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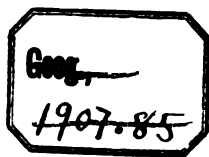
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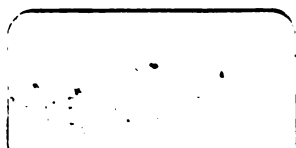
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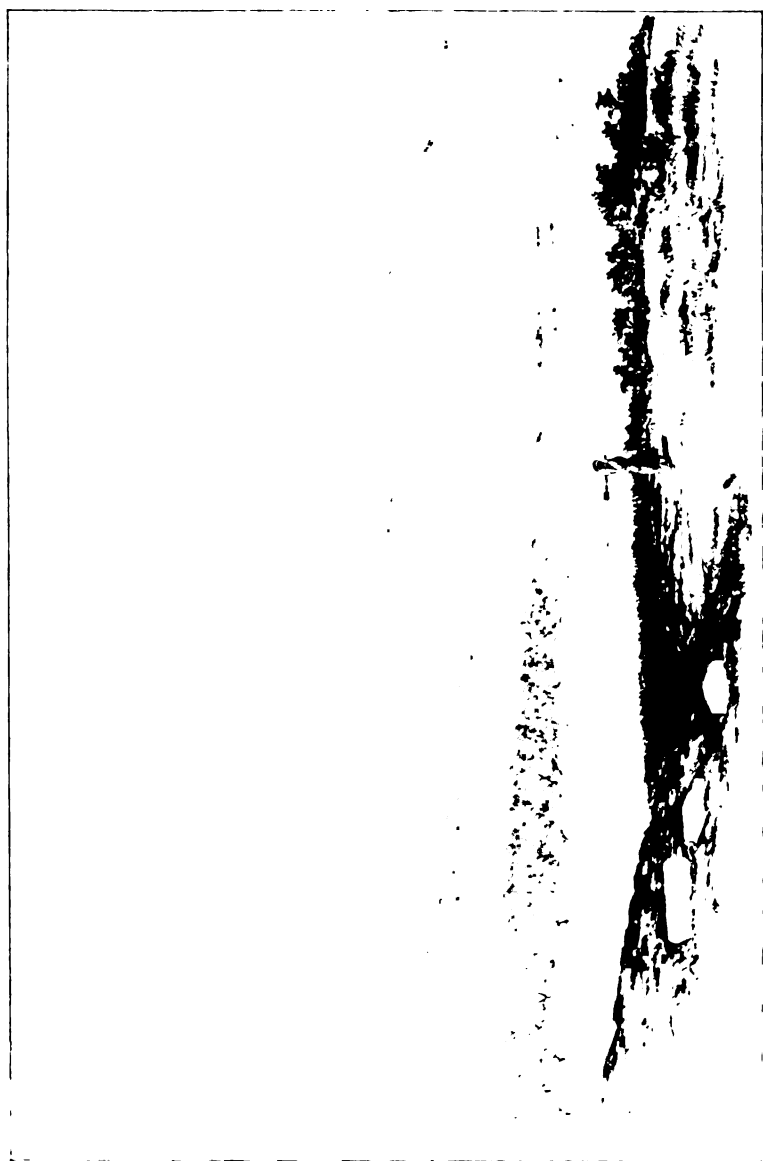
# TENT AND TESTAMENT



*“I pity the man who can travel from Dan  
to Beersheba, and cry, 'Tis all barren.”*

STERNE





*Frontispiece*

MOUNTAINS OF SAMARIA AND THE PLAIN OF ESDRAELON (see p. 48)  
*from a sketch by the Author*

TENT AND TESTAMENT  
A CAMPING TOUR IN PALESTINE  
WITH SOME NOTES ON SCRIPTURE SITES

HERBERT RIX, P.L.

LONDON  
WILLIAMS AND WILKINS  
HENRIETTA MARSH, NEW YORK

1907





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**TENT AND TESTAMENT**  
**A CAMPING TOUR IN PALESTINE**  
**WITH SOME NOTES ON SCRIPTURE SITES**

BY  
**HERBERT RIX, B.A.**

LONDON  
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1907

AUG 10 1907

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## PREFACE

THE tour which is recorded in this book followed in part the hackneyed tourist route ; in part a route which is seldom taken. It is hoped that each may have its own interest.

The average tourist who arrives in Jerusalem finds himself in the midst of perplexity. He is confronted by two or more sites for most biblical scenes. Two Zions, two Temple areas, two Bethanys, two Gethsemanes, two or more Calvarys, three Holy Sepulchres, several Bethesdas, put in their claims for his veneration. And it is the same throughout his tour : there are two Bethlehems, two Capernaums, two Sychars, four Jerichos, and so on. Some attempt is made here to discriminate between the true and the false in respect of the Bible places which are visited by most pilgrims to Palestine.

For the rest, the détours to Bethlehem of Zebulon and to Chorazin, and the journey down the Ghôr, with visits to Gadara and Pella, may interest those who have not left the beaten track and the Bible student in general.

The narrative is in some respects belated. The tour was taken five years ago, and, though the notes were written out in full immediately upon return, the



publication, with the results of subsequent study, has been delayed partly by an active life, partly by illness. The "Unchangeable East" has not, however, essentially altered since then. So far as the tourist is concerned, the main alterations are the completion of the northern road from Jerusalem as far as Sinjil, and the establishment of hotels at Nablûs and Jenîn. The opening of the railway from Haifa to Semakh does not help the average tourist: it is intended for and will be chiefly used by Mohammedan pilgrims. The suffering from drought, which occurred during my visit to Jerusalem, led to an attempt to lay on water from Solomon's Pools, and a feeble stream now arrives in the Harâm esh-Sherif, but it is available only for Moslems, and, since the pipes are laid on the surface of the ground, it arrives hot. Besides these "improvements," I do not know that any change remains to be noted which would alter the record if the tour had been taken this year.

#### PUBLISHERS' NOTE

*Mr. Rix died on October 10, 1906, while this book was in the press.*

*We have endeavoured to make it accord in all respects with the Author's wishes, and we are greatly indebted to those of his friends who have assisted us in the attempt.*

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# TENT AND TESTAMENT

## CHAPTER I

### JAFFA

**AFTER** a leisurely journey across Europe, and a glimpse of Egypt, we (myself and a friend) anchored off Jaffa on Friday, March 8. The vessel in which we had sailed from Port Said was a Russian. Apparently she had no keel to speak of, for, although the sea was calm, she rolled prodigiously. Every one spent the night in more or less of misery, which was much increased by the fact that no one belonging to the ship, not even the captain, nor, alas, the steward, spoke a word of anything but Russian. One passenger, fortunately, could speak modern Greek, and by means of this he made the officers understand a little of our wants, and so we managed to endure the long hours in which we bored our way corkscrew fashion through the dark waters. When at length we anchored outside the reef we learned to our dismay that the surf was too heavy for the boats to put off.

All that weary day we swung and rolled and bobbed about in the smooth, heaving swell, the ship never still for a moment, the passengers mostly on their backs. Evening came, and still the ocean heaved and the reef foamed. For twenty-four hours we endured that curvilinear motion in many planes; and then, oh, joy! in the cold dawn of the second day the boats came threading the reef to our rescue, and a shout of relief went up from the travellers who crowded the deck.

We landed at about 7.30 A.M. and found our dragoman

A

awaiting us. His Christian name was Hanna, which being interpreted means John ; a strong, stout, good-looking fellow, dressed in Syrian costume, cool and composed in manner, and speaking good English. He was a Christian, and a resident in this town of Jaffa.

One's first impression of Jaffa is that of a place of unmitigated glare, with roads ankle-deep in dust. But this impression is soon lost in admiration for the beauty and luxuriance of the surroundings seen from any point of vantage. The view from the minaret of the Greek church, which was the first sight that Hanna took us to see, is very lovely. Below and around us was one dense mass of foliage, the greater part that of orange-groves upon which the fruit hung golden. Among the orange-trees were pomegranates, not yet in leaf, bananas, blossoming almonds, and, rising tall and stately amid the general mass, palms, which reared their feathery heads and gazed abroad over the blue waters of the Mediterranean. To the north-east rose the hills of Judæa and Samaria, and south-eastward the high plateau between Jerusalem and Hebron. These heights were all dim with a blue heat-mist ; Carmel and Gaza were still shrouded by it. Enough, however, we could see to enable us to realise, at length, what had been at first so difficult to believe, that we were indeed in the Holy Land.

This church of the Greek Christians is built in honour of Dorcas, whose tomb is supposed to be in the adjoining burial-ground. We did not care to visit it, but drove at once to the traditional house of Simon the Tanner. In Dean Stanley's time the site of Simon's house was shown near the Latin convent ; but it has shifted since then, and is now shown half a mile away, to the south of the town : there is little reason to suppose that either site is the true one. Dean Stanley, it is true, regards the former as "one of the few localities which can claim to represent an historical scene of the New Testament" ; but the most that Canon Cheyne can say for the long note in which Stanley maintains this position\* is that it "is at least eloquent and chivalrous."† On the whole, the archæology of Jaffa may be summed up in the three words used by the Canon in the article just quoted : "Antiquities are wanting."

But although there are no antiquities, and ancient sites are more than uncertain, we may to some extent console

\* "Sinai and Palestine," p. 274.

† "Encycl. Bibl." art. "Joppa."

ourselves with the reflection that there is no doubt about the situation of the town itself. Jaffa or Yâfâ, as the natives call it, corresponds to the ancient Joppa. It was in these blue waters that the cedars were floated for the building of the Temple ; and in the offing yonder that the miserable act of treachery took place, in the days of Judas Maccabæus, when the men of Joppa "invited the Jews who dwelt among them to go with their wives and children into the boats which they had provided," and then "took them out to sea and drowned them in number not less than two hundred." \* Here stood the city which Jonathan Maccabæus besieged and took, and which went through such troubled times during the Maccabæan Wars. Here stood the later city which Pompey built and gave to Syria, which Cæsar restored to the Jews, which Herod seized, and which Cestius plundered and burnt in the Jewish War. And, coming to later times, it was here that Richard Cœur de Lion fought the Saracens ; and it was on that strip of beach, where the surf is now breaking so white, that Napoleon, called "the Great," shot in cold blood two thousand prisoners whom he could not feed and would not release.

There is, moreover, much that interests in the life which to-day crowds the streets and roads. Here come long processions of camels loaded with mountains of empty orange-boxes going to the gardens to be packed for Europe. Here, up this narrow court, is a bare-legged boy drawing water from a well, in a bucket made of a roughly stitched piece of goat-skin. The stone edge of the well is worn with deep grooves where the ropes have rubbed for many generations. Possibly this may be the very well which supplied water for Simon's tannery : who knows ? The bazaars, too, are picturesque. The shops are dark, shadowy recesses without shop-front or screen : inside squat the shopkeepers smoking their pipes. Along the narrow lane between these stalls, crowds of picturesque figures pass to and fro, old men in turbans riding brisk little donkeys ; youths in long cotton gowns girded at the waist ; women with their faces veiled, not as in Egypt merely from the eyes downward, but with the countenance completely covered.

Perhaps, after all, the most interesting thing about Joppa is the variety of myth connected with it, in which variety

\* 2 Mac. xii. 3, 4.



there is, moreover, a very interesting unity. I am reminded of it by the appearance of the reef as it is seen from the shore. One cannot but note the likeness of the long line of rocky spikes, standing up so abruptly from the water, to the backbone of some great fish whose skeleton has been stranded in the shallow surf ; and I have wondered whether that reef was not in fact the skeleton of the sea-monster which was shown at Joppa until about 60 B.C. as that of the creature from whose jaws Andromeda was rescued by Perseus ; though, if it is true that Marcus Scaurus, Pompey's general, carried the skeleton to Rome, that cannot be, for there it still is.

The myth of the great Joppa fish is threefold. First you have the myth of Jonah : for, it was from Joppa that Jonah took ship for Tarshish, when the storm arose and he was cast into the sea, to be swallowed by "the great fish which the Lord had prepared." Next you have the Greek tale of Heracles, rescuing Hesione from the sea-monster at Joppa by leaping into its jaws and tearing its entrails for three days and three nights. And, thirdly, you have the story of Perseus rescuing Andromeda, the daughter of Cepheus and Joppa, who was chained to the rocks at a place of the latter name.\*

As to these three myths folklorists seem pretty well agreed that they are variations of the same idea—that of the sun being swallowed up by the earth (or sea) and vomited forth again in the morning—a cross-current of another cycle coming in, from the observation of the winter solstice, when the sun remains in the lowest regions for three days and three nights from December 22 to 25.

But this does not of itself explain why all three myths should be localised at Joppa. To explain this we must remember that Joppa was originally a Phœnician colony in Philistine territory, and that the particular legend of Heracles given above is of Phœnician origin. Also, in the neighbouring Philistine country Dagon was worshipped, who was represented as a man emerging from a fish's mouth, being in fact a symbol of that same solar myth which is represented by the stories of Heracles and Perseus ; while Jonah is said to be no other than Oannes, the Chaldean fish-god, who is one with the Philistine Dagon. Whoso meditates

\* According to Josephus "the chains wherewith Andromeda was bound have left their marks" on the rocks here ("Jewish Wars," iii. ix. 3), and Pliny says the same.

on these cognate facts will not find it hard to see how Joppa may have come to be the scene of these strange adventures.\*

\* See Doane's "Bible Myths," p. 77, *et seq.*; "Encycl. Bibl." art. "Joppa"; Smith's D.B. art. "Joppa," &c. We have also to take into account the widespread association of dragons with the movement of waters. The rising and falling of the intermittent spring at Jerusalem known as St. Mary's Well are accounted for by the natives by a hypothetical dragon, who is believed to swallow the waters and vomit them forth again at regular intervals. The special liveliness of the sea at Joppa, where the Mediterranean swell is churned into foam by the remarkable reef at that place, would, therefore, go to confirm the connection between Joppa and sea-monsters. (See "Encycl. Bibl." arts. "Dragon" and "Joppa.")

## CHAPTER II

### JAFFA TO JERUSALEM

THERE was no need to linger in Jaffa, and at mid-day we took train to Jerusalem by the one little bit of railway which up to the time of our visit had invaded Palestine.\* It is a line of about fifty miles, with one train a day each way, which accomplishes the journey in something under four hours.

The line runs first through the plain of Sharon, a district of wonderfully rich and deep soil. Along the shore a great deal of this rich land has been lost beneath the drifting sand, which has accumulated to the depth of a couple of feet or more. A little energy in planting tamarisk and other bushes might rescue some thousands of acres which are otherwise doomed. At present, however, there is a vast extent of fertile soil remaining. In two or three places I noticed excavations near the line, which showed a depth of ten feet or more of pure loam. The scriptural "Rose of Sharon," by the by, is said to be the *Polyanthus narcissus* (*Narcissus tazetta*), which grows both upon the plains and hills of this district, a flower of which Orientals are passionately fond. "While it is in flower," says Canon Tristram, "it is to be seen in all the bazaars, and the men as well as the women at that season always carry two or three blossoms at which they are continually smelling."

The train passes between large plantations of orange-trees; then through cornfields, the blades of wheat standing, on this ninth day of March, eight or ten inches high, very rich and glossy. In the distance we could see the small square watch-towers along the Jerusalem road. "Before the railway was made," said Hanna, "two soldiers were put in each

\* A branch of the Hejáz line, from Haifa, is in course of construction, but is still (1906) far from completion. The Southern extension of the Damascus-Beyrout Railway is now carried as far as Mezerib, and a Turkish railway has been built from Damascus to Akaba.

tower to guard the road, but there is now much less traffic by road, and the towers have no guard in them." On the right of the line Hanna pointed out the village of Beit-Dejan—the ancient Beth-Dagon (Josh. xv. 41). It stands on the border of Philistia. And on the same side there presently came into sight the Tower of Ramleh, near the old Saracenic and Crusading city of that name.

Then we passed through the olive-plantations of Lydda, enclosed by hedges of prickly pear, and I knew that away to the left lay Môdein, where the Maccabæan revolt took its rise, where Mattathias hewed down the false priest who sacrificed to idols, and where the Maccabees are buried. On our right Ekron was pointed out, and then the train began to climb through the harsh and stony land of Judæa, the maritime plain being left behind. Past "Samson's Cave" the engine panted, toiling up a narrow chasm in the limestone, where we got our first impression of the wâdis of Palestine. Here, too, we saw our first jackals, of which we were to have experience in plenty before our tour was done.

We arrived at Jerusalem at five o'clock or thereabouts, and were straightway whirled off to the hotel in one of the open carriages drawn by a pair of horses, which here fulfil the office of the London cab. People say that Jerusalem is disappointing, especially when approached from the western side. I can only say that I did not find it so. To me it was forthwith entirely fascinating; so picturesque, so venerable, so crowded with strange half-civilised life, so full of historical and sacred interest! In particular I found it more obviously biblical than I had expected. Here were the blind, the lame, the lepers, the camels passing through the city gates, the peasants riding on their asses. It hardly needed interpreting; the past was brought to life. As I sat in my room and looked from the window at the "Tower of David" and a narrow perspective of grey walls beyond, and knew that at last my eyes actually beheld the Holy City, there came one of those rare moments of life when the ideal is fulfilled and the mind rests in perfect content.

I was fortunate in being the bearer of a letter of introduction to the Rev. Dr. Merrill, the United States Consul in Jerusalem, and the learned author of several works on Palestine. Many were the kindnesses which he wrought us during our stay in the Holy Land, and very valuable was

the information which he afforded us. On Sunday morning, being the day after our arrival, the kind doctor took us on the roof of our hotel and indicated the points of interest in the bird's-eye view of the city which is thence obtained. The "Grand New Hotel" in which we were staying is close to the Jaffa Gate, in the middle of the western wall. As you face eastward the high ground, on which of old stood the Upper City, lies in the near foreground and stretches away to your right. This, in the time of Christ, was the aristocratic and wealthy quarter of the town. It is now erroneously known as "Zion," a designation which causes much confusion in the minds of tourists. On your left are the two domes belonging to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and straight before you, at the further boundary of the city, stands forth the Dome of the Rock, in the old Temple Area, situated on the true "Zion" of the Psalms. Beyond this rises the Mount of Olives, very sadly disfigured of late by the buildings which have multiplied upon its sacred soil, and, back of all, stretches the purple wall of Moab, a huge straight-ridged mountain-barrier, looking strangely near, though it is thirty or five-and-thirty miles away.

Dean Stanley \* seems to find some difficulty in justifying the Psalmist's simile, "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so is the Lord round about his people." He is tempted to refer it to the mountain-barrier on the far North, together with the enclosing arms of Olivet on the East, and, perhaps, the distant range of Moab just mentioned; but he is perplexed because on the South and West he finds no protecting mountains such as the expression would lead one to look for. Seen, however, from an elevated point, like this roof on which we are standing, the surrounding country seems to fit perfectly with the scriptural picture. The protection of the city is not in any towering heights which overtop and hem the city in, but in that wide sea of mountains which, billowing ridge behind ridge, and stretching arid and forbidding far into the distance, are seen to surround the city on every hand. This difficult country, waterless and waste, was, historically speaking, always Jerusalem's protection.

And now it behoved us immediately to make our plans, and decide upon what day we would take up our camp. One main object of our tour was to see something of the Ghôr or Valley of the Jordan. I had long since come to the

\* "Sinai and Palestine," p. 174.

conclusion that it was probably by this Jordan Valley route that Jesus in His last sad journey came from Galilee to Jerusalem, and I was anxious for this reason to travel down some portion of its length. After due deliberation we decided to travel northward to Nazareth at once, returning southward by the Jordan Valley, and deferring any sight-seeing in Jerusalem until the end of our tour.

