins, and, amidst the rushing storm with which the night closed in, "ran," as if to do honour to the king, "before the chariot," as the Bedouins of his native Gilead still run, with inexhaustible strength, to the entrance of Jezreel, distant, though still visible, from the scene of his triumph.

VI. Almost all the recollections of the plain of Esdraelon belong to the Old Testament. Yet we are now on the verge of the chief scenes of the New Testament, and the battle-field of Israel may have suggested to Him, who must have crossed and re-crossed it on His many journeys to and from and through Galilee, those "victorious deeds" and "heroic acts" which Milton has ascribed to His early meditations:

"One while
To rescue Israel from the Roman yoke,
Then to subdue and quell o'er all the earth
Brute violence, and proud tyrannic power."

But it is the poet only, not the Evangelist, who has ventured to throw even this passing thought into that peaceful career, and the one incident which connects Him with the plain of Esdraelon is remarkable for the striking contrast which it presents to all the other associations of the region.

On the northern slope of the rugged and barren ridge of Little Hermon, immediately west of Endor, which lies in a further recess of the same range, is the ruined village of *Nain*. No convent, no tradition marks the spot. But, under these circumstances, the name is sufficient to guarantee its authenticity. One entrance alone it could have had, that which opens on the rough hill side in its downward slope to the plain. It must have been in this steep descent, as, according to Eastern custom, they "carried out the dead man," that "nigh to the gate" of the village the bier was stopped, and the long procession of mourners stayed, and "the young man delivered back" to his mother. It is a spot which has no peculiarity of feature to fix it on the memory; its situation is like that of all the villages on this plain; but, in the authenticity of its claims, and the narrow compass within which we have to look for the touching incident, it may rank amongst the most interesting points of the scenery of the Gospel narrative.

CHAPTER X

GALILEE

THE broad depression of Esdraelon was the natural boundary and debatable land between the central and northern tribes of Palestine. On the north of the plain rises another group of mountains, as distinct in character and form, as they are separate in fact, from those of Samaria and Judæa, and thus, in like manner, distinguished by the name of the chief tribe that dwelt among them, "the mountains of Naphtali," as the more southern were "the mountains of Ephraim" and "of Judah."

These hills are the western roots which Hermon thrusts out towards the sea, as it thrusts out the mountains of Bashan towards the Desert; and as such they partake of the jagged outline, of the varied vegetation, and of the high upland hollows which characterise in a greater or less degree the whole mass of the Lebanon range, in contrast to the monotonous aspect of the more southern scenery. So few travellers visit the interior of the Galilean mountains, that their beauty and richness is almost unknown. - M. Van de Velde, who, contrary to the usual course, entered Palestine from the north, contrasts them favourably even with the rich valley of Samaria. "It suffered," he says, "in my case from my having entered the rocky mountains of Ephraim from the much finer and truly noble Galilee." Tabor, as already described, is in fact the furthestmost southern and eastern outpost of the peculiar mixture of greensward and forest, which, like a long stretch of English park-scenery, extends the whole way from the plain of Acre to Nazareth, through the tribe of Zebulun. And a similar tract, although in a more mountainous district, characterises the hills of Naphtali, which bound the plain of Merom.

This distinction of scenery, together with the natural separation of the hills of the north from those which we have hitherto traversed, contains the main explanation of the history of the northern tribes. Asher has been already



FROM THE 1ST EDITION OF DR. ROBINSON'S "BIBLICAL RESEARCHES."

described in connection with the maritime plain of Phœnicia, on the skirts of which his possession hung. Of the almost servile character of Issachar enough has been said in describing the plain of Esdraelon. But they must be briefly recalled here, as sharing the general fortunes of the northern group, of which the two chief tribes, Naphtali and Zebulun, occupied the mountain-tract, overlooking and commanding the territory of the two others,—of Asher on the west, and Issachar on the south. All the four alike kept aloof from the great historical movements of Israel. With the exceptions already noticed, when the immediate pressure of northern invaders rallied them, first round Barak and then round Gideon, in the Plain of Esdraelon, they hardly ever appear in the events of the Jewish history. They were content with their rich mountain-valleys, and their maritime coast. Zebulun is to “rejoice in his goings out.” Asher was to “be blessed with children,” “acceptable to his brethren,” dipping his foot in the “oil” of his olive groves, shod with “the iron and brass” of Lebanon. Naphtali was to be like a ‘spreading terebinth’ of the uplands of Lebanon, “he ‘putteth out’ goodly ‘boughs.’” He is to be “satisfied with favour, and full with the blessing of the Lord.” They were to have also their openings to wealth and power by traffic on sea and land. “Zebulun shall dwell at the ‘shore’ of the sea, and shall be for a ‘shore’ of ships and his border shall be unto Zidon.” “Asher abode in his ‘creeks’”; Zebulun and Issachar are to “suck of the abundance of the seas, and of treasures hid in the sand.” Naphtali was “to possess the ‘sea on’ the south,” that is, the thoroughfare and traffic of the Sea of Galilee.

All these points of contact with the surrounding nations tended to confirm their isolation from the rest of their countrymen. Ephraim and Judah were separated from the world by the Jordan-valley on one side, and the hostile Philistines on another; but the northern tribes were in the direct highway of all the invaders from the north, in unbroken communication with the promiscuous races who have always occupied the heights of Lebanon, and in close and peaceful alliance with the most commercial and enterprising nation of the ancient world, the Phœnicians. From a very early period, their joint territory acquired the name which it bore under a slightly altered form in the distribution of the country into a Roman province—“Galil, Galilah, Galilæa.” It would seem to be merely another mode of expressing what is indicated by the word “Ciccar” in the case of the Jordan-valley—a “circle” or “region”; and as such implies the separation of the district from the more regularly organised tribes or

kingdoms of Samaria and Judæa. Gradually, too, it came to be regarded as the frontier between "the Holy Land" and the external world, "Galilee of the Gentiles"; a situation curiously illustrating, if it did not suggest, the use of the word in ecclesiastical architecture—the "Galilee" or Porch of the Cathedral of Palestine. Twenty of its cities were actually annexed by Solomon to the adjacent kingdom of Tyre; and formed with their territory the "boundary" or "offscouring" ("Gebul" or "Cabul"¹) of the two dominions, at a later time still known by the general name of "the boundaries" ("coasts," or "borders") of Tyre and Sidon." Another district of the same character on the east, as Cabul on the west, was Decapolis, a district of ten cities, mostly inhabited by Gentiles. Of these cities one was on the eastern side of the Jordan, at the point where the plain of Esdraelon branches down into the Jordan valley. It has been already mentioned, under the name of Bethshan, as having alone of all the northern fortresses remained in the hands of the Canaanites. It was thus, as it were, a northern Jebus; but, unlike Jebus, it remained a Gentile settlement to the very close of the Jewish history, known by the Greek name of Scythopolis, and celebrated on Grecian coins as the City of Bacchus. In the first great deportation of the Jewish population, "Naphtali and Galilee" suffered the same fate as the trans-Jordanic tribes before Ephraim or Judah had been molested. In the time of the Christian era this original disadvantage of their position was still felt; the "speech of Galileans" "bewrayed" them by its uncouth pronunciation; and their distance from the seats of government and civilisation at Jerusalem and Cæsarea gave them their character for turbulence or independence, according as it was viewed by their friends or their enemies.

This isolation, which renders the history of Galilee an almost entire blank in the Old Testament, is the cause of its sudden glory in the New.

I. It is one peculiarity of the Galilean hills, as distinct from those of Ephraim or Judah, that they contain or sustain green basins of tableland just below their topmost ridges; forming marked features in any view from the summit of Tabor, or further north from the slopes of Hermon. Such apparently was that ancient sanctuary, the birth-place of Barak, Kedesh-Naphtali, 'the Holy Place of Naphtali,' known only by its significant name, and its selection as the northern city of refuge, corresponding to Shechem in central, and Hebron in

¹ Such seems to be the play of the words of Hiram. "What cities are these which thou hast given me, my brother? And he called them the land of Cabul unto this day." 1 Kings ix. 12, 13.

southern Palestine. Such, too, although less elevated, was the Roman capital of Galilee—Dio-Cæsarea, or Sepphoris, situated in the green plain of Buttauf in the hills immediately above Acre.

But such above all is NAZARETH. Fifteen gently rounded hills "seem as if they had met to form an enclosure" for this peaceful basin; they rise round it like the edge of a shell to guard it from intrusion. It is "a rich and beautiful field" in the midst of these green hills—abounding in gay flowers, in fig-trees, small gardens, hedges of the prickly pear; and the dense rich grass affords an abundant pasture. The expression of the old topographer, Quaresmius, was as happy as it is poetical: "Nazareth is a rose, and, like a rose, has the same rounded form, enclosed by mountains as the flower by its leaves." The village stands on the steep slope of the south-western side of the valley; its chief object, the great Franciscan Convent of the Annunciation with its white campanile and brown enclosure.

From the crest of the hills which thus screen it, especially from that called Nebi-Said, or Ismail, on the western side, is one of the most striking views in Palestine; Tabor with its rounded dome, on the south-east; Hermon's white top in the distant north, Carmel and the Mediterranean Sea to the west; a conjunction of those three famous mountains probably unique in the views of Palestine: and in the nearer prospect, the uplands in which Nazareth itself stands, its own circular basin behind it; on the west, enclosed by similar hills, overhanging the plain of Acre, lies the town of Sepphorieh, just noticed as the Roman capital, and brought into close and, as far as its situation is concerned, not improbable connection with Nazareth, as the traditional residence of the Virgin's parents. On the south, and south-east, lies the broad plain of Esdraelon, overhung by the high pyramidal hill, which, as the highest point of the Nazareth range, and thus the most conspicuous to travellers approaching from the plain, has received, though without any historical ground, the name of the "Mount of Precipitation." These are the natural features which for nearly thirty years met the almost daily view of Him who "increased in wisdom and stature" within this beautiful seclusion. It is the seclusion which constitutes its peculiarity and its fitness for these scenes of the Gospel history. Unknown and unnamed in the Old Testament, Nazareth first appears as the retired abode of the humble carpenter. Its separation from the busy world may be the ground, as it certainly is an illustration, of the Evangelist's play on the word "He shall be called a Nazarene." Its wild character

high up in the Galilean hills may account both for the roughness of its population, unable to appreciate their own Prophet, and for the evil reputation which it had acquired even in the neighbouring villages, one of whose inhabitants, Nathanael of Cana, said: "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" There, secured within the natural barrier of the hills, was passed that youth, of which the most remarkable characteristic is its absolute obscurity; and thence came the name of NAZARENE, used of old by the Jews, and used still by Mussulmans, as the appellation of that despised sect which has now embraced the civilised world.

It was not to be expected that any local reminiscences should be preserved of a period so studiously, as it would appear, withdrawn from our knowledge. Two natural features, however, may still be identified, connected, the one by tradition, the other by the Gospel narrative, with the events which have made Nazareth immortal. The first is the spring or well in the green open space,¹ at the north-east extremity of the town; a spot well known as the general encampment of such travellers as do not take up their quarters in the Franciscan convent. This well—which must always have been frequented, as it is now, by the women of Nazareth—is probably that which the earliest local traditions of Palestine claimed to be the scene of the Angelic Salutation to Mary, as she, after the manner of her countrywomen, went thither to draw water. The tradition may be groundless, but there can be little question that the locality to which it is attached exists, and that it must have existed at the time of the alleged scene. The second is indicated in the Gospel history by one of those slight touches which serve as a testimony to the truth of the description, by nearly approaching but yet not crossing the verge of inaccuracy. "They rose," it is said of the infuriated inhabitants, "and cast Him out of the city, and brought Him to 'a brow of the mountain' (*ὡς ὀφρύς τοῦ ὄρους*) on which the city was built, so as to 'cast Him down the cliff'" (*ὥστε κατακρημνίσαι αὐτόν*). Most readers probably from these words imagine a town built on the summit of a mountain, from which summit the intended precipitation was to take place. This, as I have said, is not the situation of Nazareth. Yet, its position is still in accordance with the narrative. It is built "upon," that is, on the side of, "a mountain," but the "brow" is not beneath but over the town, and such a cliff (*κρημνός*), as is here implied, is to be found, as all modern travellers describe, in the abrupt face of the limestone rock, about thirty or forty

¹ For this and the other "Holy Places" of Nazareth see Chap. XIV.

feet high, overhanging the Maronite convent at the south-west corner of the town, and another at a little further distance.

It is needless to dwell in detail on the other lesser scenes of our Lord's ministrations in the neighbourhood of His early home. Nain, at two or three hours' distance, in the Plain of Esdraelon, has been already mentioned. The "parts," or "borders," of Tyre and Sidon are too indefinite to be dwelt upon. The claims of Cana are divided between the two modern villages of that name, the one situated at some distance in the corner of the basin of Seffûrieh, in an upland village to the east of Nazareth, the other at the distance of half a day's journey to the west. Although the former has now usurped the whole traditional sanctity, the latter, from the absolute identity of name, and from the greater antiquity of its tradition, is on the whole the most probable site. The situation is marked. It was on a rocky eminence at the north-western corner of the plain of Seffûrieh, at the mouth of a narrow wooden glen, leading into the plain from the great Jewish fortress of Jotapata (now Jefât). Ancient cisterns and tombs can be traced on the slope of the hill. Bare and dry as it now is, a solitary fig-tree recalls the story of its most illustrious citizen,—the guileless Nathanael,—and a deep well supplies the "water" used at the marriage supper. It immediately overhangs the level ground at the northern end of the plain, which in the end of spring is sometimes a marsh or lake,—and it is probably from the reeds, natural to such a neighbourhood, that it derived its name of Cana or "the reedy," with the additional epithet of Galilee, to distinguish it from Cana (Kaneh) in the tribe of Asher, which has its name from a similar cause.

II. But the most important district of Galilee has not yet been mentioned.

1. And first, we must descend from the hills of Galilee once more into the Plain of Esdraelon, and leaving Tabor on the right, turn off into a lesser wild upland plain, now called Ard-el-Hamma, which is an excrescence of the great plain on the north-west, as the plain of Acre is on the south-west. This undulating tableland, which skirts the hills of Galilee on the east, is broken by a long low ridge rising at its northern extremity into a square-shaped hill with two tops, which give it the modern name of "the Horns of Hattin," Hattin being the village on the ridge at its base. This mountain or hill—for it only rises sixty feet above the plain—is that known to pilgrims as the Mount of the Beatitudes, the supposed scene of the "Sermon on the Mount." The tradition cannot lay claim to an early date; it was in all probability suggested

first to the Crusaders by its remarkable situation. But that situation so strikingly coincides with the intimations of the Gospel narrative, as almost to force the inference that in this instance the eye of those who selected the spot was for once rightly guided. It is the only height seen in this direction from the shores of the Lake of Gennesareth. The plain on which it stands is easily accessible from the lake, and from that plain to the summit is but a few minutes' walk. The platform at the top is evidently suitable for the collection of a multitude, and corresponds precisely to the "level place" (τόπου πεδινού) to which He would "come down," as from one of its higher horns, to address the people. Its situation is central both to the peasants of the Galilean hills and the fishermen of the Galilean lake, between which it stands, and would therefore be a natural resort both to "Jesus and His disciples," when they retired for solitude from the shores of the sea, and also to the crowds who assembled "from Galilee, from Decapolis, from Jerusalem, from Judæa, and from beyond Jordan." None of the other mountains in the neighbourhood could answer equally well to this description, inasmuch as they are merged into the uniform barrier of hills round the lake; whereas this stands separate—"the mountain" which alone could lay claim to a distinct name, with the exception of the one height of Tabor, which is too distant to answer the requirements.

The Crusaders gave it its present title; and it has another fatal association with their history, one of the few vivid recollections which rival the permanent interest of these Galilean localities. On that long dry ridge, under the burning midsummer sun of Syria, on the 5th of July, 1187, was encamped the Christian host, in the final crisis of the Crusades, and round the base of the hill on every side was the victorious army of Saladin ready for the attack. The attack was made; and under circumstances somewhat similar to those of the rout on Mount Gilboa, the Christian entrenchments on the hill were stormed, and one more was added to the long list of the battles of the Plain of Esdraelon—the last struggle of the Crusaders, in which all was staked in the presence of the holiest scenes of Christianity, and all miserably lost.

2. From the plain and from the mountain, thus doubly celebrated, the traveller descends to the Sea of Galilee. The first glimpse of its waters he will have had from the top of Tabor; they also lie opened out wide before him from the top of the Mount of Beatitudes. But the first full view, as it is approached by the regular road, is on the descent through the hills whose summits form the boundary of the plain of

Hattin, and which on the other side slope abruptly down to the lake itself, as it lies a thousand feet below the level of the country. Few can fail to have been struck by the sudden flash, as from a rent in the bowels of the earth, when this view of the lake rises from below, and greets the traveller in his steep downward journey. It is, moreover, a moment, if any, when recollections of the past disarm any attempts to criticise the details of the actual scene. Yet, whether it be tame and poor, as some travellers say, or eminently beautiful, as others, there is no doubt that it has a character of its own which shall here be, if possible, described. It is about thirteen miles long, and in its broadest parts six miles wide, that is, about the same length as our own Windermere, but of a considerably greater breadth. In the clearness of the eastern atmosphere, it looks much smaller than it is. From no point on the western side can it be seen completely from end to end; the promontory under which Tiberias stands cutting off the southern, as the promontory over the plain of Gennesareth, the northern extremity; so that the form which it represents is generally that of an oval. But what makes it unlike any of our English lakes is the deep depression, which gives it something of the strange, unnatural character that belongs in a still greater degree to the Dead Sea, and in some degree to all lakes of volcanic origin, such as those of Alba, Nemi, and Avernus. The hills on the eastern side partake of the horizontal outline which belongs to the whole eastern barrier of the Jordan valley. But the western mountains, especially those at the northern end, are varied in form, and this variety is increased when they are seen mingled with the long curve of Tabor, with the horned platform of Hattin, and with the jagged summits of Safed, standing out from the offshoots of Lebanon. Their appearance, even in the view from the west, where alone they are usually seen, presents a complication of striking features, such as is hardly elsewhere visible in Palestine; and this must be still more the case in the aspect which they present to a spectator on the opposite eastern shore, now for the most part entirely unfrequented.

As we descend through the rocky walls which encompass it, its peculiar situation makes itself more strongly felt. Another climate begins. In the summer or late spring, all travellers speak of the oppressive heat, as they sink below the bracing atmosphere of the hills of Galilee into the deep basin of the Jordan lake. In the early spring it is not so: but even then the natural features at once indicate that we are approaching the temperature of Jericho and the Dead Sea. The "Nabk," or thorn-tree, never seen in the higher plains, here breaks out

along the hill-sides in thick jungles ; and down on the beach the first object that catches the eye is Tiberias with its line of palms. Beyond rises the white dome that covers the warm springs, which send out their steaming waters over the beach into the lake—an indication of that volcanic agency that has from time to time overthrown the cities in this neighbourhood, Tiberias and Safed, with a destruction for the time almost as terrible, though not as complete, as that which visited the older cities of the south. Along the edge of this secluded basin, runs the whole way round from north to south a level beach ; at the southern end roughly strewn with the black and white stones peculiar to this district, and also connected with its volcanic structure ; but the central or northern part formed of smooth sand, or of a texture of shells and pebbles so minute as to resemble sand, like the substance of the beach on the Gulf of Akaba. Shrubs, too, of the tropical thorn, fringe the greater part of the line of shore, mingled here and there with the bright pink colours of the oleander ;

“ All thro’ the summer night,
Those blossoms red and bright
Spread their soft breasts,”

long before they are in flower in the valleys of the higher country. On this beach, which can be discerned running like a white line all round the lake, the hills plant their dark base, descending nowhere precipitously, but almost everywhere presenting an alternation of soft grassy slopes and rocky cliffs, occasionally broken away so as to exhibit the red and grey colours so familiar in the limestone of Greece.

It is only as its two extremities are approached, that the parent river, and its connection with the lake, can be clearly discerned. At each end, the western hills fall away in height, and recede from the shore. On the south, a perfectly level plain of green receives the Jordan as it silently cuts its way through the banks, and winds away down the wide opening of the valley. In like manner, at the head of the lake, the entrance of the river is marked by the rich green plain of Batihah, stretching close up to the high wall of the eastern range. It has forced its way through a succession of foaming rapids, down a deep ravine, almost choked with luxuriant oleanders, and then gently pours its already turbid stream into the clear waters of the lake. A solitary thorn on one side, and a group of five isolated palms on the other, stand on the brink of the shore, as if to welcome its entrance.

3. These are the general features of the most sacred sheet of water that this earth contains. Before we descend to its

more special localities, we must turn to its general history. Like Olivet at Jerusalem, like Nazareth, like Galilee generally, it is connected with no cycle of sacred associations but one, and that the holiest of all. In the generation indeed immediately succeeding the Christian era, a few incidents from the war of Vespasian are connected with the history of the lake ; and in the next generation yet again there was established on its shores the great Jewish university which rendered Tiberias for three centuries the metropolis of the race. Tiberias became the seat of the Patriarch, who exercised an almost Papal sway over the wide extent to which his exiled countrymen had been scattered. The ruins of the ancient city, the numerous tombs in the vicinity, one of which contains the remains of the great Maimonides, and the Jewish population, whose peculiar manners and features at once arrest the traveller's attention as he passes through the streets of the modern town,—attest the reverence in which it has been held by the distant settlements, whence Jews have for centuries come to lay their bones in the neighbourhood. Tiberias, and Safed—the latter overlooking the lake from its neighbouring heights—are the two Holy Cities of the north, which, in the eyes of modern Judaism, almost rival the two Holy Cities of the south, Jerusalem and Hebron. Yet even this sanctity, by a strange coincidence or perversion of facts, has grown out of the series of events which alone give the lake its real fame. As at Jerusalem the Rabbinical belief associated the Shechinah with Olivet, so here the selection of Safed and Tiberias as the “Holy Places” of the last efforts of Judaism, was dictated by the thought that they were both within sight of the lake from whose waters the Messiah would rise ; that at Tiberias he would land, and at Safed establish his throne. “I have created seven seas, saith the Lord” (such was the Rabbinical belief), “but out of them all I have chosen none but the Sea of Gennesareth.”

4. In the Old Testament its name occurs from time to time as “the sea of Chinneroth,” either from a town on its banks, or, more probably, from the whole district in which it lies, “Chinnereth,” or “Chinneroth,” perhaps so named from the oval harp-like form of its basin. The “warm springs” of Tiberias, streaming from the shore, were already specified under the name of “Hammath.” But it was not altogether unknown for the purposes of traffic. Situated in the midst of the Jordan valley, on the great thoroughfare from Babylon and Damascus into Palestine, its waters seem to have answered a purpose like that served by the Lake of Lucerne between Italy and Germany. Hence the value to Naphtali of ‘the sea

of the south,' to compensate for "the sea of the west" enjoyed by the kindred tribes of Asher, Issachar, and Zebulun; hence "the way of the sea," "beyond Jordan," of "Zebulun and Naphtali." Along its banks, as we have already seen, the depth of its situation produced a tropical vegetation unknown in the hills above; and this vegetation was increased by the beautiful springs, which, characteristic of the whole valley of the Jordan, are unusually numerous and copious along the western shore of this lake, scattering verdure and fertility along their short course. This fertility, everywhere apparent more or less in the thin strip of land which intervenes between the mountains and the lake, reaches its highest pitch in the one spot on the western shore where the mountains, suddenly receding inland, leave a level plain of one mile wide, and three to four miles long. This plain is "the land of Gennesareth," identified by its agreement with the graphic though somewhat exaggerated description which Josephus gives of "the country of Gennesar." No less than four springs pour forth their almost full-grown rivers; the richness of the soil displays itself in magnificent cornfields; along the shore rises a thick jungle of thorn and oleander; the wild doves, hawks, and jays of brilliant plumage, with which Galilee abounds, are congregated in unusual numbers over the entire plain. The whole impression even now recalls the image of the Valley of the Nile; and thus the Jews of old were not unnaturally led, in those days of fanciful similitudes, to look on one of these fertilising streams as a vein of the Nile; abounding even in the same fish, and producing the same effects on its banks. In fact, even now the papyrus, which has vanished from its native seat in Egypt, is still found on the shores of the lake, between the plain of Gennesareth and Tiberias. This "Paradise," or "garden," of Northern Palestine (so we may best interpret the meaning of its name) is doubtless a close likeness of what the "Vale of Siddim" was, where stood the five cities when Lot saw that it was "well watered everywhere, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as 'a' garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt."

