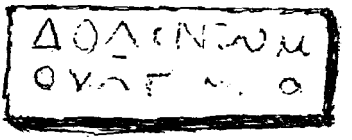
No. 48. In wall of court. EL BUSIR.



This inscription is quite undecipherable.

(To be continued.)

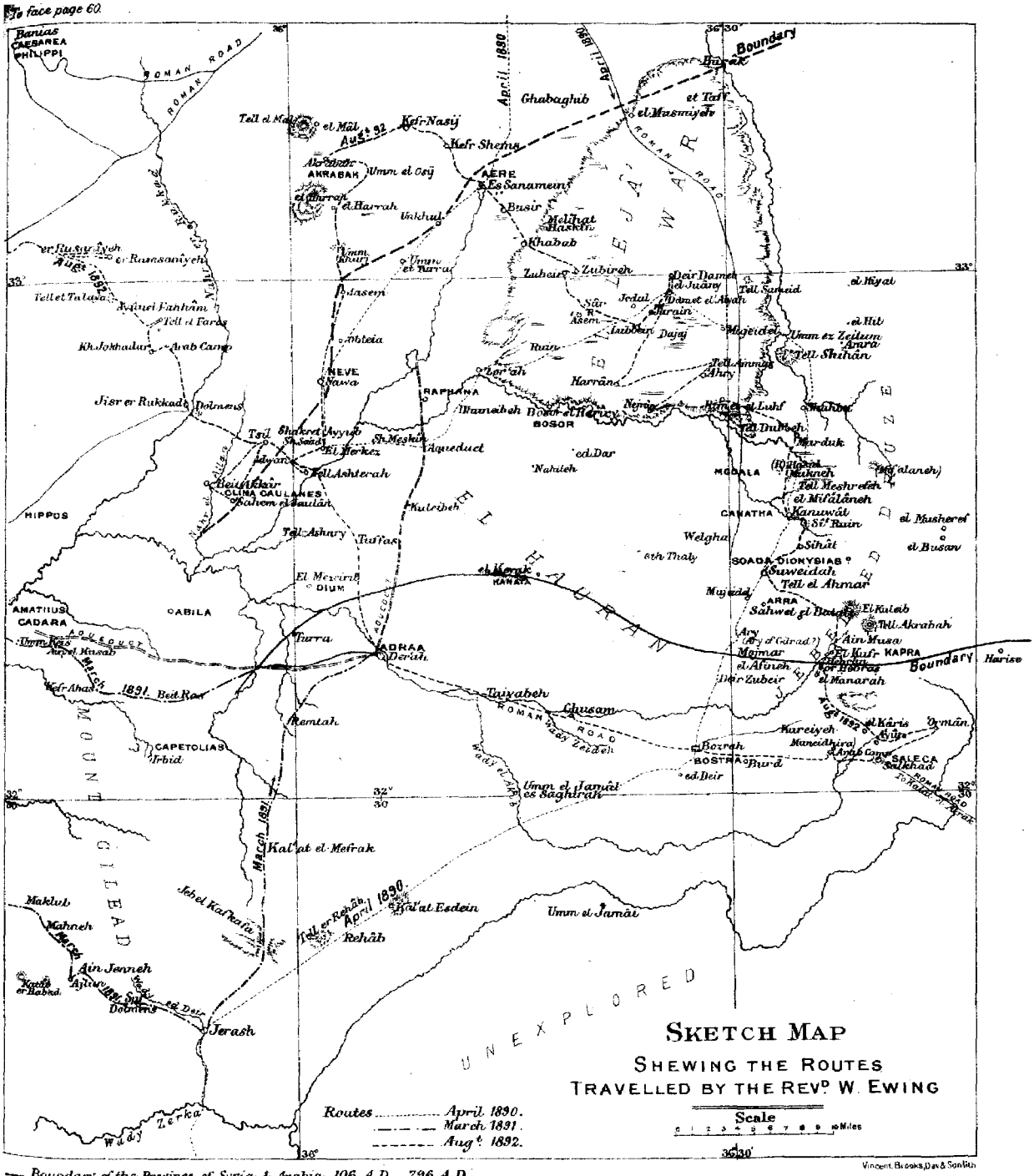
A JOURNEY IN THE HAURAN.