This decision having been communicated to Hanna, he forthwith brought our horses round for us to try them, and we went for a two hours' ride on as lovely a morning as I have ever known. It was just such a day as early June sometimes brings to us in England, when the air is of perfect clearness, the colour brilliant, the heat tempered by a delicious breeze, and the dull world so gay and buoyant that it is hard to believe that it has ever been the scene of tragedy or terror.

At the start our horses were somewhat fresh and frisky, and performed various antics to the amusement of the onlookers, but they very soon quieted down and gave no trouble except such as was occasioned by their extreme jealousy of one another. This I have been told is characteristic of the Syrian horses. They seldom quarrel with their riders, but continually quarrel with each other. The almost invariable mode of progression being in Indian file, it is inevitable that one horse of the party should be the leader; and which is to be the leader is the great subject of dispute among the horses. In their endeavours to settle this question each in his own favour, they bite and kick and fight, with no animosity against their riders but occasionally with peril to them all the same. The peril, however, is after all but slight, for the Syrian horses are docile to a degree, and there is no need for even inexperienced riders to make such an exhibition of themselves as did the good clergyman of whom Dr. Merrill tells in his delightful book "East of Jordan" \* "who was so timid that he had his horse led by the bridle from Jaffa to Jerusalem, to Jericho, Mar Saba, Hebron, and back to Jerusalem again, and thence all the way up through the country to Beirut!"

Our ride took us first to the knoll above "Jeremiah's Grotto," which I had learned in my previous study to identify with Calvary. The question whether it is rightly so identified must be discussed in a future chapter; here it will suffice to say that it is a mound divided from the

\* *Op. cit.* p. 219.

northern wall of the present city only by a road and a small area of garden ground, and presenting to it the broken face of a sheer cliff, while on all other sides it slopes gently down so as to form a slightly rounded surface.

I had sufficient faith in the site to make the interest very great, yet there was always the haunting doubt, and there was moreover the hard glare of the mid-day sun, which made the reality seem too earthly. I felt that one should have come here not only in full faith, but by twilight. On this first visit it was as if the sun were shouting to us, "This is Calvary!" and it ought to have been whispered.

Leaving this sacred spot to be revisited on a later day, we struck northward to Scopus, where one of the camps of Titus was pitched during the siege of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. The mountain is something less than a mile from Jerusalem (seven stadia, Josephus says), near the spot now called Meshârîf, and is one of the great view-points in the neighbourhood of the city. The Temple Area stands, as Josephus describes it,\* in full view, with the city spreading beyond it, while, away to the East, the north end of the Dead Sea can be seen, and that strange mountain-wall of Moab behind it.

From Scopus we came by a circuit over the high ground to the Mount of Olives on the East of the city, from which we descended by a steep road past the traditional Garden of Gethsemane into the Valley of the Kidron, and so up to the so-called St. Stephen's Gate and through the city to our hotel in the Western or Christian quarter. About some of these localities we shall have an opportunity of speaking at more length in a later chapter.

\* "Wars," v. ii. 3.

## CHAPTER III

### JERUSALEM TO BETHEL

THE ride described in the previous chapter was but a "preliminary canter" to try our horses; but now we were to begin serious work. The morning of Monday, March 11, was spent in making necessary arrangements, packing saddle-bags, kit-bag, wraps and umbrellas, looking out photographic films, pressing-papers, sketch-books, and all the other things that would be wanted upon the journey, and making a bundle of the rest to be left at Jerusalem.

The native saddle-bag, a gorgeous affair decorated with numerous tassels and fringes, is a most useful contrivance, indispensable indeed when you are separated from your baggage, as we mostly were, for the whole travelling day. The native stirrup is also, as I was afterwards informed by an experienced traveller, very comfortable and much to be preferred for this kind of travelling to the European stirrup which is generally supplied to tourists. It consists of a flat metal plate upon which the whole foot is rested, and the corner of which is used as a spur. As for the saddle, most English travellers use the European form, although some prefer the Arab with its high peaks fore and aft, which afford some support upon a long day's journey.

The dragoman, of course, was armed, but after much debate we decided to take no arms ourselves. West of the Jordan all the ordinary roads nowadays are safe enough, it is not until one strikes into the untamed East that the question of arms need be considered.\*

We intended to have set forth directly after luncheon, but unfortunately our *tezkerchs* had not come. The *tezkerch* is a secondary passport, with which every traveller has to provide himself in addition to that which he gets from the Turkish Ambassador before leaving Europe. Until he has

\* Macgregor, of Rob Roy fame, has some very judicious remarks upon this subject. See "Rob Roy on the Jordan," p. 219.



obtained this he cannot go from one vilâyet, or chief division, to another. It is much as if the British were to require from every traveller in England separate passports for the Southern, the Midland, the Northern, the Eastern and the Western counties, besides the passport with which he landed. This is, of course, merely one of the petty ways in which the Turkish Government extorts money ; for, each *tezkerah* means not only a fee for its issue, but another fee for the *visa* at each vilâyet that is entered.

At length the dragoman decided to start, *tezkerah* or no *tezkerah*, and was giving instructions to have them sent after us by express messenger, when a youth came panting in hot haste, his eyes starting from his head, and with a tremendous fuss and flourish delivered the important documents to the dragoman, and, of course, claimed his bakhshish for the extreme expedition which he had used. Our horses thereupon were brought to the door, an excited crowd gathered, and we proceeded to mount with the eye of the world upon us.

Unfortunately for the dignity of our start, the steeds were fresher than ever, and danced about in fine style before the entrance to the hotel. The animal upon which I was myself mounted, after rearing and kicking in an excited manner, backed obstinately across the middle of the road just as the carriage of a Turkish dignitary, with outriders and rearguard, came careering along at a furious pace. My back being turned that way I was, of course, ignorant of the approach of that great man, and wondered why the heathen did so furiously rage. However, we managed by degrees to bring our horses within hail of each other, and started on our journey amid the cheers of the throng who had gathered in the street to see us off—the first expedition going northward that year.

A good part of the afternoon ride was alongside a road which was then in course of construction, but which has since been opened for traffic as far as Bîreh. The general character of the country was stony and barren, but our way was fringed throughout with flowers ; bright blue irises—little things six inches high, but very noticeable among the scarlet anemones which were everywhere abundant—daisies, buttercups, golden broom, wreaths of cyclamen encircling the loose limestone blocks, while once or twice a yellow crocus peeped out among the scrub, a solitary lingerer, for the time of crocuses was past.

Of traffic there was a considerable amount nearly all the

way, people travelling in each direction, towards Jerusalem and away from it. They were mostly poor folk driving laden asses or walking in companies, the women sometimes, but by no means always, veiled. At one point we saw six girls stepping along in single file, balancing empty waterpots upon their heads. The waterpots lay upon their sides, that being the position in which they are always carried when empty, and between each pot and the bearer's head was a little round pad similar to those used by bakers in England for their trays. At another place we passed a well from which girls were returning home with their waterpots full and balanced upon their heads in an erect position. One picture is impressed with special vividness upon my mind, that of a beautiful shepherd-boy with dark oval face, reclining among his flock. About his neck and shoulder hung a scrip, from which he took scraps of food and held them to the sheep, who ran to him with perfect confidence and fed from his hand. It might have been David himself.

The villages we passed were Shafât, Tell el-Fûl, er-Râm, and el-Bireh—all of them places of scriptural interest—Shafât being usually identified with Nob, Tell el-Fûl with Gibeah of Benjamin, er-Râm with Ramah, and el-Bireh with Beeroth.\*

Of these places er-Râm is to us the most interesting, because this is in all probability the spot where Jacob's pillar stood and marked the traditional grave of Rachel when her story in the Book of Genesis was written, where it stood when the story of Saul and the lost asses was written in the Book of Samuel—"thou shalt find two men by Rachel's sepulchre in the border of Benjamin at Zelzah"—and because it is the place to which Jeremiah alluded when he recalled the sorrowful leave-taking of the Jewish exiles at this spot and wrote the well-known lament quoted by the Evangelist Matthew, "A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rahel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not."†

Above all is er-Râm interesting to us because here was

\* The chief passage upon which these identifications depend is Isa. x. 28-32. A writer in the "Encyclopædia Biblica," basing his view upon an emendation of the text, gives strong reasons for thinking that it was not from Nob at all, but from the northern summit of the Mount of Olives that the enemy was to shake his fist at Zion; so the village of Shafât may not occupy the site of Nob.

† Jer. xxxi. 15.

the Rachel's tomb of Christ's time. The traditional tomb, which has been shown for many centuries on the road to Bethlehem, dates in all likelihood from the time of Constantine, when so many other holy sites were fixed; in the time of Jesus Jacob's pillar still stood at Ramah, and the grave of Rachel which He knew was the grave beside this northern road.\* Indeed, the whole of this afternoon's ride has a certain New Testament interest for us, because although the places belong to the older Jewish history, their close proximity to each other helps us to realise how every mile of country through which Jesus passed on His journeys to and from Jerusalem was replete with sacred story. Here, in a distance of five miles, we have passed the ruins of at least four villages intimately connected with Scripture narrative. Possibly some parts of Britain are similarly packed with British history; but consider the difference! How much does the English peasant know of English history, and of the connection of existing localities with that history? With the Jew it was far otherwise. His history and his religion were one. His synagogue-schooling steeped every Jewish boy with both at once. His patriotism, which to the Roman seemed so fanatical and so obstinate, was afire with religious enthusiasm. And down to Jesus' day almost every corner of Palestine was filled with villages and towns bearing names which hallowed them because those names were written in the sacred annals of God's suffering people.

All three of these villages—Shafât, Tell el-Fûl, and er-Râm—are small places, not in themselves picturesque, though picturesquely situated on high hills; but el-Bîreh (the Beeroth of Scripture), the fourth place which we passed, comes under a different category—it is beautiful in itself. The village, as we saw it, was surrounded by vineyards, each with its watchman's tower, and by plantations of fig-trees which were now just putting forth the tender leaf. A fountain of sweet water gushed from a crevice in a rock. The elders of the village sat and gossiped and smoked their hubble-bubbles, while near by the children played and shouted to their hearts' content. As we rode on into the distance the sounds came to us wafted on the breeze, like those of an English village on a summer evening.

There are ruins of an old khân here, for it was one of the

\* "Book of Jubilees," 32; "Götting. Year-Book," 1850, p. 53, quoted by Hausrath, "Time of Jesus," 1878, vol. i. p. 30. The question as to the site of Rachel's tomb is further discussed in chapter xxxi.



FIG. 1.—OUR DRAGOMAN



FIG. 2.—OUR MULETEERS



places where Jews travelling northward from Jerusalem used to pass the night. Sometimes, it is true, those who wished to reach Galilee would cross the Jordan opposite Jericho and travel up the eastern bank, but this was by no means the invariable rule; often they would pass through Samaria, spending the first night at Beeroth or Gophna,\* especially when they were in haste.† To this day travellers from Jerusalem often make it their first stage. There is some likelihood, therefore, in the old tradition dating from Crusading times, that this village of el-Bireh is where the caravan, returning to Nazareth after the feast at Jerusalem, made its first halt, when Joseph and Mary found that the child Jesus was not, as they had supposed, "among their kinsfolk and acquaintance."

From el-Bireh we diverged to the right, and another half-hour brought us to Bétin, the modern representative of the ancient shrine of Bethel. There we found our camp pitched in a sheltered nook below the village. It was the first we had seen of it, and we were rather taken aback by the luxury which Messrs. Cook and Sons had thought fit to provide for two homely individuals. The camp consisted of three tents—sleeping-tent, dining-tent, and kitchen-tent—containing bedsteads, washstands, dressing-table, looking-glass, chairs, carpets, mosquito-curtains, and endless etceteras. The staff included, besides our dragoman, a groom, a cook, a waiter, and three muleteers. Our beasts of burden were four horses, six mules, and two donkeys.

The little hollow in which our camp was pitched at Bethel was surrounded by a dry stone wall, and in the midst rose an aged fig-tree, whose twisted arms sprawled stark and uncanny against the sky. On the stony height above us stood one of the square flat-topped houses of this strange land. A turbaned figure clad in the flowing garb of the East could be seen upon the roof slowly pacing to and fro, and pausing every now and then to gaze fixedly towards the Western heavens or look up towards the zenith.

The twilight is short in Palestine. We arrived in broad daylight; half an hour afterwards it was too dark to see. Suddenly a mist came sweeping up, and the wind began to rise. "Ha! rain?" exclaimed Hanna; "well, let rain come!" But as we sat reading in our tent after dinner, we heard some one ramming every tent-peg tighter into the ground. They were expecting a storm.

\* Hausrath, "Time of Jesus," vol. i. p. 26. Compare Josephus, "Antiq.," xx. vi. 1.

† Josephus, "Life," sec. 52.

## CHAPTER IV

### FROM BETHEL THROUGH SHILOH TO HUWĀRA

THE storm did not come. There was a shower, which Hanna declared was nothing but the falling of the dew. I awoke without having dreamt of any ladder reaching to the skies : the luxury of Cook's tents forbids, I fear, those dreams of heaven.

By daylight it was easy to see what Dean Stanley meant when he supposed that the material suggestion of Jacob's Dream came from the manner in which the stones around formed themselves into a vast "ladder," or rather "flight of steps" (for so the word should be rendered).<sup>\*</sup> It is a familiar phenomenon in limestone country, and by no means peculiar to Bethel, although at Bethel the natural terraces climbing up the hill side are very marked, and readily lend themselves to the fancy.

What may be the mythology or folk-lore of that ladder of Jacob I do not know. Perhaps it is connected with the Indian, Persian, and Egyptian ladders by which souls descended from heaven to enter into earthly bodies ; or, perhaps it is purely legendary adornment of the Yahvistic narrative by the hand of the Elohist. The earlier narrative has no "ladder," only a dream that "Yahveh stood beside him." If, as biblical scholars now tell us, Jacob was a tribal name, and the pillar stood at Bethel long before the story of Jacob was written, it is impossible to say whether the stone was erected because of a vision, or the vision invented to account for a stone.

In Arabia the anointed pillar is still found a living fact of religion ; and it stands as a memorial of the past in almost every land. Such a pillar was more than a monument of some religious event, more than an altar for the offering of sacrifices, it was (like the stone at Luz) "Beth-el," the house of God—the object into which the Deity entered, the body

\* "Sinai and Palestine," p. 220.

in which He dwelt, the vehicle by which He manifested Himself to His worshippers. At Bethel, Shechem, Gilgal, and other shrines, such pillars continued to be an essential part of the apparatus of worship to a comparatively late time.\*

"But where is Jacob's stone now?" Well, such a question is not quite so absurd as it may seem at first. Prehistoric monuments of the kind—monuments dating from an antiquity quite as remote—are to be found in all parts of the world; and, seeing that there is absolutely no doubt as to the site of Bethel, why, if the iconoclasm of intervening ages has spared it, may not the megalith be standing there still? Unfortunately, the iconoclasm of intervening ages has been unusually ruthless in Western Palestine. East of the Jordan, menhirs, such as this pillar of Jacob, with cromlechs, cairns, and dolmens, are numerous enough, but west of the Jordan they are few and far between. It is sufficient, however, to recall the doings of one very celebrated iconoclast at this very place, namely, those of King Josiah: "He brake in pieces the pillars, and cut down the Asherim, and filled their places with the bones of men. Moreover, the altar that was at Bethel, and the high place which Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, had made, even that altar and the high place he brake down; and he burned the high place and stamped it small to powder, and burned the Asherah." After that it is of little use, I fear, to look for Jacob's pillar!

Nevertheless, I remembered that one such prehistoric monument was reported to be still standing here. It is mentioned by Baedeker, and alluded to in most of the recent accounts of Bethel; namely, a stone circle discovered by Sir Charles Wilson, "which, though much decayed, reminds one irresistibly of the rude stone temples of our own country."† Why Josiah had not "stamped it small to powder" I could not say; perhaps he overlooked it. At any rate, it might prove worth our while to see it, and if not, the climb would at least give us a view of the country and do us no harm.

So we mounted our horses and left our camp in the valley for a bare, bleak height above the village. Unluckily I had

\* See Hosea iii. 4. On the place of the sacrificial pillar in the worship of the northern Semites see Robertson Smith's "Religion of the Semites," pp. 200 *et seq.*

† P.E.F.Q.S., 1881, p. 81.



no precise note as to the position of the "circle." Baedeker said it was on the north of the village, the Palestine Exploration List of Photographs said it was on the east.

The best plan seemed to be to make our way to the highest neighbouring point and take a general survey, and this accordingly we did. What a tumult, what a wild confusion of rocks and stones, some lying loose, others rooted in the mountain ! Truly Jacob had no lack of material when he "took of the stones of that place and put them for his pillows !" The line of deep blue away to the north, where the mountains of Samaria lay, was refreshing to the eye ; but in the nearer distance, for miles around us, was little else than a grey chaos. I swept the adjacent hills and valleys with my glass, and there, sure enough, on a slope less than half a mile away, was a fairly perfect circle. We did not need to go to it, for I could see it in every detail. It was a circle of huge stones, quite as perfect as that photographed by the Palestine Exploration Fund, and yet —not the same ! In fact, I cannot but think that too much has been made of that circle, and that in the stony wilderness around Bethel several such natural circles might be found. Conder says that he paid three visits to the vicinity "with the view of examining the supposed circle of stones." "We were, however, unable," he writes, "to arrive at any other conclusion than that the curious rocks photographed by Colonel Wilson are natural features ; and although Dr. Sepp speaks, I believe, of a rude stone circle, I was unable to find any such monument after searching the entire vicinity."\* I will only add that the photograph published by the Palestine Exploration Fund fully confirms this verdict of Colonel Conder as to the natural origin of this supposed monument ; and I hope that some time soon the guide-books and hand-books will cease to copy one another and to waste the time and energy of tourists.

Having concluded our survey of Bethel, we renewed our journey, travelling through a barren and silent country. Not the twitter of a bird broke the deathly stillness, for in these mountains where birds of prey are abundant, the little songsters cannot live. We passed several villages perched upon the tops of hills, but the very villages seemed dead : we saw no figures moving about them, heard no sounds issuing from them. Even the flowers seemed to have forsaken this forbidding region, and it was not until we left the

\* P.E.F.Q.S., 1881, p. 255.

bald and solid rocks of Bethel that we found ourselves once more travelling over the beautiful carpet which spreads itself on the bleak hills of Judæa in springtime. Then indeed, wherever the least scrap of soil could be found, their glory returned to us. Large anemones, white, scarlet, blue, and pale pink, with cyclamens both white and purple, wreathed every stone and draped every mountain-terrace.

Leaving the high ground, we descended into The Valley of Fig-trees, a vast depression with plantations of figs extending far up the slopes by which it is bounded. We climbed again, and again descended by a narrow and rocky wādi known as The Valley of Robbers. The path drops steeply down the length of this pass beneath a fine range of limestone rocks in which are many caves. At one point a spring breaks out of the cliff and trickles down its face. This place opens into a fine wide valley as full of olive-trees as the first was of fig-trees, their grey foliage spreading over the length and breadth of the hollow, and climbing the mountain-sides as far as eye can see. Again we rose and again descended ; and found ourselves in a broad plain, with deep rich soil, where barefooted men were ploughing with their old-world ploughs. They press on the cross-piece of the simple plough-tail with their left hand, and in their right they carry a long goad with which they guide the little oxen, one man and one yoke of oxen to each plough.