This contrast with the present aspect of its sister lake on the south, gives to the natural features of the Sea of Galilee a peculiar interest. If the southern lake is the Sea of Death, the northern is emphatically the Sea of Life. And it is still by nature what it was at the time of the Christian era by art also. With that turn for magnificent buildings which so distinguished his family, and which perhaps had been encouraged in himself by the sight of the splendid Roman villas along the shores of the Lucrine lake, where most of his own

early life had been spent, the younger Herod and his brother Philip built two stately cities, called after the names of the Emperor Tiberias and the Princess Julia, daughter of Augustus. The first, "Tiberias," was near the warm springs at the southern extremity, the second, "Julias," by the entrance of the Jordan at the northern extremity; and these, with the surrounding edifices, must have given to the lake the beauty which we are accustomed to consider as peculiar to the shores of Como and Lugano. But the chief centre of activity was to be found in the little plain just described, crowded with towns and villages. Nor was the life confined to the land. The lake, probably from the numerous streams, including the Jordan itself, which discharge their produce into its waters, abounds in fish of all kinds, which there increase and multiply, as certainly as in the Salt Sea they are cast up dead upon the shore. From the earliest times—so said the Rabbinical legends—the lake had been so renowned in this respect, that one of the ten fundamental laws laid down by Joshua on the division of the country was, that any one might fish with a hook in the Sea of Galilee, so that they did not interfere with the free passage of boats. Two of the villages on the banks derived their name from their fisheries; and all of them sent forth their fishermen by hundreds over the lake; and when we add the crowd of ship-builders, the many boats of traffic, pleasure, and passage, we see that the whole basin must have been a focus of life and energy; the surface of the lake constantly dotted with the white sails of vessels, flying before the mountain gusts, as the beach sparkled with the houses and palaces, the synagogues and the temples of the Jewish or Roman inhabitants.

5. It was to these scenes that He, whom his fellow-townsmen at Nazareth rejected, came. He "came down" from the high country, where He had hitherto dwelt; and from henceforth made His permanent home in the deep retreat of the Sea of Galilee. What has been already said at once gives the reason. It was no retired mountain-lake by whose shore He took up his abode, such as might have attracted the Eastern sage or Western hermit. It was to the Roman Palestine almost what the manufacturing districts are to England. Nowhere, except in the capital itself, could He have found such a sphere for His works and words of mercy; from no other centre could "His fame" have so gone "throughout all Syria"; nowhere else could He have so drawn round Him the vast multitudes who hung on His lips "from Galilee, from Decapolis, from Judæa, and from beyond Jordan," and ran "through the whole region round about," "carrying about

in beds " through its narrow but crowded plain " those that were sick, wherever they heard He was " ; and " whithersoever He entered," into any of the numerous " villages or cities," there " they laid the sick in the market-places," . . . " many coming and going, so that He had not time so much as to eat."

In that busy stir of life were the natural elements, out of which His future disciples were to be formed. Far removed from the capital, mingled, as we have seen, with the Gentile races of Lebanon and Arabia, the dwellers by the Sea of Galilee were free from most of the strong prejudices which in the south of Palestine raised a bar to His reception. " The people " in " the land of Zabulon and Nephthalim, by the way of the sea beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles," had " sat in darkness " ; but from that very cause " they saw " more clearly " the great light " when it came : " to them which sat in the region and the shadow of death," for that very reason " light sprang up " the more readily. He came to " preach the Gospel to the poor," to " the weary and heavy laden "—to " seek and to save that which was lost." Where could He find work so readily as in the ceaseless toil and turmoil of these teeming villages and busy waters ? The heathen or half-heathen " publicans " or tax-gatherers would be there, sitting by the lake side " at the receipt of custom." The " women who were sinners " would there have come, either from the neighbouring Gentile cities, or corrupted by the licence of Gentile manners. The Roman soldiers would there be found quartered with their slaves, to be near the palaces of the Herodian princes, or to repress the turbulence of the Galilean peasantry. And the hardy boatmen, filled with the faithful and grateful spirit by which that peasantry was always distinguished, would supply the energy and docility which He needed for His followers. The copious fisheries of the lake now assumed a new interest. The two boats by the beach ; Simon and Andrew casting their nets into the water ; James and John on the shore washing and mending their nets ; the " toiling all the night and catching nothing " ; " the great multitude of fishes so that the net brake " ; Philip, Andrew, and Simon from " Bethsaida," the " House of Fisheries " ; the " casting a hook for the first fish that cometh up " ; the " net cast into the sea, and gathering of every kind "—all these are images which could occur nowhere else in Palestine but on this one spot, and which from that one spot have now passed into the religious language of the civilised world, and in their remotest applications, for even misapplications, have converted the nations and shaken the thrones of Europe.

These, doubtless, furnish the main reasons why the sea of Galilee and the plain of Gennesareth became the home of Christ. But the lesser features of its history and scenery agree no less with the Gospel narrative. I have said that, whilst the lake is almost completely surrounded by mountains, those mountains never come down into the water, but always have a beach of greater or less extent along the water edge. It is on this smooth margin, "beside the lake of Gennesareth," that we must imagine Jesus "standing," looking out on the waters of the lake, then stepping into one of the "two 'boats'" that "stood" on its gradual slope, and bidding Peter launch out "into the deep." It is along this same level shore (probably that of the plain of Gennesareth)—which then perhaps was less encumbered than at present with the thick jungle which lines its whole length—that the multitude gathered "by the sea on the land," whilst He was stepping into "the boat." From the boat of passage, that lay close by for the purpose, He addressed to them His teaching in parables; and they stood "on the 'beach.'" On the same 'beach,' whether of the delicate texture of sand and shells which lines the northern shores, or the rougher shingle that distinguishes the rest, the scene took place described in the last chapter of the Gospel according to St. John. There was the little crew in their boat on the waters of the lake. The early dawn had broken, revealing, as it does, every cleft and broken cliff in distinct proportions all down the rocky sides of its enclosing hills. "On the beach" stood the solitary figure; and through the stillness of the morning air, not yet disturbed by the waking hum of the surrounding villages, came the gentle voice calling, after the manner of the East, "Children," and bidding them cast their wide nets into the lake once more. Then came the sudden rush of fish into the net, "so that they were not able to draw it," and the recognition of the Lord. Peter, resuming the dress which, like eastern boatmen, he had thrown off whilst struggling with the net, leaped into the lake, and dashed through the shallow water to the shore, whilst his companions in the lesser boat, in which alone they could approach the beach, dragged the net, and Peter, as he "went up" out of the water, took it from their hands, and spread it on the level shore.

Again, a remarkable feature of the lake must always have been the concentration of varied life and activity in a basin so closely surrounded with desert solitudes. The plain of Gennesareth, enjoying its tropical climate, even now presents a striking contrast to the bare hills, thinly dotted here and there with scanty grass, which embrace it. In ancient times, this

near contrast of Life and Death, population and solitude, must have been brought to its highest pitch. It was those "desert places," thus close at hand, on the tablelands, or in the ravines of the eastern and western ranges, which seem to be classed under the common name of "the mountain," that gave the opportunities of retirement for rest or prayer. "Rising up early in the morning while it was yet dark," or "passing over to the other side in a boat," He sought those solitudes, sometimes alone, sometimes with His disciples. The lake in this double aspect is thus a reflex of that union of energy and rest, of active labour and deep devotion, which is the essence of Christianity, as it was in the life of Him in whom that union was first taught and shown.

This brings us to the consideration of the more particular scenes of which traces may be found. To the southern extremity there is no record that our Lord ever went. Tiberias, its chief city, was so nearly a Roman colony, its site, on the remains of an ancient burial-ground, so offensive to Jewish scruples, that He who was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel would probably not have spent His labour in its precincts. It was also but just rising into importance.

To the eastern side, however, several visits are described ; two, it may be three, of such importance as to require special notice. The eastern shores of the lake have been so slightly visited and described, that any comparison of their features with the history must necessarily be precarious. Yet one general characteristic of that shore, as compared with the western side, has been indicated, which probably existed in ancient times, though in a less degree than at present—namely, its desert character. Partly this arises from its nearer exposure to the Bedouin tribes ; partly from its less abundance of springs and streams. There is no recess in the eastern hills ; no towns along its banks corresponding to those in the Plain of Gennesareth. Thus this wilder region became a natural refuge from the active life of the western shores. It was "when He saw great multitudes about Him" that "He gave commandment to depart unto the *other side*" ; and again He said, "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while ; for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat." The first of these occasions was in the morning. His immediate followers sent away the multitude, and took Him even as He was in "the boat." A crowd of lesser vessels were also on the lake, and there occurred one of those incidents to which every mountain-lake more or less, and the Sea of Galilee from its situation especially, is subject. Through one of the deep ravines, which

have been described as breaking through the hills to the shore, there "came down a storm of wind" on the lake, which becomes from end to end white with foam whilst the waves rise into the air in columns of spray. In a moment the still lake was roused as by "an earthquake," and the waves filled the boat; in a moment, when "He rebuked the wind," "there was a great calm." Almost every feature in the story which follows can be traced to the locality. The demoniac described by St. Mark and St. Luke, is indeed such as might have been found on either side of the lake. He is the exact counterpart of the wild maniac at Tiberias described by Epiphanius, who, like the Gadarene demoniac, refused all clothing, and wandered about the city. But the particulars are such as specially suit one spot only on the eastern side, the central ravine of the Wâdy Fik nearly opposite Tiberias. The "tombs," from which the demoniac issued the moment that he saw the boat touch the shore, would be those hewn in the rock on the approach to the ancient city, whether of Gamala or Hippos, which still crowns a height at the top of the ravine. They are not (as is the case with the tombs of Gadara near the south-eastern extremity of the lake) behind, but in front, of the town, on the side of the "road" leading up to it through the ravine from the lake, and thus in conformity with the account which implies that the inhabitants of the city only learned what had happened after all was over. "In the tombs," and "in the mountain" which overhung the lake, the demoniac dwelt, and in his wilder paroxysms was driven beyond them into "the wilderness"; that is, into the eastern Desert which succeeds to these very hills. Upon the lower slopes of the hills, on those grassy slopes which a straining eye can discern even from the western side, the vast herd of two thousand swine were feeding,—a feature of the scene which could hardly have occurred except amongst the Gentile settlers on the Eastern shores; as in like manner the Latin name of "Legion," by which the demoniac called himself, is the expression of a foreign image. The "cliff" down which the frantic herd rushed into the lake, must have been, as already implied, not an abrupt precipice, but one of those rocky faces into which the slopes, especially of the eastern hills, break away, and such as are found in this instance, though not descending sheer into the lake itself, yet perhaps sufficiently near to account for the expression of the Evangelist.

The other great occasion of a visit to the eastern shore, was that on which the multitudes were fed. Everything points to the north-eastern extremity of the lake. There, whilst Jesus went in a boat straight across "to the other side," the

multitudes would be able to go on foot from the villages of the Plain of Gennesareth, along the shore round the head of the lake. "Bethsaida" is the eastern city of that name, which, from the importance of the new city, Julias, built there by Philip the Tetrarch, would give its name to the surrounding Desert tract; its old appellation lingering in the mouths of the Galilean peasants, just as "Acco" and "Beth-gebra" have to this day persisted in spite of "Ptolemais" and "Eleutheropolis." Its site is discernible on the lower slope of the hill which overhangs the rich plain at the mouth of the Jordan. The "desert place" was either the green tableland which lies half-way up the hill, immediately above Bethsaida—or else in the parts of the plain not cultivated by the hand of man, would be found the "much green grass" still fresh in the spring of the year, when this event occurred, before it had faded away in the summer sun—the tall grass which, broken down by the feet of the thousands there gathered together, would make as it were 'couches' for them to recline upon. Overhanging the plain was "the mountain" range of Golan, on whose heights "Jesus sat with His disciples," and saw the multitude coming to them; and to which, when the feast was over, He again retired. The contrary wind, which, blowing up the lake from the south-west, would prevent the boat from returning to Capernaum, would also bring "other boats" from Tiberias, the chief city on the south, to Julias, the chief city on the north, and so enable the multitudes, when the storm had subsided, to cross at once, without the long journey on foot which they had made the day before.

But the most sacred region of the lake—shall we not say of the world?—is the little plain of Gennesareth, which has been already mentioned, on the western shore. Few scenes have undergone a greater change. Of all the numerous towns and villages in what must have been the most thickly-peopled district of Palestine, one only remains. A collection of a few hovels stands at the south-eastern corner of the plain,—its name (Mejdel), hardly altered from the ancient Magdala or Migdol—so called, probably, from a watch-tower, of which ruins appear to remain, that guarded the entrance of the plain. Through its connection with her whom the long opinion of the Church identified with the penitent sinner, the name of that ancient tower has now been incorporated into all the languages of Europe. A large solitary thorn-tree stands beside it. Its situation, otherwise unmarked, is dignified by the high limestone cliff which overhangs it on the south-west, perforated with caves, recalling by a curious, though doubtless unintentional coincidence, the scene of Correggio's

celebrated picture. A clear stream rushes past it into the lake, issuing in a tangled thicket of thorn and willow from a deep ravine at the back of the plain,—the Wâdy Hamâm or “Valley of Doves,” so called, perhaps, from the complicated caverns with which the rocks are honeycombed, in Josephus’s time the stronghold of robbers, now probably of wild pigeons. At the head of this ravine, is visible from most points of view in the plain, the horned platform of the Mount of the Beatitudes, rising from the tableland on which stood Beth-arbel. Two other ravines open on the plain through its western barrier, which is formed of green swelling hills, slightly broken by rocky crests. The plain itself is level, and everywhere cultivated. Another stream flows through it from the north-western, as that of Magdala from its south-western ravine; joined at its entrance into the plain by a third, from the most copious spring of the whole region, now, from its large circular basin, called the “Round Fountain.” There is yet a fourth, of equal breadth, but of shorter course, which, rising under a gigantic fig-tree, from which it derives its name, “the Spring of the Fig-tree,” falls into the lake at the north-eastern extremity of the plain, close by a high projecting rock, which overhangs the ruins of a solitary khan (Khan Minyeh). This rock is cut through in every direction, probably for an aqueduct. Beyond it, the hills, though always leaving a beach, again advance close to the lake. This is the northern boundary of the plain. A valley succeeds, which contains a foaming stream, marked by a ruined mill (Tâbighah), and a deep cylindrical well (Tannûr Eyûb). Further on, near the head of the lake, the fragments of two large edifices amongst the jungle of huge thistles, known by the name of Tell Hûm, complete the signs of human habitation on the western shores.

In some part of this region the home of Christ was situated. The illustrations which it furnishes to His parables and teaching are numerous and decisive, and shall be mentioned in speaking of that subject as a whole. But there is nothing to enable us to fix with certainty the precise spots of the history of His residence. It would almost seem as if the woe pronounced against Capernaum had been literally fulfilled, as if the doom of the cities of the southern sea had been visited upon those of the north; as if it had been more tolerable for “the land of Sodom” in the day of its earthly judgment than for Capernaum. It has been indeed more terrible in one sense; for the name, and perhaps even the remains of Sodom, are still to be found on the shores of the Dead Sea, whilst that of Capernaum has, on the Lake of Gennesareth, been utterly lost. And in pronouncing that woe it is possible that the comparison may

have been suggested by the likeness, which I have noticed, between what must then have been the appearance of the cities of the Plain of Gennesareth—as is still, to a certain extent, the appearance of its outward features)—and what must have been in early ages the aspect of the Vale of Siddim. Still, it would be contrary to the general spirit of prophecy, whether in the Old or New Testament, to press this argument too far. The woe here, as elsewhere, was doubtless spoken, not against the walls and houses of these villages, but against those who dwelt within them; and, as a matter of fact, it would appear that the doomed cities did survive the terrible curse for many generations. There is no reason to doubt that the site at least of Capernaum was pointed out in the fourth century, when a church was built there by Joseph, Count of Tiberias. It has since perished, with all the other sites of these Galilean towns, in the desolation which Arab hordes have brought on this once flourishing district. Yet, although its disappearance cannot, in view of these facts, be safely ascribed to a direct judgment, there is another point of view in which it is worthy of notice. To any thoughtful student of the Gospel History it would have seemed that, of all places there recorded, the scene of our Lord's permanent residence, of His home for the three most important years of His life, would have been regarded as far more worthy of preservation, than any other spot connected with His earthly course. None other could have witnessed so many of His works and words. To no other could His disciples have returned with such fond and familiar recollections, as that where they first became acquainted with Him, and which had witnessed the greater part of their intercourse with Him. Yet it is this which has passed away, without even a memorial or tradition to mark its place. The Sea of Galilee, with its towns, became, as we have seen, sacred in the eyes of the Jewish nation of a later time; and to their zeal we owe the retention of the names, and to some extent, the buildings, of Tiberias and of Magdala, and the two structures—probably synagogues—which are still visible at Tell Hûm. But the Christian Church seems hardly to have made an effort to seek or to recover what ought to have been its historical sanctuaries on these wonderful shores.¹ This neglect may in part have

¹ The few traditional localities on the lake are manifestly wrong. 1. The Latin Church of Tiberias (a dependency on the Latin Convent at Nazareth) represents the scenes of Matt. xiv. 31–34, of Matt. xvii. 27, and of John xxi. 15, all of which are expressly stated to have occurred elsewhere. 2. The spot of the feeding of the five thousand is pointed out in the ravine between Hattin and Tiberias. This, which is contradicted by the whole tenor of the Gospel narrative, was probably selected for the

arisen from the difficulty of securing a hold on regions so firmly occupied by a hostile race, and so constantly exposed to Arab depredations. But in part it must have been caused by the attention which in the earlier and the middle ages of the Church was fixed on questions connected rather with the Nativity and Death, than with the Life and Works of Christ. Compared with Bethlehem, Nazareth, and Jerusalem, it may be almost said that, not merely in sacred geography, but in the language and thoughts of Christendom, Capernaum is an unknown name. It is gone, and, in its very destruction, remains a warning that for the preservation even of the holiest places no special interposition is to be expected ; that we must be content with general, not particular certainty. As at Jerusalem, so also in Galilee. It is gone ; and the little care which has been taken to perpetuate or recover the site is a type of the unequal interest and knowledge awakened at various times by large portions of the Evangelical history and Evangelical doctrine, as originally delivered.

NOTE

ON THE CITIES OF GENNESARETH.

I HAVE forborne to enter on the question of the sites of Capernaum Chorazin, and Bethsaida ;—both from the great obscurity which hangs over it, and from the belief that the general scene of Our Lord's ministrations had been sufficiently ascertained by the identification of the Ghuweir with the Plain of Gennesareth. My attention has since been called to two articles by Mr. Thrupp and Dr. Tregelles in the *Journal of Classical and Sacred Literature*, which endeavour to transfer Gennesareth to the Batihah at the north end of the lake. The arguments used are sufficient to make this region deserving of greater attention than it has hitherto received ; and, if it should eventually prove to be Gennesareth, many of the general considerations urged in the foregoing chapter would apply to it no less than to the Ghuweir. But at present I see no adequate reason for abandoning the view usually entertained ; and for which, after having visited the northern plain in 1862, the reasons appear to me still more decisive than before. There is no appearance of habitation or even cultivation on that plain. Its marked feature is the Jordan and its

convenience of pilgrims, who could not cross to the eastern side, and because of the five basaltic rocks, which are supposed to represent the five loaves. 3. The scene of the demoniacs was fixed at the rock of Khan Mnyeh, also, doubtless, for the convenience of the western side.

tributary streams, of which there is no mention in Josephus's account of Gennesareth ; and the swamp produced by them, whilst it agrees exactly with its account of his accident at the north of the lake, has no relation to anything that he had said of Gennesareth. Add to this the powerful arguments for the identification of Capernaum with Khan Minyeh (Robinson, iii. 348-355). Bethsaida may be identified with Tâbighah, and the recent discoveries of Captain Wilson, in behalf of the Palestine Exploration Fund, render it probable that Chorazin is to be traced in the name of Kerazeh, where there are considerable ruins.

CHAPTER XI

THE LAKE OF MEROM AND THE SOURCES OF THE JORDAN

THE Sea of Galilee, as we have seen, has no sacred associations but those of the New Testament. One peaceful Presence dwells undisturbed on its shores and its waters from end to end. But the moment that the traveller emerges from its basin, he finds himself once more in the scenes of the old wars of the earliest times. The last object which he saw on the south, before descending into its deep basin, was the encampment of Barak ; and now, on ascending and advancing northwards, he is again amidst the troubled times of Joshua and the Judges.

Mounting from the shores of the Plain of Gennesareth, wider and wider glimpses of the lake open before he sees it for the last time. The broad opening at its southern end marks the rapid descent of the Jordan valley ; Tabor, with the Mount of the Beatitudes as an outpost, is long visible above it. Over the wild green hills which skirt the feet of the commanding heights of Safed, he reaches the long undulating plain enclosed between the two lines of Anti-Libanus—the uppermost stage of the Jordan. The northern horizon is closed by Hermon, with its double snow-clad peak, and beyond by Lebanon, with its many heads, in the further distance.

On the eastern range, which still retains its horizontal character, was Golan (of which the name is preserved), the sanctuary of the trans-Jordanic Manasseh. On the western, which is broken and varied, are perched here and there castles of crusading celebrity, but mostly without any ancient interest, Tibnîn, Hunîn and Belfort, which, from the masonry of their lower walls, appear to have been built on ancient Canaanite or Jewish foundations. The cities of this region may all be characterised as standing on rocky spurs or ridges, above peaceful green basins, high among the hills. Of these the most

remarkable is Kedesh-Naphtali, the birth-place of Barak ; the sanctuary, as its name implies, of the great tribe of Naphtali, by which the whole of this western range was occupied. The modern village crowns the hill. The fragments of columns on this hill—the tombs of every kind in the valley behind, and on the platform in front of the village—the ruins of two considerable structures on the same platform—constitute together the largest amount of ancient vestiges that are to be found in any of the cities of Galilee. The green plain which extends north and south of the platform and hill of the village is studded with terebinths, in sufficient numbers to illustrate the scene of Jael's encampment under trees of this kind on this very spot.

II. But it is on the plain and its river that the main historical interest is concentrated. The plain is broken by wild downs, studded with Arab encampments—covered with countless herds of cattle—chiefly the “ bulls ” and “ buffaloes ” of Hermon and Bashan, which wander over the wide plain, and wallow or repose at full length in the copious streams, here as elsewhere in the Jordan valley, descending from the western declivities. The rocks here begin to exchange the grey colour of the limestone formation of Central Palestine for the dark basalt—the “ iron ” as it was called in ancient days—of Bashan. In the centre of this plain, half morass, half tarn, lies the uppermost lake of the Jordan, about seven miles long, and in its greatest width six miles broad, the mountains slightly compressing it at either extremity, surrounded by an almost impenetrable jungle of reeds, abounding in wild fowl ; the sloping hills near it scoured by herds of gazelles.

This lake, now called Hùleh, in old times bore the name of Merom, and afterwards of Samachon, both probably from its upland situation,—“ The High Lake.” On its shores was fought the third and last conflict of Joshua with the Canaanites. After the capture of Ai and the battle of Beth-horon, which secured to him the whole of the south and centre of Palestine, a final gathering of the Canaanite races took place in the extreme north, under the king, who bore the hereditary title of Jabin ; and the name of whose city, Hazor, still lingers at the head of the plain, and in the surrounding hills. Round him were assembled the heads of all the tribes who had not yet fallen under Joshua's sword. As the British chiefs were driven to the Land's End before the advance of the Saxon, so at this Land's End of Palestine were gathered for this last struggle, not only the kings of the north in the immediate neighbourhood, but from the Desert-valley of the Jordan south of the Sea of Galilee, from the maritime plain of Philistia,

from the heights above Sharon, and from the still unconquered Jebus, to the Hivite who dwelt in the valley of Baalbek . . . "under Hermon"; all these "went out, they and all their hosts with them, even as the sand is upon the seashore in multitude, . . . and when all these kings were met together, they came and pitched together at the waters of Merom to fight against Israel." The new and striking feature of this battle, as distinct from those of Ai and Gibeon, consisted in the "horses and chariots very many," which now for the first time appear in the Canaanite warfare: and it was the use of these which probably fixed the scene of the encampment by the lake, along whose level shores they could have full play for their force. It was this new phase of war which called forth the special command to Joshua, nowhere else recorded: "Thou shalt hough their horses, and burn their chariots with fire." Nothing is told us of his previous movements. All that we know is, that on the eve of the battle he was within a day's march of the lake. On the morrow, by a sudden descent, like that which had raised the siege of Gibeon, he and all the people of war "fell" like a thunderbolt upon them in the "mountain" slopes of the plain, before they had time to rally on the level ground. In the sudden panic "the Lord delivered them into the hand of Israel, who smote them, and chased them" westward over the mountains above the gorge of the Leontes "to Sidon," and eastward to the "plain" of "Massoch" or "Mizpeh." The rout was complete, and the cavalry and chariots which had seemed so formidable were visited with special destruction. The horses were hamstrung, and the chariots burned with fire. And it is not till the revival of the city of Hazor, under the second Jabin, long afterwards, that they once more appear in force against Israel, descending as now, from this very plain. Far over the western hills Joshua pursued the flying host, before "he turned back," and "took Hazor," and "burned it" to the ground. The battle of the Lake of Merom was to the north, what the battle of Beth-horon had been to the south;—more briefly told, less complete in its consequences, but still the decisive conflict by which the four northern tribes were established in the south of Lebanon; by which Galilee, with its sacred Sea, and the manifold consequences therein involved, was included within the limits of the Holy Land.