By Rev. W. EWING.

ON the afternoon of Monday, August 15th, 1892, under a broiling sun, I set out from Safed, with two attendants, viz., Mohammed el Khudra, a man of some reputation in that mountain city, who was supremely satisfied as to his own abilities to act as guide, philosopher, and friend; and 'Abdullah, a youthful mukary, who bestowed all my goods for the journey on a rather lean-looking *kedîsh*, planting himself on the top of all, and sang, swore, and whistled the day in and the day out again: a happy-hearted lad, but, withal, in mortal dread of *Chirkas* (Circassian), Bedawy, and Druze, and when in their neighbourhood, ever trembling for the day that never came. Heading eastward, winding along through the groves of ancient olives that shade the northern steeps, we left the castle hill behind us, lying like a mighty mastiff in repose, clear cut in white against the dark purple of the Jermuk range beyond. Passing between the two beautifully-rounded grassy hills that guard the Damascus road, just where it reaches its greatest height, we plunged down the swift and narrow descent, with high precipitous cliffs on either hand, into the flat lands of the Upper Jordan valley. Red-legged partridges, like their more sober cousins at home, always nearest when the gun is furthest, literally swarmed over the grey crags to the right; impenetrable hedges of prickly pear fenced the tortuous approaches to the village on the left, while women and dirty children made believe to wash, puddling in the little stream that gurgled down the glen. In pleasing contrast with the monotonous brown of the surrounding country, the gardens, fruit trees, and young plantations of Ja'uneh, the Jewish colony, seemed to fall like a spreading cascade of emerald from the rocky side of Jebel Kan'ân.

Hot and shelterless are the broad stretches in the Ghôr, marked here and there by the dark brown roofs of the Arabian "houses of hair," and by the groups of white flecks, that mark the presence of the shepherd

To face page 60.



SKETCH MAP

SHEWING THE ROUTES TRAVELLED BY THE REVD W. EWING

Scale

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Miles

Vincent, Brooks, Day & Son Ltd.

and his gentle charge. Just over the brown knolls to northward we catch glimpses of sunlight sparkling on the "Waters of Merom"; beyond the long marshland, haunt of buffalo and boar, and alive with water fowl, both great and small, rise the sombre heights of the Jaulân, culminating in the gleaming shoulders of the mighty Hermon.

Riding in the burning sun, few things help better to beguile the time than the tales in which the Arab soul delights, and in the relating of which he excels. I have often been amused and interested to see with what eagerness a crowd of Arabs will gather to hear a story for the hundredth time, told by a master of the art. Men get a reputation for telling one story well, even as among ourselves the fame of a great singer is often chiefly due to the manner in which he sings one song. I asked Mohammed for a tale, and the ready tongue at once responded, with not one, but many, all racy of the soil we trod; for was it not just here that a Christian mukary returning from Damascus, overpowered with fatigue, had lain down to rest on this soft bank under the shady thorns, and in the gloom of swift-falling night, had fallen a prey to the devouring hyena? And not much further on, had he not himself only just escaped with his life from the jaws of bear, boar, or he knew not what thing of horror, in the darkness, all owing to the agility of the fine horse he rode? These are but the kernels of his tales: wrought out with all the wealth of Oriental fancy, they lasted long.

Long strings of camels, returning from Acre, whither they had carried the golden riches of the Haurân, with drowsy riders rocking on their backs, swung contemptuously past on their way to the fords, some distance south of the *Jisr Benât Ya'kûb*.

It was after sunset when we reached the bridge. Fed by his mighty springs the Jordan maintains a steady flow even at this advanced season; dark breadths of moving waters pass between the piers and under the arches, swirl round in foam-capped eddies, then break off in swift descent, between evergreen banks of waving oleander. In the hush of night the river's rush fills all the valley with a pleasant sound.