From this plain the road to Sinjil (the *Casale St. Giles* of the Crusaders) bears away to the left ; but we kept straight on, or inclined a little to the right, ascending another barren, stony region. We were now approaching Seilūn, the ancient Shiloh. On our right, a little off the path, stood an ancient building, about thirty-five feet square, known as "The Mosque of the Forty," that is to say it is dedicated to the Forty Companions of the Prophet. But it was a synagogue before it was a mosque, for the lintel of the north doorway, although it has been thrown down since Colonel Conder visited it in 1872, is still unbroken, and shows the pot of manna on its front, being, as Conder declares, "similar to the lintels of Galilean synagogues." Neither are the Jews and the Mohammedans the only claimants to the building, for in the west wall there is a pointed arch ; and inside the ruin are columns and capitals which Colonel Conder considers to be Byzantine. In all probability, therefore, the building has been first a synagogue, then a church, and finally a mosque.

What can have made this particular spot so sacred that Jew, Christian and Moslem have alike revered it? Of course those to whom the Hebrew Tabernacle is a solid fact jump to the conclusion that this is the spot where the Tabernacle stood. Even Edersheim quotes the opinion with apparent approval.\* All that we can say, however, is that in ancient and mediæval times such a tradition may have existed and led to the erection of these shrines, but that, if so, it is quite lost now.

As we approached Shiloh I had in mind that passage in Stanley's "Sinai and Palestine" in which the author pictures the "daughters of Shiloh" as dancing about the well at the yearly festival,† and I asked the dragoman to point it out to me when we reached it. Accordingly, a little way past the "Mosque of the Forty," he pointed out a round pool cut in the rock, which he said was the Well of Shiloh. This may certainly be sufficiently ancient, but a serious drawback is that it is not a well at all, but a cistern, and it was difficult to imagine Shiloh's daughters dancing round this. It is to be noticed, however, that this "well" is a feature of the picture gratuitously introduced, and that the Scripture passage to which Stanley refers contains no mention of it at all.‡

However, while we were on the subject of wells it seemed not amiss to visit any running water which there might be in the neighbourhood; so I determined that after our mid-day meal we would go in search of the real well of Shiloh. Meanwhile luncheon was the next business on the programme.

We ate it under the shadow of another mosque. A group of villagers gathered round us. The men wore the usual square striped cloak of coarse sacking thrown over a tunic of dark-coloured cotton, which was belted at the waist and came a little below the knees. Their heads were wrapped in the keffiyeh or large handkerchief protecting the neck and fastened round the crown by the agâl or elastic rope of camel-hair or worsted. The girls wore blue skirts, and had their heads wrapped in white kerchiefs. Their faces, like those of all fellah women, were

\* "Sketches of Jewish Life," p. 255.

† "Sinai and Palestine," p. 232. Judges xxi. 19 *et seq.*

‡ Some trace of the festival may linger in the name Merj el 'Aid, "the meadow of the feast," by which the plain to the south of Seilûn is still called. P.E.F.Q.S., 1877, p. 180.

unveiled. One man, of different aspect from the rest, tried to converse, speaking to my surprise what seemed tolerable French. He asked the invariable questions as to where we came from and whither we were going. I complimented him upon his French, and he explained that he was an Algerian.

After luncheon I requested Hanna to inquire of the natives whether there was no running water in the neighbourhood of the village, and one of the youths readily undertook to guide us to it. He had not gone far when he was joined by another, and the two stepped briskly on before us, planting their bare feet on the rough and thickly-strewn stones with the greatest unconcern. They were very jolly fellows, their broad faces, which were almost black, shining with good humour, their eyes sparkling, and rows of white teeth gleaming when they laughed. The ease and spring of their walk over the rough ground indicated great agility and health; indeed, it seemed difficult for them to walk slowly enough for us; they would stop and look round and wait, and then trot on again, just as a dog does when he is out for a walk with his master.

The spot to which they guided us was in a deep valley running north and south, the western side of it perforated with numbers of rock-cut tombs lying in rows along the layers of limestone. In a picturesque nook on the same side of the valley, among piled-up rocks, they showed us a round hole just large enough to admit the body of a man. Looking down it I could see, at a depth of about fifteen feet, a stream of running water. It was apparently coursing swiftly along an underground duct in a direction transverse to the line of the valley.

While we stood there a grey-haired old man appeared, wearing nothing but a cotton shirt, which was open from the neck to the waist, showing his hairy breast. He promptly descended through the opening, making his way down to the water by means of projections in the rocky sides of the shaft. There he drank and washed, and then climbed up again. (Fig. 3.)

When we got back to our dragoman, he told one of our guides to show me how he struck a light. The youth produced from a little leather pouch at his girdle (the "purse" of Scripture) a flint and steel, the latter similar in shape to those formerly used in England, but smaller. He then took a small end of frayed hempen cord, and held the flint and

the cord between the thumb and finger of his left hand in such a way that the frayed end of the latter came about level with the sharp edge of the former. With his right hand he then struck the steel upon the flint, the cord immediately began to smoulder, and he soon produced a flame with his breath.

Remounting our horses, we now travelled in a north-westerly direction down the Wâdi Seilûn. After about an hour's ride we turned northward, and on a hill before us saw the village of el-Lubban—the Lebonah which in the Book of Judges (xxi. 19) is mentioned as being on the north of Shiloh. How strange it seems to find these names almost unchanged, clinging to the identical spots for thousands of years !

The country continued to be silent—no streams, no birds ; only Mohammed the groom, riding in the rear, chanted an interminable Arab song to a tune of four notes ; and occasionally, in some cultivated nook among the mountains, a little company of fellahin sang at their work.

At a distance of about two or three hours' ride from Seilûn we found ourselves on a height from which we looked upon the plain of Makhnah, with a grand distant view of the mountains of Samaria, and the snowy peak of Hermon far to the north. In the near distance rose Ebal and Gerizim, and at the foot of the latter lay the little village of Huwâra, where our camp was pitched. We reached the valley by a very steep and bad road, and thence made our way to the open plain, across which about twenty minutes' ride took us to our camp.

I should have preferred to encamp at Nablûs, in that Vale of Shechem concerning whose beauties I had heard so much. But Hanna strongly dissuaded us from any such plan. The people, he said, were rude, and it was impossible to keep them from invading the tents ; and they were fanatical to such a degree that they often became dangerous to Christians. He further took occasion to remind us that pictures were forbidden by the Mohammedan religion, so that when we entered Nablûs I must not attempt to photograph, otherwise we stood a fair chance of all being killed. It may be that for reasons of his own he exaggerated the dangers, but, of course, for the ignorant there was nothing to do but to follow his advice.

However, the spot where our camp was pitched had its own interest. Our tents were on a spur of Mount Gerizim.

The mountain chain rose upon our left as we faced northward. On our right beyond the plain was a range of lower hills, their tops all aglow just now with the rays of the declining sun as it sank behind Gerizim. Straight before us, but just hidden by a projecting spur, lay the Well of Jacob. It was about four or five miles distant, and between it and our camp stretched the Plain of Makhnah, green with the broad stretches of wheat now in blade. And it came upon me that these were the very fields upon which Jesus looked when He sat by the well and said, "Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh the harvest? Behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes and look on the fields, that they are white already unto harvest."\* The very fields, and almost the very time of year. Not quite; for the wheat-harvest is in June, and this was March 12, so that it wanted little more than three months to the average harvest-time.

Before our tents there stretched two paths, both of them leading to Nablús. The main path crosses the centre of the plain, and is the one most frequented; the other is on rather higher ground, and is therefore used more especially in winter, though it was far from being deserted even now, being shorter, though rougher, than the main route. Dotted along each path, in vanishing perspective, were people in twos and threes, dressed in bright colours, particularly in a very bright yellow, which seems to be the favourite colour in this part of Palestine. A little further up the slope on which our camp was pitched stood the village of Huwàra, from which came shouts and laughter of children. Their little forms, in red, blue, and yellow, glanced gaily in the evening light.

The sun sank behind Gerizim, the golden glory faded from the hill-tops on the East, the vivid green of the plain below us darkened, the children's games ceased, night came with rapid strides, and the sudden chill warned us into the tents. I noticed that inside the tent the thermometer stood at 55° Fahr., and it was ten degrees lower when we woke in the morning.

\* John iv. 35.

## CHAPTER V

### FROM HUWÂRA TO JACOB'S WELL AND SHECHEM

PROFESSOR GEORGE ADAM SMITH, in his "Historical Geography of the Holy Land," mentions that besides the ordinary road to Jenin through Shechem and Samaria, he had heard from his muleteers that another route existed. He was told that in order to find this route he must take the road past Askar which leads towards Bethshan, until he reached the point where it turns eastward, and then keep due north.\* Professor Smith, therefore, upholds Lightfoot and Stanley in their assertion that such a road exists, and he thinks it likely that it would be preferred by Jesus to the other route, inasmuch as it avoided both Shechem and Sebaste, two large alien towns, one Samaritan and the other Greek, close to which He must otherwise have passed.†

Now, since it was one chief object of my tour to obtain such information as would enable me to realise that Life, I read the passage from Professor Smith's book to our dragoman Hanna, and told him that I should like, if possible, to follow the route described. He declared, however, that he had never heard of such a road, neither had his muleteers; and, even if it existed, one thing was certain, and that was that we could not depend upon finding any suitable camping-grounds on the way. I then began to realise how heavily handicapped we were by our luxurious camp. It was perfectly true that to drag our great caravan over mountain-tracks which were unknown to dragoman or muleteers, where we might find no water, or might be forbidden by the natives to encamp, would never do at all, so the plan had to be abandoned. By all means let the man who has health and strength travel with nothing but horse and saddlebags.

\* *Op. cit.* p. 374.

† We know from Josephus that Galileans who went up to the festivals at Jerusalem commonly travelled through the country of Samaria passing through Jenin ("Antiq." xx. vi. 1); but that description might apply to either route.

However, I determined, since the existence of the road has been denied, and since Professor Smith does not seem to have actually seen it, that I would do what I could to ascertain whether it is really extant.\* Accordingly I requested Hanna to cross-examine the natives of Huwâra. But all I got from them was this : they said that they never went through Nablûs or Sebastiyeh to reach Jenin, but neither did they go by the Bethshan road. Their regular route was by a mountain track which took them through Fandakûmiyeh and Jeba. Now there is one road through Fandakûmiyeh and Jeba which is well known ; it runs almost direct from Sebastiyeh to Jenin, leaving Dôthân on the left ; but the mountain-track of which the Huwâra people spoke would avoid Nablûs and Sebastiyeh, cutting off a large corner, and joining the main road near Jeba.

However, we were at the mercy of our dragoman and *impedimenta*, and, since we could not explore the road mentioned by Lightfoot and Stanley, the best course seemed to be to take the usual route, and when we had visited Jacob's Well to follow the great bend round to the west and see something of Nablûs and Sebastiyeh, the ancient Shechem and Samaria.

From Huwâra to Jacob's Well is between four and five miles. We rode along the wide well-worn track between broad stretches of glossy wheat, and reached it before nine o'clock in the morning. Until a recent date the well lay in the open plain, amid the ruins of an ancient church which once covered it. At the present time it is enclosed by a high stone wall, having been purchased, as Hanna informed us, by the Greek Christians of the village of Balâta, which is about seven minutes' ride from the well.

In 1697 the well was found to be 105 feet deep, with fifteen feet of water. In 1866 it was reported as seventy-five feet deep and quite dry. In 1881 the original stone which surrounded the mouth of the well was discovered among the ruins. In 1894 Professor George A. Smith writes, "It is impossible to say whether the well is now dry, for many feet are choked with stones."† At the present time the well may be seen with the ancient curbing replaced, the débris cleared out, and the water standing cold and sweet to a considerable depth.

Entering the enclosure we found ourselves in a garden

\* It is not marked in the Ordnance Survey Map.

† Smith, "Hist. Geog.," p. 374.



of sweet-scented stocks, which the Christian owners had planted there. In one corner of the enclosure, on the left as we entered, were some sheds and a long barrack-like building where pilgrims are lodged; six hundred Russian pilgrims were expected that very night. Looking to the right we saw what seemed to be a heap of rubbish—a mound of earth and stones—in the side of which was a dark doorway or cavernous opening flanked by the shafts of some broken pillars. To this narrow arch we were led, and found ourselves at the top of a short flight of steps which led down to a little chapel within the mound. We descended the steps, and, when our eyes had become accustomed to the gloom, saw before us the Well surrounded by its ancient kerb cut half through by the rub of the ropes. Noting these deep-worn grooves, and remembering that the well has not been in use for ordinary purposes since the fourth century, when the church whose ruins now lie scattered around was built over it, it appears to be just within the bounds of possibility that this was the very stone upon which Jesus sat when He talked with the woman of Samaria (Fig. 4).

To some, no doubt, the whole story of the Samaritan woman who "came to draw water" is as legendary as the story of "our father Jacob, which gave us the well"; to myself, however, the probabilities have seemed to be that the Fourth Gospel is a composite book, consisting of discourses based upon more or less historical traditions, and that this particular story of the Samaritan woman is one of those which, while it contains some Philonic symbolism, bears traces of having come originally from the narrative of one who knew the place and was likely to know the circumstances. The well lies close by the road from Judæa to Galilee; above it towers the mountain of Gerizim, where the foundation of the Samaritan temple still exists; to the east and south stretches the plain of el-Makhnah, rich with corn-crops to this very day; and the village of Askar, half a mile away, in all likelihood represents the little town of Sychar, from which the Samaritan woman had come to draw water. Thus the local details seem to be exact.

At our request an attendant let down a candle by a long string, and we were able to judge of the accuracy of another detail of the Scripture story—"the well [*φρέαρ* not *πηγή*, the pit, not the water] is deep." The water, of which we drank, is very pleasant to the taste and the coolest which we found



FIG. 3. THE WELL AT SHILOH



FIG. 4.—JACOB'S WELL



in the course of our journey, a cup of really cold water not being very easily obtainable in Palestine.\*

On issuing from the little chapel I noticed carefully the relation of the floor of the cell to the level of the surrounding plain. Standing on the mound of *débris* which covers the well and looking around me, it was very obvious that the floor of the chapel must be exactly on a level with the surrounding country. The well, in fact, was just like others which we had seen in our journey—a plain circular opening in the level ground, guarded by a stone curb to keep the earth from falling in—only, this particular well was of unusual depth and was constructed with special pains, for the upper part is protected to some distance from the surface by carefully built stone-work, and the lower part is cut through limestone rock.

And that, by the way, is just one of the puzzles about this remarkable relic of antiquity—why such a laboriously constructed well should exist in such a place? The place is within easy reach of wells and streams. Askar has its spring and Nablûs its running brooks. The natives, indeed, claim that the latter has over twenty springs. Who, then, could have dug such a well in such a place, and for what purpose did he dig it?

The readiest answer certainly seems to be that it was dug by some one who was an alien to the owners of the neighbouring waters. Jacob may be an eponymous hero or a real person; but this well surely goes back to those “patriarchal” times when tribes or families fought together for possession of the springs and jealously excluded all new comers from their use.

The fact which I have just mentioned, that Askar has its own spring, suggests another puzzle. If the story of the Woman at the Well is a story of fact, and if Askar is to be identified with Sychar, why did the woman come so far to fetch her water? The objection is not that the well was too far away, for many villages in the East are half a mile from their wells, but that there was no need to come at all. The well of Askar (so I was informed by the natives) is in the middle of the village, with a convenient passage leading down to the water's edge; and it is used at the present day

\* I asked the custodian whether the water came from a spring at the bottom of the well. He answered that it did not, but came by infiltration; which agrees with Conder's statement on the subject, but not with Robinson's.

by all the inhabitants. Why then should the Woman of Sychar come to Jacob's Well? Formerly, when Sychar was supposed to be identical with Shechem or Nablûs, the objection had even greater weight, for Nablûs is still more distant and has still more water!

The answer may be that she came just because it was Jacob's Well. The well was in some sort sacred in the time of Jesus, and these holy wells were and still are frequented by people from a distance who value the water from them for its supposed healing and medicinal qualities. On the other hand, the woman is made to speak as though it were for the mere quenching of thirst that she came this weary journey, and would gladly have a spring of living water nearer home. So that one has to confess with a sigh, that even if the fiction is, as I hold, founded on fact, the fact is very difficult to separate from the fiction.

The path by which we had approached Jacob's Well continues northward, bearing slightly to the east, and passes the village of Askar. But in that path we did not now continue, but turned instead sharply to the west along the Vale of Shechem, Ebal being now on our right hand, and the mountain-slopes of Gerizim upon our left.

At this turn to the west, I noticed how closely the spurs of Ebal and Gerizim approached each other, making possible the traditional reading of the law from the two mountains, if we suppose the lower slopes of the mountains to be meant. The Bible narrative does not, indeed, require even that modification of the tradition, for, whether with the Authorised Version we read that the Israelites stood "over against" Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal, or with the Revised Version, that they stood "in front of" either mountain, the reading of the law was quite possible. The only thing that is impossible is that the reading took place, as has been so strangely fancied, from the *summits* of the two mountains.

Nablûs, the Shechem of the Bible, is not visible from Jacob's Well, being entirely round the corner, and a good half-hour's ride to the west.\*

At the entrance of the town we passed the Turkish barracks, where a number of soldiers were loafing about in the sun. A little further on we dismounted, and presently

\* De Saulcy, Stanley, and other writers, who identify Sychar with Shechem, maintain that the ancient Shechem lay to the east of the rebuilt city of Neapolis (Nablûs), founded by Vespasian, and that this saves the historicity of John iv. 30, 35.

found ourselves walking through the streets of this most ancient place. The bazaars of Nablûs are beyond description picturesque—narrow of course, and cut, like those we had already seen in Cairo, Jaffa, and Jerusalem, into masses of brightest light and blackest shade by the cloths and awnings stretched at short intervals from roof to roof across the street. But there was a colour here and a tone, a variety of form and general flavour of antiquity, which surpassed those of the other places mentioned. The costumes of the natives, too, were purely Oriental without that admixture of Western garb which in Jaffa and Jerusalem one cannot but feel to be a disfigurement, and they were mostly of brightest hues with a preponderance of yellow.

At my desire we were now led to the Samaritan quarter. We passed through narrow streets, along which every now and then long files of camels threaded their way, leaving small space for foot-passengers on either side, through the market where corn was being bought and sold, then bearing to the left we were taken to the south-western part of the town, and there, crowded among a dislocated mass of houses, stood the tiny synagogue in which the Samaritans worshipped.

So small was the little whitewashed room that I did not at first understand that this was the synagogue which I had so much wished to see. I supposed it to be a vestibule, and wondered when we should be taken through it to the main building. I noticed, however, that it contained a kubla, or niche, towards which prayers were directed, and, inferring that it was therefore holy, asked whether I should remove my shoes. The high-priest, who was showing us the place, answered that it was unnecessary to do so; but before we were allowed to step upon the floor, he turned back the corner of the matting with which it was covered.

This high-priest was a fine-looking man, tall and dignified, with lofty forehead, oval face, clear olive complexion, mild eyes, rather thick underlip, nose somewhat straighter than the usual Jewish type, beard black turning grey. The total impression was distinctly Jewish, but that of the very finest type of Jew, in which the sensuousness has almost disappeared, and a certain refinement which does not as a rule belong to the Jew has taken its place.\* He was accompanied

\* The generally accepted view as to the origin of the Samaritans is that they were the Cuthim, or strangers from Chaldea, who were placed in this district when Sargon carried away Israel into Assyria. Colonel

by his son, a very beautiful lad of fifteen or sixteen. The Samaritans are very clean in person, differing in this respect very markedly from those of their ancient enemies who are seen in Palestine.