III. The Lake of Merom no more appears in history. But its geographical interest, at which we have already glanced, as the point from which the Jordan finally issues in its downward course, carries us on to the springs of those immortal streams, which here, for the first time, unite in one unbroken

and distinct river. The undulating plain still continues, but narrowing as it approaches its head, and increasing in richness of soil and cultivation, till it almost resembles the Plain of Gennesareth, in the rank luxuriance of its feathery reeds and thorn, and thickets of oleander; marking, however, the difference of elevation by here exhibiting only their green foliage, at a time when those on the shores of the Sea of Galilee were already blazing with their red blossoms. Here, for the same reason, the vegetation is distinguished from that of the Jordan on its lower level; and whereas in the hot Ghor, it flows through a thicket of willows and tamarisks, in these upper regions its foliage is the same as that of the Leontes, sycomores and oleanders. This mass of vegetation implies that we are approaching the watershed of Palestine. Besides the clear springs which have been pouring down their full-grown streams into the valley from the western ranges, we now find countless rills winding through the reedy jungles and the rich fields of millet, corn, and sweet peas, from the hills which begin to close the plain, upon the north. Then descends, under deep shades of sycamore, the turbid torrent of the Hasbeya, which rushing from far up in the heights of Anti-Libanus, through a deep gorge of basalt, may claim, in a strictly scientific sense, to be the parent stream of the whole valley. And now, close above this mass of verdure, its own slopes sprinkled with trees, Hermon rises over us, a long ascent of snow, like the Sierra Nevada above the Vega of Granada. From these slopes springs the most illustrious of earthly streams. It is not always that the sources of great rivers correspond to the future course of their progeny. But those of the Jordan meet every requirement. Geographically they might be perhaps sought elsewhere; but historically, the sight of the springs which we have now reached, at once vindicates and explains their claim.

1. The first and westernmost is at the foot of a green eminence, overgrown with shrubs. From its north-west corner, a magnificent spring,—the exemplar, so to speak, of all those tributaries that we have seen along its banks from En-Gedi upwards,—bursts forth into a wide crystal pool, sending forth at once a wide crystal river through the valley. It receives, as it winds round the hill, another burst of many rills, creeping out from underneath the roots of a venerable oak, which by its size and beauty carries one back to that of Mamre in the far south, and which is still in a manner consecrated by spreading its branches over the tomb of a Mussulman saint. It has been sometimes asked, why the Jordan was not traced to the source of the more powerful stream of

Hasbeya, which has just been noticed, or confined to the real origin of its unbroken course in the Lake of Merom. No one who has seen the burst of clear and living water from these gentle shades—so distinct from the turbid rush or stagnant marsh of either of those other claimants,—could hesitate for a moment. There at once the Israelite would recognise the birth-place of his own life-giving and mysterious river.

The hill itself—apparently an extinct crater—rises from the plain with somewhat steep terraces, and a long level top ; and from this again, immediately above the spring, rises another swelling knoll, with another level top, now strewn with ruins. This is the town and the citadel of *Dan*, the frontier of the Holy Land—its geological boundary also, for here, it is said, the limestone of Palestine terminates, and the volcanic district of Syria begins. That height commands the view of the whole rich plain. In the south, the Lake of Merom, stretched out like a sheet of water above a dam, marks the first descent of the Jordan ; beyond, a deep rent in the mountains indicates the yet further outlet, through which it plunges into the Sea of Galilee. The eastern hills still preserve their horizontal outline, the western still their broken form. Here is explained how, in this sequestered and beautiful stronghold, the people of Laish “dwelt secure,” separated by the huge mass of Lebanon and half of Anti-Lebanon from their mother city of Sidon, and “there was no deliverer in their hour of need,” because “they were far from Sidon.” Up this rich plain came the roving Danites from the south. Since the victory of Merom these northern regions had hardly been explored ; they saw at once, as we see still, how it was “a large land,” —“very good,”—“a place where there is no want of anything that is in the earth.” And on this hill, by the source of their sacred river, the little colony from the southern tribe set up their capital, and called it Dan “after the name of Dan their father” ; and, far removed as it was from all the sacred places of the south, there they set up their sanctuary also. A miniature Shiloh rose in that beautiful grove—a teraphim, and a graven image, and a priesthood of irregular creation ; till the time when, after the fall of Shiloh, and the troubled and lawless period of the Judges, such unauthorised practices were probably put down by the strong hand of Samuel. But a sacred place it still remained ; and there, for his remoter subjects, Jeroboam first erected the temple with the Golden Calf, for those to whom a pilgrimage to Bethel or Jerusalem was alike irksome.

It is doubtful whether the delineation of Dan in Jacob's blessing relates to the original settlement on the western

outskirts of Judah, or to this northern outpost. Herder's explanation will apply almost equally to both. "Dan," the judge, "shall judge his people"; he the son of the concubine no less than the sons of Leah; he the frontier tribe, no less than those in the places of honour,—shall be "as one of the tribes of Israel." "Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path,"—that is, of the invading enemy by the north, or by the west—"that biteth the heels of the horse,"—the indigenous serpent biting the foreign horse unknown to Israelite warfare, "so that his rider shall fall backwards." And his war-cry as from the frontier fortresses shall be "For thy salvation, O Lord, I have waited." In the blessing of Moses, the southern Dan is lost sight of; the northern Dan alone appears, with the same characteristics, though under a different image; "a lion's whelp" in the far north, as Judah was in the far south: "he shall leap from Bashan," from the slopes of Hermon, where he is couched watching for his prey.

2. With Dan the Holy Land properly terminates. But the easternmost source of the Jordan, about four miles distant, is so intimately connected with it both by historical and geographical association that we must go forwards yet a little way into the bosom of Hermon. Over an unwonted carpet of turf, through trees of every variety of foliage,—through a park-like verdure, which casts a strangely beautiful interest over this last recess of Palestine, the pathway winds, and the snowy top of the mountain itself is gradually shut out from view by its increasing nearness, and again there is a rush of waters through deep thickets, and the ruins of an ancient town—not Canaanite, but Roman—rise on the hill side; in its situation, in its exuberance of water, its olive-groves, and its view over the distant plain, almost a Syrian Tivoli.

This is *Cæsarea Philippi*—chosen doubtless on this very account by Philip the Tetrarch, as the site of his villas and palaces, beside the temple here dedicated by his father Herod to the great patron of their family, Augustus Cæsar. Yet this, though its chief historical name, is not its only one. At the outskirts of the Holy Land it combines in a tangled web all the associations of that land almost from first to last. High on the rocky slopes above the town still lingers the name of *Hazor*, in the earliest times, as we have seen, the capital of Northern Palestine—"the head of all those kingdoms." A few rude stone blocks on a rocky eminence mark the probable site of the capital of Jabin, and close beside it still remains a deep circular grove of ilexes—perhaps the best likeness which now exists of the ancient groves so long identified with the Canaanitish worship of Astarte. Hard by

this height of Hazor, but commanding a nearer view of the plain, is the Castle of Shubeibeh, the largest of its kind in the East, and equal in extent even to the pride of European castles at Heidelberg; built, as it would appear, in part by the Herodian princes, in part by Saracenic chiefs; famous in the days of the Crusades as the residence of one of the chiefs of the Assassins, the "old man of the mountain."

But the main centre of attraction is the higher source of the Jordan. Underneath the high red limestone cliff which overhangs the town it bursts out; not, as in the lower or westernmost source, in a full spring, but in many rivulets, which, issuing from the foot of the rock, first form a large basin, and then collect into a rushing stream. It penetrates through the thickets on the hill side, and in the vale below, at some point which has never been exactly verified, joins the stream from Dan. In the face of the rock immediately above the spring is the large grotto which furnished a natural sanctuary not indeed to the Israelites, who perhaps never penetrated so far, but to the Greeks of the Macedonian kingdom of Antioch. We have often had occasion to observe how slightly in the choice of their natural sanctuaries the Hebrews seem to have been influenced by the local beauty or grandeur of the spot; how modern is that "religion of caves" which in the Christian times of Palestine has played so important a part. At last we have arrived at an exception to this rule; and this shows that we are on the confines of the Gentile world. The cavern-sanctuary of Cæsarea, unknown to Israelite history, was at once adopted by the Grecian settlers, both in itself and for its romantic situation the nearest likeness that Syria affords of the beautiful limestone grottos which in their own country were inseparably associated with the worship of the sylvan Pan. This was the one *Paneum* or "sanctuary of Pan" within the limits of Palestine; which before the building of Philip's city gave to the town the name of *Paneas*, a name which has outlived the Roman substitute, and still appears in the modern appellation of *Banias*. Greek inscriptions in the face of the rock testify its original purpose; the reverence thus begun was continued by the Romans; the white marble temple built by Herod to Augustus crowned its summit; and in later times Jewish pilgrims mistook the traces of this Gentile worship for the vestiges of the altar of the Danites and Jeroboam; and Christian or Mussulman devotion has erected above it one of the numerous tombs dedicated to the mysterious saint whom the one calls St. George and the other Elijah.

But amidst these Pagan recollections of *Paneas* or *Cæsarea* Philippi there is one passage which brings it within the

confines of Sacred History. As it is the northernmost frontier of Palestine, so it is the northernmost limit of the journeys of Our Lord. In the turning-point of His history, when "from that time many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Him," when even the Twelve seemed likely "to go away"; and He "could no more walk in Judæa because the Jews sought to kill Him"; then He left His familiar haunts on the Sea of Galilee, to return to them, as far as we know, only once more. He crossed to the north-eastern corner of the lake, and passed, as it would seem, up the rich plain along its eastern side, and came into "the parts," into "the villages" of Cæsarea Philippi. It is possible that He never reached the city itself; but it must at least have been in its neighbourhood that the confession of Peter was made; the rock on which the Temple of Augustus stood, and from which the streams of the Jordan issue, may possibly have suggested the words which now run round the dome of St. Peter's. And here one cannot but ask what was the "high mountain" on which, six days from that time, whilst still in this region, "He was transfigured" before His three disciples? It is impossible to look up from the plain to the towering peaks of Hermon, almost the only mountain which deserves the name in Palestine, and one of whose ancient titles was derived from this circumstance, and not be struck with its appropriateness to the scene. The fact of its rising high above all the other hills of Palestine, and of its setting the last limit to the wanderings of Him who was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, falls in with the supposition which the words inevitably force upon us. The sacredness of Hermon in the eyes of the surrounding tribes may well have fitted it for the purpose, even if it did not give it the name, of "the Holy Mountain." High up on its southern slopes there must be many a point where the disciples could be taken "apart by themselves." Even the transient comparison of the celestial splendour with the snow, where alone it could be seen in Palestine, should not, perhaps, be wholly overlooked. At any rate, the remote heights above the sources of the Jordan witnessed the moment when, His work in His own peculiar sphere being ended, He set His face for the last time "to go up to Jerusalem."

NOTE

ON THE NORTHERN BOUNDARY.

I HAVE not thought it worth while to perplex the question of the boundary of Palestine by including the large tracts northward and eastward, which are given as parts of the Israelite possessions in the first journey of the spies, in the reigns of David and Solomon, and in the prophetical descriptions of Ezekiel. But it may be necessary to notice the position advanced by Hävernicks (Pentateuch, 148), that "Dan," the Danite settlement and the northern boundary, was different from "Dan" in Gen. xiv. 14, and was situated not on the sources of the Jordan, but in the plain of Cœle-Syria. The only argument in favour of this position is the mention, in Judg. xviii. 28, of Beth-Rehob, which in Num. xiii. 21 appears on the way to Hamath. But this (in the total uncertainty of the site of Rehob) can hardly stand against the decisive arguments on the other side. 1. Josephus (Ant. VIII. viii. 4) expressly identifies the northern Dan with the sources of the Jordan, and (Ant. V. iii. 1) calls the plain of Merom "the great plain of the Sidonians." 2. It is connected with Bashan in Deut. xxxiii. 22. 3. The word for "valley" in Judg. xviii. 28, is *Emek*, and not *Bika'ah*, the term uniformly (and still) applied to the Plain of Cœle-Syria.

CHAPTER XII

LEBANON AND ANTI-LEBANON

WITH Dan, or Cæsarea Philippi, the Holy Land terminates. But its scenery and geography cannot be considered complete without a few words on the vast mountain region which forms its physical barrier, and which is the foundation of the whole structure of the country. The double range of the Lebanon and the Anti-Lebanon closes the Land of Promise on the north, as the peninsula of Sinai on the south ; but with this difference, that one part or other of these ranges, though beyond the boundaries of Palestine, is almost always within view. The thunder-storm, which the Psalmist tracks in its course throughout his country, begins by making the solid frame of Lebanon and Sirion to leap for fear, like the buffaloes of their own forests, and ends by shaking the distant wilderness of the lofty cliffs of Kadesh. From the moment that the traveller reaches the plain of Shechem in the interior, nay, even from the depths of the Jordan-valley by the Dead Sea, the snowy heights of Hermon are visible. The ancient names of this double range are all significant of this position. It was "Sion," "the upraised ;" or "Hermon," "the lofty peak" ; or "Shenir," and "Sirion," the glittering "breast-plate" of ice ; or, again, "Lebanon," the "Mont Blanc" of Palestine ; "the White Mountain" of ancient times ; the mountain of the "Old White-headed Man," or the "Mountain of Ice," in modern times. So long as its snowy tops were seen, there was never wanting to the Hebrew poetry the image of unearthly grandeur, which nothing else but perpetual snow can give ; especially as seen in the summer, when "the firmament around it seems to be on fire." And not grandeur only, but fertility and beauty were held up, as it were, on its heights, as a model for the less fortunate regions which looked up to it. The "dews" of the mists that rose from the watery ravines, or of the clouds that rested on the summit of Hermon, were perpetual witnesses of freshness and coolness,—the

sources, as it seemed, of all the moisture, which was to the land of Palestine what the fragrant oil was to the garments of the High Priest ; what the refreshing influence of brotherly love was to the whole community. Still more was this luxuriant life of vegetation rooted in the valleys and on the slopes of Lebanon, the western range, which in this respect far exceeds its eastern rival. "His fruit shall shake like Lebanon." This is the description which only applies to the thin threads of verdure, or the occasional spots of cultivation, in the desert heights of Hermon ; but is literally true of the slopes and terraces of Lebanon, as they overhang the bay of Beirût, or of Tripoli. In the longings of the Hebrew lawgiver, the one distinct image which blended with the general hope of seeing "the good land beyond Jordan" was of "the 'good' mountain, even Lebanon."

I. The two ranges were further distinguished by an antique sanctity, of which traces still remain. Of Hermon it has been already noticed that it was probably the scene of the Transfiguration, and may thus have been the "Holy Mountain"—the only mountain so called in the New Testament. Of this sacredness the proofs are manifold. It is, as Dr. Robinson truly remarks, girded with ancient temples. "They are found in all situations—crowning hills and mountain tops ; or secluded in valleys and deep gorges. The founders and worshippers have disappeared for unknown ages. Whether they were Phœnicians or Græco-Syrians, we cannot tell ; they have left behind no trace but these their works, and no record how or why these works were erected." That on its summit, of which some ruins are still to be traced, was noticed by Jerome. To this, on its heights or in its close neighbourhood, may be added no less than seventeen. Six are to be seen on its more southern uplands, Rûkleh, Kul'at Bustra, Hibbariyeh, Neby Safa, Deir el-Ashayr, and Burkush. That of Neby Safa "stood facing the east, directly over against Hermon, in his most imposing aspect." That of Hibbariyeh "fronts directly on the great chasm of Wady Shib'a, looking up the mighty gorge as if to catch the first traces of the morning sun rising over Hermon." That of Rûkleh, which is further east, "fronts westward," "also towards the snows of Hermon," and is distinguished by a finely carved human countenance, as if intended for Baal or Astarte. That of Deir el-Ashayr fronts eastward, and is remarkable as consisting of a double edifice, one behind the other, on a larger scale at Baalbek.

Eleven more can be traced in the passes of the Anti-Lebanon westward of Damascus. One, indeed two, stand over the source of Ain Fijeh, as if to consecrate that most abundant of

all the Syrian springs, the supposed source of the Barada ; large traces of another, also in connection with the river, are at Kefr-Zeit. Another, of which the many columnar fragments give its name to the village where they are found—Kefr-el-Awamid—"the village of the columns"—is near Abila, and must have faced towards the sacred hill now crowned by the alleged tomb of Abel ; itself, as it would seem, planted on a more ancient sanctuary. Two or three cluster on the slopes of the hill below Bludân. By one of these stands a clump of aged ilexes ; perhaps, with the exception of that of Hazuri, near Baniâs, the best likeness remaining in Syria of the ancient groves of Astarte. On a rude altar among the trees, by an immemorial usage, which has given to the spot the name of Um-esh-Shūkakîf, "the Mother of Fragments," the neighbouring villagers are in the habit of breaking earthen jars. The hill of Nebi Yunas (the Prophet Jonah) above Bludân, is in like manner full of similar remains. At its foot, in the plain of Suraya, are two evidently consecrated to the spring which gushes out from its sides—Ain Fowar. Half-way up is a third ; on its summit are two, one of more antique appearance than the other, both commanding a magnificent view of Hermon and the surrounding villages.

To this array of heathen sanctuaries must be added the legends of later Jewish or popular tradition. The ruined edifice called Nimrod's tomb, is shown at Kefr Hawy, on the summit of the Pass of Hermon, between Baniâs and Damascus. The north-eastern extremity of the range of Anti-Libanus has been long pointed out as the scene of the death of Abel. The story is continued in a striking legend attached to one of the most romantic passes in Syria, through which the Barada rushes in a roaring torrent. This pass is called Sûk Barada, or el-Goosh, from a fair held there on the banks of the stream. It is crossed by a single arch, called the bridge of Sûk. High up in the rocks, on the left bank, are tombs and broken columns in front, and the remains of a Roman road, with the inscription as fresh as if just cut. On the right bank rises a lofty hill, on whose summit is seen a line of tall black trees. They are seven *Snudians* or Syrian oaks. The following is the story told concerning them in the neighbourhood :—"Habid (Cain) and Habil (Abel) were the two sons of Adam. The whole world was divided between them ; and this was the cause of their quarrel. Habil moved his boundary stones too far ; Habid threw them at him, and Habil fell. His brother, in great grief, carried the body on his back for five hundred years, not knowing what to do with it. At last, on the top of this hill, he saw two birds fighting,—the one killed the other,

washed him, and buried him in the ground. Habid did the like for his brother's body, and planted his staff to mark the spot, and from this staff the seven trees grew up over the tomb which is still shown." At the entrance of the pass stood, in ancient times, the city of Abila, the capital of *Abilene*, once mentioned in the New Testament, in connection with a series of dates. The name, no doubt, originated the legend; the word "Abil" (meadow) would be a natural designation of a town at the exit of the Barada through the green vale at the foot of the defile, and the same change of 'Abel' into 'Abila' under like circumstances, occurs in the town of "Abel-Shittim." On the western slopes of Anti-Libanus is the tomb of Nebi-Shit—"the Prophet Seth." It stands conspicuous on the side of the hill, with its two white domes, just where the great view of Cœle-Syria opens in the descent. Round it lies the village which derives its name from the sanctuary. The larger of the two domes marks the mosque; the lesser, the tomb, which joins it at an obtuse angle. The tomb is seen through a rough grating. It is in a gallery, extending like a long low chest for a length of sixty feet, covered, as usual, with offerings. "It would have been twenty feet longer," said the attendant, "but the Prophet Seth, who came here preaching to the people who worshipped cows, was killed by them, and was hastily buried, with his knees doubled under his legs. Every Friday night a light shines in the tomb." The reverence for the dead Patriarch is, as usual at Mussulmans' tombs, very strong. "Tell him," said the guardian of the mosque—on seeing an English traveller inadvertently turning his back on the tomb—"that he would not turn his back on the Sultan; why not show equal regard to the Prophet." On the opposite side of the vale of Cœle-Syria, and therefore nearly facing the tomb of Seth, immediately close to the village of Muallakah, is the similar mosque of Nebi-Nuach—the "Prophet Noah," though smaller, and apparently less honoured. He "having died a natural death, and been therefore buried at peace," the tomb was proportionally longer than that of Seth, being nearly 120 feet in length, the feet being supposed to rest in a well. Two or three other temples exist not far off: Mejdel further south, and Ain-Ata further north, in the same plain.

But Baalbek stands supreme, and may well close this series of the sanctuaries of Anti-Lebanon. Its identification with any Biblical site must remain extremely uncertain. It may possibly be Baalath, the frontier city of Solomon, or Baalhamon, the pleasure-garden of the Canticles, or Baal-Hermon, the sanctuary of Baal in Hermon, or Baal-Gad ("the gathering

of Baal") "under Hermon." But against each of these suppositions there are objections which must prevent us from coming to any positive conclusion on the subject. Of its general importance, however, there can be no question. The size and beauty of the buildings render them at once a physical landmark and a historical monument which no notice of Syria can omit. "In vastness of plan, combined with elaborateness and delicacy of execution, they seem to surpass all others in Western Asia, in Africa, and in Europe." The ranges of columns which give their peculiar grace to the edifices belong to the same age of later Roman magnificence which has left so many proud memorials of itself throughout the East. But there are touches of an earlier antiquity which give it a true connection with the history of Palestine and Egypt. Its situation was probably fixed by the necessity of a sanctuary to greet the travellers and merchants on the great caravan route between Damascus and Tyre, as Petra between Damascus and the Gulf of Elath. Its name, even if we cannot connect it with any Biblical spot, evidently points to its connection with Baal—Baal-bek, "the assembly¹ or gathering of Baal," as its Greek name, "Heliopolis," shows the identification of Baal with the sun. Baal was, in Greek Mythology, identified as the supreme God with Jupiter, as the Sun-God with Apollo; and hence, in the description of the different temples included within the vast sanctuary, has arisen, both in ancient and modern times, a confusion between the two, which it is now almost impossible to rectify. Like the temples of Baal at Samaria and at Gades, it included the inferior deities as well as the chief Sun-God himself. "To the Gods of Heliopolis" is the inscription which still testifies to the plurality of divinities worshipped here. The influence of Egypt is indicated not only by the legend of the sacred image brought from the Egyptian City of the Sun—"On"—"Heliopolis,"—but by some striking peculiarities of Egyptian architecture: as, for example, the Egyptian symbol of a winged globe is in one of the recesses of the great court; an Egyptian capital crowns one of the columns of the lesser temple; and the crested eagle with its outspread wings in the portal occupies the same relative position, and apparently represents the same idea, as the wings of the Egyptian doorways. "Under the shadow of thy wings shall be my refuge" is the most general expression in which the figure appears in the Biblical imagery; "The

¹ "Bekka" is the same word as "Mecca," the *m* and *b* being interchanged, as in the name of Baalbek itself—pronounced sometimes Maalbek. *Bek* is to press, as in a crowd; *Mek*, to suck out clean, as a young camel the milk from the udder. I derive this information from Dr. Vandyck of Beirut.

Sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in his wings," is the thought which is more directly illustrated by the eagle of Baalbek. Finally, the huge substructions of the outer enclosure probably point to the earliest foundation of the building, Phœnician, Jewish, or Syrian. The three vast stones, which for a long period gave to the whole building the name of the "Three-Stone" (*Trilithon*), exceed in size even those of Hebron or Jerusalem; and, with the still vaster stone on which they rest, present the most gigantic masses of hewn stone that are to be found in the world. In the adjacent quarry are to be seen the stones still standing against the rock, like tall trees waiting to be felled; one already lies prostrate, with the lines drawn across its two ends, as if for the cutting off of the unfinished parts.

Within the precincts of the Temple of Baalbek the worship of Baal lingered to the latest days of Paganism, with a union of licentiousness and ferocity which rendered the spot a memorial, on its darker side, of the ancient religion of Canaan, --as its magnificence and beauty recall the brighter and nobler side of the faith of the whole ancient world.

Two great valleys part the Anti-Lebanon from the Lebanon. The southernmost and smallest of the two is the Wâdy-et-Teim, the vale of the Hasbany or Hasbeya river--the geographical, though not the historical, source of the Jordan. The whole valley has its sacred associations, but it derives them not from Classical or Hebrew times, but from the singular sect which there first established itself in strength. It was the refuge, in the eleventh century, of Derazy, the founder of the Druzes. At Hasbeya is their original sanctuary, and from the hills and villages along this valley have radiated their settlements through the whole of the two ranges.

The northern valley is one of wider extent and wider fame. "Cœle-Syria" or "the Basin of Syria" was the name given by the Greeks or Romans to the vast green plain which divides the range of Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon, the former reaching its highest point in the snowy crest to the north, behind which lie the Cedars; the latter in the still more snowy crest of Hermon; the culmination of the range being thus in the one at the northern, in the other at the southern extremity of the valley which they bound. The view of this great valley is chiefly remarkable as being exactly to the eye what it is on maps--the "hollow" between the two mountain ranges of "Syria," or, according to the ancient Hebrew denomination, which has subsisted almost unchanged from the time of Amos to the present day, the broad "Cleft," *Beka'ah* or *Buka'a*. A screen, through which the Leontes breaks out, closes the

south end of the plain. There is a similar screen at the north end, but too remote to be visible, "the entering-in of Hamath," so often mentioned as the extreme limit in this direction of the widest possible dominion of the Israelite Empire.