We turned northward towards a *makhâḍa* or ford, between the bridge and Lake Ḥûleh, where, near some Arab tents where we intended to sleep, we hoped to effect a crossing. Here my guide's local knowledge was invaluable. Coming opposite a rounded hill to the left we bore down upon the river, across the intervening meadow. The night was cloudless, and from the moonless sky the stars streamed down their fullest splendour. The deep water here flowed softly, tall, spectral weeds waving gently in the night breeze. Mohammed pulled up on the river's brink and called "'Isa, 'Isa," in a voice hardly above a whisper. Immediately on the opposite bank, in the dim light, a shadowy form appeared, and the owner of a voice peculiarly soft for a Bedawy, agreed to meet us at the *makhâḍa* and conduct us safely over. As we rode onward Mohammed explained that *'Isa*, the chief of the local Arabs, was *sharîk*, or partner of his own, who often came to Safed on business, and who would be sure to stretch a point to help us. Just below a slight fall the river widens

into a broad pool, a bushy peninsula from the other side reaching well into the middle. Above the reeds beyond, we could see the top of the soldier's tent, for here a guard was set; but the servant of the *Sultân* was asleep! Well up to the waist in the dark water, 'Isa's dusky figure approached to meet us. The bridles were removed from the horses' mouths; having tied up my saddle bags as high as possible, and instructed me to sit tailor-wise on the top of the saddle, 'Isa grasped the halter, and led my steed into the water. After many windings, avoiding treacherous holes in the river's bed, the flood sometimes threatening to carry us off bodily, at last he conducted us safely to the further bank. While waiting for my companions, the soldier, roused from slumber, shivering in the night air, accosted me with a few trembling oaths. My dress puzzled him; finally he became exceedingly deferential, supposing me to be a *Basha*. In this delusion he was assiduously encouraged by the ingenuous Mohammed; and forthwith we took our way to the encampment of 'Isa—only a few straggling tents on a bare knoll, about a hundred yards from the river.

The women, disturbed at midnight, got up with great good nature, collected straw and dry sticks for a fire, whose leaping flame soon shed a comfortable radiance over the faces of sheep and oxen that lay wonderingly around. Milk was brought and warmed; this, with the coarse bread of the Beduw and honey, made a meal by no means to be despised.

In mid-stream 'Abdullah's *kedîsh* had fallen, giving the poor fellow an involuntary bath at a most inconvenient hour. As he had no change of apparel, his case was all the more piteous; but by dint of using the fire in a thoroughly original fashion, he was in a fairly presentable case when the hour for riding arrived. Accustomed to all kinds of hardship these sturdy men of the road make light of troubles that would overwhelm us. One thing grieved him—the sugar had got wet, and not all the care he lavished on it could prevent it from crumbling and melting before his eyes.

The horses were tethered beside us. Stretching a cloak on the ground, I lay down to rest awhile, under the silent stars. The last thing I remember was the firelight on the features of an eager crowd, to whom Mohammed was retailing the news of the world, with evident relish of his own eloquence.

Before daybreak we were astir again.

As we climbed the hills to eastward in the growing light of the morning, a magnificent view was obtained of Lake Ḥûleh and its picturesque surroundings. As we rose higher the inequalities of the plain seemed to be flattened out, and Arab tent and threshing floor were clearly seen. Close by the mouth of the river the red-tile roofs of the new Jewish colony stood boldly out amidst incipient gardens and orchards. The lake itself lay like a sheet of silver, sending off between emerald banks, the shining thread of the Jordan. Over the marshes in the valley northward hung thick masses of whitish vapour, through openings in which we could see the green of the reeds, and patches of gleaming water.

The serried heights of the western mountains, stretching northward to the darker peaks of Lebanon and southward to the brow overlooking the Sea of Galilee, smiled softly to the sunrise, while the snow that still lay in the furrows that plough the sides of Great Hermon, responded to the sun with flashing light, hardly less brilliant than his own.