Enemies to the Jews of course they still are. With the Jews of Nablûs at any rate their feud is as acrimonious, so I was informed, as ever it was. It cannot, however, last much longer; it will die with the Samaritans themselves. For, this very ancient sect has almost disappeared. In the fifth century of the present era there were many Samaritans both in Southern Palestine and in Egypt, and they even had a synagogue in Rome. As late as the seventeenth century they had communities in Cairo and Damascus. But early in the last century they became extinct everywhere but in Nablûs. The Samaritans of Nablûs numbered about a thousand in the twelfth century; at the present time they number about 150.\*

The outer clothing of the Samaritan consists, like that of any other town-dweller in Palestine, of the kumbâz, or long cotton robe tied about the waist with a girdle and having loose sleeves reaching to the tips of the fingers. But the turban is peculiar. Round the tarbûsh, and almost covering it, is wound a broad sash of crimson silk, arranged in picturesque folds. This colour belongs exclusively to the Samaritan. The high-priest, in addition to this characteristic turban, wears a long black cloth coat open in front and hanging loosely from his shoulders. This, Hanna explained, was worn only by his Holiness, and distinguished him from the rank and file of his flock.

This robe, which was not purchasable in the bazaar, I was anxious to add to my collection of costumes, and informed Hanna of my desire. He requested that I would leave the matter entirely to him, not appearing in the transaction myself, and he would then do his best for me. Followed, a lengthy dialogue in Arabic, much gesticulation, tones of surprise, indignation, indifference, explanation, firmness,

Conder and others hold, however, that this is a biased account of the matter, invented by the Pharisaic party, and that the tradition of the Samaritans themselves, that they are of pure Jewish blood, is to be respected. See Conder's "Tent-Work in Palestine," p. 16 *et seq.*

\* Conder says 135, in 1872; Baedeker says 160; our dragoman informed us that the number is 150, of whom only forty are initiated. In an article in the *Daily News* (August 27, 1906) on a visit to London of a deputation from the Samaritans, the total number is given as 115 men and 85 women.

concession, dignity, amusement, and suddenly the High-Priest stripped off his official robe with a laugh and handed it to Hanna. Then the son was despatched to fetch the corresponding turban, and the transaction was complete.

The price I afterwards learned was fifteen shillings, below which figure his Holiness declared that he could not go, as the coat "had still two years' wear in it." Hanna told me at the same time (he never informed me of his lies till we were well away) that he would not have obtained it even at that price, only he had told the priest that the coat was wanted for an American gentleman who had written for it from New York and named a fixed price beyond which it was not possible for him to go. There was nothing for me to do, after Hanna made such confessions of deceit, but to express surprise and disapproval, which, however, did not have the slightest practical effect when the next occasion arose. The Arab is, in fact, incapable of understanding the Western attitude towards deceit. "The word of an Englishman" has become a synonym with them for truth and fidelity, but they seem quite unable to see that the same truthfulness would be either morally praiseworthy or commercially advantageous to themselves. Lying is an art with them, and I really believe they take an artistic pleasure in it. It is all one with their love for tales of adventure. The invention, the cleverness, and the pleasure of outwitting another, are at the root of their habitual deceit. An Arab appears very seldom to tell the truth unless there is a distinct and immediate advantage in doing so; and then he feels it to be a lost opportunity for playing his favourite and amusing game of competitive invention.

To return to the little synagogue; a chair was now set before us, and we were mysteriously told to wait and see what would appear upon that chair. That which appeared was an ancient parchment roll much torn and patched, which the priest placed there for our inspection. This was presently removed, and another was placed there, larger and in better condition. These manuscripts were written not in the square Hebrew to which we are accustomed, but in the more ancient "Samaritan" character. They were, the priest asserted, copies of the Pentateuch, the first which he showed us dating from the time of the Maccabees, and the second from "the thirteenth year after the Jews entered Palestine!"

Whether either of the scrolls was indeed the sacrosanct



codex which is elevated in the Samaritan services like the host in a Roman Catholic church, it is impossible to say. It is affirmed that the most ancient copy is seldom or never exhibited to travellers. By the priest himself it is handled with the greatest reverence. Every time he touches it he exclaims, "In the name of God." It is, however, interesting to know that when it is "elevated" in their synagogue the congregation do not bow down to the scroll, but turn themselves obliquely and fall on their faces towards the eastern summit of Mount Gerizim, where of old their temple stood.

In a tiny courtyard near the synagogue grew an orange-tree which was just now laden with fruit. Here we rested for a while in the cool shadow conversing with our Samaritan friend. His part of the conversation consisted of only two words—the words "very good." But it was surprising into how many connections they fitted. Turning to the tree, he said "very good," in a tone of information. Pointing to my camera into which I had been putting some new films, he asked "very good?" in a tone of inquiry. Waving his hand toward the mountain up which we were about to climb for the sake of the view over Nablûs, he exclaimed "*Very good!*" in a tone of pride; and so the conversation went merrily forward till we made our adieus and addressed ourselves to our journey.

## CHAPTER VI

### SHECHEM TO SAMARIA

At the western boundary of the town we remounted and climbed a spur of Gerizim by a long slope, until we reached a kind of terrace from which there was a beautiful view of Nablûs; and here under the shade of the olives, which are cultivated in terraces far up the side of the mountain, Mohammed spread our mid-day meal.

The place was a favourite resort of the inhabitants of Nablûs, who came here to smoke and drink coffee and chat or sleep in the sunshine. Beside the road was a platform of stone, on which were placed a number of four-legged stools, several nargilehs, and a small charcoal stove. It was in charge of a short, broad, elderly man in a white turban, jacket and baggy trousers, and an old pair of slippers. He let out the stools and nargilehs, and sold sweet Turkish coffee, which he made upon his stove in a little metal vessel and served in tiny cups without handles (Fig. 5). The nargileh was originally made from the nargil or cocoanut, but those which you see in Palestine are mostly made of glass. Above the bottle or vase which contains the water is a small cup-shaped receptacle to hold the tobacco. The people of Palestine use large flaky tobacco, of which they take a handful, dip it in water and squeeze it together; then, laying it in the cup, they light it by applying a bit of burning charcoal with the tongs. The smoke passes downward from the cup into the water, through which it rises into the empty space above the liquid surface, and is thence inhaled by means of a long flexible tube. The smoke is drawn into the lungs.

This is the favourite form of smoking in Palestine when the smoker is at rest. Sometimes, indeed, I saw men even when riding horses or donkeys holding their "hubble-bubbles" in their hands and smoking them as they travelled; but, for the most part, cigarettes are smoked when *en route*.

The old-fashioned Turkish pipes with large bowls and long wooden stems seem almost to have gone out of use : I do not think I saw a single one in the course of our tour. It was very strange to find French cigarette papers lying on the ground even in remote places beyond Jordan, where one imagines oneself to be out of reach of civilisation.

After we had lunched, my fellow-traveller climbed the mountain where the Samaritan place of sacrifice is to be seen, upon which every year the passover-lamb is still slain ; where also is the sacred rock upon which tradition says that the altar of their temple stood. As the horses could not do the climb, I had to deny myself the pleasure of seeing these interesting spots, being constitutionally incapable of the ascent on foot.

While my friend was gone therefore I sat in the shade and looked abroad over the valley beneath me, in which the white houses of Shechem lay clustered, with Ebal towering beyond. A stream of bright water ran by the roadside, whose musical voice mingled with the gurgling of the nargilehs, the hum of quiet talk, the distant laughter of a group of children dabbling in the brook, and the shrill chirp of a small bird up the mountain-side. Two youths, one in yellow, the other in blue, were lounging in the sun ; in a shady corner a man in a striped cloak and a white turban lay dozing ; while the old custodian in his baggy blue trousers and jacket was cooking his pot. Behind me rose the terraced side of Gerizim with its olives ; below was a tangle of almond-trees, figs, and poplars, and those brambles which figure in Jotham's parable. It must have been from just such a spot as this that his parable of the trees was spoken.

At two o'clock we were on horseback again, and, regaining the valley, journeyed westward for about an hour under a burning sun. Our way lay through the fertile valley of Shechem, past fields carefully irrigated from the abundant stream which flows down its length. We passed two aqueducts. One of them, a Roman structure on a long series of arches, was still in use ; though the sides were broken and cascades poured from it into the road beneath. These old Roman contrivances often fill one with wonder. It seems strange that so civilised a people should never have hit upon the fact, which was daily before their eyes, that water returns to its level ; and that for want of this one little simple bit of knowledge they should

have spent such enormous labour upon these wonderful but needless structures.

Then we turned to the right, and for another hour travelled by a still hotter road toward the north-west. The track lay between cultivated fields and continued to rise until, at the highest point, a great stretch of the Mediterranean came into view. A little further and Samaria lay before us on an opposing height.

The situation of the ancient city is superb. Between us and it lay a deep valley, from which the round terraced hill upon which the ruins stand rose to a height of four or five hundred feet; the elevation of Samaria above the sea being as much as 1450 feet. No other city in Palestine can approach it for situation except Jerusalem and Safed. Jerusalem, with its sheer gulf upon the east and south, is certainly impressive, but it cannot compare with Samaria for isolated grandeur; only Safed, the sacred city of Galilee, surpasses it in that respect. Omri, king of the ten tribes, certainly chose the site of his capital with judgment.

But the ruins which we see up yonder are not those of the city of Omri. That old capital, where Ahab reigned and sinned, where Jehu slaughtered the priests of Baal, and to which Naaman came to be healed of his leprosy, was completely wiped out of existence by John Hyrcanus. The ruins which crown the hill to-day are those of Herod the Great's Samaria. Its modern name, Sebastiyeh, is but a slight departure from the name Sebastè, the Greek for Augusta, by which the tyrant indicated its dedication to Augustus. In the lifetime of Jesus there stood in the midst of the city a marble temple where the Cæsar was worshipped as a god, and to this day amid the broken walls and scattered stones which cover the topmost plateau, a group of pillars stands erect, and marks the site of that abomination of all pious Jews.

We plunged into the deep ravine which surrounds the mountain of Samaria, passed through an ancient gateway, and climbing the terraced height upon which the ruins stand, soon reached our camp, which we found pitched in the very midst of Herod's temple. Of course we were soon surrounded by a group of villagers. One in striped abâ and keffiyeh brought coins which his plough had turned up. Few of them were legible, but one was plainly a coin of Probus, one of the emperors who succeeded in restoring and, for a time maintaining, the unity of the Empire after that long and terrible period of anarchy during which it had

been broken up into undefined military districts. When that coin was struck, some thirty years before Constantine, Samaria was still a place of some importance ; for it lived on into Christian times and became an episcopal see. The very mosque in which these villagers worship, which stood hard by our camp, was once a Christian church.

As the sun got low a great flight of storks settled in the trees behind our camp. I tried to count them, but when I had got as far as fifty gave it up. The snapping of their multitudinous beaks made a curious rattling noise, and the branches of the trees swayed and bent beneath their weight as though they would break. It was March 13, a week earlier than the usual date for their arrival in Palestine, accounted for perhaps by this being an unusually warm spring. It interested me much to see these friendly immigrants, faithful to their old country in the day of her ruin and desolation. They are several times mentioned in Scripture, and Jeremiah (viii. 7) alludes to the regularity of their return in that pathetic passage, "Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times ; and the turtle and the swallow and the crane observe the time of their coming ; but my people know not the ordinance of the Lord."

## CHAPTER VII

### FROM SAMARIA THROUGH DÔTHÂN TO JENIN

WHEN Hanna came to us next morning we found that he was suffering from rheumatism in the legs. However, he managed to limp along and show us something of the ruins, Herod's hippodrome and the Street of Columns. The latter—a colonnade which originally made the circuit of the hill—has a hundred of the columns still standing, besides a multitude lying prostrate where they fell. It affords some notion of the magnificence in which Herod indulged when he gave rein to his passion for building. Few places, indeed, enable one better to realise what an offence these cities of the Gentiles who “exercised lordship over them,” must have been to the devout Jews. Their temples, their theatres, their pagan splendours were all alien and impious and hateful.

About half way round the hill we found Mohammed waiting for us with the horses, and turning our back upon Samaria we took our way northward toward Dôthân. The ride is not one which has impressed itself upon my memory except as extremely hot and tiring. Four hours of scorching hillsides and stifling wâdis, and we found ourselves at the foot of Tell Dôthân, that same “mountain” of Dôthân which we read of as “full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.” It is not much of a “mountain,” being in fact merely a green mound with a long back, on the top of which are foundations of old buildings. At the foot of it ran a broad, clear, shallow stream, and on the stream was—*horribile dictu*—a mill! Yes; in this venerable place, where Joseph's brethren had fed their flocks and Elisha had been besieged by the Syrian host, a steam flour-mill was puffing and snorting and rattling. One would have preferred silence. At the same time the mill was primitive enough of its kind. The engine-fire was fed with wood, and in the glare of the furnace-room one could see the

stoker gliding to and fro in oriental petticoats—a curious mixture of past and present.

Mohammed had spread our lunch in an orchard across the stream, and there in the cool shadow of the fruit trees we stretched our weary limbs while the horses were tethered on the further bank. But we had not taken many mouthfuls when the usual outbreak of equine spite commenced. One of the horses, seized with jealousy of his neighbour, commenced to bite and kick and do his best to injure the object of his hatred. There was nothing for it but for our little groom to fetch him across the stream and tie him to one of the trees. Forthwith, out bounced the miller and fell upon poor Mohammed tooth and nail, pouring upon him such a volume of wicked Arabic that the humble little man trembled in every limb. The torrent of abuse slackening a little, and the violent gesticulation gradually slowing down, Mohammed recovered the use of his limbs, took the offending quadruped out of the miller's orchard; and peace was once more restored.

Of course we saw Joseph's Pit; a circular cistern in the field hard by the miller's orchard, and tried hard to believe that it was the very "pit" or cistern into which the lad was cast.

At two o'clock we bade farewell to the irascible miller, and rode in the fierce heat over a stony track along a stifling valley; then turning sharply to the left came into a wide valley full of olive trees. Under the grateful shade of these trees we rode for about two miles, our general direction being still northward. In one place we passed a very picturesque group about a village well. The well itself was surrounded by a low wall, and around it were gathered a number of graceful girls clothed in bright colours. Some of them were drawing water in buckets made of skin, attached to ropes that ran in grooves which years of friction had cut deep into the stone. Each bucket was drawn by two girls. They had no winch, but raised the water by a direct pull upon the rope. One girl pulls as high as she can, and then lets go. The other catches the rope at the moment that the first one drops it. And so they alternate, first one pulling and then the other, until the bucket appears.

Soon after four o'clock we arrived at Jenin, and found our camp pitched upon a grassy slope overlooking this beautiful town with its picturesque old mosque. The Bible name,

En-Gannim, meaning Fountain of Gardens, is as suitable to the place to-day as it ever was, for there is a stream here which, running from the hills behind the village, parts into many brooklets and makes the whole place luxuriant. The white houses are half buried in beautiful foliage, from the general mass of which palms raise their stately heads. A range of distant mountains, the mountains of Galilee, form the background of the view ; behind all rises the snowy head of Hermon.

Although Jenin is not mentioned in the New Testament, it is not altogether without interest in relation to Christ's life, for the road between Nazareth and Jerusalem always passed this way, and it must often have been His halting-place in His journeys to and fro between Galilee and Judæa. "It was the custom of the Galileans," says Josephus, "when they came to the holy city at the festivals, to take their journeys through the country of the Samaritans, and at this time there lay, in the road they took, a village that was called Ginea (Jenin), which was situated in the limits of Samaria and the Great Plain." \*

It is true that there were alternative routes on the east of Jordan, recrossing by one of the fords in Judæa ; it was, in fact, by one of those routes that Jesus travelled to His death. But to take one of those eastern roads necessarily meant a much longer journey ; it is remarked elsewhere by Josephus that "it was absolutely necessary for those that go quickly [to Jerusalem] to pass through that country [of Samaria], for in that road you may, in three days' time, go from Galilee to Jerusalem." † The principal reason for taking the longer route would probably be to avoid those recurrent border-fights between Galileans and Samaritans which Josephus mentions, and one of which he describes as taking place at this very town of Ginea. Ordinarily the people of Galilee would travel to the feasts at Jerusalem by this road through Jenin, but when the country was disturbed peaceable folk would prefer the eastern route.

I wonder whether Jesus did not choose the Jordan Valley for His last journey to Jerusalem with the express purpose of avoiding the risk of those brawls which would have been fatal to the purpose of His mission ? It is usually said that He chose that route to avoid notice, but remembering how

\* "Antiq." xx. vi. 1. The situation of Ginea is also described in "Wars," iii. iii. 4.

† "Life," sec. 52. Whiston's translation.



populous Peræa was at that time, the other seems to me to be a more likely motive. When we call to mind the Galilean notion of a Messiah, that He was to head their faction-fights and their religious wars; and when we remember how persistent Jesus was in His warnings to His disciples that His Messiahship was of another kind, a suffering Messiahship, how "He charged them that they should tell no man of Him," we can understand that to come upon a party of excited Galileans contending with Samaritans at this border-town of theirs might have meant the fury of His own countrymen if He refused to head them, and so a premature martyrdom and the frustration of the whole design with which He set out for Jerusalem—the proclamation of a spiritual Messiahship.

The "Great Plain" mentioned by Josephus in the passage quoted above is, of course, the historic Plain of Esdraelon, which stretches away beyond the northern limits of the town. For we are now upon the frontier-line of Galilee, and nestled among the distant hills which lie beyond the Great Plain, a lovely background to the scene which is displayed before us, there reposes, though unseen as yet, the long-loved Nazareth.

It is a lovely picture upon which we are looking. At the foot of the grassy slope upon which our tents are pitched a path runs from right to left, along which men and women dressed in brilliant hues pass to and fro. The path is bordered on the further side by a hedge of prickly pear, and beyond this are gardens upon gardens. Little children in yellow, white, blue, red, are playing merry games on the greensward near us with shouts and laughter. And now it is six o'clock. From the minaret which rises white and tall amid the gardens, higher than the palms, higher than the distant line of hills, cutting with its slim line the clear blue of the evening sky, there sounds the distant chant of the Muezzin. In a moment the games of the children cease, all with one consent turn their faces to the town and scamper down the slopes to their homes in the beautiful town, and a great quiet falls over all the scene. Then the soldiers arrive from the Kaimmakâm, and mount guard over our tents, and the piercing stars come out, and in due time we turn in, and the tent-door is buttoned up by our solemn-faced waiter.

## CHAPTER VIII

### FROM JENIN THROUGH NAIN TO NAZARETH

It was the habit of our dragoman to secure soldiers to act as our sentries whenever he could get them. When this was not possible he employed two villagers, generally the sheikh of the village and some other responsible inhabitant. The soldiers have a practice of whistling to each other at intervals throughout the night—just a single low whistle, but rather disturbing to light sleepers—while the fellahin often keep themselves awake by singing their monotonous mournful chants by the hour together. Add to these disturbances the barking of village dogs and the howl of jackals, and it will be understood that a Palestine traveller needs to be a preternaturally sound sleeper if he is to rise refreshed.

However, the troubles of the night were soon forgotten in the thought that to-day's journey would bring us to one of the most deeply desired objects of our journey—the mountain village of Nazareth.