II. From the plain of Cœle-Syria we mount the range of Lebanon. Its physical features have been already described. Its connection with the western portions of the Holy Land must have been as close as those of Hermon with the eastern portions. From its southern extremity the views over Palestine must have been those which the Assyrian conquerors enjoyed as they first looked from "the tower of Lebanon" upon their prey. "I have travelled," says M. Van de Velde, "in no part of the world where I have seen such a variety of glorious mountain scenes within so narrow a compass. Not the luxurious Java, not the richly wooded Borneo, not the majestic Sumatra or Celebes, not the paradise-like Ceylon, far less the grand but naked mountains of South Africa, or the low impenetrable woods of the West Indies, are to be compared to the south-western projecting mountains of Lebanon. In those lands all is green or all is bare. An Indian landscape has something monotonous in its superabundance of wood and jungle that one wishes in vain to see intermingled with rocky cliffs or with towns or villages. In the bare tablelands of the Cape Colony, the eye discovers nothing but rocky cliffs. . . . It is not so, however, with the southern ranges of Lebanon. Here there are woods and mountains, streams and villages, bold rocks and green cultivated fields, land and sea views. Here, in one word, you find all that the eye could desire to behold on this earth. . . . The whole of Northern Canaan lies at our feet. Is not this Sidon? Are not those Sarepta, and Tyre, and Ras-el-Abiad? I see also the Castle of Shūkif, and the gorge of the Leontes, and the hills of Safed, and, in the distance, the basin of the Sea of Tiberias, with the hills of Bashan, far, far away, and all these hundreds of villages between the spot we are at and the sea-coast. . . . Half a day would not suffice for taking the angles of such an ocean of villages, towns, castles, rivers, hills, and capes."

Such another view is obtained from the south-eastern extremity of the same range—the ridge of Dahar close to the Wâdy-et-Teim. Lebanon and Hermon are visible at once; and the valley of the Jordan is spread out in both its upper stages:—that of the Hasbany river—that of the Merom lake—ending in the still distinct glimpse of the water of the Sea of Galilee. It is one of the best geographical prospects in Syria.

The historical monuments of Lebanon are much less numerous than those of Anti-Lebanon. The Temple of Astarte

at Afka is the only one of importance. From its romantic defile the river of Adonis "ran purple to the sea" with "blood of Thamnuz yearly wounded"; that is, with the stains of the red earth which gave birth to the legend. The Nahr-el-Kelb—the "Dog" or "Wolf" river, so called from the fabled dog, whose bark at the approach of strangers could be heard as far as Cyprus—is marked by the confluence of the inscriptions of the four empires of Egypt, Assyria, Greece, and Rome;—so remarkable both in themselves and in their history. It is instructive to note their gradual resuscitation from the neglect of centuries. Maundrell sees them for a moment, and conjectures them to be "perhaps the representations of some persons buried hereabouts, whose sepulchres may probably also be discovered by the diligent observer." Pococke sees in them only "some small figures of men in relief cut out in different compartments, but very much defaced by time." The Roman inscription was first successfully copied. Next, the Egyptian absorbed the attention of scholars. Finally, the Assyrian came no less distinctly to light. The Greek inscription is too insignificant to deserve notice, were it not for its connection with the others. It is on the Egyptian and Assyrian sculptures, abounding as they do along the face of the rocky wall, that the attention of the Biblical student is chiefly fixed.

There, side by side, we encounter the figures of the earliest and latest oppressors of Israel—Rameses and Sennacherib. Rameses must have passed by that road at a time when the sacred history had hardly penetrated into these parts. His memorials can scarcely seem more ancient to us than they did to the earliest Grecian travellers. When we trace the well-known Egyptian figures—the king and the god as usual giving and receiving offerings,—it is with the same feeling as that with which Herodotus must have climbed up the same pathway more than two thousand years ago. "In the part of Syria called Palestine," to use his own words, "I myself saw the monuments of Sesostris still standing."

But the visit of Sennacherib, here recorded, is a direct reflection of his scornful speech as reported by the prophet Isaiah, and opens to us a striking historical scene in this portion of Syria. "By the multitude of my chariots am I come to the height of the mountains, and to the sides of Lebanon; and I will cut down the height of his cedars and the beauty of his cypresses; and I entered into the height of his border, and the forest of his park. I have digged, and drunk waters; I have made a bridge." "The multitude of his chariots," such as they are seen on the Assyrian monuments of

the further East, must have wound their difficult way through those romantic gorges, up to the very "height of the mountain ranges," and along "the extreme edges of Lebanon," along the valleys of the streams which he drained off by his armies, or over which he threw bridges for them to pass.

But there was one spot more sacred than all, to which the conqueror boasts that he had penetrated. He had gone into "the extremest height of Lebanon, the forest of its park"; and there he had cut down with relentless insolence "the height of its cedars, the beauty of its fir trees."

In these words it is hardly possible not to recognise the sacred recess of the present cedars of Lebanon. They have been so often described, that any detailed account would here be superfluous. But a few words may be allowed for a scene so interesting, and in which probably some new impression is received by every traveller who approaches them. In 1853 I had been prevented from visiting them by the snow; and the same obstacle in 1862 again rendered impossible the usual route over the crest of the mountain from Baalbek, or even over its south-western shoulder from Afka. For this reason we approached the place from Tripoli. As the Wâdy-et-Teim, the valley of the Hasbany, is the sacred country of the Druzes, so the valleys and hills between Tripoli or Ehden, converging towards the deep glen of the "Holy River," the Kadisha—probably so called from its numerous monasteries—is the *Kesrouan*, the sacred country of the Maronites—the fierce Christian sect with which the Druzes are at deadly war. On the edge of the river is *Kanobin* (Cenobion), the residence of the patriarch. On the heights above it is their chief village, Ehden. It is from this village, with its many churches, and its beautiful viaducts surrounding the castle of its daring chief, Sheykh Joseph, that the ascent is made to the cedars. A wide view opens of the long terraces of the *moraines* (as they are technically called) of ancient glaciers descending into the valley. Here a slip of cultivated land reaches up into the verge of their desolate fields. Behind this is a semicircle of the snowy range of the summit of Lebanon. Just in the centre of the view, in the dip between the moraines and the snow-clad hills behind, is a single dark massive clump—the sole spot of vegetation that marks the mountain wilderness. This is the Cedar Grove. It disappears as we ascend the intervening range; and does not again present itself till we are close upon it. Then the exactness of Sennacherib's description comes out. It is literally on the very "edge" of the height of Lebanon—a "park" or "garden" of the forest, or "garden of God," as truly as the "*jardin*" or "garden," well known

to Swiss travellers in the bosom of the moraines of Mont Blanc. It stands as if on an island eminence, broken into seven lengths, of which six are arranged round the seventh, a square mount in the midst, on which stands the rude Maronite chapel. The variation of tint and outline thus makes the whole group a kind of epitome of forest scenery. The outskirts of the eminence are clothed with the younger trees, whose light feathery branches veil the more venerable patriarchs in the interior of the grove. This younger growth, which has entirely sprung up within the last two centuries, amounts now to more than three hundred.

The older trees, which are so different in appearance as to seem to belong to a different race, are now about twelve in number. Their forms are such as must always have impressed the imagination of the inhabitants. Their massive branches, clothed with a scaly texture, almost like the skin of living animals, and contorted with all the multiform irregularities of age, may well have suggested those ideas of regal, almost divine, strength and solidity, which the sacred writers ascribe to them. They stand at the apex, so to say, of the vegetable world. "From the cedar tree that is in Lebanon" downwards is the knowledge of Solomon. "To the cedar of Lebanon" upwards is the destruction of the trees from the burning bramble of Jotham. The intermarriage of the inferior plants with the cedar is the most inconceivable presumption of all. The shivering of their rock-like stems by the thunderbolt is like the shaking of the solid mountain itself. In ancient days the grove must have been much more extensive—or rather, perhaps, the great trees then overspread the whole. Now they are huddled together in two or three of the central vales; and the peculiar grace of the long sweeping branches feathering down to the ground, of the cedar as transplanted into Europe, is there unknown. In one or two instances the boughs of these aged trees are held up by a younger one; others, again, of which the trunks are decayed are actually supported in the gigantic arms of their elder brethren. But in earlier times the breadth and extent of the trees seem to be as much noticed as their height and solidity. The cedar is the model of the "spreading abroad"—the constant growth—of the righteous man; his boughs are "multiplied," and "become long," "fair," "thick," "overshadowing" in "length" and in "multitude." So vigorous and vast was this life of the cedar groves, that it seemed as if all the snows and waters of Lebanon were gathered up into them. They are "filled"; their "rest is by quiet waters"; "the waters make them great; the deep set them up on high." The rills from the

surrounding heights collect on the upper flats, and form one stream, which winds amongst the moraines on its way to the lower flat, whence it is precipitated into the gorge of the Kadisha. The cedars grow on that portion of the moraine which immediately borders this stream, and nowhere else.

And the spot thus becomes a centre of life to the wilderness in the midst of which it stands. "Nature was never silent in the forest; the cicale here were extraordinarily loud; and the trees were full of little birds of the brightest green-and-gold plumage, with a short clear note." This is the very scene suggested to Ezekiel, who reports that under the cedar "all the fowls of the air nestle, and all the beasts of the earth bring forth their prey," and still more in the Psalm which gathers the whole of animal life round the cedars. "The birds making their nests"—"the storks in the fir-trees"—the "marmot" or *shopan* in the surrounding cliffs; the chamois on the hills; the roaring of the lions in the stillness of the night; whilst the distant view is filled up on the one side by the sea, with its monsters, its vast animal life, and its ships, and on the other by the "garment of light in the sky," the "clouds," and the "wind" on the mountain; the springs of the Kadisha, and the other rushing streams of the Lebanon; the cornfields and the vineyards on the nearer slopes, "for the service of man: to make glad and to strengthen the heart of man." And if their very appearance and aspect thus connect them with the poetry of the Bible, their history is also bound up with its history. We know not who first attacked the forests of Lebanon; but already, in the time of David, they were invaded for the building of the palaces at Jerusalem. Many were the trees dragged down by the steep descent—no doubt to the harbour of Tripoli—to be embarked on rafts for Joppa, for the woodwork of Solomon's Temple; and for the vast palace which, from its rustic carving in cedar-wood, seems to be almost a transplantation of the sacred grove to Jerusalem—"the house of the forest of Lebanon"; whilst in the gardens the costly cedars transplanted from Lebanon seemed to have taken the place of the native sycamore. For statues, for houses, for masts of ships, the huge branches were carried off to Tyre and Sidon. But the great destroyer, long remembered, was Sennacherib. He is described as making it his especial boast that he had penetrated to the sacred garden or park, and cut them down; and on his approach, probably, the prophetic wail is lifted up—"Open thy doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour thy cedars: Howl, fir-tree, for the cedar is fallen." And in like manner, on his fall, the triumphant cry is raised in the Lower World—"See, the fir-trees rejoice

at thee and the cedars of Lebanon, saying, Since thou art laid down, no feller is come up against us."

Since that time they have become rarer and rarer. Other groups, indeed, are said to exist in different parts of the mountain; but they have been reported only by two travellers. By the time of Justinian the supply of cedar-wood was almost, and by the time of our Edward IV. entirely, exhausted for the purposes of building. And now, for at least two centuries, they have become invested, by the veneration of pilgrims, and by the increased admiration of nature, with a sanctity almost approaching to that with which they were revered as special miracles of Divine power by the Hebrew Psalmists. The old Hebrew name of *erets* has never deserted them, and is even perpetuated in the puny imitation of them in the Western *larch*. The Maronites long guarded them, under penalties of excommunication; and honour them as "the Twelve Apostles"—"the Friends of Solomon." The sanctuary, which was a rude altar, and is now a rude wooden chapel, they greatly frequent on the festival which the Oriental Church treats as the Feast of all "High Mountains," the Feast of the Transfiguration.

From the heights of the Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon we turn to the Four Rivers, which take their rise in these mountains, and on which the physical structure or historic interest of the neighbouring countries so largely depends.

Of the Jordan, which springs from the foot of the Hermon, and its powerful tributary the Hasbany, which sweep down the Wâdy-et-Teim, no more need here be said. It remains to treat of the Litâny, or river of Phœnicia; the Orontes, the river of Antioch; the Barada, the river of Damascus.

III. Of these the Litâny is the least known; it is, in fact, a river almost without a name. Its popular name of "Leontes" is unknown to ancient writers: its native name of "Litâny" is confined only to its upper course; whilst its lower course—the large stream which issues from the mountains and falls into the sea a few miles north of Tyre—has the separate name of Khasimiyeh, or "the boundary."

Its interest lies in its geographical peculiarity. It rises in the vale of Cœle-Syria, a few miles south of Baalbek; but, instead of penetrating through the narrow screen which parts that valley from the Wâdy-et-Teim, it forces its way through the eastern flank of Lebanon, thus almost entirely eluding the notice of travellers and geographers, as well by this unexpected turn as by the deep ravine which encloses it. That ravine, to the few who have explored it, is one of the most remarkable physical features of Syria. For thirty miles or more it flows

at the bottom of a chasm so deep and so precipitous that its course can only be traced here and there from the overhanging brow of one of the rocky eminences which close it in. It enters the pass at the foot of Cœle-Syria. It rushes under a curious natural bridge, the only means of transit from one bank to the other through all this wild course, and finally runs westward under the huge precipice of the Castle of Belfort—a castle, as its name implies, built by the Crusaders, but raised on the foundations and out of the remains of some still older fortress, intended to guard the gorge which conveys this furious but retired stream into the Mediterranean near Tyre.

IV. The northern river is the Orontes. This alone of the four rivers is said to have the aspect, not of a mountain stream, but of a true river. With this agrees the account of the abundant waters of its source, immediately north of the rise of the Leontes, which seems to have entitled it, amongst all the springs of Syria, to the emphatic name of "The Spring." Worthy of its origin the river rolls on; and, whether in the length of its course, or the volume of its waters, or the rich vegetation of its banks, it is not surprising that, to the Roman world, the Orontes should have appeared as the representative of Syria. Politically too, as well as by its natural features, it presented the chief point of contact, in later times, between this corner of Asia and the West.

As the valley opens northwards, it forms the great geographical feature so often described in the Sacred History as the utmost northern boundary, not of the Holy Land, but of the Holy Empire of Solomon—"the entering in of Hamath." Near this spring is to be found the town, still bearing its original name of Riblah, and remarkable as the encampment of the kings of Egypt and Babylon in the later days of the Jewish monarchy. There Eliakim was raised to the throne instead of Jehoahaz by Pharaoh Necho, and there Zedekiah was tortured, and his nobles massacred, by Nebuchadnezzar. "A more advantageous place," says Dr. Robinson, who has visited the spot, "for the encampment of the hosts of Egypt and Babylon can hardly be imagined. On the banks of a mountain stream, in the midst of this vast and fertile plain, the most abundant supplies of provisions and forage were at hand. From this point the roads were open to the Egyptian monarch across the desert, either by Aleppo and the Euphrates to Nineveh, or by Palmyra to Babylon. From Riblah, too, the host of the Babylonian conqueror could sweep around the end of Lebanon, and along the coast to Palestine and Egypt; or, passing on southwards through the Bûkâ'a, could spread themselves over the land, either eastwards or westwards, from

the valley of the Jordan. Riblah, indeed, disappears from history, and is no more heard of until the present century ; but the great plain of the Orontes continued to be the store-house and battle-field of conflicting hosts during the long dominion of the Syro-Macedonian kings, the Romans, and the Arabian warriors of the middle ages. Of its great cities, Emessa (Hüms) and Hamath (Hamah) still remain, while Apamea has sunk into oblivion under its present name of Kûl'at-el-Umdik."

Near what may be called the turning-point of its courses, where its spacious stream is diverted from advancing further northwards by the chain of Amanus, the offshoot of the Taurus range, rose the Greek city of Antioch. Out of a vast square plain, the Orontes issues into a broad valley, opening seawards, but closed in on the north by Amanus, on the south by the rugged hills of the Casian range. These last, with the circuit of vast walls that crown their heights, defended the city on one side, as the Orontes formed a natural moat on the other side in the level valley.¹ All the cities in Palestine must have seemed mere villages or garrison towns in comparison with the size, the strength, and the beauty of this new capital. It has often been observed how the Christianity of the first ages thrived in cities rather than in the country. So it was emphatically with "the disciples, who were first called Christians at Antioch," the capital of the East. From Antioch the river pursues its westerly course, and it is in this its last stage that the scenery occurs which—by the wooded cliffs the numerous windings, and the green spaces by the river-side—has suggested the likeness of the English Wye. Enormous water-wheels, turned by the ample stream ; gardens, hedged in, not by the usual fence of stiff prickly pear, but by plane and myrtle ; the ground thickly studded with bay and oleander, as the river passes by the probable site of Daphne—these are some of the features which distinguish the scenery of the Orontes from the usual imagery of the East.

V. The Leontes and Orontes are unknown, Baalbek and Antioch are all but unknown, to the earlier history of the Jewish people ; but when we turn eastward we find ourselves once more on well-known ground. There is no portion of

¹ This peculiarity in the situation of Antioch, with hills on one side and river on the other, explains the apparent inconsistency noticed by Gibbon between the vast extent of its walls and the small number of its gates. Of the five gates, one commanded the only pass into the hills, one the bridge across the river, and (in the shorter ends of the oblong space) one led up the valley (eastward) and two down the valley (westward). This remark, as well as the general facts, characteristic of the Orontes and Antioch, which I was unable to visit, I owe to the accurate observation of my friend and fellow-traveller, Mr. T. Fremantle.

Syria where the history is so dependent on the geography as that which hangs on the fourth river of Lebanon, now called "Barada"; by ancient Greeks. "Bardines," or "Chrysorrhoeas"; by the Hebrews, "Abana," or "Pharpar," "the river of DAMASCUS."

Damascus should be approached only one way, and that is from the north-west. The traveller who comes from that quarter passes over the great chain of Anti-Libanus; he crosses the watershed, and he finds himself following the course of a little stream flowing through a richly cultivated valley. The stream is the Barada. It rises in the plain of Zebdani; it flows on, and the cultivation, which at its rise spreads far and wide along its banks, nourished by the rills which feed it, gradually is contracted within the limits of its single channel. The mountains rise round it absolutely bare. The peaks of Mount Sinai are hardly more sterile than these Syrian ranges. But the river winds through them visible everywhere by its mass of vegetation—willow, poplars, hawthorn, walnut, hanging over a rushing volume of crystal water—the more striking from the contrast with the naked desert in which it is found.

One vast accession it receives—the volume of water which bursts from the rock of Fijeh, out of the sanctuary which, as if in admiration of this most copious of all the springs of Syria, was built over its source. Perhaps in no part of the East is there so wonderful a witness to the peculiarly Oriental connection between verdure and running water as the view on which we are now entering. The further we advance the contrast becomes more and more forcible; the mountains more bare, the green of the river-bed more deep and rich. At last a cleft opens in the rocky hills between two precipitous cliffs: up the side of one of these cliffs the road winds; on the summit of the cliff there stands a ruined chapel. Through the arches of that chapel, from the very edge of the mountain-range, the traveller looks down on the plain of Damascus. It is here seen in its widest and fullest perfection, with the visible explanation of the whole secret of its great and enduring charm, that which it must have had when it was the solitary seat of civilisation in Syria, and which it will have as long as the world lasts. The river with its green banks is seen at the bottom, rushing through the cleft; it bursts forth, and, as if in a moment, scatters over the plain, through a circle of thirty miles, the same verdure which had hitherto been confined to its single channel. It is like the bursting of a shell—the eruption of a volcano—but an eruption not of death but of life.

Far and wide in front extends the level plain, its horizon bare, its lines of surrounding hills bare, all bare far away on the road to Palmyra and Bagdad. In the midst of this plain lies at our feet the vast lake or island of deep verdure, walnuts and apricots waving above, corn and grass below ; and in the midst of this mass of foliage rises—striking out its white arms of streets hither and thither, and its white minarets above the trees which embosom them—the City of Damascus. On the right towers the snowy height of Hermon overlooking the whole scene ; close behind are the sterile limestone mountains : so that one stands literally between the living and the dead ; and the ruined arches of the ancient chapel, which serve as a centre and framework to the prospect and retrospect, still preserve the magnificent story which, whether fact or fiction, is well worthy of this sublime view. Here, hard by the sacred heights of Salhiyeh, consecrated by the caverns and tombs of a thousand Mussulman saints, the Prophet is said to have stood, whilst yet a camel driver from Mecca, and, after gazing on the scene below, to have turned away without entering the city : “ Man,” he said, “ can have but one paradise, and my paradise is fixed above ! ” It is this grand aspect of Damascus which at once reveals the long-sustained antiquity of the city. Its situation secured its perpetuity : the first seat of man in leaving, the last on entering, the wide desert of the East. There may be other views in the world more beautiful ; there can hardly be another at once so beautiful and so instructive. “ This is indeed worth all the toil and danger it has cost me to come here,” was the speech of the distinguished historian whose premature death at Damascus almost immediately afterwards gave a mournful significance to his words.

No details at Damascus can be compared with this first approach. The Biblical localities divide themselves into two classes. The first relate to Abraham. His stay at Damascus is too faintly indicated in the sacred record to furnish any ground for specifying any scenes in connection with it. But assuming, as it does, a large place both in heathen and Mussulman traditions, it has invested with some interest two or three of the localities in the neighbourhood.

At the distance of two miles outside the walls is the village of Hobah, said to be that to which Abraham pursued the kings. The only place in it now visited is the synagogue. In the corner of the building is a hole, said to have been the retreat of Elisha, and entered by a rude staircase, long worn away. It is still frequented by sick pilgrims, who “ come and sleep, and rise the next morning well.” In the centre of the

building is a space enclosed within rails, formerly said to mark the place of Hazael's coronation, but now called the grave of Elisha's servant (evidently meaning Gehazi), who died here, in the hundred and twentieth year of his age, and over whose grave this railing was erected to prevent the burial of another on the same spot. A little to the west of this, close upon the mountain, and at the entrance of the gorge leading to Helbon, is Burzeh, where a mosque covers a small cave called "The Place of Abraham," in all probability the same as that mentioned by Josephus, under the name of "The Habitation of Abraham." It is the object of Mussulman pilgrimage, as the local traditions connect it with the fantastic legend of Abraham's birth. It is also probably the site of the celebrated view described both in the Koran and Josephus, in which Abraham, seeing the rising and setting of the sun, the moon, and the stars, is led to abandon the worship of transitory things.

The other class of local traditions in Damascus is that relating to St. Paul. It is no wonder that, as every traveller "comes near to Damascus," the question arises, Where took place that conversion which turned the fortunes of the world—the "vision at noon," "above the brightness of the sun," even the Syrian noonday sun? We know only that it was on the road from Jerusalem; and the expression seems to indicate that Damascus was in sight, perhaps we may even say had come suddenly into sight. Four distinct spots have been pointed out at different times in the neighbourhood, at a greater or less distance, within ten miles of the city. Of these four spots, the only one now kept in remembrance is situated at about a quarter of an hour to the east, in the Christian burial-ground, and is marked by a small mass of conglomerate stone. Not far off is the so-called Tomb of St. George, "the good porter," who is traditionally said to have assisted St. Paul in his escape over the adjacent wall; and to the stone altar erected over this tomb are brought all the coffins of the Christian dead before their interment. Indeed, with that triviality which so often marks Oriental tradition, the ignorant guides of the place speak only of the escape and hiding-place of the Apostle, and have lost all memory of his vision and conversion.

A more authentic locality in St. Paul's history is "the Straight Street." From the Eastern to the Western Gate, through the heart of the city, there runs a long thoroughfare, called the "Street of Bazaars," from the bazaars which, after a few hundred yards, contract and fill up its course. Both of the gates bear traces of Roman workmanship. That on the

west is now so much blocked up by buildings as to be almost undistinguishable. That on the east, however, shows distinctly the triple archway, which opened on the great road or street ; the large central arch leading to the broad central thoroughfare : the lesser arches on each side leading to the side thoroughfares, divided from the central one by colonnades. This was the *Via Recta*, which here, as in all the Syro-Greek or Syro-Roman towns—Nicæa, Gerasa (Jerash), Philadelphia (Ammân), Antioch, Palmyra—intersected the city in the straight line that gave it its name. In this street, “in the house of Judas,” the Apostle is described as lodging. A house purporting to be the house of Judas is shown, as far as the present buildings will admit of its site being ascertained, within the direction of the ancient street. It contains a square room with a stone floor, one portion of which is walled off for a tomb, covered with the usual offerings of shawls, &c. It is called the “Tomb of the Apostle” (*Harari*, the name usually given by Mussulmans, though not by Christians, to the Christian Apostles). This, and a house on the north-east side of the town, called the House of Ananias, are revered by Mussulmans as well as by Christians.

It may be from a confused tradition of the vision of St. Paul that a belief prevails amongst the Mussulmans of Damascus that Our Lord, having ascended from the Mount of *Olives* at Jerusalem, has descended, or will descend, on the Mount of *Figs* at Damascus. One of the minarets of the great Mosque is called the Minaret of Isa (Jesus), from the expectation that this will be the spot. A dark neglected chamber half-way up the minaret is shown as the place where He will stand to judge the world. Every prayer offered within its walls is on this account supposed to be sure of success, and hence the long exclusion of unbelievers from the mosque.