In the swift dawn of the Eastern day we were already far along the path which follows closely the line of the old Roman road, leading from the bridge, by way of *Kuneiterah* and *Sa' sa'*, to Damascus; the series of extinct volcanoes, the Jaulân hills, rising in front; the undulating plateau, torn by many a deep winding wady, and winter watercourse reaching to the borders of Gilead; over the western rim of this plateau the mighty hollow of the *Ghor*, the blue waters of Galilee reposing in calm beauty between the opposing heights: westward rose the mountains of Zebulon and Naphtali, passing southward into the gentle hills around Nazareth; Tabor, Little Hermon, and Gilboa, and beyond the great plain of Esdraelon, the highlands of Samaria.

From some of the higher points the scene presented was one of great interest. The rolling uplands of the Jaulân, as far as the eye could reach, seemed to be literally alive with camels. These patient ships of the desert, of all sorts and sizes, great and small, young and old, huge shaggy patriarchs, moving with unspeakable dignity, and light, sportive, gambolling calves, swarmed on every hand. Here, in this deep hollow, a regiment has taken shelter from the heat of the advancing sun; yonder, a battalion crowds among the sweet grass that surrounds the spring, hustling and jostling each other like a mob at the door of a theatre; wherever pasture, however meagre, was to be found, the brown hills were dotted with their yellow forms. Tall columns of blue smoke, rising gracefully in the quiet morning, marked the encampments of their masters. The burning suns had long since destroyed the scanty vegetation of the desert. These herds of camels form almost the entire wealth of the wandering *'Arab*. To these uplands, cool and breezy compared with the vast solitudes of sand, where "much grass" is still to be found in the deeper valleys, they are fain to come with the growing heat of summer. Thus it has been from time immemorial; thus it seems likely to be for many a year to come. This annual overflow of the tides of barbarism from the far East sets dead against the efforts of incipient civilisation, indicated by an occasional patch of maize or field of wheat amid surrounding desolation. I asked why no attempt was made by the Government to put an end to it. The explanation was that the Beduw pay to the Government an annual tax of one *mejedie* per head of camel. This tribute, punctually delivered, represents a considerable portion of the revenue of the country; so there is a very natural unwillingness to interfere with it.

Reaching a slight eminence we found the valley before us filled with the dark spreading tents of the children of the East. 'Abdullah visibly quailed at the sight of this great portable city, with crowds of uncanny-looking inhabitants moving about in its temporary streets. Riding

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forward, however, we passed through their midst, meeting with nothing but civility and courtly Arab salutations at their hands, coupled with invitations to turn aside and spend the day with them. Rough enough as to exterior they certainly were, but a kindliness showed through their genial offers of hospitality, the sincerity of which no stranger could mistake.

We pressed on until we reached the tumble-down village of *Ma'arah*. A copious fountain springs by the wayside, from under the ruins of an old building. Here we were tempted to rest. My morning ablutions were an object of absorbing interest to the motley group of villagers who swiftly gathered to scrutinise the travellers. A frugal breakfast of bread and milk, which the tatterdemalions readily brought us, thoroughly refreshed us. While we were engaged with this, we found the poor people were absolutely bubbling over with news, and greatly rejoiced to find fresh ears to listen to their story.

The Turks have given a home in this district to numbers of free-spirited Circassians who left their native mountains some years ago in order to live under a Mohammedan government. One of their strongest settlements in these parts is at *Kuneiterah*, on the Damascus road, about fifteen miles from *Jisr Benât Ya'kûb*. Bringing with them habits of industry, and some knowledge of agriculture, they soon changed the aspect of the country around their new home. They build dykes, plant hedges, make roads, prepare watercourses for irrigation: with wheeled vehicles, and improved implements of husbandry, they speedily secure returns from the soil, amazing to the ancient ignorant and indolent inhabitants. But unless the results of their labours were secured to them by some means against the troops of marauders that prowl around, they, too, might grow heartless and give up the hopeless struggle. The ordinary *Fellah* trembles at the approach of the Arab, and all that he hath he would gladly give to the wild man of the desert for sweet life's sake. He has little reason to labour hard simply to feed the robber. But the Circassian knows nothing of trembling, whoever approaches. They are trained to arms from their youth. Their weapons are vastly superior to those of the Arab; and every man of them is a dead shot with the rifle. They have established for themselves a reputation for perfect fearlessness; determined courage in conflict, and relentless severity in exacting vengeance when injured. Men think twice before attacking them. Even the Bedawy, from of old the terror of these lands, is learning to acknowledge the prowess of the Circassian, and to bend his proud spirit in the presence of his superior.