Midway between Jenin and Nazareth, upon the slope of Mount Gilboa, just where that mountain-range thrusts a spur into the midst of the Plain of Esdraelon stands Zerin, the Jezreel of Scripture story; and it was to this village that our way was now directed. The great stretch of level land through which we rode was busy with ploughs, each plough being drawn by a yoke of small black oxen, and closely followed by a man or woman who dropped the seed carefully into the furrow by hand. The ploughman paid little heed to the great blocks of loose stone which were scattered over the surface, for they do not care about a straight furrow as an English ploughman does. Though it is stony, the soil of Esdraelon is wonderfully deep and fertile, reddish in hue, suggesting to the fancy that sea of blood which both in ancient and modern times has been poured out on this great battlefield of Palestine.

As we approached Zerin, there rose upon our right the

desolate uplands where Saul and his three sons fought their last battle. Saul, we read, had pitched his camp "by the fountain that is in Jezreel." The fountain is still there, known now as Ain-el-Meiyiteh, or the Dead Well\* and in appearance and surroundings it certainly answers to its name. It is a ragged hole girt by shapeless blocks of limestone situated at the foot of a bleak and barren moor. No human being was in sight as I stood there, save one old woman who wept beside it over the loss of her goat-skin bucket which had slipped into the water. A rough-coated and dejected ass meditated among the dry scrub near by, and a vulture scenting out some carrion wheeled slowly round beneath the staring sun. Looking northward I could see, at a distance of some half-dozen miles, a rise of broken land which there invades the Great Plain. Among those low hills there nestles a village known as Endor. For thirty centuries it has kept its name unaltered. On the night before the Battle of Gilboa, when darkness had fallen upon the camp, the wretched king stole from his tent pitched beside this well, and in breach of his own laws crept across yonder plain to the witch-woman in that same village to ask his fate. The rival fountain Ain Jâlûd, which is more commonly identified with the "Fountain of Jezreel," is a more picturesque and striking spot than this, and it is not wonderful that it should have been selected as the scene of so famous a tragedy, but the Dead Well at the foot of Gilboa fits far better with the Scripture account of the battle.

The view from Zerin is beautiful. Across the Plain of Jezreel to the north rises the hill, easily recognised by its peculiar shape, in which Nazareth is embosomed. Westward stretches the range of Carmel. The general aspect is one of fertility, which makes the barrenness of the heights above us all the more striking by contrast. One might almost fancy that the curse which David uttered in his passionate lament for Saul and Jonathan, "Ye mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew, neither let there be rain upon you," had literally blasted the mountain, so dry and hopeless it appears.

Yet these stony and withered slopes were once clothed with vines, and just below the spot where we have halted Naboth used lovingly to tend that little vineyard which has become a proverb in every mouth. For that other tragedy, the judgment upon Ahab and Jezebel, was enacted close to

\* So Cheyne, relying upon an amended text. See "Encycl. Bibl." art. "Harod."

the place where we were standing. Here it was that Ahab, brought face to face with Elijah, cried : " Hast thou found me, O mine enemy ? " Here rose the tower on which the watchman stood " and spied the company of Jehu as he came." Here Joram the son of Ahab was pierced to the heart by Jehu's arrow, and his body cast " into the plot of ground of Naboth the Jezreelite." And here at the foot of the city wall was fulfilled " the word of the Lord, which He spake by his servant Elijah the Tishbite, saying: ' In the portion of Jezreel shall the dogs eat the flesh of Jezebel.' "

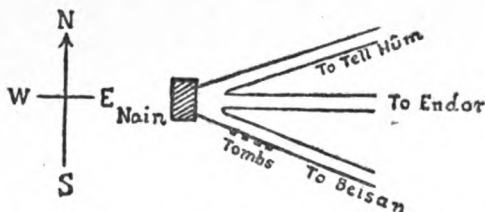
As for Ain Jâlûd, we passed that soon after leaving Jezreel. It is a most beautiful spring. On our right as we rode was a rocky cliff, at the base of which yawned a dark cave from which the waters flowed. The stream issuing from this cave immediately spread itself into a broad and shallow pool as clear as crystal and forty or fifty feet in diameter. I was admiring the beauty of the spot as our horses plashed their way through, when Hanna turned his head and shouted, " Gideon's Fountain ! " We had already become so much accustomed to hear all kinds of places associated with all kinds of patriarchs and heroes that we paid little attention at the moment, whereby we lost the chance of an emotion, for it is generally agreed that this is indeed the veritable spot where the three hundred men who " lapped the water with the tongue as a dog lappeth " were selected to deliver Israel from the Midianites.

In order to show us Ain Jâlûd, Hanna had made a slight détour. He now led us across the plain to Nain, which is five or six miles distant, passing on the way the village of Sûlem, dear to the memory of childhood from its being the scene of the story of Elisha and the Shunamite woman.

Of Nain I wished to take something like careful note, so we made our mid-day halt there. After we had lunched in the cool shadow cast by the wall of the Franciscan chapel, the sheikh of the little village undertook to guide me to the " unfenced burial-place " mentioned by Edersheim as lying to the east of the village. My desire of course was to realise the scene described in the Gospel of Luke, and certainly the spot to which I was conducted corresponded in a striking manner with the details of the story.

The ancient tombs (Fig. 6) were reached by walking eastward across a level stretch of rough herbage and then taking a few steps up the hillside. They are barely ten minutes' walk from the present village. The position of

the tombs may be diagrammatically represented as follows :



The north-east road which comes from the lake shore past Tell Hûm and Khân Minyeh (rival sites for Capernaum) and through el-Mejdel (Magdala), is the one which Jesus and His disciples would, according to the story, have travelled. As they approached the village they met the funeral procession of the widow's son issuing thence towards these tombs, which lie upon the south-east road. Thus Tristram and Edersheim are plainly right in their locality, as against Stanley, Conder, and Farrar, who find the tombs on the west of the village.\*

From Nain we again descended into the Plain of Esdraelon, across which we rode northward for the space of about an hour. Most travellers, I suppose, are surprised at the height and the abruptness of the hill upon which Nazareth is situated. It may without exaggeration be termed a mountain. One is accustomed to picture Nazareth as a little rustic village nestling in the hollow of a gentle upland, instead of which we found ourselves approaching a bold and somewhat fantastic cliff from which the Nazarenes might look abroad over half the land of Palestine. The town itself we could not yet see, though there is a growing village gleaming white upon the nearer ridge, which travellers often mistake for it. Nazareth lies in a hollow behind and below the lofty rampart which forms the southern edge of the mountain.

As we drew still nearer and began to traverse the gentle slope which leads to the foot of the steep ascent, I was much struck with the gorgeous effect of the dark blue lupines

\* I assume that the account of the "miracle" is based upon a real incident. The tombs are very ancient rock-cut tombs, which I should have supposed to belong to a period much earlier than the Christian era; but upon this point I find no pronouncement by any archæologist. Dr. Ramsay (quoted in Sanday's "Sacred Sites," p. 101) holds that the ancient city did not occupy the same site as the modern village, but was on the top of the hill.



FIG. 5.—RESTING PLACE ON MOUNT GERIZIM



FIG. 6.—TOMB AT NAIN



in full flower. In one place was a great mass, an acre or more in extent, the magnificence of which almost took away one's breath, and there were many similar patches.

Then, turning to the left, we skirted the base of the mountain until we reached the road which climbs the western side by a series of zig-zags. It was weary work pacing to and fro from west to east and east to west, rising by slow degrees towards the ridge above us ; but we forgot the fatigue in the excitement of knowing that when we reached the crest we should look down upon the goal of so many dreams—the little town where the childhood of Jesus was spent—one of the few sacred spots which we can with some confidence associate with the life of the beloved Master.\*

And now we crossed the lip of the great cup in which Nazareth lies and began to drop toward the town. On our right near the bottom of the descent we passed the threshing-floor, where travellers often encamp. It is a bare, dusty place, hot and low, and we were glad to find that our pioneers had succeeded in getting a better pitch for us—an orchard situated on the south-eastern side of the cup, high up the slope and facing the main mass of the habitations.

A better spot we could not have had for viewing the town in its entirety, for there it lay spread before us fan-wise on the opposite slope, built terrace above terrace in the scoop of the mountain like the seats in a Roman theatre, and scored through here and there by miniature wadis, down which the water doubtless courses impetuously in the rainy season.

The first view of it, I must confess, is disappointing. It is a Christian town, and like most of the Christian towns is progressive, and thinks it becoming therefore to imitate the West. Consequently there are many houses to be seen of European form, with red tiles and sloping roofs, and this detracts from the antique and oriental character which one would fain associate with this place of all others. Moreover, the town is a growing one. It contains about ten thousand inhabitants, and houses are still building. This adds to the newness of its appearance, especially in its upper part ; and it is not until you get into the narrow streets among the dark faces and Eastern costumes that you can recover the Oriental feeling. However, we are in Nazareth ; and here we may rest, deferring to another day a closer acquaintance with its topography and traditions.

\* A doubt is thrown even upon this site by Canon Cheyne in his article "Nazareth," in the "Encycl. Bibl." On this question see Appendix A.



## CHAPTER IX

### AN EXCURSION TO BETHLEHEM OF GALILEE

At last we were in Nazareth, and yet when morning dawned I decided to put off for the present any nearer view of the town than that which our camp afforded. For to-day was Saturday, and, if Hanna was to get his Sunday's rest to-morrow, an excursion upon which I had set my heart must be made at once.

The excursion to which I refer was to the little village of Bêt-Lahm, the modern representative of "Bethlehem, a city of Zebulon," mentioned in the Book of Joshua. My interest in this place arose from the theory put forward by some recent writers that this, and not Bethlehem of Judæa, was the true birthplace of Jesus. The argument for that view is, briefly, as follows: An obscure phrase occurs in the Talmud which may be read "Bethlehem Noseriyyah," *i.e.*, Bethlehem near Nazareth. Suppose, then, that this was the name by which Bethlehem of Zebulon came to be known, and suppose that in the earliest form of the evangelical tradition Jesus was stated to have been born at this Bethlehem-Nazareth, we can understand that a two-fold tradition might arise; sometimes the inheritors of the tradition would say He was born at Bethlehem and sometimes at Nazareth. The next step would be the transference to the better-known Bethlehem, near to Jerusalem; and it may thus have come about that we have the story of the birth at Bethlehem-Judah alongside the oft-repeated title "Jesus of Nazareth."\*

Without discussing the theory here, I may say that probability on the whole seems rather to incline to the view that Nazareth was the birthplace of Jesus, and that the Bethlehem of the birth-stories was imagined and adopted in fulfilment of definite Rabbinic teaching, which is known to have existed, that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem of

\* See more fully in Appendix B.

Judæa. Nevertheless the theory that Jesus was born in the northern Bethlehem carries with it sufficient probability to make a visit to that village of interest to a New Testament student. Accordingly I left my fellow-traveller to wander alone through the streets of Nazareth, and took Hanna with me to seek out this little-known place.

Hanna declared that he had never heard of such a village much less been there, so he had to find his way by questioning the peasants and others whom we passed. By good luck we took the shortest route, the distance to ride being about ten miles each way, although as the crow flies it would perhaps be not much more than seven.

The ride was through a beautiful region, more like an English country-side than any we had yet seen. First we went down the mountain-side by the same road as we had ascended the night before, and then for some distance followed the highway leading to Haifa. At length, turning into a field-path to the right, we traversed for some miles a stretch of rich arable land. Great herds of black cattle were being driven single file along the narrow track between fields. Shepherd boys were followed by flocks of goats and sheep. Men with bare legs and feet and wearing cotton shirts open to the waist, which showed their naked bodies, were ploughing with oxen and with camels. Now and then we met a man carrying home his wooden plough over his shoulder, after finishing his work. We crossed a stream and found ourselves surrounded by extensive woods of what Hanna called "wild oak." A specimen which I brought home has been identified as *Quercus coccifera*—a tree whose growth is much like that of our English oak, but whose leaf is somewhat different.

Shortly before reaching the village we came to a spring where girls were drawing water in pitchers and women were washing clothes. The women had lighted a fire on the ground and were boiling the clothes in a cauldron. They were natives of Bethlehem, they said, and had to come to this spring for all their water; it is a good step from the village—a quarter of a mile, or perhaps more. Their dresses were of white cotton, made with tight sleeves and confined at the waist by a sash, the skirt coming a little below the knee and showing the baggy Turkish trousers made of some darker stuff. The top of the head was exposed, but the back of the head and neck carefully protected by a handkerchief knotted beneath the chin.

Bethlehem of Galilee is a miserable little place now—just a group of poor hovels, one or two built of stone from the adjacent ruins, but mostly made of mud. The view, however, which is seen from the village is extremely beautiful, whichever way one turns. On the south-west rises the long range of Carmel—the Place of Sacrifice standing up prominent and noticeable above the general level of the ridge. From the south-west to the south-east extend the blue hills of Samaria ; \* on the hither side of them the immense Plain of Esdraelon, at present mostly of a bright green (almost yellow) with the young wheat, but showing also considerable tracts of dark red soil just turned up by the plough ; nearer still, a belt of slightly undulating ground sloping down from the village to the plain and thickly clothed with oak-woods of a fresh and tender green. Turning, next, to the east, one faces a mountain-mass, part of the highlands of Galilee ; the nearest being the low hills up which the road to Nazareth winds. Nazareth itself we cannot see, nor yet the height upon which Nazareth is built, these lower hills being near enough to hide it.

I lunched beneath a great spreading tree, and then explored the place under the guidance of an elderly native whom Hanna engaged for the task. Bethlehem must at one time have been a place of some importance, for numbers of square stones and prostrate columns lie around, covering a large area. Guérin † mentions the ruins of two buildings, a synagogue and a church, the former lying north and south, the latter oriented east and west. The synagogue, which Guérin describes as “*presque complètement démoli*,” I have no doubt is to be identified with the scanty remains to the east of the village, where I found the bases of five round pillars set in a row seven feet apart, the section of each pillar being two feet in diameter. As to the church, I was not aware till afterwards that its ruins had existed, and I should think that, as in so many other places, the fellahin have carried off most of the stones to build their houses since Guérin was there, but it may account for some of the cryptic pits and tunnels the origin of which I could not guess. One of these is a square pit, lying to the west of the synagogue, the sides being lined with large squared stones. At the bottom is seen the opening of a passage, which, my Arab guide explained by gestures, led underground for an unknown distance ; he pointed far away to the blue hills.

\* See Frontispiece. † “*La Palestine*,” tome i. (Galilée) p. 393.

Such stories are, of course, very commonly attached to any unexplored tunnel. Between this and the village lay another shorter tunnel or arch, lined with trimmed stones of some size, several which I measured were two feet long by fifteen inches high and twelve inches deep.

As is very commonly the case in Palestine, there is a place just outside the village where the people store their corn. It is a bare dusty mound, on the top of which are holes opening down into pits. In the case of Bethlehem this also showed, if I remember rightly, traces of being a buried ruin.

We returned to Nazareth by the road which had brought us there. Had I been physically fit, my observations might have been more adequate ; but ills of the flesh, from which I had long been suffering, rendered riding painful and walking almost impossible.

## CHAPTER X

### A SUNDAY IN NAZARETH

ASSUMING Nazareth to have been, if not the birthplace, at least the foster-home of Jesus, the ancient synagogue must be for us a spot of the deepest interest, for, in that case, it was here that He received His schooling and here that He worshipped with His parents. Moreover, there is the story told by St. Luke of His having preached here in His early ministry.

Once more, however, we have to lament the doubt in which so many Bible sites are clouded. All that we can say for certain is that the church of the United Greeks stands upon the site (Fig. 7) of a very ancient synagogue; and that there is a tradition, dating back to the sixth century, that it was in this synagogue that Jesus preached His memorable sermon. But this is something, sufficient, at any rate, to make it worth our while to visit the spot. Accordingly, we engaged the local guide, an Albino, to take us there.

A service was just over when we reached the building, and round about the entrance was a crowd of women and girls, clean and happy-looking, with merry eyes, and smiles that showed their white teeth. Their features were regular and very pleasing, their faces unveiled, their expression frank and open. Their heads were, for the most part, wrapped in some gay kerchief, and their foreheads adorned with a string of coins—those “pieces of silver” of which Jesus spoke in His parable. Truly the Christian girls of Nazareth, like those of Bethlehem in the south, testify by their appearance to the healthy influence of the social freedom which they possess in a far greater degree than their Moslem sisters.

As to the church itself, it appears to be almost entirely new, and there can be but the merest fragment of the ancient synagogue left. Its position is, however, a point of



FIG. 7.—GREEK CHURCH AT NAZARETH



FIG. 8.—ST. MARY'S WELL AT NAZARETH



some interest ; for, if this was the synagogue in which Jesus preached the sermon which aroused the fury of His fellow-townsmen, we must look hereabout for the true Rock of Precipitation.

The traditional cliff is the great mountain-edge to the south of the town, overlooking the Plain of Esdraelon. But this is an altogether preposterous idea. It is based upon the very common notion that a great event must happen on a great mountain, or in a great city, or be in some other way physically prominent. Assuming, however, the Greek church to stand upon the site of the ancient synagogue, then the Rock of Precipitation is doubtless the cliff behind the Maronite convent. This rock is scarcely more than a stone's throw from the old synagogue. It has a sheer drop of about thirty feet. At the present time private gardens extend to the foot of it, but its summit is easily accessible ; and a few steps up the hillside enabled us to stand on the spot whence, according to the Gospel story, the mob desired to hurl the heretic prophet.

Our guide now remarked that he wished to go to his church ; so he showed us, at our request, the path which we must follow to gain the hill behind the town whence that famous view, so finely described by Keim, could be obtained, and left us to take our way alone. We were glad, indeed, to be released from the constant attendance which Palestine travel involves ; and in this Christian town of Nazareth, where there was less risk of molestation than elsewhere, it was a relief to be allowed to meditate in solitude and quiet upon the great past, of which the scenes around us so eloquently spoke. So we climbed in the sweltering heat to the ridge on the north of the town, and rested in the shadow of a half-covered shrine—one of those "sheikhs' tombs" which crown half the hill-tops in the land.

It is cooler here, for the least bit of shadow always gives a refreshing air. In the sun it is intolerable, but here in the shade my pocket thermometer shows only 58°, and the gentle breath which fans us makes one realise what was meant by "the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."

We are sitting with our backs against the wall of the "tomb" and looking westward. Straight before us is the long ridge of Carmel, with Elijah's "Place of Sacrifice," rising boldly above the general level at its nearer extremity. At the other extremity we see Haifa, a white cluster of houses nestling beneath the hill and facing the blue sea, which is



marked off from the land by a long white line stretching from Haifa northward. It is in reality a line of low sand-hills, though seen from this height it might be taken for a fringe of surf. On our left hand as we are now facing we see a long undulating range—the hills of Samaria, dim in a heavy heat-mist.

If we rise from our lowly seat and stand with our faces to the south, we see directly below us the hollow in which Nazareth lies; beyond that, the Plain of Esdraelon, a vast expanse of green with patches of dark earth; and if we step out of the shadow of the building, and turn to the south-east, we are confronted by Little Hermon and Mount Gilboa, two short ranges which divide the eastern part of the plain into three strips of low-lying ground which run down to the valley of the Jordan. Turn the head a little more till you face due east, and there, beyond the Nazareth range, Tabor thrusts up his round and shaggy head; beyond him lies the deep depression in which the Jordan runs, and dim in the hot distance are the lofty mountains of Gilead and Bashan, standing up to-day like a gigantic blue wall, a noble background to the picture.

To the north of our position the view is more confined. There is no great plain, or deep valley, only a huge mountain mass, ill-defined and featureless. One noble object alone meets the gaze in this direction, the solemn height of Hermon, rising high above this stony and barren confusion and crowned to-day by a cloud which rests lightly on his snowy head. Perhaps the prospect might be wider and the hills separate themselves into successive ranks, were it not for this haze which hangs so heavy, for on this side, especially, the air trembles with heat. Yet, it is cool in the shadow of the "sheikh's tomb," and there we sit and rest.