CHAPTER XIII

THE GOSPEL HISTORY AND TEACHING IN CONNECTION WITH THE LOCALITIES OF PALESTINE

It might be supposed from the much greater extent of history, and the much greater variety of detail in the Old Testament than in the New, that the Old much rather than the New would be constantly present in Palestine. But, on the contrary, all travellers would probably bear witness how the Gospel history was always in the ascendant, how, whenever the recollections of the Old and the New Testament came into collision, the former at once gave way. Of course this feeling is in a great measure to be accounted for by the stronger hold which the New Testament possesses over European minds through its greater intrinsic importance, and through our more complete familiarity with its details. But it is not only this. The sight of the country brings forcibly before us the fact that the Gospel History, interwoven as it is with the same imagery and the same natural features, is the completion and close, without which the earlier history would be left imperfect. In the localities as in the events and in the teaching of the Sacred History, the saying is true—*Vetus Testamentum in Novo patet ; Novum Testamentum in Vetere latet*. And in these concluding scenes the fewness and shortness of the glimpses are compensated by the vividness and clearness of the recognition. It is like travelling in the night. Whole tracts are traversed with no other approach to identity with former events, than is given by the knowledge that we are treading the same ground and breathing the same air. Suddenly a flash of lightning comes, and for an instant tower, and tree, and field are seen as distinctly and as unmistakably as in the broad daylight.

I. In regard to the Gospel History, as distinct from the Parables and Discourses, the special events have been suffi-

ciently dwelt upon in connection with their separate localities. What is here proposed is to view them in connection with each other, and as a whole.

1. The Infancy of Christ embraces two localities, Bethlehem and Egypt. Of these the notices are so slight in the Gospel narratives as hardly to leave a trace on the subsequent history. Egypt is never again mentioned; Bethlehem only once, or at most twice, and then doubtfully and obscurely. But in the legends of the Apocryphal Gospels, the local circumstances of each event are unfolded in the utmost detail, and the spots indicated—the sycamore at Heliopolis, and the grotto at Bethlehem—are those still pointed out. The fact is worth notice, as showing that the Apocryphal rather than the Canonical Gospels, are the real sources of the earliest local traditions; and that in this, probably, lies their chief historical importance.

2. The connected history of Christ begins with *Nazareth*. He appeared, not as the Prophet of Bethlehem, but as the Prophet of Nazareth. Nazareth was accordingly the centre, from and to which He came and returned, on the two only occasions when we read of his emerging from that secluded basin, before He finally left it for His public ministry. When He went up with His parents to the Passover, the caravan must in all probability have followed the course of the Roman road by Scythopolis and Neapolis, and then for the first time He saw the interior of Palestine. The one or two days' journey from Nazareth to Bethabara, either by Scythopolis or by the bridge at the foot of the Sea of Galilee, must have introduced Him for the first time to the wild scenery of the Jordan-valley, and of its eastern Desert.

3. Amongst the various questions which come before the student of Scripture, few are of greater interest than to ascertain the principle of the differences between the earlier and the latest of the Evangelists. The inward differences of style and character cannot be here considered. But the outward difference of arrangement has been evidently, if not occasioned, at any rate influenced, by local considerations. The first three Gospels turn almost entirely on the ministrations in Galilee; the Gospel of St. John turns almost entirely on the ministrations in Judæa. If the reader takes the Gospels of St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. Luke, he would hardly be aware, till he approached the final chapters, that Judæa was in existence. If he takes the Gospel of St. John, he will find that, although Galilee is mentioned from time to time, yet it is always as the exception, not the rule; in three chapters only out of the twenty which form the regular narrative, always

with a reason, almost an excuse, for the retirement from the sphere of His labours, "in Judæa," "amongst the Jews," "at Jerusalem." Galilee and Judæa are opposed to each other, as two distinct countries, rather than as two provinces of the same country. How it was that these Galilean and Judæan cycles of history are represented in the respective narratives, as thus independent of each other, perhaps it is not possible to determine; but the marked distinction between the two spheres is common to both systems of narrative. It is not more extraordinary that St. John should speak of Galilee as thus separate in race and interests from Judæa, than that the Three Evangelists should speak of the passage into Judæa as a marked and exceptional departure from the ministrations of Galilee, as the turning-point of the history, the crossing, if one may so speak, of the Rubicon of Palestine. This distinction between Judæa and Galilee is, as we have seen, founded in the features of the country. That broad separation which from the earliest times existed between the fortunes of the four northern Tribes and those of the south, at the time of the Christian era was still further increased, through the occupation of the intervening country of Samaria by a hostile sect. Any one who took either Judæa or Galilee as the point of view from which to regard the rest of Palestine would naturally look on the other as remote and separate from that of which he was writing. If then (for whatever reason) the range of the Evangelists' vision was confined to the spheres respectively of the north and of the south—of the lake and the mountains, and the wild peasantry, on the one hand,—of the City and the Temple, and the cultivated Jews on the other,—some, at least, of the divergences and omissions in the two sets of narratives are explained. The demoniacs, who, even as late as the third century, peculiarly infested the shores of the Galilean lake, would naturally find no place in the Gospel of St. John. The raising of Lazarus in Judæa would find no place in the Gospels of the earlier three.

4. Galilee and Judæa were the chief, but not the only scenes of Our Lord's ministration. Of the transient passages through the intervening tract of Samaria, nothing more can be added to what has been already said of the one remarkable halt at Shechem or Neapolis. Three distinct occasions, however, occur when, partly from the hostility, partly from the excitement, of the popular mind, Christ was compelled to retire into the less frequented parts of Palestine, and where, accordingly, the local sphere is enlarged. The first of these occasions was when John was beheaded, when many of the disciples turned away from Him, when the first approach of His end

dawned upon Him and upon them,—after the feeding of the multitudes on the Sea of Galilee. The eastern shores of the lake, the limits of the Holy Land towards the west, on the boundaries of Tyre and Sidon, and far away to the north, the villages of Cæsarea Philippi, for this period of His life, and for no other, are seen by glimpses only, yet still distinctly in the Gospel narratives. The second occasion of such danger is that mentioned in the Fourth Gospel,—when He encountered the same hostility at Jerusalem as He had before encountered in Galilee. And here again the scene of His retirement is in accordance with what might have been expected. What the northern and western mountains of Galilee were to that province, Peræa and the Jordan-valley were to Judæa. “Beyond Jordan” “He abode,—” or “at Ephraim,”—the high village on the outskirts of the hills of Benjamin, “near,” and overhanging, “the wilderness” of the Jordan, continued with His disciples, “walking no more openly amongst the Jews.” And with these notices in St. John agrees the statement in St. Matthew’s Gospel, that in the last period of His life, before His final entrance into Jerusalem, He “came into the coasts of Judæa beyond Jordan,”—and with both of these statements agrees the narrative of all the Four, which makes that final approach to have been—not from the usual northern road through Samaria,—but from Jericho.

II. It has been thought worth while, at the risk of some repetition, briefly to bring together the general framework of the Gospel History, partly as a means of testing its general truth, partly as a help, though slight, to finding our way through the disregard of time and place which pervades three at least of the narratives.

But there remains a greater interest. Every traveller in Palestine has recognised the truth of what every commentator has conjectured from the likelihood of the case,—the suggestion of the imagery of the Parables, by what may still be seen passing before the eye of the spectator of those scenes. Let us now collect together all these instances, and observe what light they throw upon the place, or the mode, of the teaching of which they formed the framework.

1. The first Parable that rises before the mind of the traveller as he enters Judæa from the Desert, is that of the Vineyard. “There was a certain householder who planted a vineyard, and set a ‘wall’ around it, and digged a wine-press, and built a tower.” It is one of the few instances—perhaps the only one—in which an image of the Old Testament is almost exactly repeated in the discourses of Christ.—The “song of my beloved,” the vineyard on a hill, the horn of oil, with “the

wall," "the stones gathered out," "the vine of Sorek, the tower in the midst of it," and "the wine-press,"—are common to the Gospel Parables, and to the prophecies of Isaiah. Of both, an equal illustration is preserved in what has been before described as one of the main characteristics of the southern scenery of Palestine. Enclosures of loose stone, like the walls of fields in Derbyshire or Westmoreland, everywhere catch the eye on the bare slopes of Hebron, of Bethlehem, and of Olivet; and at the corner of each rises its square grey tower—at first sight hardly distinguishable from the ruins of ancient churches or fortresses, which lie equally scattered over the hills of Judæa; whilst, more rarely, the rocky surface of the ground is hewn into the level floor for the pressing of the grapes, and the cavity to receive the juice as it streams from the feet of the wine-pressers.

To a certain extent, the number of vineyards now seen in the south must be ascribed to the fact that in the southern towns is to be found the greatest amount of Christian or Jewish population, who alone can properly cultivate what is to Mussulmans a forbidden fruit. But it has been already shown that Judah must always have been the chief seat of the vine in Palestine. And thus the past history of the nation concurs with our own present experience in pointing to what was one of the most obvious and familiar images of Palestine at the time when the Parables were delivered, of which no less than five have relation to vineyards,—that of the labourers, that of the fig-tree, that of the husbandmen, that of the two sons, and that of the true vine.

Of the two first the scene is doubtful. The Parable of the labourers was, if we can trust the order in which it occurs, spoken in Peræa. In the dearth of modern information on those parts it is useless to speculate. But the vineyards of Moab were famous in former days. The Parable of "the fig-tree" is one amongst many, of which the place is left wholly uncertain. Yet, placed as it is, in close juxtaposition with the story of the massacre of the Galileans in the Temple, and the fall of the tower of Siloam, it is natural to connect it with Jerusalem. The peculiarity of the image—that of a *fig-tree* in a *vineyard*,—however unlike to the European notion of a mass of unbroken vine-clad hills, is natural in Palestine, where fig-trees, thorn-trees, apple-trees, whether in cornfields or vineyards, are allowed to grow freely wherever they can get soil to support them.

But of the three remaining Parables of this class, the place can hardly be doubted. If, as the narrative implies, the Parables of the two sons and of the husbandmen were spoken

in the courts of the Temple, the Mount of Olives, with the evening light resting on those ancient towers and enclosures of vineyards, which mark its long slopes, was immediately in view to point and to enliven the story. If, as has been often conjectured, the Parable of the True Vine was spoken after they had risen from the Supper, and passed out into the night air; then again, the vine might be at hand, either on the moonlit sides of Olivet, or else, perhaps, creeping round the court of the house where they were assembled.

Mount Olivet, besides its abundance of olives, is still sprinkled with fig-trees. Bethphage possibly derives its name from this circumstance. One allusion to these fig-trees has been already noticed. There are two others, and they are indisputably connected with Olivet. One is the parable not spoken, but acted, with regard to the fig-tree, which, when all the others around it were, as they are still, bare at the beginning of April, was alone clothed with its broad green leaves, though without the corresponding fruit. Fig-trees may still be seen overhanging the ordinary road from Jerusalem to Bethany, growing out of the rocks of the solid "mountain," which might, by the prayer of faith, be removed, and cast into the distant Mediterranean "sea." On Olivet, too, the brief parable in the great prophecy was spoken, when He pointed to the bursting buds of spring in the same trees, as they grew around Him:—"Behold the fig-tree and all the trees—when they *now* shoot forth—when his branch is yet tender and putteth forth leaves, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is *now* nigh at hand."

Another image which, whatever may have been the case formerly, is now seen again and again in the immediate vicinity of Jerusalem, is that of the shepherds leading over the hills their flocks of sheep and goats,—of white sheep and of black goats, intermingled on the mountain-side, yet by their colour at once distinguishable from each other. The "shepherds," we know, "abode with their flocks," at that time, at least within a few miles of Jerusalem; it is possible that even then, when the Mount of Olives must have been much more thickly set with trees and enclosures, such a flock may have wandered up the sides of the hill, and suggested to Him who was sitting there with His disciples over against the Temple the scene of the Shepherd of Mankind dividing the parts of that vast flock, each from each, the sheep on His right hand and the goats on His left. There is also one other parable of this class, of which the scene, though not so distinctly specified, is yet placed close to Jerusalem. It was whilst he was conversing with the excommunicated blind man, not within the Temple courts,

and therefore probably in His other usual resort, on Olivet, that he addressed to the Pharisees the Parable of the Good Shepherd. The sheepfold on the slope of the hill, the wicket-gate, the keeper of the gate, the sheep, as in all southern countries, following, not preceding, the shepherd whose voice they hear—may have been present to His mind then, as in the later parable; and thus it may have been the same outward scene which embraced the images of the mild and beneficent Guardian and of the stern and awful Judge of the human race.

There is yet another parable, drawn from the shepherd-life of Palestine, of which, however, both the context and its own contents carry us away from Judæa. The indications of the scene of the Lost Sheep are indefinite, yet both in St. Luke and St. Matthew the last preceding note of place connects it with Galilee. But the combined description of the pastures "in the wilderness" and "on the mountains" can hardly find any position in Palestine precisely applicable, except the "mountainous country" or "wilderness," so often called by these names, on the east of the Jordan. The shepherd of that touching parable thus becomes the successor of the wild herdsmen of the trans-Jordanic tribes, who wandered far and wide over those free and open hills,—the last relics of the patriarchal state of their ancestors.

The previous context of "the Good Samaritan" would probably lead us to connect its delivery with Galilee. But the immediately succeeding context naturally brings us into Bethany. In this case the story may have been spoken on the spot which must certainly have suggested it. There we see the long descent of three thousand feet, by which the traveller "went down" from Jerusalem on its high tableland, to Jericho in the Jordan-valley. There the last traces of cultivation and habitation, after leaving Bethany, vanish away, and leave him in a wilderness as bare and as solitary as the Desert of Arabia. Up from the valley of the Jordan below, or from the caves in the overhanging mountains around him, issue the Bedouin robbers, who from a very early time gave this road a proverbial celebrity for its deeds of blood, and who now make it impossible for even the vast host of pilgrims to descend to the Jordan without a Turkish guard. Sharp turns of the road, projecting spurs of rock, everywhere facilitate the attack and escape of the plunderers. They seize upon the traveller and strip him, as is still the custom of their descendants in like case; they beat him severely, and leave him naked and bleeding under the fierce sun reflected from the white glaring mountains, to die, unless some un-

expected aid arrives. "By chance," "by a coincidence of circumstances" that could hardly be looked for, the solitude of the road is on the day of this adventure broken by three successive travellers ascending or descending the toilsome height. The first who came was, like the previous traveller, on his way from the capital; a priest, probably going to the great sacerdotal station in Jericho. The road, as it winds amongst the rocky hills where the traveller is thus exposed, rises usually into a higher pathway, immediately above the precipitous descent on the left hand. The priest "saw"—no one on that long descent could fail to see, even from a distance—the wounded man lying by the rocky roadside, and he turned up on the high pathway and passed him by. The next was a Levite, coming or going between the two priestly cities, and he, when he reached the spot, also cast a momentary glance of compassion at the stranger, and climbed the pathway and went forward. The third was one of the hated race, who was not more solitary here in this wild Desert than he would have been in the crowded streets of Jerusalem. He, too, mounted on his ass or mule, came close to the fatal spot, saw the stranger, bound up the wounds, placed him on his own beast, and brought him before evening to a caravanserai,—such an one as may be still seen in the ruins of a Khan or Hospice on the mountain-side, about half-way between Jerusalem and Jericho,—and on the morning left him there to be cared for till he should himself return to Jerusalem. Such is the outward story, truly the product of one of the most peculiar scenes of Judæa, yet which has now spread through a range as vast as its own wide scope; the consolation of the wanderer and the sufferer, of the outcast and the heretic, in every age and in every country.

2. From the cycle of parables in Judæa, we pass to those in Galilee. Of these, the greater part are grouped in the discourse from the fishing-vessel off the beach of the Plain of Gennesareth. Is there anything on the spot to suggest the images thus conveyed? So (if I may speak for a moment of myself) I asked as I rode along the track under the hillside, by which the Plain of Gennesareth is approached. So I asked, at the moment seeing nothing but the steep sides of the hill alternately of rock and grass. And when I thought of the parables of the sower, I answered, that here at least was nothing on which the Divine Teaching could fasten: it must have been the distant cornfields of Samaria or Esdraelon on which His mind was dwelling. The thought had hardly occurred to me, when a slight recess in the hillside, close upon the plain, disclosed at once, in detail, and with a conjunction

which I remember nowhere else in Palestine, every feature of the great parable. There was the undulating cornfield descending to the water's edge. There was the trodden path-way running through the midst of it, with no fence or hedge to prevent the seed from falling here and there on either side of it, or upon it; itself hard with the constant tramp of horse and mule and human feet. There was the "good" rich soil, which distinguishes the whole of that plain and its neighbourhood from the bare hills elsewhere descending into the lake, and which, where there is no interruption, produces one vast mass of corn. There was the rocky ground of the hillside protruding here and there through the cornfields, as elsewhere through the grassy slopes. There were the large bushes of thorn—the "Nabk," that kind of which tradition says that the Crown of Thorns was woven—springing up, like the fruit trees of the more inland parts, in the very midst of the waving wheat.

This is the most detailed illustration of any of the Galilean parables. But the image of cornfields generally must have been always present to the eye of the multitudes on shore, of the Master and disciples in the boat, as constantly as the vineyards at Jerusalem. "The earth bringing forth fruit of itself"; "the blade, the ear, the full corn in the ear"; "the reapers coming with their sickles for the harvest," could never be out of place in the Plain of Gennesareth. And it is probable that these cornfields would always have exhibited the sight which has been observed in the plains of the Upper Jordan beyond the Lake of Merom, and in the great cornfields of Samaria,—women and children employed in picking out from the wheat the tall green stalks, still called by the Arabs "Zuwân." This is apparently the same word as the Greek "Zizania," rendered in our version "tares." These stalks, it can easily be imagined, if sowed designedly throughout the fields, would be inseparable from the wheat, from which, even when growing naturally and by chance, they are at first sight hardly distinguishable.

Of the rest of the imagery in that series of parables it is perhaps not necessary to speak. Yet in the countless birds of all kinds—aquatic fowls by the lake-side, partridges and pigeons hovering, as on the Nile-bank, over the rich plain of Gennesareth—we may still see the "birds of the air" which "came and devoured the seed by the wayside," or which took refuge in the spreading branches of the mustard-tree. And even the relics of the great fisheries which once made the fame of Gennesareth, the two or three solitary fishermen casting their nets into the lake from its rocky banks, are enough

to recall the image which here alone, in inland Palestine, could have had a meaning ; of the net which was " cast into the sea and gathered of every kind," from all the various tribes which still people those lonely waters.

Of the rest of the parables I do not profess to speak. Some need no local illustration. Of others I have been unwilling to state anything beyond what fell within my own knowledge, or has been expressly recorded by trustworthy observers.

III. From the nature of the case, the Discourses of Christ are less directly connected with the scenes where they were delivered than the Parables. In the latter, outward imagery was expressly required ; in the former, it could only be incidental. Yet, though for the most part the discourses will be understood wholly without regard to local allusions, there are still some cases in which such allusions may be easily discerned. The intimate connection of the conversation at Jacob's Well with the neighbouring objects has been already noticed. The natural growth of the discourse on the Bread of Life from the multiplied bread in the Desert is too obvious to need any explanation. The loud cry in the court of the Temple on the last great day of the Feast of Tabernacles must refer to the spring in the heart of the Temple rock, from which flows the living water into the two pools of Siloam, whence on that day the water was brought to the Temple service. The declaration, " I am the light of the world," has, with great probability, been referred to the lighting up the colossal candlestick in the same festival ; the more remarkable in the profound darkness which then, as now, reigned through the night of an Oriental town. The " whited sepulchres," beautiful without but within full of dead men's bones, are often supposed to be illustrated by the whitewashed domes which in Egypt and Syria always mark the tombs of Mussulman saints. But these are all modern, and there can be little doubt that the real explanation must be sought in the ornaments, and possibly the paintings, now disappeared, of the vast array of sepulchres with which the hills and valleys about Jerusalem are perforated, and some of which, if the discourse was spoken in the Temple, may have been visible at the moment in the Valley of the Kedron.

These are perhaps all the allusions that can be traced in the special scenes of the lesser discourses. But we naturally ask whether, in the greatest of all, the Sermon on the Mount, any such can be discovered, spoken, as it was, if not on the very mountain now pointed out in the plain of Hattin, yet certainly on one of the heights of the western shore of the

lake, and, therefore, commanding a view in its essential features common to all of them, and well known to us now. It must be granted (perhaps we ought rather to say thankfully acknowledged) that there are very few passages in that discourse which are illustrated, still fewer which are explained, by a sight of the localities. These few, though often noticed, must be here briefly collected.

1. One of the most striking objects in the prospect from any of these hills, especially from the traditional Mount of the Beatitudes, is the city of Safed, placed high on a bold spur of the Galilean Anti-Lebanon. Dr. Robinson has done much to prove that Safed itself is a city of modern date. But if any city or fortress existed on that site at the time of the Christian era, it is difficult to doubt the allusion to it, in "the city 'lying' on the mountain top." The only other that could be embraced within the view of the speaker would be the village and fortress of Tabor, which would be distinctly visible from the Mount of the Beatitudes, though not from the hills on the lake-side. Either or both of these would suggest the illustration, which would be more striking from the fact that this situation of cities on the tops of hills is as rare in Galilee as it is common in Judæa.

2. The most remarkable appeal to nature which occurs in the whole of the New Testament is found in this discourse,—"Behold the fowls of the air," and "Consider the lilies of the field." The flocks of birds in the neighbourhood of Genesareth have been already observed. Their number, their beauty, their contrast with the busy stir of sowing and reaping, and putting into barns, visible in the plain below (whether of Hattin or Genesareth), must have always courted observation. What the especial flower may be, here indicated by the word which we translate "lily," it is impossible precisely to determine. The only "lilies" which I saw in Palestine in the months of March and April were large yellow water lilies, in the clear spring of 'Ain el-Mellâhah, near the Lake of Merom. But if, as is probable, the name may include the numerous flowers of the tulip or amaryllis kind, which appear in the early summer or the autumn of Palestine, the expression becomes more natural—the red and golden hue more fitly suggesting the comparison with the proverbial gorgeousness of the robes of Solomon. And though there may not be any special appropriateness to Galilee, the brilliant flowers of Palestine are one of the most attractive features of its scenery, the more so from the want of colour or form in the general landscape; and the wide expanse which they cover at once places them on a level with the "grass of the field," which might be

cut down in a moment to feed the oven in a country where fuel was scarce.

3. The image with which, both in St. Matthew and St. Luke, the discourse concludes is one familiar to all eastern and southern climates,—a torrent, suddenly formed by the mountain rains, and sweeping away all before it in its descent through what a few minutes before had been a dry channel. Yet it may be observed that it is an image far more natural in Galilee than in Judæa ; whether we take the perennial streams which run through the Plain of Gennesareth, or the torrent-streams of the Kishon and the Belus, which on the west run through the Plain of Esdraelon to the Mediterranean. As applied to them, this likeness has far more aptitude than if derived from the scanty and rare flooding of the Kedron and the wādys of the south. The sudden inundation of the Kishon is a phenomenon already historical from the Old Testament ; and, if we are to press the allusion to the “sand,” on which was built “the house that fell,” then there is no other locality in Palestine to which we can look, except the long sandy strip of land which bounds the eastern plain of Acre, and through which the Kishon flows into the sea.

IV. Two or three obvious conclusions are forced upon us by this general view of the Parables and Discourses.

First, if it is clear that the form of the teaching was suggested by the objects immediately present,—if the character of the Parables thus coincides with the notices of the localities where they occur,—it is a proof, incontestable, and within small compass, that even that revelation, which was most unlike all others in its freedom from outward circumstance, was yet circumscribed, or (if we prefer so to state it) assisted, by the objects within the actual range of the speaker's vision. It is an argument, such as in the days of subtle theological speculation might have been justly and forcibly used for what is termed the Perfect Humanity of Christ. It is an argument which, in our own time, may be more practically used to show the simplicity and reality of a teaching which took its stand on the ordinary sights and sounds still seen and heard in the same land where that teaching was delivered. And, if it was thus suggested by outward existing images, it must also, by those images, be judged and explained. We are apt sometimes to carry out into an infinite series of moral and theological conclusions the truths which are stated under these material forms. It might, perhaps, serve both to restrain us from precipitate inferences, and also to relieve us from some difficulties, if we bore in mind that the distinctness which necessarily belongs to physical objects cannot be transferred bodily

to the moral world. When, for example, we look on the track of the road, on the protruding rocks, on the thorny thickets, on the deep mould of the cornfields of Gennesareth ; or, again, on the white sheep and the black goats of the flocks in Judæa ; we ought to feel that the division of mankind into various classes, when represented under those figures, necessarily assumes a definiteness of separation, which cannot be applied without modification to the complexities of the actual world.