Some little time before our visit, the Arabs of the great tribe of *Wuld 'Aly*, coming westward, had chosen to assert their ancient rights and privileges in the matter of pasture, over the whole of these wide-stretching domains. They resented the intrusion of the Circassians, whom they regarded as interlopers; the cultivated fields represented so much land simply stolen from them. To mark their sense of the injustice thus done them, they took two of the Circassians, whom they

surprised alone and unprotected, and stained with their life-blood the soil which they and their fellows had appropriated. There the *lex talionis* is in full force. The Circassians were at once on the alert, and on the very night before our arrival six of the Arabs had paid with their lives for the cruel folly of their tribesmen. This, the villagers assured us, had fired the wrath of the Beduw almost to frenzy; the country was practically in a state of war, which rendered it extremely unsafe for travellers.

Notwithstanding friendly remonstrances, we remounted and rode on; turning soon, we pursued our course in a south-easterly direction. Passing many enormous herds of camels, we saw, in the head of a broad valley, the largest Arab encampment I have ever seen. It was a veritable city of goats' hair; and the hum of its busy life reached us in the distance. In the open spaces before the tents women were churning butter, swinging energetically the milk-filled skin between the legs of the tripod; others were making flour, grinding the wheat between two circular stones, the upper of which was turned by means of a wooden handle inserted near the edge, the grain being put in through an aperture in the centre; others, again, were transforming the flour into great sheets of bread; while the music of mortar and pestle might be heard from some shady tent, where the coffee-loving Sheikh would provide a cup of the coveted beverage for his friends.

Certain green-coloured tents, of the shapes commonly used by travellers, stimulated a natural curiosity. They turned out to be the "shops" of merchants from Damascus, who make it their business to supply the Arab with such luxuries as they can tempt him to purchase. Coffee and tobacco, which is used almost exclusively in the form of cigarettes, have now become really a necessity. Tea is a luxury pretty well beyond their reach; a pocket-mirror, however indifferent the glass, is a treasure. These merchants take payment in kind, the Arabs not being over flush of cash; *samn*, or clarified butter, is the chief article of commerce. Troops of donkeys, with great sweating skins of *samn* on their backs, may be seen constantly during this season, heading towards the cities, where the merchants realise a splendid profit. This can hardly be grudged to men who, going forth unprotected into the wilderness, trusting themselves absolutely in the hands of the barbarians, certainly put their possession of courage beyond all question.

As we continued our journey Mohammed entertained me with the story of an adventure which befell him here in his youthful days. He was then *Ḳawass* to the French Consul in Safed, and rode his beautiful grey mare. The Arabs have always a keen eye for a good horse. Suddenly he was set upon by five horsemen, and but for the almost supernatural performances of that magnificent grey he must inevitably have perished. I am disposed to think there was some truth in this story, for it contained fewer oaths than usual, and concluded with one of the most fervent *el ḥamdulillahs* I ever heard him utter.

It was approaching mid-day when the hill of *Er Ruzaniyeh* hove in

sight, the black ruins which cover its summit looking very black in the perpendicular rays. To the east lay a large encampment, the tents being ranged in a double row running from north to south. The dwelling of the Sheikh was sufficiently indicated by its size, covering about four times as much ground as those of his subordinates. Among the Arabs a man's dignity is frequently expressed by the number of *'Awamîd*, literally "columns," but in reality wooden poles, required to support his بيت الشعر —"house of hair." One object in having a larger tent is to provide accommodation for strangers, whom the hospitable soul of the Arab can hardly endure to see passing his tent-door. They love to be known as men كثير الرماد —"of much ashes"—the heap of ashes by his "house" affording a fair index to the extent of the owner's hospitality.