We had come here to try and realise what Jesus looked upon in His childhood, and, lo, as we sat here in perfect quiet, a beautiful boy of ten or twelve in white tunic and fez came strolling by. He did not see us sitting in the deep shadow, and as he passed along the ridge, his lithe young figure clean cut against the sky, I remarked to my fellow-traveller that he might do for the boy Jesus. Scarcely had the words left my lips when the lad paused and looked around—first at Hermon, then at the sea, and then up at the sky, where some swallows were darting to and fro—an act of contemplation deliberate, impressive, bespeaking a

beautiful young soul. And that was the only human figure which broke the solitude of that Sabbath morning.

The ground at our feet was gay with the spring flowers of Palestine—the beautiful scarlet anemone, the little cyclamen (*latifolium*), the small blue iris (*Iris histrio*), and countless others. A small long-tailed hawk was hovering near us. There was a hum of bees and the chirp of one small bird ; no other sound, except once the distant bark of a dog down yonder in Nazareth.

At about two o'clock a number of folk in holiday dress, mostly women and children, arrived at the little shrine. And here I must put in a word or two explanatory of the shrine itself. These little chapels are extremely numerous. Almost every conspicuous hill is crowned with one, and they are to be seen in almost every village. Conder identifies them with the "high places" of Scripture, and, on the ground that mukâm or "station," one of the names by which they are commonly known, is a Hebrew word, he suggests that the cult they represent is of Canaanite origin.\* To argue thus, however, is to overlook the fact that the saint-worship to which they pertain is found over the whole Oriental world. The "dome," "shrine," or "station," for it is known by all these names, is dedicated to some saint ; it may be his tomb, or it may merely mark the spot where some incident in his life occurred ; but his presence always dwells in it, and his influence both for good and evil goes out from it. When there is sickness in a village, offerings are brought to the mukâm, and on occasions of rejoicing the peasants will dance or feast before it.

Such a place is held in the greatest possible respect, and it is said that notwithstanding the thieving propensities of the Palestine peasant, ploughs or other farm implements are often left in the mukâm with the certainty that they will not be touched. In this little shrine above Nazareth I noticed some clothes lying. These, however, were not left for safety ; but were, as Hanna afterwards informed me, put there as offerings to the saint by people who had been cured of their complaints. Such a use of clothing is very widely spread, and the custom has many ramifications. It is connected, for instance, with the practice of hanging shreds and rags upon sacred trees, which we saw in Palestine, as I shall hereafter have occasion to mention, and which is not unknown in the British Isles, for I have seen it both in

\* "Tent-Work in Palestine," 6th edition, pp. 304-6.

Wales and Ireland. The root-idea of the custom seems to be the identification, or at any rate the close connection, of the clothes with the wearer, so that in offering his clothes it is as if a man offered a part of himself.

It was to such a sheikh's (or saint's) shrine that these good folk of Nazareth had come on this Sabbath afternoon. They had come there to hold festival, though whether it had any religious significance I cannot say. They all seemed very merry, and set to work to gather fuel for a fire, just as we should at an English picnic. Some went inside the mukâm, others climbed on the roof to look at the view. The children laughed and played, and I noticed one little girl of twelve or thirteen smashing a scorpion which she had found beneath a large stone.

Leaving my friend on the hill to proceed with his meditation in solitude, I now dropped down the steep side, first through a maze of broken terraces and half-built houses, and then through a region of older streets and bazaars, and in due time reached St. Mary's Well, the sole spring by which Nazareth is supplied by living water (Fig. 8). I found it surrounded by a crowd of women and girls filling their earthen pitchers at the arched fountain. Some, I am sorry to say, used large square paraffin-tins, a horrible product of Western civilisation, which, like so much else that Western civilisation produces, are more useful than beautiful. I once asked some of the folk why they used these instead of the graceful earthen pitcher which they had inherited from antiquity, and they very simply and unanswerably replied, "Because they do not break!"

This fountain of Nazareth has not the same form that the well of Nazareth had in Jesus' day, neither is it at precisely the same spot. But this is the same spring, and the old well was probably not many yards away. It is, as I have said, the only spring in the place, and the mother of Jesus must have come here daily to draw water for the household.

At the present day the girls of Nazareth have a coquettish way of balancing the full pitcher all awry, just as in England a smart youth will sometimes wear his hat on the side of his head. The Christian girls are particularly good-looking, and I gathered from Hanna that they have a reputation for innocent "chic," of which this little trick with the pitcher is a symptom. A Turkish soldier mounted on a fine and spirited horse was lingering there, chaffing the women and

laughing gaily. Poor fellow ! the horse suddenly became restive, a struggle ensued between horse and rider which ended in the gay soldier being dashed up against a wall and carried home in a battered condition.

Returning to the camp I was met by Hanna with the news that our mules were all stolen. One of the muleteers had been sent with them to a neighbouring village to get them some food, but had returned with a bleeding nose and no beasts. Whether the mules had strayed into the crops, or how the affray had arisen I could not learn, but Hanna had already sent to the deputy-governor and obtained some soldiers to go in pursuit ; and in the evening the soldiers came riding into our camp with swords drawn, all looking very important and bringing the rescued mules in their midst. I much fear that no very diligent inquiry was made into the rights of the case. Certainly none of our party were called either as prosecutors or witnesses. Several inhabitants of the guilty village, we afterwards learnt, were clapped into gaol, and Hanna seemed altogether unable to understand why we should deem anything in the shape of a trial to have been necessary.

## CHAPTER XI

### NAZARETH TO TIBERIAS

FROM Nazareth it had been our intention to go westward to Haifa, explore Carmel, and see something of the "coasts of Tyre and Sidon"; but Hanna declared that if we attempted this large circuit we could not be back in Jerusalem by Easter, unless we omitted some other essential part of our projected journey. It is the misfortune of a traveller new to the country that he has scarcely any check upon his dragoman's statements. Distances he can, to some extent, estimate; but the character of the country, the temper of the inhabitants, the difficulty of obtaining suitable camping-grounds or wholesome water, all are unknown to him; and unless he can speak the language of the country and make independent inquiries, or is a man of strong physique, prepared for hardship and danger, he is practically in his dragoman's hands. This the dragoman very well knows, and his constant endeavour is to keep the party in the beaten tracks, along the roads with which he is acquainted, and where he will meet old cronies, and put a good thing in their way in the shape of fees for camping and bakhshish for occasional service.

So it proved in the present instance. We were obliged in all prudence to follow the strong representations of the wily Hanna, with the result that in the northward journey we followed pretty much the usual tourist route. It was not until we turned southward that we departed to any great extent from the course usually laid down.

We left Nazareth on Monday, March 18, and by eight o'clock were on the way to Tiberias. It was a cool grey morning, and as we mounted the hill to the east of Nazareth, long white clouds lay across the mountain ranges to the north; Hermon alone reared his noble head high above the mists.

Over the ridge and down the steep and stony path bear-

ing north-eastward we rode, until we reached the low undulations which fringe the Plain of Esdraelon. On the spur of a hill to our left, covered with olive-trees, stood el-Meshed, where Jerome says that in his day the tomb of the prophet Jonah was shown. A rise in the road brought us in view of Bashan beyond Jordan, and presently Karn Hattin thrust his strange shape upon our notice, lying almost straight before us.

The tradition that this was the Mount of Beatitudes arose perhaps from its noticeable form and conspicuous position, but it is an idea that dates only from the time of the Crusades. Tradition, as I have already remarked, usually demands that a notable incident shall have a dramatically and romantically fit stage for its occurrence ; but it is not so that the world is in general arranged. For my own part, I afterwards came to believe that the true Mount of Beatitudes was the green hill behind Gennesaret—a serene and natural resort for the Master and His disciples.\*

Soon afterwards the nearer heights open out and show the village of Kefr Kenna lying in a fold of the hills on a slight rise, a place where there is no want of water, for it is supplied by a beautiful and abundant stream. Kefr Kenna is known to every tourist as the traditional Cana of Galilee, but the site is extremely doubtful.

As to the significance of Cana in the Gospel story, whether it is historical or merely symbolical, it is impossible to say. It is as mysterious as the disciple Nathanael, who was said to have been born there. The fourth Gospel—in which almost every name and numeral, as well as every event, seems to have a cryptic meaning—can never be freely used for biographical purposes. All we can say is that the stories of the water made wine, and the healing of the nobleman's son, were probably founded on some biographical facts handed down by tradition ; but as we read them now they are poetry, and their spiritual intent is all that remains to us.

That there actually was such a place as Cana does not, however, admit of doubt. There was, and there is, more than one such place. In fact, we have here one of the

\* On Karn Hattin, however, one notable incident did, in fact, occur—the last and decisive battle of the Crusades, which was fought on July 4, 1187. One main cause of this great defeat was thirst ; and, as one stands on the arid plain below the Horns, one can realise how terrible an enemy that must have been.

many examples of the multiplication of identical names which is so characteristic of Palestine, and which has so often occasioned historical confusion. There is a Cana far away in the Sidon region, another Cana eight miles north of Nazareth, a third a mile and a half north-east of Nazareth, and there is this village of Kefr Kenna, three miles and a half from Nazareth by the same road. The first is out of the question, and the last seems to be excluded by the fact that Cana in Greek is spelt with a "K," while the root of Kenna demands a "χ." The remaining two are both philologically possible, and from either of them the traveller would go "down" to Capernaum. There is, perhaps, rather more probability attaching to 'Ain Kāna, which is on the road from Nazareth to Capernaum, than to Khurbet Kāna, eight miles to the north and away from the line of travel; and this site, which was first suggested by Colonel Conder, has been favoured by Guthe and by Sanday.\*

The beautiful brook of Kefr Kenna was reached just before entering the village. Close behind it lay a venerable sarcophagus, used as a drinking-trough. Women were fetching water in their graceful jars, one woman was rinsing clothes, and a little girl was scraping a water-skin with a knife and cleaning it in the stream. We did not halt to see the veritable water-pots in which the water was changed into wine, nor the house of Bartholomew the Apostle; but passing the school, from which issued the hum of children at their lessons, and the Greek and Latin churches which frowned at each other across the road, we issued into the open fields again.

From Kefr Kenna we dropped into a beautiful little plain surrounded by low hills. At times it seemed almost as though we were in England, for the lower slopes of the hills were clothed with yellow broom, and the rough scrub which covered their stony sides and crowns reminded one of Dartmoor.

We passed the usual groups and parties on the road, some

\* Conder, P.E.F. Mem., i. p. 288, and "Tent-Work," 6th edition, p. 81; Sanday, "Sacred Sites," p. 84, fn. As between Kefr Kenna and Kanat el-Gelil (Khurbet Kāna), ecclesiastical authority is on the whole in favour of the latter; so also is the evidence derived from Josephus ("Life," § 16). He lived at Cana at the time of John of Gischala's revolt, and since he also describes his home as situated in the plain of Asochis, it may be inferred that the Cana, "a village of Galilee," which he knew (and he was living when the Gospels were written), was Khurbet Kāna.

riding, some walking. Here were women cutting dandelion plants, which they cook and use as a vegetable ; anon came a string of eight mules, driven by three men ; presently passed an imposing procession of seven laden camels led by three men riding on donkeys, with the merchant at the head of the party busy with tablet and pencil as he rode ; and last, but not least, came the Tiberias omnibus, for we were now on one of the few roads on which a vehicle can run ! This remarkable machine is a kind of covered char-à-banc, or "flying bedstead," which runs between Haifa and Tiberias, and on this particular day was crowded with passengers, some in Oriental, others in semi-European costumes. So *bizarre* was its appearance that it scarcely seemed to spoil the romance of the journey, though it frightened both our horses, which left the road and bolted into the fields.

Shortly before noon we turned aside into an olive garden, and lay there during the heat of the day. Near by was a picturesque group of shepherds, in striped cloaks and cool head-drapery, stretching their limbs beneath the spreading boughs of an ancient tree. In Palestine noon rather than night is the silent time. The wild beasts are in their lairs, the men hide themselves from the heat, the wells are almost deserted by the women, even the chirping of the little crested larks, who hop from stone to stone, almost the only small bird seen in these mountains, is silenced for a time, and the monarch of the skies looks abroad over a hushed and powerless world.

When we took the road again, a slight ascent lay before us. As we climbed it Tabor began to thrust up his shaggy head. He rose above the low hills a little to our right. An uncouth, ill-placed mountain he always seemed to me, from any and every point of view, never harmonising with the scene, but standing apart insolently individual and self-contained in his rounded and too symmetrical isolation. I suppose it was this symmetry and isolation which led the early Christians to select this as the Mount of Transfiguration, a strange selection, seeing that in the time of Jesus it was crowned by a fortress, and probably by many dwellings.

Soon afterwards, passing over a slight ridge, we found ourselves at the apex of an immense fan-shaped scoop, which sloped downwards broadening out as it descended, and broke off abruptly at the edge of the steep declivity—the cliff one might almost say—which overlooks the Jordan Valley and the Sea of Galilee. Our first glimpse of the lake



we obtained about an hour and a half after commencing the descent of this conchoidal hollow, just a narrow blue streak, which opened out as we proceeded, till at length there lay, far, far below us, at the bottom of a weird gulf, small by reason of the enormous depth at which it lay, seeming, indeed, to be of some sub-terrestrial world, that lovely expanse of azure water, which was the goal of so many dreams.

We dismounted and gazed long upon that buried beauty, as one might peer into still water and fancy some fairyland in the calm crystal depths. That underworld into which we were looking is 680 feet below sea-level—a widening out of the wonderful cleft down the length of which the Jordan flows. The mountains recede and leave this oval setting for yonder jewel.

The nearer half of the sea was ruffled by a breeze, the further part, under the shelter of the red cliffs of Bashan, motionless, transparent, ethereal—a shimmer of blue which might be either air or water—a dream ready to vanish at a word. Immediately beneath us, dwarfed into a pigmy town by the distance, lay the glittering houses of Tiberias, its dazzling whiteness lit by the western sun, standing in lovely contrast to the blue of the lake and the rich brown of the crusaders' walls and towers which encircled it.

It took us an hour or more to descend the steep zig-zag which was cut in the side of the cliff. When at length we reached the Lake-side almost the first thing we saw was a group of fishermen squatting on the beach "mending their nets." It seemed a reminder that here at least we were in Jesus' country; a feeling which never left us so long as we lingered about these lovely waters. The Mount of Olives had seemed so disfigured by modern dwellings, Jacob's Well so doubtful in its Messianic legend, Nazareth itself occidentalised and spoiled, but here is both certainty and beauty. Jesus paced these slopes and sailed these waters, and filled His eyes and His soul with the azure of the lake and the rosy splendour of yonder cliffs. He took His parable from those lilies of the field which to this day clothe the shores with their splendour.\* Here was veritably lived that Galilean idyll which has become the Gospel of half mankind.

And now it is evening. We are encamped on a grassy

\* The scarlet anemone (*Anemone coronaris*), which has often, and reasonably, been identified with the lilies which surpassed in splendour the glory of Solomon, is abundant here; also the yellow chrysanthemum (*Chrysanthemum coronarium*) and many other of the gayest flowers



FIG. 9.—THE OLD MOSQUE, TIBERIAS



FIG. 10.—THE SHEIKH OF GERGESA



bank close to the shore, and about a mile to the south of the town. The sun has gone behind the hill, a breeze has sprung up ; there is a white surf along the beach ; the sound of its wash comes soothingly through the twilight. A level bank of cloud crosses the north end of the lake, so mingling with the mountains that it is hard to say which are mountains and which are clouds. The wind rises ; the colour of the lake has changed from blue to a slaty green ; its surface is flecked with tiny wavelets, and long dark lines stretch obliquely across the water, marking where the swell rolls beneath the pressure of the wind. A gull is skimming the waves, dipping his wings and feet as he flies. And now the dusk rapidly deepens, fire-flies glance among the mimosa shrubs, and away yonder on the eastern shore the lights of the Bedawin camps glimmer against the dark hills as night descends.

## CHAPTER XII

### ACROSS THE SEA OF GALILEE TO KERSA, THE "COUNTRY OF THE GERASENES"

IN the night the jackals came down from the mountains, and the dogs of Tiberias sallied forth and fought them. A tremendous affair it must have been, judging by the noise, which made the hours of darkness horrible, and which continued through the greater part of the night. "What peace is there between the hyena and the dog?" exclaims the Book of Ecclesiasticus; and the same might be said of the jackal, for the dogs seem to consider them their natural enemies. In the morning we learned that the garrison of Tiberias had been victorious and one of the jackals had been torn to pieces.

When we arose at half-past five, the lake was of glassy smoothness, the mountains on the further side of deep purple, except a narrow undulating ribbon of purest blue along the sky-line. Above this a band of orange light told that the sun was up, though he had not yet risen above the hills. But presently the rim of his burning orb appeared, and instantly a golden shaft flashed across the mirror, broadening in a few seconds to a pathway of glory as though the sacred feet had once again touched the waters of Galilee.

To-day we had planned to visit Kersa, the ancient Gergasa or Gerasa, where the demoniac dwelt among the tombs, and the swine ran down a steep place into the sea. So we breakfasted at six, and by half-past were rowing straight across the lake, for Kersa lies almost opposite to Tiberias. Our boat was rather a heavy affair, manned by five strong Arabs, hearty, jolly fellows, who chattered and joked and laughed, showing rows of glistening teeth. We had started early because we intended after seeing Kersa to explore the north end of the lake and return along the western shore, a round of some four and twenty miles in all, which with inland excursions would take up the greater part of the day.

Hanna said, moreover, that the boatmen liked to cross the lake early in the day if they had to cross at all, and were not permitted, as they preferred to do, to hug the shore. The sudden storms, said Hanna, which are here so prevalent, are more frequent in the afternoon and evening than the morning, the wind coming in squalls from the west. This latter is contrary to what I have usually heard, which is that the storms descend from the mountains on the eastern shore.

The lake at this part is something over six miles across, which the Arabs row in about two hours. Half-way across, the view towards the head of the lake is very striking. A little to the left of the central point of the northern shore, one sees a deep cleft in the hills, filled now with dark blue shadow. That is where Jordan enters. Behind this are ranges of hills; and beyond all, almost central, and dominating the whole scene, rises the white crest of Hermon. It is a picture which must have entered very deeply into a soul such as that of Jesus in His frequent crossings and recrossings of the Galilean Sea.

Turning now to the direction in which we are rowing, that is, due east, we observe that the dip in the hills which we had seen from Tiberias has opened itself out into a distinct cleft or wādi, and, as we proceed, this further reveals itself as a deep and broad valley running up from the lake. It is in the mouth of this valley that the ruins of Kersa are situated; and as we are now drawing towards the shore, we must devote a few lines to the question of the identification of Kersa with the ancient Gergasa, which identification is the main reason for our paying it a visit.

The one story connected with this place—that of the demoniac and the swine—is narrated by all the synoptics. In Matthew's story different manuscripts give the scene of the occurrence as the country of the Gadarenes—the Gergesenes, the Gerasenes, and the Gazarenes—"Gadarenes" having the weight of evidence in its favour as the word which the Evangelist himself wrote. In Mark and Luke the scene is given as the country of the Gerasenes, Gergesenes, and Gadarenes—"Gerasenes" having here the weight of manuscript evidence in its favour. The difference in readings is very remarkable, one and the same manuscript giving sometimes three different readings. The Codex Sinaiticus, for instance, reads Gazarenes in Matthew, Gerasenes in Mark, and Gergesenes in Luke.