2. Again, the mere fact that Our Lord's teaching was suggested by familiar and passing objects is not without interest and instruction. It shows that He was affected by the outward impressions of the moment, not only in the graver events of His life, as when the sudden view of Jerusalem filled His eyes with tears, or the sight of sufferers drew forth the heaving sigh and the bitter groan, but habitually, and in His daily intercourse. Even if we knew no more than this general fact, it would be to us a touching proof that He was of "the same flesh and blood," "tried," in all points, "like as we are." But another and a higher thought strikes us when we consider what were the especial objects which thus, if one may so say, gave a colour to the thoughts and expressions of Him who spake as never man spake. Though characteristic not only of the country, but of the particular spots of country, where the parables and discourses were uttered, they are yet so common and obvious that, but for these sacred allusions, one would pass them by without notice. The grander features of the scenery, the mountains, the forests, the striking points of Oriental vegetation, palm and cedar, and terebinth, the images, in short, which fill the pages of the Psalmists and Prophets of the Older Dispensation, have no place in the Gospel Discourses. *He* must have been familiar with the magnificent prospect from the heights above Nazareth. Hermon and Tabor must have been constantly before him in His later wanderings. The Pisgah-view must have been His from the Peræan hills. Yet none of these came within the circle of His teaching. Perhaps the only exception is the allusion, noticed before, in the Sermon on the Mount to the city set on a "mountain" ; but this, even if certain, is a mere passing glance at a single point in the landscape. As a general rule, every image, every emotion is drawn from the humbler and plainer figures of every-day life and observation,—vineyards and cornfields, shepherds and ploughmen, travellers and fishermen. And if the beauty of nature attracts His notice, it is still of the same simple and general kind,—the burst of the radiance of an eastern sun,—the lively instincts and move-

ments of the careless birds over His head,—the gay colours of the carpet of flowers under His feet. If there be any one passage of the older Scriptures which specially represents the natural storehouse of the Parables of the Gospel, it is the gentle and touching burst of the imagery of spring in the Song of Songs: “The winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the *flowers* appear on the earth; the time of the singing of *birds* is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; the *fig tree* putteth forth her green figs, and the *vines* with the tender grape give a good smell.” It were vain to ask the precise cause of these omissions and selections. Perhaps there may be found some answer in the analogies, partial as they are, of the absorption of the greatest of ancient philosophers, of the noblest of mediæval saints: which made Socrates delight in the city rather than in the country: which made St. Bernard on the shores of Geneva unconscious of the magnificence of the lake and mountains round him. But, rather, perhaps, we may say that it was the same humble and matter-of-fact, yet at the same time universal spirit, which characterised the whole course of His life on earth, and has formed the main outlines of His religion since. The homeliness of the illustrations, whilst it links the teaching with the daily life of His time, yet sufficiently frees them from local peculiarity to render them of universal application. They gain more force and vividness by being still seen on the spot, but they need little or no explanation beyond what they themselves convey. What has often been said of the two Sacraments is, in fact, but one instance of what applies to His whole ministry. Taken from the common usages of Eastern life, ablution and the social meal, from the common elements of nature, water, bread, and the fruit of the vine, there is hardly a country where they are not easily accessible and intelligible. A groundwork of historical and geographical fact, with a wide applicability extending beyond the limits of any age or country; a religion rising in the East, yet finding its highest development and fulfilment in the West; a character and teaching, human, Hebrew, Syrian, in its outward form and colour, but in its inward spirit and characteristics universal and divine—such are the general conclusions, discernible, doubtless, from any careful study of the Gospels, but impressed with peculiar force on the observant traveller by the sight of the Holy Land.

3. Lastly, the whole effect of these points of homely contact between the life of Christ and the earthly scenes of His ministrations, leaves two thoughts not to be set aside. On the one hand, it is useless to deny that there is a shock to the religious

sentiment in finding ourselves on the actual ground of events which we have been accustomed to regard as transacted in heaven, rather than on earth,—which we have been led by pictures and preaching and poetry to invest with an atmosphere too ideal to be brought into contact with anything so prosaic as the actual stocks and stones of Syria. “*Is not this the son of the carpenter ? Is not his mother called Mary ? And his brethren James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas ? And his sisters, are they not all with us ? A prophet has no honour in his own country.*” But, on the other hand, this very feeling gives us a sense of solidity and substance in the character thus presented to us, which it is our own fault if we do not turn to account. So completely one of the sons of men, a career so circumscribed by the roads, and valleys, and hills of an ordinary home and country ; and yet (to go no higher than the point to which we are led by the mere outward contemplation of the history), so universal in the fame, the effects, the spirit of His teaching and life.—“*From whence hath this man these things ? and what wisdom is this which is given unto him that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands ?*”

CHAPTER XIV

THE HOLY PLACES

It has been the object of the foregoing chapters to represent the connection between the topography of Palestine and the historical events of the Old and New Testament. There remains another interest, in every way inferior, but still living and powerful—that which attaches to what are technically called “the Holy Places.” By this term are meant not the scenes of sacred events, taken generally, but such special localities as the Greek or Latin Church, or both conjointly, have selected as objects of pilgrimage. Of course, the historical scenes and the sanctuaries will sometimes coincide. But this is by no means universal. Some scenes which the whole Christian world would naturally regard as most sacred are almost wholly neglected by the mass of pilgrims properly so called. Others, which rank high in the estimation of local and ecclesiastical tradition, are probably unknown beyond the immediate sphere of those who worship in them. And the most important are so slightly connected with the actual thread of the Sacred History, and, if ever so genuine, would throw so little light upon it, that the whole subject is best reserved for a consideration distinct from that which has been bestowed on the general geography of the Holy Land. But they have an interest of their own; they have been for ages objects of a reverence which still diverts some and alienates others from the greater centres of local instruction which the Holy Land contains. They caused the greatest event of the middle ages—the Crusades; and indirectly invited Columbus to the discovery of the New World. They exhibit within a narrow compass the feuds between the Greek and Latin Churches, which have rent Christendom asunder, which overthrew the Byzantine Empire, and which in our own time were the occasion of a bloody European war.

Of these places there are twelve pre-eminent above the rest; thus apportioned amongst the several communities which in

any sense share the Christian belief:—1. Church of the Nativity at Bethlehem (common). 2. Church of the Annunciation at Nazareth (Latin). 3. Church of Jacob's Well at Nablûs (destroyed). 4. Church at Cana (Greek). 5. Church of St. Peter at Tiberias (Latin). 6. Church of the Presentation at Jerusalem (Mussulman). 7. Church of the Flagellation (Latin). 8. Grotto of Gethsemane (Latin). 9. Tomb of the Virgin (common). 10. Church of the Ascension (Mussulman). 11. Church of the Apostles or 'of the Last Supper' (Mussulman). 12. Church of the Holy Sepulchre (common). But, as some of those have been long deserted, and others depend for their support entirely on the greater sanctuaries in their neighbourhood, I shall confine myself to those which exist in Bethlehem, Nazareth, and Jerusalem.

1. Whether from its being usually the first seen by travellers, or from its own intrinsic solemnity, there is probably none which produces so great an impression at first sight as the Convent of the Nativity at Bethlehem. It is an enormous pile of buildings, extending along the ridge of the hill from west to east, and consisting of the Church of the Nativity, with the three convents, Latin, Greek, and Armenian, abutting respectively upon its north-eastern, south-eastern, and south-western extremities. Externally there is nothing to command attention beyond its size—the more imposing from the meanness and smallness of the village, which hangs as it were on its western skirts. In the Church itself the only portion of peculiar interest is the nave—common to all the sects, and for that very reason deserted, bare, discrowned, but in all probability the most ancient monument of Christian architecture in the world. It is all that now remains of the Basilica, built by Helena herself, the prototype of those built by her Imperial son, at Jerusalem beside the Holy Sepulchre, and at Rome over the graves of St. Paul and of St. Peter. The long double lines of Corinthian pillars; the faded mosaics, dimly visible on the walls above, as in the two Churches of St. Apollinaris at Ravenna; the rough ceiling of beams of cedar from Lebanon, still preserve the outlines of the Church, once blazing with gold and marble; in which Baldwin was crowned, and which received its latest repairs from our own Edward IV.

2. From this, the only interesting portion of the upper church, we descend to the subterranean vault, over which, and for which, the whole structure was erected. At the entrance of a long winding passage, excavated out of the limestone rock of which the hill of Bethlehem is composed, the pilgrim finds himself in an irregular chapel, dimly lighted

with silver lamps, and containing two small recesses, nearly opposite each other. In the northernmost of these is a marble slab, which marks the supposed spot of the Nativity, with the rays of the silver star, sent from Vienna in 1852, to supply the place of that which the Greeks—truly or falsely—were charged with having stolen. In the southern recess, three steps deeper in the chapel, is the alleged stall, in which, according to the Latin tradition, was discovered the wooden manger or “*præsepe*,” now deposited in the magnificent Basilica of S. Maria Maggiore at Rome, and there displayed under the auspices of the Pope, every Christmas-day.

Let us pause for a moment in the dim vault, between those two recesses ; let us dismiss the consideration of the lesser memorials which surround us on all sides—the altar of the Magi—of the Shepherds—of Joseph—of the Innocents—to which, probably, no one would now attach any other than an unimaginative importance, and ask what ground there is for believing or disbelieving the tradition which invites us to confine the awful associations of the village of Bethlehem within these rocky walls. Alone of all the existing local traditions of Palestine, this one indisputably reaches beyond the time of Constantine. Already in the second century, “a cave near Bethlehem” was fixed upon as the place where, “there being no place in the village where he could lodge, Joseph abode, and where accordingly Christ was born and laid in a manger.” And this seems to have been the constant tradition of the place, even amongst those who were not Christians, in the next generation, and to have been uniformly maintained in the Apocryphal Gospels, which have always exercised so powerful an influence over the popular belief of the humbler classes of the Christian world, both in the East and the West. It is perhaps invidious to remark on the deviations from the Gospel narrative, which tells us that the want of room was not in the village, but in the inn ; and that the hardship was not that they were driven from the village to the inn, but from the inn to the manger. Such a deviation implies, perhaps, an independent origin of the local tradition, but not necessarily its falsehood. And if at Bethlehem the caves in the limestone rock, on which the village stands, were commonly used as elsewhere in Palestine for horses and cattle, the omission of all allusion to the cave in St. Luke’s narrative would be, to a certain extent, explained. On the other hand, the general impression of the account in Justin is certainly different from that of St. Luke ; and if (with the tradition which Justin seems to have followed, and which has unquestionably prevailed since the time of Jerome) we lay the

scene of the Adoration of the Magi on the same spot, it is positively irreconcilable with the words of St. Matthew, that they came into the "*house where the young child was.*" We must add to this the often-repeated suspicion, which Maundrell was the first to express, which attaches to the constant connection of the several localities of Palestine with grottoes and caves. However much it may be urged that, in a country like Palestine, natural excavations are unavoidably employed for purposes of dwelling, of sepulture, of rest, for which in Europe they never would be used, yet for this very reason there would be a disposition to attach events to them, if the real locality had been forgotten. If, for example, in the case now in question, the caravanserai or khan had been swept away in the convulsions of the Jewish war, and the inhabitants of Bethlehem had any wish to give a local habitation to the event which made their village illustrious, they would almost inevitably fix on a strongly marked natural feature, such as the cave of the convent must, in its original aspect, have been. And another motive leading to the same result transpires through the same passage of Justin which first mentions the tradition, namely the attempt to find a fulfilment of a fancied prediction of the Messiah's birth in the LXX translation of the words of Isaiah, "He shall dwell on high; his place of defence shall be 'in a lofty cave of the strong rock.'"

One further objection to the identity of the whole scene must be mentioned in conclusion. During the troubled period of the invasion of Ibrahim Pasha the Arab population of Bethlehem took possession of the convent, and dismantled the whole of the recess of that gilding and marble which is the bane of so many sanctuaries, European and Asiatic. The native rock of the cave was disclosed; but also, it is said, an ancient sepulchre hewn in that very spot. It is possible, but very improbable, that a rock devoted to sepulchral purposes would have been employed by Jews, whose scruples on this subject are too well known to need comment, either as an inn or a stable.

Still there remains the remarkable fact that the spot was revered by Christians as the birthplace of Christ two centuries before the conversion of the Empire,—before that burst of local religion which is commonly ascribed to the visit of Helena. And out of these earliest and most sacred of its recollections has grown a subordinate train of associations, which has at least the advantage of being unquestionably grounded on fact. If the traveller follows the windings of that long subterranean gallery, he will find himself at its close in a rough chamber hewn out of the rock, here sufficiently clear

to need no proof or vindication. In this cell, in all probability, lived and died the most illustrious of all the pilgrims attracted to the Cave of Bethlehem—the only one of the many hermits and monks from the time of Constantine to the present day sheltered within its rocky sides, whose name has travelled beyond the limit of the Holy Land. Here, for more than thirty years, beside what he believed to be literally the cradle of the Christian faith, Jerome fasted, prayed, dreamed, and studied; here he gathered round him his devoted followers in the small communities which formed the beginnings of conventual life in Palestine; here, the fiery spirit which he had brought with him from his Dalmatian birthplace, and which had been first roused to religious fervour on the banks of the Moselle, vented itself in the flood of treatises, letters, commentaries, which he poured forth from his retirement, to terrify, exasperate, and enlighten the Western world; here also was composed the famous translation of the Scriptures which is still the “*Biblia Vulgata*” of the Latin Church; and here took place that pathetic scene, his last communion and death, at which all the world has been permitted to be present in the wonderful picture of Domenichino, which has represented, in colours never to be surpassed, the attenuated frame of the weak and sinking flesh, the resignation and devotion of the spirit ready for its immediate departure.

II. The interest of the “Holy Place” of Nazareth is of a kind different from that of Bethlehem. At the south-eastern extremity of the village extend the massive buildings of the Latin convent. It is well known from the hospitable reception it affords to travellers caught in the storms of the hills of Gilboa, or attacked by the Bedouins of the plain of Esdraelon. It is well known also for the impressiveness of its worship, in which wild figures in the rough drapery and the rude rope-fillet and keyeh of the Bedouin dress join in the responses; and the chants of the Latin Church are succeeded by a sermon addressed to these strange converts in their own native Arabic, with all the earnestness and solemnity of the preachers of Italy. There is no church in Palestine where the religious services seem more worthy of the sacredness of the place.

But neither is there any place where traditional and local sanctities undergo so severe a shock. Elsewhere, however discreditable the conflicts of the various sects, they have yet for the most part agreed (and indeed this very agreement is the occasion of their conflicts) on the spot which they wish to venerate. But at Nazareth there are three counter-theories—each irreconcilable with the other—in relation to the special scene which has been selected for peculiar reverence.

1. From the entrance of the Franciscan church a flight of steps descends to an altar, which stands within a recess, partly cased in marble, but partly showing the natural rock out of which it is formed. On a marble slab in front of this altar, worn with the kisses of many pilgrims, are the words " *Verbum caro hic factum est,*" and intended to mark the spot on which the Virgin stood when she received the angelic visitation. Close by is a broken pillar, which in like manner is pointed out as indicating the space occupied by the celestial visitant, who is supposed to have entered through a hole in the rocky wall forming the western front of the cave, close by the opening which now unites it with the church. The back, or eastern side of the grotto behind the altar opens by a narrow passage into a further cave, left much more nearly in its natural state, and said by an innocent tradition, which no one would care either to assert or to refute, to have been the residence of a friendly neighbour who looked after the adjacent house when Mary departed on her journey to see Elizabeth in Judæa.

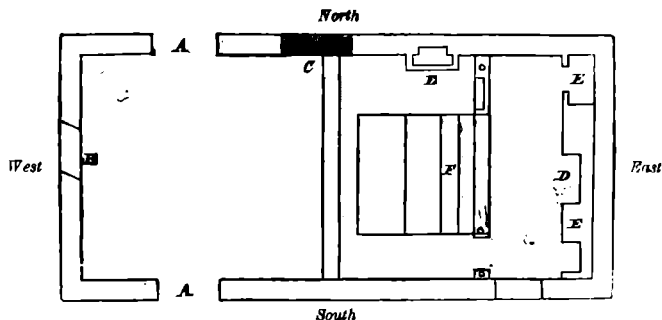
2. To any one who knows the rivalry which prevails in the East between the Greeks and Latins on the subject of the Holy Places, it will not be surprising that the Greeks excluded from this convent have their own "Church of the Annunciation" at the opposite end of the town. But it would be an injustice to them to suppose that this contradiction was merely the result of jealousy. In the abstinence of the scriptural narrative from any attempt to localise the scene—from any indication whether it took place by day or night, in house or field—the Greeks may at least be pardoned for having clung to the faint shadow of tradition which lingers in the Apocryphal Gospels. In that which bears the name of St. James we are told that the first salutation of the Angel came to Mary as she was drawing water from the spring in the neighbourhood of the town. That spring still remains, and bears her name, and in the open meadow by its side stands the Greek Church of the Annunciation, a dull and mournful contrast in its closed doors and barbarous architecture to the solemn yet animated worship of the Franciscan convent—but undoubtedly with a better claim to be an authentic memorial of the event which they both claim as their own.

3. But the tradition of the Latin Church has to undergo a yet ruder trial. There is another scene of the Annunciation, not at the other extremity of the little town of Nazareth, but in another continent—not maintained by a rival and hostile sect, but fostered by the Supreme Head of the Roman Church itself. On the slope of the eastern Apennines, overlooking the Adriatic Gulf, stands what may be called (accord-

ing to the belief of the Roman Catholic Church) the European Nazareth. Fortified, as if by the bastions of a huge castle, against the approach of Saracenic pirates, a vast church, even now gorgeous with the offerings of the faithful, contains the "Santa Casa," the "Holy House," in which the Virgin lived, and (as is attested by the same inscription as that at Nazareth) received the Angel Gabriel. Every one knows the story of the House of Loretto. The devotion of one half the world and the ridicule of the other half has made us all acquainted with the strange story, written round the walls of that remarkable sanctuary: how the house of Nazareth was in the close of the thirteenth century conveyed by angels, first to the heights above Fiume, at the head of the Adriatic Gulf, then to the plain, and lastly to the hill of Loretto. But this "wondrous flitting" of the Holy House is not the feature in its history which is most present to the pilgrims who frequent it. It is regarded by them simply as an actual fragment of the Holy Land, sacred as the very spot on which the mystery of the Incarnation was announced and begun. In proportion to the sincerity and extent of this belief is the veneration which attaches to what is undoubtedly the most frequented sanctuary of Christendom. The devotion of pilgrims even on weekdays exceeds anything that is seen at any of the holy places in Palestine, if we except the Church of the Holy Sepulchre at Easter.

Before the dawn of day the worship begins. Whilst it is yet dark, the doors are opened—a few lights round the sacred spot break the gloom, and disclose the kneeling Capuchins, who have been here throughout the night. Two soldiers, sword in hand, take their place by the entrance of the "House," to guard it against all injury. One of the hundred priests who are in daily attendance immediately begins mass at the high altar of the church, the first of a hundred and twenty that are repeated daily within its precincts. The "Santa Casa" itself is then opened and lighted, the pilgrims flock in; and, from that hour till sunset, come and go in a perpetual stream. The "House" is thronged with kneeling or prostrate figures, the pavement round it is deeply worn with the passage of pilgrims, who, from the humblest peasant of the Abruzzi up to the King of Naples, crawl round it on their knees; the nave is filled with the bands of worshippers who, having visited the sacred spot, are retiring backwards from it, as from some royal presence.

On the Santa Casa alone depends the sacredness of the whole locality in which it stands. Loretto—whether the name is derived from the sacred grove (*lauretum*) or the lady (*Loreta*)



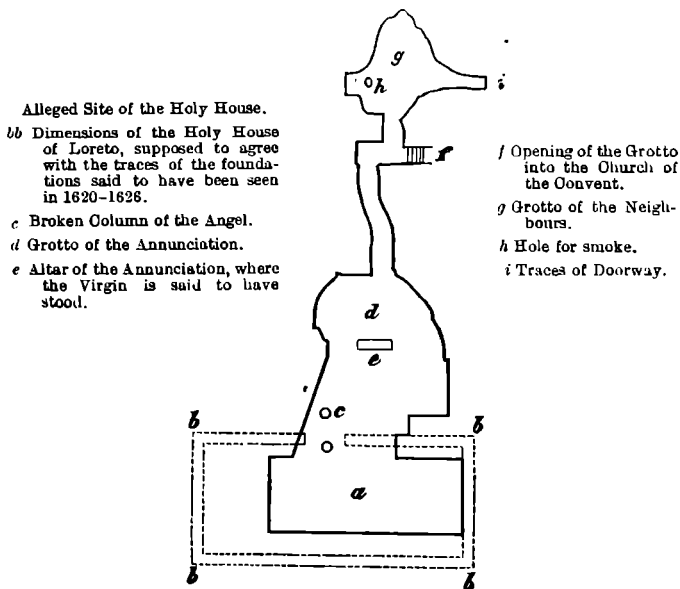
PLAN OF THE HOLY HOUSE AT LORETO

<i>A A</i> Modern Doorways.	<i>D</i> Chimney.
<i>B</i> Ancient Window.	<i>EEE</i> Cupboards.
<i>C</i> Ancient Door.	<i>F</i> Altar.

SIZE, INCLUDING THE WALLS :

Length, 32 ft. 8 in.

Breadth, 14 ft. 9 in.



PLAN OF THE GROTTO AT NAZARETH

N.B.—Instead of the rough sketches of the earlier editions, I insert two Plans, apparently drawn with much care, from "Loreto and Nazareth," by the late W. H. Hutchinson, a Roman Catholic Priest of the Oratory.

under whose shelter the house is believed to have descended—had no existence before the rise of this extraordinary sanctuary. The long street with its venders of rosaries, the palace of the governor, the strong walls built by Pope Sixtus IV. are all mere appendages to the humble edifice which stands within the Church. The "Santa Casa" is spoken of by them as a living person, a corporation sole on which the whole city depends, to which the whole property far and near over the rich plain which lies spread beneath it belongs for ever.

No one who has ever witnessed the devotion of the Italian people on this singular spot can wish to speak lightly of the feelings which it inspires. But a dispassionate statement of the real facts of the case may not be without use. Into the general question of the story we need not enter here. It has been ably proved elsewhere, first, that of all the pilgrims who record their visit to Nazareth from the fourth to the sixteenth century, not one alludes to any house of Joseph as standing there, or as having stood there, within human memory or record; secondly, that the records of Italy contain no mention of the House till the fifteenth century; thirdly, that the representation of the story as it now stands, with the double or triple transplantation of the sanctuary, occurs first in a bull of Leo X. in the year 1518. But it is the object of these remarks simply to confront the House as it stands at Loretto with the House as it appears at Nazareth. It has been already said that each professes to contain the exact spot of the Angelic visitation, to be the scene of a single event which can only have happened in one; each claims to be the very House of the Annunciation, and bases its claim to sanctity on that especial ground. But this is not all: even should either consent to surrender something of this peculiar sacredness, yet no one can visit both sanctuaries without perceiving that by no possibility can one be amalgamated with the other. The House at Loretto is an edifice of thirty-six feet by seventeen: its walls, though externally cased in marble, can be seen in their original state from the inside, and these appear to be of a dark red polished stone. The west wall has one square window, through which it is said the Angel flew; the east wall contains a rude chimney, in front of which is a mass of cemented stone, said to be the altar on which St. Peter said mass, when the Apostles, after the Ascension, turned the house into a church. On the north side is (or rather was) a door, now walled up. The monks of Loretto and of Nazareth have but a dim knowledge of the sacred localities of each other. Still, the monks of Nazareth could not be altogether ignorant of the mighty sanctuary which, under the highest authorities of their Church, professes

to have once rested on the ground they now occupy. They show, therefore, to any traveller who takes the pains to inquire, the space on which the Holy House stood before its flight. That space is a vestibule immediately in front of the sacred grotto; and an attempt is made to unite the two localities by supposing that there were openings from the house into the grotto. Without laying any stress on the obvious variation of measurements, the position of the grotto is, and must always have been, absolutely incompatible with any such adjacent building as that at Loretto. Whichever way the house is supposed to abut on the rock, it is obvious that such a house as has been described would have closed up, with blank walls, the very passages by which alone the communication could be effected. And it may be added, that although there is no traditional masonry of the Santa Casa left at Nazareth, there is the traditional masonry close by of the so-called workshop of Joseph of an entirely different character. Whilst the former is of a kind wholly unlike anything in Palestine, the latter is, as might be expected, of the natural grey limestone of the country, of which, in all times, no doubt, the houses of Nazareth were built.

It may have seemed superfluous labour to have attempted any detailed refutation of the most incredible of Ecclesiastical legends. But Loretto is so emphatically the "Holy Place" of one large branch of Christendom—its claim has been so strongly maintained by French and Italian writers of our own times—and is, moreover, so deeply connected with the alleged authority of the Papal See—that an interest attaches to it far beyond its intrinsic importance. No facts are insignificant which bring to an issue the general value of local religion, or the assumption of any particular Church to direct the conscience of the world, or the amount of liberty within such a Church left on questions which concern the faith and practice of thousands of its members.