The encampment was one of Turkomân Arabs, presided over by the good Sheikh Mustapha, a man of portly presence and genial manner. With great heartiness he bade us welcome under his roof, adding the usual formula in addressing me, بيتي بيتك—"my house is yours." We found that in a like liberal spirit he had just assured a number of mukaries that his house was *theirs*, and in truly oriental fashion they had taken possession, stretching themselves under his spreading cloth of hair during the great heat of the day. They cheerfully made room for the new comers, and after some eight hours in the saddle we were glad enough to rest awhile, especially as the generous Mustapha at once provided us with delicious fresh milk. Just before dropping off for an hour's sleep, I heard my veracious attendant, Mohammed, beginning a tale of his master's greatness and dignity, which grew to enormous proportions before we had travelled far, in the telling of which, especially as it developed in his skilful hands, he seemed to find a keen delight. I remonstrated, but in vain. My business was to see the country, going where I would ; but all minor matters of management must be left to him. I had to learn to answer to the title بيك —"Baik," a dignity which clave to me in the wilds of barbarism, but deserted me on our return to civilisation ! By and bye, having heard it a few times, I knew when the tale was coming. A peculiar clearing of the throat, a direct address to the man of most consequence in the company, يا سيدي البيك —"O my master, the Baik"—forthwith I discreetly made my escape, to find invariably on my return a new deference in the manner of all !

The mukaries were hearty fellows, bound for Safed, and they willingly agreed to carry thither letters for my friends. These written and despatched, we listened to the entreaties of Sheikh Mustapha, and resolved to spend the night with him. I wandered among the houses on the hill, finding many fragments, bits of carved stones, broken columns and old lintels, but no inscriptions to tell of their past. These fragments

are built into the walls of the modern huts, which are used simply as shelters for the cattle; their masters prefer the open wholesomeness of the tent.

Crowning the hill which bounded our vision eastward stood *Er Rumsanîyeh*. Following Mustapha's directions we set out to spend the afternoon among the ruins there. These have been fully described in Mr. Schumacher's book on the Jaulân. While we were yet in the midst of the stony waste we were agreeably surprised to meet two Safed acquaintances who had come hither to do business among the Arabs. They rode with us to the base of the hill, then turned southward to a few poor looking tents, the occupants of which were to sell them *samn*.

On our return we saw the spot where a poor Bedawy had lost his life, a few tatters of his garments, torn in the struggle, still lying about. That same night, not far from the same place, a Circassian bullet laid another wanderer low. Descending into Wady *Ghadîr en Nuḥâs* near by a spring we found a huge dolmen, the top stone measured roughly 8 feet by 3 feet 6 inches by 2 feet 3 inches. The Beduw call these rude monuments of the dim past sometimes *Ḳubûr el Awwalîn*—the graves of the ancient inhabitants; sometimes *Ḳubûr Bêni Isrâîl*—the graves of the children of Israel, to whom, through all the desert, is attributed great personal strength and irresistible prowess in war.

(*To be continued.*)

SYRIA AND ARABIA.

By A. G. Wright, Esq.

I.—Formation of the Provinces of Syria and Arabia.

It was in the summer of 64 B.C. that Pompey completed his victorious Eastern campaign by entering Syria, and at once annexing it as a Roman province.[1] The district over which he established the authority of Rome extended, roughly speaking, from the Upper Euphrates and the Gulf of Issus to Egypt and the Arabian desert, but its exact boundaries are uncertain; this is due to the fact that after dethroning Antiochus, the last of the Seleucid monarchs, Pompey parcelled out the land so that it was in part merged in large city districts and in part left in the hands of native rulers, subject to Rome, whose continual embroilments caused uncertainty of the exact line of frontier.

The Syrian nationality and language extended only as far south as Damascus; to the east and south-east of that city were the Arabs, to the south the Jews, while the west was occupied by the Phœnicians. In the

[1] Plut., Pomp., 39; App., Syria, 49,70.