The case is nevertheless not entirely hopeless. The first

thing that occurs to us is that the only Gerasa one knows is thirty-five miles from the Sea of Galilee, while Gadara is at least six miles from it; and we might be inclined to infer forthwith, as many eminent authorities have done, that Gerasa and Gadara are both to be rejected, and that Gergesa was the true name of the place. A writer in the *Encyclopædia Biblica* reminds us, however, that this would be to argue too hastily, and that we must take into account the well-known tendency of the scribes when writing a word beginning with "gad" or "ger" to repeat the initial "g" at the beginning of the second syllable. Allowing for this he concludes that Gerasa was the true name of the place, Gergesa the name as corrupted by the scribes, and that the modern representative of it is Kersa, the spot towards which the prow of our boat is now directed. The Gerasa represented by the modern Jerash is of course altogether out of the question, but there is no reason why a second Gerasa represented by the modern Kersa might not have existed.\*

It may seem strange to some readers that any one should trouble to identify the scene of so legendary an occurrence. They will recall the famous passage of arms between Mr. Gladstone and Professor Huxley, and having long since concluded that science allows no reality to this miracle of the bedevilled swine any more than to any other story of witches or magicians, they may be inclined to say, Why trouble about the supposed scene of a baseless legend? Let them, however, glance at Rushbrooke's "Synopticon," or take the trouble to compare for themselves the story as given in all three of the Synoptic Gospels, and note the verbal correspondences, and they will realise that here we have a very early tradition, earlier than any of the written Gospels, strongly suggesting some real incident in the life of Jesus, however distorted it may have become in the process of passing from mouth to mouth amid a wonder-loving people.

Dr. Edwin Abbott, in "The Kernel and the Husk,"† has given a possible explanation of the "swine" part of the story; but, whatever be the true explanation, I cannot doubt that the shore upon which we are about to land was trodden by the feet of Jesus, and that here He performed one of the many healing works which He wrought upon those mental sufferers who abounded then, as now, in this sad

\* See on the whole question Sanday's "Sacred Sites," pp. 25 ff.

† *Op. cit.*, p. 204.

country, and who then, as now, were believed to be possessed by demons. It is this which gives such interest to the ruins of Kersa and their surroundings, and made me eager to compare the locality with the details of the Gospel story.

We landed upon a flat shore covered with rank grass and flowers, among them species of campanula, chamomile, and pheasant's-eye (*Adonis*), the blue pimpernel, and quantities of an enormous umbel growing to a height of six or seven feet. At a little distance, perhaps a quarter of a mile, from the lake we found the ruins. They consist of two long lines of wall at right-angles, apparently forming part of an enclosing rampart, together with fragments of walls covering a large area. This agrees fairly well with Thomson's statement,\* that it was a small place with considerable suburbs, though I did not verify his assertion that "the walls can be traced all round."

The small plain upon which the ruins lie is bounded on the south by a spur of the mountains which runs steeply down to the water—"the only portion of that coast," says Professor G. A. Smith, "on which the steep hills come down to the shore." I afterwards verified this statement of Professor Smith's, for, although there are several other places—as, for instance, at Kalat el-Hosn, a little south of Kersa, where the mountains are not too precipitous to fit the story—this is the only place where they descend within a few feet of the water; everywhere else there is a long stretch of level ground between the mountains and the lake. In short, the objection which lies against Gadara as the place which the Evangelist had in mind—that the swine, after they had reached the foot of the mountain, would have had to ford the Jabbok and then gallop for five or six miles over a level plain before they could succeed in getting themselves drowned—applies in a less degree to every other place along the lake-shore except the mountain at Kersa. At every other place the level strand would be too broad for the impetus of their descent to carry them into the waters of the lake, but here such a descent must inevitably end in such a disaster. The inference is that, whatever of truth or fiction there may be in the story itself, the coast immediately south of Kersa is that which was intended by those who handed the story down.

From the slope of this southern hill there jutted out what appeared to be a mass of masonry. Four miles up the Wâdi

\* "The Land and the Book," p. 375.



are the remains of Kusr Bardawil, or the Castle of Baldwin ; and this tower, overlooking the sea, may have been some to work or watch-tower belonging to Crusading times. Whatever it had been in olden time, it was evidently used as a look-out place now, for perched upon it we noticed the figure of a man who was intently watching us. Presently he lay down, and all the time that I was photographing and gathering flowers I was conscious of him eyeing my proceedings. At length, when we began to retreat towards the shore, he left his ruined tower, and with a slow and stately step descended the slope of the mountain. At the same time, an elderly Bedawi appeared from another direction. The watchman proved to be the sheikh of a tribe of Bedawin whose tents we had noticed not very far away, and who, as Hanna afterwards informed us, is very rich, owning large flocks and herds. He addressed us courteously, and our dragoman and boatmen made due submission, each in turn kissing his hand ; of us, as Europeans, this was not expected. Notwithstanding his wealth, the sheikh has the reputation of being a humble-minded man, which on the present occasion was shown by his attempting to withdraw his hand each time that it was kissed, this being the recognised mode of expressing humility and politeness.\*

I inquired his name, and was informed that it was Sheikh Ahmed el-Azaizeh, chief of the Azaizeh tribe of Bedawin. I further asked the name of the ruin upon which he was standing when we first saw him, and he said that it was called Gilyat ("Kaliat") Ghera. It now occurred to me that he might be able to inform me on one point which I had been turning over in my mind ever since we landed. According to the demoniac story there ought to be tombs in this place, yet I had found none of the rock-cut tombs which are so often seen near ancient ruins in Palestine. Only two dark spots high up the hillside looked as though they might be caverns of the kind. Pointing to them, I asked Sheikh Ahmed whether they were tombs. The left-hand one he said was a cave, the right-hand one was not an opening at all, though from this distance it looked like one. In reply to my question whether he knew of any other caves or rock-cut tombs in this neighbourhood, he said, to my surprise, that this one which I had pointed out was the only cave of any sort in the surrounding district. Thomson's account, in "The Land and the Book," does not very well agree with

\* Cf. Burton, "Pilgrimage to Al-Madinah," vol. i. p. 287.

this. His statement is, "It [Kersa] is within a few rods of the shore, and an immense mountain rises directly above it, in which are ancient tombs, out of some of which the two men possessed of the devils may have issued to meet Jesus." \* The phrase "some of which" would imply that Thomson found several.

We were much charmed with the dignity and kindliness of our Bedawi sheikh. He was altogether just such an Arab chief as one reads of in romances. He permitted me to take his portrait, and when we essayed to bid him farewell pressed us to take coffee with his tribe. This, much to our regret, we were forced to decline, as we had a long circuit to make before evening. We launched our boat, and turning the prow northwards, commenced our coasting trip round the northern half of the lake.

\* *Op. cit.*, p. 376.

## CHAPTER XIII

### A COASTING TRIP IN SEARCH OF BETHSAIDA

FROM Kersa we commenced to row northward, keeping near to the shore, and noticing all the way how broad a strip of flat land intervened between the mountains and the sea, a feature which is not observable when this coast is viewed from the western shore. After rowing for about four or five miles we found ourselves at the north-east corner of the lake, where the mountains recede to a considerable distance and the shore-strip broadens into a wide plain. At one part this plain broke off at the water's edge with a sheer bank of some height, along which was stretched a large Bedawin camp, and near to it a line of low buildings, which the boatmen told us were used by the Bedawin for storehouses. In the midst of the village rose a single palm.

The broad plain which extended between us and the mountains was the famous Plain of el-Batiha, where Josephus fought with Sylla and was hurt by the stumbling of his horse, and the Bedawin settlement is now known as Mesadiyeh, a name which has the same root and is, indeed, almost the same word as Bethsaida. It was to understand more clearly the situation of this place that we had included it in our excursion.

Besides the significance of the recognised geographical name of Mesadiyeh, the fact is on record\* that when Dr. Thomson was here in 1855 he heard the identical name "Bethsaida" applied to the village by the Bedawin of the district. May not this, then, we would ask, be the site of the old fishing village of Bethsaida from which Andrew and Peter came? True it is rather far (some two miles) from et-Tell, which is usually identified with Bethsaida Julias, the Greek Bethsaida; but it is more than probable that the Bethsaida which Philip built upon the inland mound was

\* "The Land and the Book," p. 360.

called after some older coast-village where Jewish fishermen lived ; and if so, Mesadiyeh may well be the village after which it was called—the Jewish Bethsaida which Jesus frequented.

But this Mesadiyeh, it may be objected, with its high bank falling sheer to the water, was surely not a very convenient landing-place for fishing-boats ? True, but I would call attention to the fact that just beyond the Bedawi settlement, the lake opens into a broad estuary or basin into which three considerable streams empty themselves. This basin, with its shelving beach of sand and shells, one may imagine to have served as a harbour for the boats, while the village itself was built along the bank.\*

Some have preferred to find the original Bethsaida at el-Araj on the further or western shore of the estuary in question, and there is something to be said for this view ; there are considerable ruins there, it is more accessible from et-Tell, and it is said that a Roman road connected the two places.

Re-embarking we rowed across the opening, which is perhaps a quarter of a mile in width, to el-Araj, or "Laraj," as the name is abbreviated by the natives of the place just mentioned. Here there are broken stone walls of some extent, with palm-trees rising above them, and some roughly built houses constructed of ancient materials. From this place I decided to make my way inland to et-Tell, the site of Bethsaida Julias. At first our crew had all declared that this would be impossible, as the tell stood in the middle of a swamp. But they afterwards admitted that as the season was so extraordinarily dry, one might perhaps reach the tell ; so two "brave men," as Hanna styled them, undertook to be my guides, while the rest of our party promised to take the boat round to the mouth of the Jordan and await us at a point in that river opposite to the tell which we were about to visit.

The walk occupied about half an hour. We met with no difficulty other than that of the intense heat, which was indeed almost intolerable. One or two broad ditches we had to leap, and there were marshy spots to pass, and I called to mind that this was the very place where Josephus met with his accident, referred to above : "The horse upon which I rode, and upon whose back I fought, fell into a quagmire, and threw me to the ground ; and I was bruised

\* See sketch in Appendix C., p. 274.

on my wrist, and carried into a village named Kepharnōmōn (Capernaum)."\* In a wet season the whole plain almost as far as et-Tell must be practically a quagmire. The drier part, where the marsh rises toward the mound, is adorned with patches of dark blue lupine (*Lupinus pilosus*) and many other gorgeous flowers.

We passed several herds of Indian buffaloes with horns of immense length, wallowing in the mire like swine. These are not, as has been stated, the "bulls of Bashan," but are a comparatively modern introduction, and are of the same breed as we had already seen both in Italy and Egypt. The buffaloes were tended by rough-looking, black-faced Bedawin, who would every now and then start up in unexpected places from the cover of some ditch or shrub. They would gaze at us with immovable faces, uttering no greeting and showing no sign of surprise at our unwonted intrusion.

The tell, as we approached it, was seen to rise somewhat abruptly from the plain, and was of a height quite sufficient to dominate the whole of the Delta in the midst of which it stands. It occurred to me as I reviewed it that the whole of this marsh was formed by the deposit brought down by the Jordan and by the streams which flow down the Wady Suffāh, and that in 1900 years an area quite equal to this might have been laid down. Is it possible, then, that et-Tell stood in Christ's time upon the coast-line? This idea seems to be negatived, however, by the presence of so much ancient stonework and roadwork at el-Araj and elsewhere on the existing shore, and by the fact that in the time of Josephus that district was apparently as marshy as it is now. Dr. Torrance, of Tiberias, to whom I afterwards mentioned the doubt, and who knows the lake shores as thoroughly as any man living, gave it as his opinion that in the first century of our era the coast-line was practically the same as it is now.†

At the foot of the mound was a Mohammedan burial-place, the tombs very roughly built of ragged stones, with an upright one at each end. About a quarter of the way up the tell were the remains of an ancient oil-mill, with a circular nether stone more than six feet in diameter. The tell itself is covered with rough buildings, mostly made from old squared stones, the material doubtless of the ancient town. These seemed to be storehouses of the Bedawin similar to those of Mesadiyeh.

\* "Life," § 72. † See, however, Sanday, "Sacred Sites," p. 41.

The fierce heat of the sun could now no longer be borne, nor, as none of us were armed, did it seem very prudent to pry too much among the Arab property, so I did not attempt a complete exploration of the tell. I looked for the Roman road which is said to have joined the place with el-Araj, but found no trace of it; though a search under more favourable conditions might very probably have revealed it. Turning westward we left the tell and found our way to the nearest point on the Jordan bank.

Following down the river we presently discovered our party, who had moored the boat in the shade of some bushes, where the clear waters played music against her sides. The little bays and holes beneath the bank were full of fish and little tortoises. It was our first near view of the Jordan, and it was not without emotion that I found myself floating on the bosom of that venerable stream.

Our Arabs rowed us home along the western shore past Tell Hûm, 'Ain Tâbigha and Khân Minyeh. The two latter have both been identified by different writers with the supposed Western Bethsaida, a town which, if the Gospels are rightly read, does not, I think, need to be looked for either here or anywhere else. My thoughts, therefore, in this part of our voyage ran rather upon the probable site of Capernaum than on that of Bethsaida; for Christ's lake-side home lay certainly at some point upon this four or five miles of coast.

Tell Hûm has been known to most of us from childhood's days as the place where the ruins of Capernaum are to be seen. Pictures in magazines and books of travel have familiarised us with the scattered remains of its buildings; and the story of the discovery of the Marble Synagogue, the very one as we fondly believed which the Centurion of the Gospels built for the Jewish people whom he loved, was one of the religious romances of our youth. At this first superficial view of the site, as we passed it in the boat, what struck one concerning it was, first, its distance from the Plain of Gennesaret, and secondly, its low-lying position.

The description which Josephus gives of the "fertile fountain" of Capernaum which waters the Plain of Gennesaret † leads one to infer that Capernaum is situated in or just above that plain, which Tell Hûm certainly is not. This objection, it is true, has been met by supposing that Capernaum's stream was carried to the plain by an aqueduct,

\* See Appendix C.

† "Wars," iii. x. 8.

the possible remains of which we shall by-and-by examine. But what about a second objection? Can yonder be the Capernaum which was "exalted unto heaven?" And where, moreover, is "the mountain" into which Jesus called His disciples when He chose the twelve? Where is that peaceful height to which He would ascend for prayer? Surely it must have been nearer to His home than any of the hills which form a distant background to Tell Hûm!

And now contrast this with el-Minyeh, which we pass about an hour later. There is the green hill immediately behind the ruins. On that lofty rock which overhangs, there are the remains of a Roman castle. The town itself may well have climbed the height which backs the narrow plain. For, this is the northern point of Gennesaret, where its crescent-shaped expanse tapers off to a point as the mountains crowd toward the shore. Behind these nearer mountains rises the lofty and imposing peak of Safed—a three hours' climb from here. That may well have been the "city set on a hill" alluded to by Jesus in His teaching. This little bay under the shadow of the rock would form a harbour for the fishing-boats, a feature that is wanting to Tell Hûm. On the whole our first impression is much in favour of el-Minyeh as the true site of Capernaum. But these questions are not settled off-hand, and we must wait for closer consideration before we form a judgment on so long-debated a question.

At the northern wall of Tiberias we beached our boat for a short time while one of the boatmen was despatched to the Scottish Mission-house to ascertain if I could see Dr. Torrance, the resident physician, whom I wished to consult about our projected journey down the Ghôr.

The doctor was not at home; but late in the evening, accompanied by Hanna, I dragged my weary limbs along the shore from our tent to his house, one of the muleteers preceding us with a lantern. We had some difficulty in groping our way by the narrow streets to the door, and when we stood there all the dogs of the town seemed to be surrounding us in a menacing circle, with such a chorus of fierce barking that we could not hear each other speak. At length we effected an entrance, and were most kindly and graciously received.

The doctor, brisk, practical, energetic, kind-hearted, after the manner of the British practitioner, thought the season favourable for the journey, and on the whole was encouraging.

Hanna, who had been admitted to the conference, felt some timidity ; averred that he had no acquaintance with those Arab tribes of the Ghôr, that they were often dangerous, that he doubted if we should find any road or any camping-grounds, and all the other objections which a dragoman usually raises when he is instructed to go off his beat.

All these imaginary difficulties the good doctor brushed aside ; could not see where the difficulty came in, spoke of the matter with a general of-course-ness, but gave us the very practical promise to speak to the Kaimmakâm on our behalf and get a letter from his Excellency together with a man who knew the district, and these preparations he promised to have ready by the time that we reached Tiberias again on our return journey. And so we sallied forth into the darkness, woke our muleteer, who was dozing on the doorstep, and followed his lantern back to the camp.



## CHAPTER XIV

### FROM TIBERIAS THROUGH GENNESARET TO TELL HÛM

At a little after six the next morning we broke up our camp and started northward. Our tents had been pitched, as I have said, about a mile south of Tiberias, so we had to pass the town in order to reach the bridle-path which runs thence to the Ghuweir or Land of Gennesaret. As we approached the walls we came upon a strange and interesting sight. It chanced to be one of the mornings which occur at regular intervals (every month, Hanna said) when the Jews commemorate their dead. Troops of Jewesses were issuing from the city and trudging towards us, most of them carrying small pots or cans containing some liquid which they were careful not to spill. When we reached the burial-place, a straggling area of stony and ragged ground, apparently without boundary or protection, the mystery of these vessels was explained. They contained whitewash; and numbers of the women were busy among the graves, whitening the stones till they gleamed out in the morning light, the veritable "whited sepulchres" of Scripture.

It was a weird scene. While some of the poor creatures were busy among the tombs making them "outwardly appear beautiful," others had thrown themselves prostrate on their dead with passionate weeping. A few were sitting upon the whitened mounds conning the Hebrew psalms, but many more rocked themselves to and fro and filled the air with a monotonous melancholy chant which came to us like the wail of the wind over some barren moor.

I have seen the mourning customs of the peasantry in the Highland kirkyard, and the green graveyards of Ireland, in the Swiss mountains, the flats of Holland and the snows of Norway, and all are impressive and pathetic, but nowhere have I beheld a scene so weird and foreign, so eerie and lonely and apart from human ways, as this mourning among the Jews of Palestine. We left them there in the grey

morning, and rode on past the ruined walls and towers of Tiberias.

The ride from Tiberias northward is along the waterside. The lake-shore was luxuriant with oleanders bursting into bloom and many unknown flowers among the grass, especially a pale yellow scabious, the most abundant of all the blossoms hereabout. Large butterflies floated past us on gorgeous wing. We noticed a blue and red kingfisher diving for his prey, and numberless little tufted larks, common everywhere in Palestine, which do not rise like our skylark, but hop from stone to stone, uttering a clear fragmentary little song something like our robin's.

At Mejdél we made a pause, for this is the ancient Magdala from which probably came Mary Magdalene. Even here, however, as almost everywhere in Palestine, certainty is denied us. We have to remember that the name Magdala is derived from migdal, a tower, and that there were many towers in Palestine. This particular Mejdél is three miles from Tiberias, while the Babylonian Talmud speaks of a Migdal Nunya, or fish-tower, which was only one mile from Tiberias, and the Jerusalem Talmud confirms this account in placing Magdala within a Sabbath day's journey of that city. There may, therefore, have been two migdals in this neighbourhood. Which of the two was the wealthy and luxurious Magdala spoken of in the Jerusalem Talmud, said to have been destroyed because of licentiousness, we cannot say.