But the legend is also curious as an illustration of the history of "Holy Places" generally. It is difficult to say how it originated—or what led to the special selection of the Adriatic Gulf as the scene of such a fable; yet, generally speaking, the explanation is easy and instructive. Nazareth was taken by Sultan Khalil in 1291, when he stormed the last refuge of the Crusaders in the neighbouring city of Acro. From that time, not Nazareth only, but the whole of Palestine, was closed to the devotions of Europe. The Crusaders were expelled from Asia, and in Europe the spirit of the Crusades was extinct. But the natural longing to see the scenes of the events of the Sacred History—the superstitious craving to win

for prayer the favour of consecrated localities—did not expire with the Crusades. Can we wonder that, under such circumstances, there should have arisen the feeling, the desire, the belief, that if Mahomet could not go to the mountain, the mountain must come to Mahomet? The House of Loretto is the petrification, so to speak, of the “Last sigh of the Crusades”; suggested possibly by the Holy House of St. Francis at Assisi, then first acquiring its European celebrity. It is indeed not a matter of conjecture that in Italy—the country where the passionate temperament of the people would most need such stimulants—persons in this state of mind did actually endeavour, so far as circumstances permitted, to reproduce the scenes of Palestine within their own immediate neighbourhood. One such is the Campo Santo of Pisa—“the Holy Field,” as this is “the Holy House”—literally a cargo of sacred earth from the Valley of Hinnom, carried, as is well known, not on the wings of angels, but in the ships of the Pisan Crusaders. Another example is the remarkable Church of St. Stephen at Bologna, within whose walls are crowded together various chapels and courts, representing not only, as in the actual Church of the Sepulchre, the several scenes of the Crucifixion, but the Trial and Passion also; and which is entitled, in a long inscription affixed to its cloister, the “Sancta Sanctorum”; nay, literally “the *Jerusalem*” of Italy.¹ A third still more curious instance may be seen at Varallo, in the Kingdom of Piedmont. Bernardino Caimo, returning from a pilgrimage to Palestine at the close of the fifteenth century, resolved to select the spot in Lombardy most resembling the Holy Land, in order to give his countrymen the advantage of praying at the Holy Place without undergoing the privations which he had suffered himself. Accordingly, in one of the beautiful valleys leading down from the roots of Monte Rosa, he chose (it must be confessed that the resemblance is of the slightest kind) three hills, which should represent respectively Tabor, Olivet, and Calvary; and two mountain-streams, which should in like manner personate the Kedron and Jordan. Of these the central hill, Calvary, became the “Holy Place” of Lombardy. It was frequented by S. Carlo Borromeo; under his auspices the whole mountain was studded with chapels, in which the scenes of the Passion are represented in waxen figures of the size of life; and the whole country round now sends its peasants by thousands as

¹ This church was, at least in its foundation, considerably earlier than that of Loretto, having been first erected in the fifth century. There is an excellent account of it in Professor Willis's *Essay on the Architectural History of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre*.

pilgrims to the sacred spot. We have only to suppose these feelings existing as they naturally would exist in a more fervid state two centuries earlier, when the loss of Palestine was more keenly felt—when the capture of Nazareth especially was fresh in every one's mind—and we can easily imagine that the same tendency, which by deliberate purpose produced a second Jerusalem at Bologna and a second Palestine at Varallo, would, on the secluded shores of the Adriatic, by some peasant's dream, or the return of some Croatian chief from the last Crusade, or the story of some Eastern voyager landing on their coasts, produce a second Nazareth at Fiume and Loretto. What, in a more poetical and ignorant age, was in the case of the Holy House ascribed to the hands of angels, was actually intended by Sixtus V. to have been literally accomplished in the case of the Holy Sepulchre by a treaty with the Sublime Porte for transferring it bodily to Rome, so that Italy might then have the glory of possessing the actual sites of the conception, the birth, and the burial of our Saviour.

III. The Holy Places which cluster within and around the walls of Jerusalem have been shown, age after age, with singular uniformity. Here and there a tradition has been misplaced by accident, or transposed for convenience, or suppressed in fear of ridicule, or, it may be, from sincere doubts. But, on the whole, what was shown to Maundeville in the fourteenth century was with some few omissions shown to Maundrell in the seventeenth, and what Maundrell has carefully described, with the dry humour peculiar to his age, may still be verified at the present time. Such localities are interesting as relics of the period when for the first and only time Palestine became a European province—as the scenes, if one may so call them, of some of the most celebrated works of European art, as the fountain-heads of some of the most extensive of European superstitions. No thoughtful traveller can see without at least a passing emotion the various points in the Via Dolorosa, which have been repeated again and again in pictures and in calvaries, amidst the blaze of gorgeous colours, and on the sides of romantic hills in France and Italy ; the spot where Veronica is said to have received the sacred cloth, for which Lucca, Turin, and Rome contend—the threshold where is believed to have stood the Scala Santa, worn by the ceaseless toil of Roman pilgrims in front of St. John Lateran. There is, however, one feature common to all these lesser sanctities, which illustrates the general remarks already made on the scenery of Palestine. In some countries, such as Greece, the natural feature—in some cities, such as Rome, the vast ruins—lend themselves with extraordinary facility

to the growth of legends. The stalactite figures of the Corycian cave at once explain the origin of the Nymphs who are said to have dwelt there. The deserted halls, the subterranean houses, the endless catacombs of Rome, afford an ample field for the localisation of the numerous persons and events with which the early history of the Roman Church abounds. But in Jerusalem it is not so. The featureless rocks without the walls, the mere dust and ashes within, at once repel the attempt to amalgamate them with the fables which, by the very fact of their slight and almost imperceptible connection with the spots in question, betray their foreign parentage. A fragment of old sculpture lying at a house door is sufficient to mark the abode of Veronica ; a broken column, separated from its companions in a colonnade in the next street, is pointed out as that to which the decree of Pilate was affixed, or on which the cock crew ; a faint line on the surface of a rock is the mark of the girdle which the Virgin dropped to convince St. Thomas. There is no attempt at fraud, or even at probability ; nothing seems to have been too slight, too modern, for the tradition to lay hold of it. Criticism and belief are alike disarmed by the child-like, almost playful spirit in which the early pilgrims and crusaders must have gone to and fro, seeking for places here and there in which to localise the dreams of their own imaginations.

From these—the mere sport and exuberance of monastic tradition—we pass to the more important of the sacred localities of Jerusalem.

1. The present edifice of the Church of the Ascension on the top of Olivet has no claims to antiquity. It is a small octagon chapel within the court of a mosque, the minaret of which is ascended by every traveller for the sake of its celebrated view over Jerusalem and the Dead Sea. In the court are five altars—for the Greek, Latin, Armenian, Syrian, and Coptic Christians, all of whom on Ascension-day climb the hill to celebrate that great festival. Within the chapel is the rock which has been pointed out to pilgrims, at least since the seventh century, as imprinted with the footstep of our Saviour. There is no spot to which the remarks just made may be more justly applied respecting the slightness of ground on which these lesser traditions rest. It would be painful to witness any mark of fraud, or even any trick of nature, in connection with an event like that which this rock professes to commemorate. Nothing but deep repulsion would now be excited were there, for example, any such mark as that which is shown in the Chapel of Domine Quo Vadis at Rome, or of St. Radegonde at Poitiers, where a well-defined footmark in the stone is sup-

posed to indicate the spot where, in those two places, our Saviour appeared to St. Peter and St. Radegonde. Here there is nothing but a simple cavity in the rock, with no more resemblance to a human foot than to anything else. It must have been sought and selected in default of anything better ; it could never either have been invented or have suggested the connection.

The site is probably ancient. This doubtless is "the top of the hill" on which Helena built one of the only two churches which Eusebius ascribes to her (the other being, as we have seen, at Bethlehem)—the church whose glittering cross first caught the eye of the pilgrims who approached Jerusalem from the south and west. At the same time there is one circumstance on which Eusebius lays great stress, and which throws a new light on the special object for which this church was erected. That object, he tells us, as at Bethlehem, was a cave—a cave, as he further adds, in which "a true tradition maintains that our Lord had initiated his disciples in His secret mysteries" before the Ascension, and to which, on that account, pilgrimages were in his time made from all parts of the Empire. It was to honour this cave, which Constantine himself also adorned, that Helena built a church on the summit of the mountain, in memory of the Ascension. The cave to which Eusebius refers must almost certainly be the same as that singular catacomb, a short distance below the third summit of Olivet, commonly called the Tombs of the Prophets, the first distinctly noticed by Arculf in the seventh century, to whom were shown within it "four stone tables, where our Lord and the Apostles sate." In the next century the same "four tables of His Supper" were shown again to Bernard the Wise, who speaks of a church being erected there to commemorate the Betrayal. From that period it remained unnoticed till attention was again called to it by the travellers of the seventeenth century, in whose time it had assumed its present name, which it has borne ever since.

It is clear from the language of Eusebius that the traditional spot which Helena meant to honour was not the scene of the Ascension itself, but the scene of the conversations before the Ascension, and the cave in which they were believed to have occurred. Had this been clearly perceived, much useless controversy might have been spared. There is in fact no proof from Eusebius that any tradition pointed out the scene of the Ascension. Here was (as usual) the tradition of the *cave*, and nothing besides. Helena fixed upon the site of her church, partly from its commanding position, partly from its vicinity to the cave. The contradiction of the present spot to the

words of St. Luke, and its still more palpable contradiction to the whole character of the scene of the Ascension, has been already pointed out. Even if the Evangelist had been less explicit in stating that He led them out "as far as Bethany," the secluded hills which overhang that village on the eastern slope of Olivet are evidently as appropriate to the whole tenor of the narrative as the startling, the almost offensive publicity of the traditional spot, in the full view of the whole city of Jerusalem, is wholly inappropriate, and (in the absence, as now appears, of even traditional support) wholly untenable.

2. There are few travellers whose attention has not been arrested, even in the first flush of the ascent of Mount Olivet, by the site of a venerable chapel, approached by a flight of steps, which lead from the rocky roots of Olivet. It is entered by yet again another and deeper ascent, under the low-browed arches of a Gothic roof, producing on a smaller scale the same impression of awful gloom that is so remarkable in the subterranean Church of Assisi. This is the traditional burial-place of the Virgin. "You must know," says Maundeville, "that this church is very low in the earth, and a part is quite within the earth. But I imagine that it was not founded so; but since Jerusalem has been so often destroyed, and the walls broken down, and levelled with the valley, and that they have been so filled again and the ground raised, for that reason the church is so low in the earth. Nevertheless, men say there commonly, that the earth hath been so ever since the time that our Lady was buried there, and men also say there that it grows and increases every day without doubt." Its history is comparatively recent. It is not mentioned by Jerome amongst the sacred places visited by Paula. And, if on such matters the authority of Councils is supposed to have any weight, the tomb of the Virgin ought to be found, not at Jerusalem, but at Ephesus, where it was placed by the Third Council. But even the authority of a General Council has been unable to hold its ground against the later legend, which placed her death and burial at Jerusalem. Even the Greek peasants of Ephesus, though still pointing to the ruined edifice on the heights of Coressus as the tomb of the Panagia, have been taught to consider it the tomb of another Panagia than the "Theotokos," in whom their great Council exulted. And Greeks and Latins unite in contending for the possession of the rocky sepulchre at the foot of Olivet—the scene, in the belief of both Churches, of that "Assumption" which, in our later ages, has passed from the region of poetry and devotion into a sober and literal doctrine.

Close beside the Church of the Virgin is a spot which, as it

is omitted in Abbé Michon's catalogue of Holy Places, might perhaps have been passed over; yet a few words, and perhaps the fewer the better, must be devoted to the garden of Gethsemane. That the tradition reaches back to the age of Constantine is certain. How far it agrees with the slight indications of its position in the Gospel narrative will be judged by the impressions of each individual traveller. Some will think it too public; others will see an argument in its favour from its close proximity to the brook Kedron; none, probably, will be disposed to receive the traditional sites which surround it, the grotto of the Agony, the rocky bank of the three Apostles, the "terra damnata" of the Betrayal. But, in spite of all the doubts that can be raised against their antiquity or the genuineness of their site, the eight aged olive-trees, if only by their manifest difference from all others on the mountain, have always struck even the most indifferent observers. They are now indeed less striking in the modern garden enclosure built round them by the Franciscan monks, than when they stood free and unprotected on the rough hill-side; but they will remain, so long as their already protracted life is spared, the most venerable of their race on the surface of the earth; their gnarled trunks and scanty foliage will always be regarded as the most affecting of the sacred memorials in or about Jerusalem; the most nearly approaching to the everlasting hills themselves in the force with which they carry us back to the events of the Gospel History.

3. On the brow of the hill now called Mount Zion, a conspicuous minaret is pointed out from a distance to the traveller approaching Jerusalem from the south, as marking the Mosque of the Tomb of David. Within the precincts of that mosque is a vaulted gothic chamber, which contains within its four walls a greater confluence of traditions than any other place of like dimensions in Palestine. It is startling to hear that this is the scene of the Last Supper, of the meeting after the Resurrection, of the miracle of Pentecost, of the residence and death of the Virgin, of the burial of Stephen. If one might hazard a conjecture respecting the cause of such a concentration of traditions, some of them dating as far back as the fourth century, it would be this. We know from Cyril and Epiphanius that a building existed on this spot, claiming to be the only edifice which had survived the overthrow of the city by Titus. This building of unknown origin would naturally serve as an appropriate receptacle for all recollections which could not otherwise be attached to any fixed locality. There is one circumstance which, if proved, would greatly endanger

the claims of the "Cœnaculum." It stands above the vault of the traditional Tomb of David, and we can hardly suppose that any residence, at the time of the Christian era, could have stood within the precincts of the Royal Sepulchre. It must, however, be remembered that the belief in David's Tomb, although now entertained by Christians, Jews, and Mussulmans alike, has yet given the place a special sanctity only in the eyes of the last. Possibly it may have been occasioned by a misunderstanding of St. Peter's words, "His sepulchre is *with us* (ἐν ἡμῖν) until this day"; according to which, it might have been thought that David's Tomb was literally in the midst of the Pentecostal Assembly, that is, in the chamber now shown as the Cœnaculum; and in that case, the earlier tradition that this was the site of "the upper chamber" might hold its ground. In 1862, a partial entrance to this sanctuary was effected for the Prince of Wales. But it was impossible to penetrate farther than the shrine containing the usual cenotaph erected over the supposed graves of Mussulman saints. Two points, however, were established by what was then seen. First, the shrine or tomb stands in what is distinctly the crypt of the church above. Secondly, there is in the wall on the north of the shrine¹ a closed door which is said by the guardians of the mosque, and which, from the Arabic inscription over it, purports to be the entrance to the vault below. But into this vault (in this respect differing from the cave below the Mosque of Hebron) there is no aperture visible. The Mussulman tradition assigns the burial-place to David and Solomon. But it is obvious from the Biblical account that, if it be the tomb of David at all, it must be a sepulchral catacomb of vast extent, because it contained the graves of far the larger part of the kings of Judah. The authenticity or non-authenticity would therefore be disclosed by a moment's glance at the cavern, if such really exists there; and any such discovery would have the additional importance of so far settling the disputed question of the site of Mount Zion itself.

4. We now approach the most sacred of all the Holy Places; in comparison with which, if genuine, all the rest sink into insignificance; the interest of which, even if not genuine, stands absolutely alone in the world. I shall not attempt to unravel the tangled controversy of the identity of the Holy Sepulchre. Everything which can be said against that

¹ The shrine was seen and described, as we saw it, by Dr. Barclay (City of the Great King, 208). The door, I believe, has been seen by no Europeans except those who entered with the Prince on the occasion to which I refer. The inscription over it is to the effect—"This is the door of the Garden of Paradise" (the usual phrase for the grave of a saint).

identity will be found in the Biblical Researches of Dr. Robinson—everything which can be said in its favour will be found in the Holy City of Mr. Williams, including, as it does, the able discussion on the architectural history of the church by Professor Willis. It is enough to state that the argument mainly turns on the solution of two questions, one historical, the other topographical. The historical question rests on the value of the tradition that the spot was marked before the time of Constantine by a temple or statue of Venus, which the Emperor Hadrian had erected in order to pollute a spot already in his time regarded as sacred by the Christians. The topographical question is whether the present site can be proved to have stood without the walls of Jerusalem at the time of the Crucifixion. On the historical question the advocates of the identity of the Sepulchre never have fairly met the difficulty that it is hardly conceivable that Hadrian could have had any motive in such a purpose, when his whole object in establishing his new city of *Ælia* was to insult, not the Christians, but the Jews, from whom, in Palestine at that time, the Christians were emphatically divided. And it is at least curious that to the corresponding tradition respecting Hadrian's temple of Adonis at Bethlehem, there is no allusion whatever by Justin, or by Origen, though speaking of the very cave in which the Pagan temple is said to have been erected, and within a century of the time of its erection. In the topographical question, on the other hand, the opponents of the identity of the Sepulchre have never done justice to the argument first clearly stated in England by Lord Nugent, and pointedly brought out by Professor Willis, which is derived from the so-called tombs of Joseph and Nicodemus. Underneath the western galleries of the church, behind the Holy Sepulchre, are two excavations in the face of the rock, forming an ancient Jewish sepulchre as clearly as any that can be seen in the Valley of Hinnom or in the Tombs of the Kings. That they should have been so long overlooked both by the advocates and opponents of the identity of the Holy Sepulchre, can only be accounted for by the perverse dulness of the conventual guides of the church, who point the attention of travellers and pilgrims, not to those sepulchres, but to two graves sunk in the floor in front of them,—possibly, like similar excavations in the rocky floors at Petra, of ancient origin—possibly, however, as Dr. Schulz suggests, dug at a later time to represent the graves, when the real object of the ancient sepulchres had ceased to be intelligible; just as the tombs of some Mussulman saints are fictitious tombs erected over the rude sepulchres hewn in the rock beneath. The traditional names of Joseph and Nicodemus

are probably valueless. But the existence of these sepulchres proves almost to a certainty that at some period the site of the present church must have been outside the walls of the city, and lends considerable probability to the belief that the rocky excavation, which perhaps exists in part still, and certainly once existed entire, within the marble casing of the chapel of the Holy Sepulchre, was at any rate a really ancient tomb, and not, as is often rashly asserted, a modern structure intended to imitate it. One further point deserves consideration. The tradition that Adam or Adam's skull was buried in Golgotha seems anterior to the tradition of the Sepulchre itself. It was suggested by Dr. Clarke that the curious cavity still shown as the site of that burial-place may have been the origin of the whole theory which identifies this place with the Crucifixion. It is, at any rate, remarkable that this should have been the only traditional spot in connection with the Crucifixion recorded in the third century.

Farther than this in our present state of knowledge no merely topographical consideration can bring us. Even though these tombs prove the site to have been outside some wall, they do not prove that wall to have been the wall of Herod: it may have been the earlier wall of the ancient monarchy, and, even though it be outside the wall of Herod, this only proves the possibility—not even the probability—of its identity with the scene of the Crucifixion. And the question whether the wall of Herod really ran so as just to exclude or just to include the present site must depend for its solution on such excavations under the accumulated ruins of ages as are now impossible, but will doubtless in some future day clear up the topography of ancient Jerusalem, as they have, in the analogous case of Rome, cleared up, beyond all previous expectation, the topography of the Forum. But, granting to the full the doubts which must always hang over the highest claims of the Church of the Sepulchre, no thoughtful man can look unmoved on what has, from the time of Constantine, been revered by the larger part of the Christian world as the scene of the greatest events of the world's history, and has itself in time become, for that reason, the centre of a second cycle of events of incomparably less magnitude, indeed, but yet of an interest in the highest degree romantic. It may be too much to expect that inquiring travellers, who see the necessary uncertainty of the whole tradition, should be able to partake of those ardent feelings which even a sceptical observer like Dr. Clarke acknowledges, in that striking passage which describes the entrance of himself and his companions into the Chapel of the Sepulchre. But its later associations may

be felt by every student of history without fear of superstition or irreverence.

Look at it as its site was first fixed by Constantine and his mother. Whether Golgotha were here or far away, there is no question that we can still trace the sweep of rocky hill, in the face of which the Sepulchre stood, as they first beheld it. For if the rough limestone be disputed, which some maintain can still be felt in the interior of the Chapel of the Sepulchre, there can be no doubt of the rock which contains the "tombs of Joseph and Nicodemus"; none of that which in the "prison" and in the entombment of "Adam's head" marks the foot of the cliff of the present Golgotha; or of that which is seen at its summit in the so-called fissure of the "rocks rent by the earthquake"; none, lastly, of that through which a long descent conducts the pilgrim to the subterraneous chapel of the "Invention of the Cross." In all these places enough can be seen to show what the natural features of these places must have been before the "ingenuous rock" had been "violated by the marble" of Constantine; enough to show that the church is at least built on the native hills of the old Jerusalem.

On these cliffs have clustered the successive edifices of the venerable pile which now rises in almost solitary grandeur from the fallen city. Above rise the two domes, between which the Turkish sheykh was established by Saladin to watch the pilgrims within—the lesser dome surmounting the Greek Church which occupies the place of Constantine's basilica; the larger surmounting the Chapel of the Holy Sepulchre, and by its ruinous state indicating the need of that repair which of late furnished a pretext to the hostile claims of France and Russia. Underneath stands the Gothic portal and façade of the Crusaders, its European features strangely blending with the Oriental imagery which surrounds it on every side. Close beside the Christian belfry towers the minaret of Omar, telling its well-known story of Arabian devotion and magnanimity. In front extends the open court thronged with buyers and sellers of relics to be carried home to the most distant regions of the earth. The whole is patched together by the bridges and walls and stairs by which the monks of the adjacent convents climb into the galleries and chambers of all kinds which run through the sacred edifice. All these, and many like appearances, unfold, more clearly than any book, the long series of recollections which hang around that tattered and incongruous mass. Enter the church, and the impression is still the same. There is the place in which to study all the diverse rites and forms of the older Churches of the world. There alone are gathered together all the altars of all the sects which

existed before the Reformation. On one side is the barbaric splendour of the Greek Church, exulting in its possession of Constantine's basilica and of the rock of Calvary. In another corner is the deep poverty of the Coptic and Syrian Churches, each now confined to one paltry chapel, forcibly contrasted again with the large portions won by the rich revenues of the merchant Church of Armenia. And intermingled with each of these is the more chastened and familiar worship of the Latin Church, here reduced from the gigantic proportions which it bears in its native seat to a humble settlement in a foreign land, yet still securing for itself a footing, with its usual energy, even on localities which its rivals seem most firmly to have occupied. High on the platform of Calvary, beside the Greek sanctuary of the Crucifixion, it has claimed a separate altar for the Exaltation of the Cross. Deep in the Armenian chapel of St. Helena it has seated itself in the corner where the throne of Helena was placed during the "Invention." In the Chapel of the Holy Sepulchre itself, whilst the Greek Church, with its characteristic formality, confines its masses to the antechapel, where its priests can celebrate towards the east, the Latin Church, with no less characteristic boldness, has rushed into the vacant space in the inner chapel, and, regardless of all points of the compass, has adopted for its altar the Holy Tomb itself. For good or for evil—for union or for disunion—the older forms of Christendom are gathered together, as nowhere else in Europe or in Asia, within those sacred walls.

To unfold the claims of these several communions would be in itself a history. The apportionment of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre is, in fact, an epitome of the crusade within the Crusades which forms so curious an episode in that eventful drama. We are there reminded of what else we are apt to forget, that the chivalry of Europe were engaged not only in the great conflict with the followers of Mahomet, but also in a constant under-struggle with the emperors of the great city which they encountered in their midway progress. The capture of Constantinople by the Latins in the fourth Crusade was but the same hard measure to the Byzantine Empire which on a smaller scale they had already dealt to the Byzantine Church, then, as now, the national and native Church of Palestine and of the East. The Crusaders, by virtue of their conquest, occupied the Holy Places which had before been in the hands of the Greeks; and the Greeks in turn, when the Crusaders were ultimately expelled by the Turks, took advantage of the influence of wealth and neighbourhood to regain from the Turks the share in the sanctuaries of which the European princes had deprived them. Copt, Syrian, and

Armenian have, it is true, their own claims to maintain, as dissenters, so to speak, against the great Byzantine establishment from which they have successively separated. But the one standing conflict has always been between the descendants of the crusading invaders, supported by France or Spain, and the descendants of the original Greek occupants, supported by the great Northern Power which claims to have succeeded to the name and privileges of the Eastern Cæsars. Neither party can ever forget that once the whole sanctuary was exclusively theirs; and although France and Russia have doubtless pressed the claims of their respective Churches from political or commercial motives, yet those claims themselves arise from the old conflict of the two great national Churches of the East and West, here alone brought side by side within the same narrow territory.

It would be an easy though melancholy task to tell how the Armenians stole the Angel's stone from the antechapel of the Sepulchre—how the Latins procured a firman to stop the repairs of the dome by the Greeks—how the Greeks demolished the tombs of the Latin Kings, Godfrey and Baldwin, in the resting-place which those two heroic chiefs had chosen for themselves at the foot of Calvary—how, in the bloody conflicts at Easter, the English traveller was taunted by the Latin monks with eating the bread of their convent and not fighting for them in the church—how the Abyssinian convent was left vacant for the Greeks in the panic raised when a drunken Abyssinian monk shot the Muezzin going his rounds on the top of Omar's minaret—how, after the great fire of 1808, which fire itself the Latins charge to the ambition of the Greek monks, two years of time, and two-thirds of the cost of the restoration, were consumed in the endeavours of each party, by bribes and litigations, to overrule and eject the others from the places they had respectively occupied in the ancient arrangement of the Churches—how each party regards the Turk as his best and only protector against the other. These dissensions, however painful, are not without their importance, not only in regard to the recent troubles which have arisen from them, but also as illustrations of the state of feeling there preserved, though now happily extinct in Europe, with which the mediæval orders and cathedrals even of our own country strove by force or fraud to enrich themselves with relics and sanctuaries at the cost of their neighbours or rivals. They are instructive, too, as exhibiting within a small compass, and in the most palpable form, the contentions and jealousies which, not in Palestine only, or in the middle ages, but from the earliest times to the present day have been

the bane of the history of the Christian Church ; making common enemies dearer than rival brethren, common good insignificant in comparison with the special claims and privileges of each sect and Church. Yet let us not so part. Grievous as these dissensions are, their extent has been often exaggerated. Ecclesiastical history, after all, is not all controversy, nor is the area of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre at all times and in all places a mere battle-field of its several occupants. To the ordinary traveller it exhibits only the sight of all nations, kindreds, and languages worshipping, each with its peculiar rites, round what they all believe to be the tomb of their common Lord—a sight edifying by the very reason of its singularity, and suggestive of a higher and nobler, and, perhaps the time may come when it may be added, a truer image of the Christian Church than that which is too often and too justly derived from the history both of holy things and of holy places. “*Vox quidem dissona, sed una religio. Tot pæne psallentium chori, quot gentium diversitates.*” So wrote the pilgrims of the days of Jerome : so, from a higher point of view than has yet been reached, might be said by those who, in our days, whether at Jerusalem or elsewhere, can discover a common faith amidst diversities yet greater.

There is one more aspect in which the Church of the Holy Sepulchre must be regarded. It is not merely the centre of the worship of Christendom, it is also in an especial manner the Cathedral Church of Palestine and of the East ; and in it the local religion, which attaches to all the Holy Places, reaches its highest pitch, and, as is natural, receives its colour from the Eastern and barbarous nations, who necessarily contribute the chief elements to what may be called its natural congregation. It may be well, therefore, to conclude by a description of the Greek Easter, which will also sum up the general impressions of the whole building, in whose history it forms so remarkable a feature. The time is the morning of Easter Eve, which, by a strange anticipation, here, as in Spain, eclipses Easter Sunday. The place is the great Rotunda of the nave ; the model of all the circular churches of Europe, especially that of Aix-la-Chapelle. Above is the great dome with its rents and patches waiting to be repaired, and the sky seen through the opening in the centre, which here, as in the Pantheon, admits the light and air of day. Immediately beneath are the galleries in one of which on the northern side—that of the Latin convent—are assembled the Frank spectators. Below is the Chapel of the Sepulchre—a shapeless edifice of brown marble ; on its shabby roof, a meagre cupola, tawdry vases with tawdry flowers, and a forest of slender tapers ; whilst a blue curtain

is drawn across its top to intercept the rain admitted through the dome. It is divided into two chapels—that on the west containing the Sepulchre, that on the east containing “the Stone of the Angel.” Of these, the eastern chapel is occupied by the Greeks and Armenians. On its north side is a round hole from which the Holy Fire is to issue for the Greeks. A corresponding aperture is on the south side for the Armenians, who communicate it to the Syrians, Copts, and Abyssinians. At the western extremity of the Sepulchre, but attached to it from the outside, is the little wooden chapel allotted to the poor Copts; and further west, but parted from the sepulchre itself, is the still poorer chapel of the still poorer Syrians, happy in their poverty, however, for this, that it has probably been the means of saving from marble and decoration the so-called tombs of Joseph and Nicodemus, which lie in their precincts, and on which rests the chief evidence of the genuineness of the whole site.

The Chapel of the Sepulchre rises from a dense mass of pilgrims, who sit or stand wedged round it; whilst round them, and between another equally dense mass, which goes round the walls of the church itself, a lane is formed by two lines, or rather two circles of Turkish soldiers stationed to keep order. For the spectacle which is about to take place nothing can be better suited than the form of the Rotunda, giving galleries above for the spectators, and an open space below for the pilgrims and their festival. For the first two hours everything is tranquil. Nothing indicates what is coming, except that the two or three pilgrims who have got close to the aperture keep their hands fixed in it with a clench never relaxed.¹ It is about noon that this circular lane is suddenly broken through by a tangled group rushing violently round till they are caught by one of the Turkish soldiers. It seems to be the belief of the Arab Greeks that unless they run round the Sepulchre a certain number of times the fire will not come. Possibly, also, there is some strange reminiscence of the funeral games and races round the tomb of an ancient chief. Accordingly, the night before, and from this time forward for two hours, a succession of gambols takes place, which an Englishman can only compare to a mixture of prisoner's base, football, and leapfrog, round and round the Holy Sepulchre. First, he sees these tangled masses of twenty, thirty, fifty men, starting in a run, catching hold of each other, lifting one of themselves

¹ The holy fire once came through four holes in the form of a cross, said to be the impression of St. George's fingers. Into those holes the Greek and Armenian pilgrims thrust their hands, and shut their eyes, under the conviction that whoever so did would be saved. (Van Egmont, 308.)

on their shoulders, sometimes on their heads, and rushing on with him till he leaps off and some one else succeeds ; some of them dressed in sheep-skins, some almost naked ; one usually preceding the rest as a fogleman, clapping his hands, to which they respond in like manner, adding also wild howls, of which the chief burden is—"This is the tomb of Jesus Christ—God save the Sultan"—"Jesus Christ has redeemed us." What begins in the lesser groups soon grows in magnitude and extent, till at last the whole of the circle between the troops is continuously occupied by a race, a whirl, a torrent of these wild figures, like the Witches' Sabbath in "Faust," wheeling round the Sepulchre. Gradually the frenzy subsides or is checked ; the course is cleared, and out of the Greek Church, on the east of the Rotunda, a long procession with embroidered banners, supplying in their ritual the want of images, begins to defile round the Sepulchre.

From this moment the excitement, which has before been confined to the runners and dancers, becomes universal. Hedged in by the soldiers, the two huge masses of pilgrims still remain in their places, all joining, however, in a wild succession of yells, through which are caught from time to time strangely, almost affectingly, mingled, the chants of the procession—the solemn chants of the Church of Basil and Chrysostom, mingled with the yells of savages. Thrice the procession paces round ; at the third time the two lines of Turkish soldiers join and fall in behind. One great movement sways the multitude from side to side. The crisis of the day is now approaching. The presence of the Turks is believed to prevent the descent of the fire, and at this point it is that they are driven, or consent to be driven, out of the church. In a moment the confusion, as of a battle and a victory, pervades the church. In every direction the raging mob bursts in upon the troops, who pour out of the church at the south-east corner—the procession is broken through, the banners stagger and waver. They stagger and waver, and fall amidst the flight of priests, bishops, and standard-bearers hither and thither before the tremendous rush. In one small but compact band the Bishop of Petra (who is on this occasion the Bishop of "the Fire," the representative of the Patriarch) is hurried to the Chapel of the Sepulchre, and the door is closed behind him. The whole church is now one heaving sea of heads resounding with an uproar which can be compared to nothing less than that of the Guildhall of London at a nomination for the City. One vacant space alone is left ; a narrow lane from the aperture on the north side of the chapel to the wall of the church. By the aperture itself stands a priest to

catch the fire ; on each side of the lane, so far as the eye can reach, hundreds of bare arms are stretched out like the branches of a leafless forest—like the branches of a forest quivering in some violent tempest.

In earlier and bolder times the expectation of the Divine presence was at this juncture raised to a still higher pitch by the appearance of a dove hovering above the cupola of the chapel—to indicate, so Maundrell was told, the visible descent of the Holy Ghost. This extraordinary act, whether of extravagant symbolism or of daring profaneness, has now been discontinued ; but the belief still continues—and it is only from the knowledge of that belief that the full horror of the scene, the intense excitement of the next few moments, can be adequately conceived. Silent—awfully silent—in the midst of this frantic uproar, stands the Chapel of the Holy Sepulchre. If any one could at such a moment be convinced of its genuineness, or could expect a display of miraculous power, assuredly it would be that its very stones would cry out against the wild fanaticism without, and unhappy weakness within, by which it is at that hour desecrated. At last the moment comes. A bright flame as of burning wood appears inside the hole—the light, as every educated Greek knows and acknowledges, kindled by the Bishop within—the light, as every pilgrim believes, of the descent of God Himself upon the Holy Tomb. Any distinct feature or incident is lost in the universal whirl of excitement which envelops the church, as slowly, gradually, the fire spreads from hand to hand, from taper to taper, through that vast multitude—till at last the whole edifice from gallery to gallery, and through the area below, is one wide blaze of thousands of burning candles. It is now that, according to some accounts, the Bishop or Patriarch is carried out of the chapel in triumph on the shoulders of the people, in a fainting state, “ to give the impression that he is overcome by the glory of the Almighty, from whose immediate presence he is believed to come.” It is now that a mounted horseman, stationed at the gates of the church, gallops off with a lighted taper to communicate the sacred fire to the lamps of the Greek church in the convent at Bethlehem. It is now that the great rush to escape from the rolling smoke and suffocating heat, and to carry the lighted tapers into the streets and houses of Jerusalem, through the one entrance to the church, leads at times to the violent pressure which in 1834 cost the lives of hundreds. For a short time the pilgrims run to and fro—rubbing their faces and breasts against the fire to attest its supposed harmlessness. But the wild enthusiasm terminates from the moment that the fire is communicated ; and perhaps not the

least extraordinary part of the spectacle is the rapid and total subsidence of a frenzy so intense. The furious agitation of the morning is strangely contrasted with the profound repose of the evening, when the church is once again filled—through the area of the Rotunda, the chapels of Copt and Syrian, the subterranean church of Helena, the great nave of Constantine's basilica, the stairs and platform of Calvary itself, with the many chambers above—every part, except the one chapel of the Latin Church, filled and overlaid by one mass of pilgrims wrapt in deep sleep and waiting for the midnight service.

Such is the Greek Easter, the greatest moral argument against the identity of the spot which it professes to honour, stripped, indeed, of some of its most revolting features, yet still, considering the place, the time, and the intention of the professed miracle, probably the most offensive delusion to be found in the world.

It is as impossible to give any precise account of the origin of this singular scene as of the story of the transference of the House of Loretto. The explanation often offered, that it has arisen from a misunderstanding of a symbolical ceremony, is hardly compatible with its antiquity. As early as the ninth century it was believed that "an angel came and lighted the lamps which hung over the Sepulchre, of which light the Patriarch gave his share to the bishops and the rest of the people, that each might illuminate his own house."¹ It was probably the continuation of an alleged miraculous appearance of fire in ancient times—an appearance suggested, it may be, in part by some actual phenomenon in the neighbourhood, such as that which is mentioned in the account by Ammianus of Julian's rebuilding the Temple—in part also by the belief found at many of the tombs of Mussulman saints, that on every Friday a supernatural light blazes in their sepulchres, which supersedes all necessity of lamps, and dazzles all beholders. It is a remarkable instance of a great, it may almost be said an awful superstition, gradually deserted by its supporters, yet still maintained for the sake of the multitude. Originally all the Churches partook in the ceremony, but one by one they have fallen away. The Roman Catholics, after their exclusion from the church by the Greeks, denounced it as an imposture, and have never since resumed it. Only inferior to the delight of the Greek pilgrims at receiving the fire is the delight of the Latins in deriding what, in the "Annals of the

¹ Bernard the Wise, A.D. 867. (*Early Travels in Palestine*, p. 26.) There is a story of a miraculous supply of oil for the lighting of the lamps on Easter Eve at Jerusalem, as early as the 2nd century. Euseb. H. E. vi. 9.

Propagation of the Faith," they describe (forgetful of the past and of S. Januarius at Naples) as a "ridiculous and superstitious ceremony." "Ah! vedete la fantasia," exclaim the happy Franciscans in the Latin Gallery. "Ah! qual fantasia;—ecco gli bruti Greci—noi non facciamo così." Next, the grave Armenians deserted, or only with great reluctance acquiesced in, what they too regarded as a fraud. And lastly, unless they are greatly misrepresented, the enlightened members of the Greek Church itself, including, it is said, no less a person than the late Emperor Nicholas, would gladly discontinue the ceremony could they but venture on such a shock as this step would give to the devotion and faith of the thousands who yearly come from far and near, over land and sea, for this sole object.

It is doubtless a miserable thought that for such an end as this Constantine and Helena planned and builded—that for such a worship as this Godfrey and Tancred, Richard and St. Louis, fought and died. Yet in justice to the Greek clergy it must be remembered that this is but the most extreme and the most instructive case of what every Church must suffer which has to bear with the weakness and fanaticism of its members, whether brought about by its own corruption or by long and inveterate ignorance. And however repulsive to our European minds may be the orgies of the Arab pilgrims, we ought rather perhaps to wonder that these wild creatures should be Christians at all, than that being such they should take this mode of expressing their devotion at this great anniversary. The very violence of the paroxysm proves its temporary character. On every other occasion their conduct is sober and decorous, even to dullness, as though—according to the happy expression of one of the most observant of Eastern travellers—they "were not working out, but *transacting* the great business of salvation."

It may seem to some a painful and perhaps an unexpected conclusion that so great an uncertainty should hang over spots thus intimately connected with the great events of the Christian religion,—that in none the chain of tradition should be unbroken, and in most cases hardly reach beyond the age of Constantine. Is it possible, it is frequently asked, that the disciples of the first age should have neglected to mark and commemorate the scenes of such events? And the answer, though often given, cannot be too often repeated, that it not only was possible, but precisely what we should infer from the absence of any allusion to local sanctity in the writings of the Evangelists and Apostles, who were too profoundly absorbed in the events themselves to think of their localities, too wrapt in

the spirit to pay regard to the letter or the place. The loss of the Holy Sepulchre, thus regarded, is a testimony to the greatness of the Resurrection. The loss of the Manger of Bethlehem is a witness to the universal significance of the Incarnation. The sites which the earliest followers of Our Lord would not adore, their successors could not. The obliteration of the very marks which identified the Holy Places was effected a little later by what may without presumption be called the providential events of the time. The Christians of the second generation of believers, even had they been anxious to preserve the collection of sites familiar to their fathers, would have found it in many respects impossible after the ruin of Jerusalem by Titus. The same judgment which tore up by the roots the local religion of the Old dispensation deprived of secure basis what has since grown up as the local religion of the New. The total obliteration of the scenes in some instances is at least a proof that no Divine Providence, as is sometimes urged, must have watched over them in others. The desolation of the Lake of Gennesareth has swept out of memory places more sacred than any that are alleged to have been preserved. The Cave of Bethlehem and the House of Nazareth, where our Lord passed an unconscious infancy and an unknown youth, cannot be compared for sanctity with that "House" of Capernaum which was the home of His manhood and the chief scene of His words and works. Yet of that sacred habitation every vestige has perished as though it had never been. It is a certain fact, and one dwelt upon with considerable emphasis by the Sacred historian, that "of the sepulchre of Moses no man knoweth unto this day." It is conjectured with some probability by the only European who has thoroughly investigated the tomb of Mahomet at Medina, that this, too, is a later fiction, and that in the first fervour of the Mussulman faith the burial-place of the Prophet was left unknown. Is it surprising that the causes which thus obscure the local reminiscences of the first beginnings of less momentous movements should have had still greater weight in covering with a like uncertainty the cradle and the sepulchre of Gospel History?

But the doubts which envelop the lesser things do not extend to the greater; they attach to the "Holy Places," but not to "the Holy Land." The clouds which cover the special localities are only specks in the clear light which invests the general geography of Palestine. Not only are the sites of Jerusalem, Nazareth, and Bethlehem absolutely indisputable, but, as we have seen, there is hardly a town or village of note mentioned in the Old and New Testament which cannot still

be identified with a certainty which often extends to the very spots which are signalised in the history. If Sixtus V. had succeeded in his project of carrying off the Holy Sepulchre, the essential interest of Jerusalem would have suffered as little as that of Bethlehem by the alleged transference of the manger to S. Maria Maggiore, or as that of Nazareth, were we to share the belief that its holy house were standing far away on the hill of Loretto. The very wish to believe in the transference is a proof of the slight connection between an attachment to the mere sanctuaries and the enduring charm which must always attach to the real scenes of great events. It shows the difference (which is often confounded) between the local superstition of touching and handling, of making topography a matter of religion—and that reasonable and religious instinct which leads us to investigate the natural features of historical scenes, sacred or secular, as one of the best helps to conceiving of the events of which they were the stage.

These "Holy Places" have, indeed, a history of their own, which, whatever be their origin, must always give them a position amongst the celebrated spots which have influenced the fortunes of the globe. The convent of Bethlehem can never lose the associations of Jerome, nor can the Church of the Holy Sepulchre ever cease to be bound up with the recollections of the Crusades, or with the tears and prayers of thousands of pilgrims, which, of themselves, amidst whatever fanaticism and ignorance, almost consecrate the walls within which they are offered. But these reminiscences, and the instruction which they convey, bear the same relation to those awakened by the original and still living geography of Palestine as the later course of Ecclesiastical history bears to its divine source. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre, in this as in other aspects, is a type of the History of the Church itself, and the contrast thus suggested is more consoling than melancholy. Alike in Sacred Topography and in Sacred History, there is a wide and free atmosphere of truth above, a firm ground of reality beneath, which no doubts, controversies, or scandals concerning this or that particular spot, this or that particular opinion or sect, can affect or disturb. The Churches of the Holy Sepulchre or of the Holy House may be closed against us, but we have still the Mount of Olives and the Sea of Galilee; the sky, the flowers, the trees, the fields, which suggested the Parables; the holy hills, which cannot be removed, but stand fast for ever.

APPENDIX

IN the foregoing chapters I have often had occasion to refer to the richness and precision of the local vocabulary of the Hebrew language. In the Authorised Version this is unfortunately lost ; not so much by the incorrect rendering of any particular word, as by the promiscuous use of the same English word for different Hebrew words, or of different English words for the same Hebrew word. It has been my endeavour to supply this defect, by substituting in all cases one uniform rendering in the passages quoted. But, in order to justify and explain these slight changes, I have thought it best to append a list of topographical words used in the Hebrew Scriptures, with a brief account of their exact meaning, as fixed by the root of the word, or, if possible, by actual examples of the thing described.

Such an inquiry is the more interesting in a language so primitive, and in a nomenclature so expressive, as that of the Hebrews. The geographical passages of the Bible seem to shine with new light as these words acquire their proper force. How keenly, for example, are we led to notice the early tendency to personify and treat as living creatures the great objects of nature, when we find that the "springs" are 'the eyes,'—the bright, glistening, life-giving eyes of the thirsty East ; that the mountains have not merely summits and sides, but 'heads,' 'shoulders,' 'ears,' 'ribs,' 'loins.' How strongly the character of Eastern scenery is brought out, when we discover that, for ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, where the Authorised Version reads "river," we ought to read 'dry watercourse' ; and how grandly does the Euphrates stand out, when we find that he is emphatically "The River" of Asia ; and the Nile, when we find that he has his own peculiar name, never applied to any lesser stream. How powerfully is the cave life of the Israelite history illustrated by the numerous words for the cavities in rocks ; the absence

of sea life by the few words for "bay" or "harbour." What a picture is held out to us, as we glance over the names of the several towns and cities in the allocation of the tribes by Joshua, and see that, in Judæa, the "Hazer" or Bedouin village hangs everywhere on the frontier; that the remnants of the lairs of wild beasts linger in the towns of the interior; that "terebinth" and "forest" grew once where they have long since vanished; that the "tents" were still found in Havoth-Jair beyond the Jordan. How clearly are the natural divisions of the country exhibited, as we see the often-repeated arrangement of Palestine into "the country of the 'mountains'" [of Judah, Ephraim and Naphtali], the "south" [of the frontier], and "the low country" [of Philistia], and the "issuings forth of the springs" [of Pisgah],—or again, the "desert" [of the Jordan], the "sea-shore" [of the Phœnician plain],—or again, "the circles," or "the round" [of the oases of the Jordan], and the "level downs" [of the trans-Jordanic tablelands]. Many are the events of which the scene is fixed by the precise mention of "the mountain" instead of "the hill," or of "the hill" instead of "the mountain"; "the spring" for "the well," or "the well" for "the spring"; the "river" for "the torrent," or "the torrent" for "the river." Many are the images which come out with double force from perceiving their original local meaning; as when "the valley of the shadow of death" is seen to be a narrow 'ravine,' where the shade of the closing rocks is never absent.

So also by restoring the definite article, which the English translators—whether following the Vulgate or for other reasons which cannot here be examined—too often neglected, the locality which would else be passed by as unknown comes out clothed with a long train of venerable recollections, or distinguished by some remarkable feature. Thus we shall find that the spot by which "the angel of the Lord found" Hagar was not merely "a fountain of water," as we read in our version, but a well-known spot, 'the spring' of water in the wilderness—"the 'spring' in the way to Shur," which probably refreshed the traveller in the desert in times long after. Thus 'the' solitary oak of Deborah (Gen. xxxv. 8) stands out as a landmark to our eyes; and we perceive that the tree in which Absalom met his death was evidently a tree of note even amongst the forests of Gilead, not only held in remembrance at the date of the composition of the history, but well known before the occurrence, as is proved by the fact that it is not only called "'the' great 'terebinth'" in the narrative, but that the same form is used by Joab's informant

—"A certain man told Joab, I saw Absalom hanging in '*the terebinth.*'" (2 Sam. xviii. 19, 20.)

Finally, it is instructive to observe the tenacity with which these local designations have in some instances survived even to this day in the native Arabic. The valley of Cœle-Syria is still called by the same peculiar word for 'plain' which it bore in the time of Amos: and the desert valley of the Dead Sea has never lost its name of "Arabah."

GLOSSARY OF PLACE NAMES

Abel, meadow
Achu, Nile-meadow
Agam, pond
Ain, spring
Allon, oak
Ammah, elbow (of a hill)
Aphik, body of water
Ar, city
Arabah, desert
Aremon, keep
Asherah, grove
Aznoth, ears (of a mountain)

Bamah, wave
Beer, well
Berecah, pool
Beth, house
Bikah, plain
Birah, palace
Bittsaron, fortress
Bôr, pit

Carmel, park
Cateph, shoulder (of a mountain)
Cephar, hamlet
Cephim, rocks
Ceroth, dug wells
Chagavim, chasms
Chatser, enclosure
Chavvoth, tent villages
Chebel, district
Chelkah, plot
Chepher, cistern or pit
Chisloth, loins (of mountain)
Chor, hole
Choresch, wood
Chutz, street
Ciccar, round
Choph, sea-shore

Daci, wave
Dothain, "two wells"

Emek, valley
El, *Elah*, oak or terebinth
Eshel, tamarisk
Etz, tree

Gai, ravine
Gal, bubbling spring
Gal, wave
Geb, ditch
Gedoth, banks (of a river)
Geliloth, circles
Geruth, inn
Goommatz, sunk-pit
Gulloth, bubblings
Gibeah, hill

Har, mountain
Harmon, keep (of a castle)

Ir, city

Jaar, forest
Jad, side (of a river)
Jam, sea
Jarden, Jordan
Jeshimon, waste
Jooval, flood-stream
Jor, The Nile
Jarcah, thigh (of mountain)

Katseh, end (of a river)
Kir, wall
Kiriah, city

Lashon, tongue (of a river)

Maaleh, ascent
Maareh, open field
Maavar, ford
Mabbooa, gushing spring
Mabbool, The Deluge
Machoz, haven
Makor, well-spring
Maon, den
Maoz, stronghold
Mashabim, troughs
Mearah, cave
Mechilloth, fissures
Metsad, lair
Metsoolah, bottom
Metsoorah, fort
Mical, brook
Micreh, pit
Midbar, wilderness
Mikveh, reservoir
Minharoth, burrows
Miphratz, bay
Misgab, lofty rock
Mishbar, wave
Mishor, downs
Mistar, hiding-place
Mibtsar, fortress
Morad, descent
Motsa, spring-head

Nachal, torrent
Nahar, river
Naphath, region
Nekik, cranny (of a cliff)
Nikerah, hole (of a rock)

Ophel, mound

Pachath, hollow
Pardes, plantation
Peleg, stream
Perazoth, unwall'd villages
Pisgah, height

Rechob, open space
Rosh, head (of a mountain)

Sadeh, field
Saphah, brink (of a river)
Seiph, cleft (of a cliff)
Sela, cliff
Sether, covert (of mountain)
Shaveh, dale
Shecem, back (of mountain)
Shedemoth, fields
Shefi, bare hill
Shen, crag (of a cliff)
Shephelah, low country
Sheteph, flood
Shichor, The Nile
Shuk, street
Shuchah, pitfall
Soc, *Succoth*, booth

Tealah, conduit
Tirah, Bedouin castle
Tsad, side (of a mountain)
Tselah, rib (of a mountain)
Tsechiach, top (of a rock)
Tsur, rock

INDEX

*• The following abbreviations are employed in this Index :—*Pal. Palestine*; *M. Mountain*; *R. River*; *L. Lake*; *N. North*; *S. South*; *E. East*; *W. West*; *O.T. Old Testament*; *N.T. New Testament*; *A.V. Authorised Version of the Bible*; Words preceded by †—as † *Abel*—are Hebrew topographical terms, which will be found at large in the Appendix; Arabic names are put in *Italics*.

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