"The one, doubtless, from which Mary Magdalene came" interposes the hasty reader. But here, again, what reason have we for associating Mary Magdalene with licentiousness? The notion appears to be based upon the groundless identification of Mary Magdalene with the "sinner" of Luke vii. 36-50. All that we really know about her is that she came from a place named Magdala, that she was one of the women who accompanied Jesus and ministered to Him, and that Jesus was believed to have cast out seven devils from her. This last belief, having regard to Oriental notions, would point, not to her having lived a dissolute life, but rather to her having at one time been mentally affected, and to this affection having several times returned.\*

Whether or not there was another migdal near to Tiberias (distinguished perhaps from this one as Migdal Nunya or the fish-tower), one may with some likelihood surmise the

\* "Encyclopædia Biblica," arts. "Magdala" and "Mary."

Mejdel where we have now alighted to have been the actual Magdala from which Mary came. It was very near to Jesus' home and to the scene of so many of His teachings, for it stands on the southernmost margin of the Plain of Gennesaret, and was in all probability the watch-tower which guarded the entrance to the plain. At the present day it is a wretched little place, a mere heap of scattered ruins and tangled rubbish, in which a few dirty mud-huts lie half buried, the whole disorderly heap being dignified only by one or two palms which rise in the midst and wave a benediction over the memories of the past. Close beside the palm-trees incongruously rises stark and straight a telegraph post, aggressively asserting modernity. It is one of a line which we see stretching away over the mountain ridge upon our left, and which tells of some distant civilisation far removed in every way from these poor hovels of Mejdel.

We mounted again, and proceeded to traverse the Land of Gennesaret. The plain so called in Scripture is between three and four miles in length, and shaped, as already indicated, somewhat like a crescent moon, being widest half-way between its two extremities, and tapering off at each end to points where the mountains almost touch the sea. All along the shore of Gennesaret the blooming oleanders grow in thick masses. The plain is crossed by several streams, one at Mejdel, three others in the midst of the plain, and a fifth at Khân Minyeh on the northern extremity. The last-mentioned is a very beautiful spring or fountain called Ain et-Tin (the fountain of the fig-tree), and there, sure enough, is the aged fig-tree overhanging the crystal waters with its large glossy leaves. The spring gushes from beneath a picturesque and precipitous rock, which projects into the water of the lake, and so completely closes the northern end of Gennesaret that the only exits from the plain in that direction are over the rocks or by a circuit up the mountain-slope.

Near to the pool of the fig-tree lie the ruins of an ancient Saracenic inn called Khân Minyeh, and not far from them some fragmentary walls. The most extensive traces of ruins, however, in the neighbourhood are out in the plain at a distance of about 430 paces to the south. Here there are remains of massive walls and arches. The stones are joined with mortar, and many of them are of considerable size. Some which I measured were 3 feet 6 inches in length by 1 foot 9 inches in breadth. Also, the boundary walls between the fields, loosely piled up by modern hands, are full



FIG. 11.—KHAN MINYEH AND DAIN ET TÎN, GENNESARET



FIG. 12 --AIN TABIGHA: THE OCTAGONAL ENCLOSURE



of large squared stones doubtless taken from the ancient ruins. I spent some time wandering among these fragments, and came to the conclusion that whatever might be said in favour of Tell Hûm as the site of Capernaum (as against el-Minyeh), no stress can fairly be laid upon the argument that Minyeh is lacking in extensive ruins. The plough has, indeed, passed over the site, but traces remain, notwithstanding this, of what may well have been a town of considerable extent.\*

We must not leave this place without noticing the great bed of papyrus which grows in a swamp where the fountain flows into the lake. It is one of two places in Palestine where the papyrus, which is now extinct in Egypt, still flourishes, the other being Lake Hûleh.

From Khân Minyeh we climbed a little way up the hill and turned into the trough of the old Roman aqueduct, which is here hollowed in the rock. This is the aqueduct alluded to in the previous chapter, which plays so considerable a part in the Capernaum controversy.

The point upon which it bears is as follows: Josephus says that the Plain of Gennesaret is "watered throughout" by a most fertile fountain, which the people of the country call "Capharnaoum." At first sight, then, one would infer that Capernaum was situated in the Plain of Gennesaret; and if that was so, Tell Hûm, which is two and a half miles from Gennesaret, cannot be Capernaum. On further consideration, however, one perceives that the spring and village of Capernaum may have been far from Gennesaret, provided that the water of the spring was conveyed by an aqueduct to the plain of that name. Now, there is no notable spring in Gennesaret itself which could possibly have watered the plain "throughout;" but there is such a spring, a very notable, very copious, and very fertile one, in the adjoining plain of Tâbigha, which lies to the north of Gennesaret, and is separated from it by this barrier of rocks over which we are now supposed to be travelling.

Was the Tâbigha stream, then, the Fountain "Capharnaoum"? and were its waters conveyed by an aqueduct to the Plain of Gennesaret? "Yes," say the advocates of the Tell Hûm site, "the spring of Tâbigha is the only one that

\* The late Sir Charles Wilson told me that he found nothing but Arab remains here, but admitted that he had excavated for only two days. Two days' excavation by native workmen does not amount to much.

answers to Josephus' description of the Fountain 'Capharnaoum,' and its waters were doubtless conveyed to the Plain of Gennesaret by this rock-cut trough." Adopting this view, they proceed to argue that this disposes of the necessity for looking for Capernaum in Gennesaret itself, and they furthermore hold that Tell Hûm, which is about two miles from Tâbigha, is not too far removed from the spring to bear the same name.

The argument, it will be seen, is permissive. If it is granted, it makes Tel Hûm possible as the site of Capernaum, but it does not of itself supply any positive grounds for the identification. I may say briefly, without entering further into the question at present, that the conclusion I came to was that this trough in the rock was, indeed, an old aqueduct; that it did, indeed, convey the waters of Tâbigha to the Plain of Gennesaret, and yet that Tel Hûm was *not* Capernaum.

Meanwhile, it was only as a road that we were personally concerned with the trough in question, and a shockingly bad road it makes, with its semi-circular channel polished to a fine glaze by the hoofs of countless beasts of burden. However, our horses managed to slide and scramble through it, and we found ourselves presently on the northern side of the rocky barrier which shuts away the Plain of Gennesaret.

Not far from the point where we issued into the open we came upon the settlement of the German Catholic Palestine Society, where we inquired our way to Ain et-Tâbigha. We were promptly informed that the true and only Ain et-Tâbigha was the little runnel of sweet water which trickled through their own secluded grounds on its way down to the lake! It was clear, however, that if "Tâbigha" is derived, as it is said to be, from Heptapegon, the seven streams,\* the true Tâbigha was the great flood of brackish water which rushed by numerous channels down to the Sea of Galilee at some little distance from the German settlement. The

\* Sanday ("Sacred Sites," p. 40) speaks of Ain el-Tabigha as "the ancient Heptapegon," but does not quote authorities. Thomson, in "The Land and the Book, p. 356," gives a different derivation, namely, from Dabbaga, the Arabic for tannery, "and, no doubt," he adds, "the tanneries of Capernaum were actually at these fountains, whatever may be true in regard to the name. And if a city should again rise in this vicinity the tanneries belonging to it would certainly be located here, for the water is precisely the kind best adapted to that business."

purport of my inquiry was, in fact, not where to find the stream, but where to find the Ain, or source of the stream, with its large octagonal enclosure, of which I had previously read, and the relation of which to the channel through which we had just ridden, has an important bearing on the question whether that channel is indeed a road or an aqueduct.

This octagonal wall enclosing the spring we soon discovered higher up the hillside upon our left (Fig. 12). It is a remarkable structure, apparently very ancient, but of well-fitted blocks of stone, and in its neighbourhood are considerable remains of masonry. The stream which issues from this source is warm as well as brackish, and one may guess that it was used in old times for baths similar to those at Tiberias. May it not be, then, that the rock-aqueduct through which we had just passed carried this volcanic water for such a purpose to the towns in the Plain of Gennesaret, and that this partly answers the question, which has often been asked, why *this* water should be conveyed at so much expense, when the plain might so much more easily have been irrigated from the Rubudiyeh, or other streams which come down the wâdis on the north? As to the fragments of ruin in the neighbourhood of the spring, one speaks with diffidence about a place where the eyes of experts have often been busy; but to a layman in these matters the possibility is certainly suggested that if Minyeh marks the site of Capernaum, a portion of the city was built up here on the hillside, round about the spring, and that this lofty position, looking down upon the Galilean Sea and the towns along its shore, suggested the form of that sentence of doom: "Thou Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell."

Descending again to the water-side we waded through the torrents of et-Tabigha, and did not pause until we reached the famous place known as Tell Hûm. But here a great disappointment awaited us. The Franciscan monks, who have bought and enclosed the site, either could not or would not show us anything. Old photographs and well-known pictures led us to expect extensive ruins, yet nothing was to be seen but a few loose fragments of white stone. Hanna believed from their manner that they were purposely concealing something. Perhaps it was that we had come unarmed with any permit from the guardian at Tiberias, which Baedeker advises travellers to take; or



perhaps what Hanna said that he had heard is indeed the truth, that the monks have carefully hidden all the relics lest the Turkish government should appropriate them.\* However this may be, we saw nothing except a few fragments piled promiscuously near to the door of their hospice. So we had to content ourselves with lunching in their spacious guest-room, glad to be out of the midday glare, and with indulging in a cool siesta while Hanna went in search of a Bedawi guide to show us the path up the mountain to the ruins of Chorazin.

The brethren, who by the way were all Italians, assured me in answer to my inquiries that there was no spring at all at Tell Hùm, and that, as they believed that the lake-water caused fever, they sent for all their drinking-water to the German Catholic settlement at Ain-Tàbigħa.

\* The late Sir Charles Wilson told me that, so far as the White Synagogue is concerned, this is indeed the case; that he knew the place where its remains were buried, a mound now planted with fruit-trees. A re-excavation by a German society is at present (1906) in progress.

## CHAPTER XV

### FROM TELL HÛM THROUGH CHORAZIN TO SAFED

THE Bedawi whom Hanna engaged to guide us to Kerâzeh (the ancient Chorazin) was a mild-looking elderly man, rather short and spare, who carried a gun slung upon his back, very long in the barrel and highly ornamented on the stock—one of those ancient muskets of the flint-and-steel order which are still in use among the Bedawin, and handed down by them as heirlooms from father to son.

From the enclosure at Tell Hûm we struck inland up a long stony slope, passing here and there, among the natural boulders, carefully squared blocks and other traces of the ancient town, the most important which we noticed being a marble sarcophagus. The path by which our guide took us was no path at all, and as we proceeded we found ourselves among a very chaos of huge lumps of rock. Among these our horses picked their way at the risk of breaking their legs and our necks. Several times they slipped and recovered themselves with difficulty. Their coats streamed with sweat. Meanwhile the old Bedawi hopped from boulder to boulder in the most marvellous manner without once losing the big slippers which by some conjuring device hung persistently upon his shrunken feet. Every now and then he would stop, and turning round await our laborious advance, he himself being apparently quite cool and not at all out of breath.

Professor George A. Smith, in the *Encyclopædia Biblica* (art. "Chorazin"), estimates the distance from Tell Hûm to Kerâzeh as "about one mile." It is, however, more than double that distance, even when measured in a straight line. Jerome, whom he quotes, is nearer the mark when he says two Roman miles, though this also is too little, for a Roman mile was equal to only 1618 English yards. It is not absolutely certain, however, that Jerome means Kerâzeh when he speaks of Chorazin, for he describes the town as

being on the shore of the lake, and although there is a peep of the lake looking down the wâdi from Kerâzeh, the nearest point of the shore is fully two miles away. Perhaps the ancient city extended in scattered fashion down the wâdi to the lake shore. This would explain Jerome's description, and it would also give point to the fact that Jesus links together Bethsaida, Chorazin and Capernaum in pronouncing His record woes, as though they were all lake-side towns or all simultaneously in sight, as in that case they might from some points of view have been.

There could not, in any case, be much doubt as to the ruins at which we had now arrived being in fact those of the ancient Chorazin. The survival of the name with so slight a corruption would seem almost sufficient of itself to prove the identity. We remembered, moreover, that Jesus bracketed Chorazin with Tyre and Sidon, as though it were a town of some extent, and we could see for ourselves that such a town must at one time have occupied this site.

The ruins, composed of black basalt (for we are here on the edge of that circular eruption of basalt of which Safed is the crown and centre), are utterly dislocated and thrown together in confusion by earthquakes and natural convulsions. The blocks are of magnificent size, and among them are some beautiful pieces of carving; one in particular, a conchoidal ornament lying near to some gigantic monoliths, perhaps the lintels of a doorway, belongs probably to the entrance of the principal synagogue (Fig. 14.)

From Kerâzeh the old Bedawi continued to guide us on our way to Safed. The same terrible sort of "road" from which we had already suffered, continued for most of the way until we reached a lonely mosque beside a ruined khân known as Khân Jubb Yûsuf. The khân is on very high ground (for we had been climbing ever since we left Tell Hûm), and round it was grouped a picturesque crowd of Arabs. It is not in any way noteworthy, unless it be for the fact that here the pit is shown into which Joseph was put by his brethren. This was the third of Joseph's pits which had been pointed out to us in the course of our travels; for we had already seen one at Cairo \* and another at Dôthân !

\* Joseph's Well at Cairo is in the Citadel, near the mosque of Ibn Kalaun. The Jews of the city are credited with having originated the legend that this is the well into which the Patriarch was cast. The real Joseph to whom the well pertains is no other than our old friend Saladin, whose full name was El-Melik En-Nâsir Salah-ed-din Yusuf



FIG. 13.—RUINS OF CHORAZIN



FIG. 14.—RUINS OF SYNAGOGUE : CHORAZIN



From this point there was a path of some sort, but terribly hard at times, and once I was within an inch of death. We were passing along a rocky path, with a sheer precipice below us upon our right. Just at this critical point my little steed, usually so sure-footed, slipped, and one foot went over the edge of the narrow track. For a few moments of awful suspense there was a desperate scrambling, and sparks flew from the rock; then the footing was regained and the horse stood with trembling limbs.

The wâdi through which we came before the final climb to Safed was magnificent beyond anything I ever saw outside the Alps; cliffs towered above us and the gulfs below seemed fathomless. The paths which wind through the chasms surrounding the city are intricate, and for once our dragoman was puzzled, but a little lad in kumbâz and tarbûsh, who had been sent by our pioneers to guide us to the camp, came running to meet us, and we presently issued from the maze.

We entered the town by the Mohammedan quarter, and one of the first things we saw was a wedding procession. A troop of women, dressed in the brightest colours, came towards us chanting, or, rather, screaming a melancholy phrase, consisting of only two notes:—



The phrase may be written in any octave you like, the upper note being simply a shriek. Every now and then the "song" was broken in upon by one of the women sending forth the piercing trill of the zaghârit: the whole effect being most melancholy and weird. Whether or not it was intended for joy I do not know; convention may require such an expression; but in fact marriage cannot but be for the Mohammedan girl a dreaded if not heartbreaking affair.

This procession of women, Hanna explained, was going to fetch the bride from her parents' house in order to conduct her to the house of the bridegroom. If he was correct in this statement, then the wedding ceremony was such a one as that described in 1 Maccabees ix. 37 *et seq.*, in

Ibn-Eiyoob. The well existed before his time, but he re-opened it and named it after himself.

which the processions of bride and of bridegroom *go to meet each other*, for we presently met the bridegroom's procession coming towards us, so that as the women returned with the bride they must have come face to face with the bridegroom. In the Maccabean story "the children of Jambri were making a great marriage, and were bringing the bride from Nadabath with a great train, a daughter of one of the great rulers of Canaan. . . . And the bridegroom came forth, and his friends and his brethren, to meet them with timbrels, and minstrels, and many weapons." It would appear, from various accounts, that all these forms of procedure obtain in the East—the bridegroom may come to the bride's house to fetch her, the bride may be conducted by her friends to the bridegroom's house, or, finally, the two processions may meet, though the last is not so common.\* However this may be, we presently met, as I have said, the men's procession coming from the bridegroom's house. They were beating a small drum or "tubble," clapping their hands in rhythm all together, and all chanting in a monotone. In their midst was the happy man, walking slowly along. Beside him were friends carrying chairs, which Hanna explained were always carried on such occasions, in case the bridegroom might wish to sit down and rest.

We saw nothing more of the proceedings till after dark, when a dance took place just behind our camp. The company at the dance consisted, of course, of men only, and the music was of the same drumming and clapping which we had already observed. The men stood in rows and swayed their bodies to and fro to the sound of the primitive music. This went on until it was quite dark, and long after we had retired to rest the stillness of the night was broken by the intermittent firing of guns, one of the common tokens of rejoicing. This wedding took place upon a Wednesday, the fourth day of the week, which is the orthodox day for the marriage of a virgin.†

The Mohammedans form less than half the population of Safed, nearly all the rest being Jews. Safed is, in fact, one of the four cities which the Jews hold sacred, the other three being Jerusalem, Hebron, and Tiberias. They believe that the Messiah will come from Safed, or rather that He will

\* "Encyclopædia Biblica," art. "Marriage."

† "Palestine in the Time of Christ," E. Stapfer, p. 163.

rise up from the waters of the Sea of Galilee, assemble His followers in Tiberias, and thence march hither to Safed, where His throne will be established for forty years, before He goes forth into the wider world. All this seems strangely out of harmony with the ancient Jewish prejudice against Galilee.

The town itself, though it is not mentioned in Scripture, is mentioned in the Talmud ; but the present Jewish settlement there dates only from the sixteenth century A.D. It was founded by Spanish Jews, near descendants of those who were driven out of Spain by Isabella I. These Sephardim Jews still speak a Spanish patois, and they practise polygamy. They form, however, only a small proportion of the whole Jewish colony, the greater part being of Polish descent. These Polish Jews, who crowd the streets of Tiberias and Safed, are pale and sickly in appearance, weedy in growth, with bent shoulders as if they still bore the yoke of contempt which their fathers bore in Egypt. They wear long cotton gowns, and round-crowned "pot" hats made of soft felt, and their countenances are adorned by two curls, one on each cheek, like the traditional Shylock. This custom of wearing curls is said to arise from a misunderstanding of Leviticus xix. 27 : "Ye shall not round the corners of your heads, neither shalt thou mar the corners of thy beard."

They have many other such superstitions. Dr. Thomson, in "The Land and the Book," speaking of Safed, remarks that formerly, being an unwall'd city, it was surrounded every Sabbath by a string stretched from post to post. This string was held to represent the wall of the city, and its erection relieved the Jews from a certain legal difficulty. A Jew must not carry on the Sabbath even so much as a pocket-handkerchief, except within the walls of the city ; if there are no walls he must not carry it at all ; within the string, therefore, a conscientious Jew may carry his handkerchief without feeling that he has broken the law. Dr. Thomson goes on to narrate that he was once amused by a devout Israelite who was walking with him on the Jewish Sabbath toward the grove of olive-trees on the north of the town, where the doctor's tent was pitched. When they came to the end of the street they found that the string was gone. This his companion regarded as a great convenience, since he was now at liberty to go on without



reference to what was in his pocket, because he *had not passed the wall.*\*

We shall have more to say about the Jews when we visit Tiberias again on our return journey ; meanwhile as we sit in the door of our tent, glance yonder at that little group upon our left. Our little groom, Mohammed, has friends in Safed, and they have come to the camp to see him. Note the effusiveness of the greetings, the men kissing each other first on one cheek and then on the other, two or three times over. See how they stand clasping each other's hands, while questions and exclamations are poured forth on either side. They have none of our occidental reserve. Burton, in his "Pilgrimage to Al-Medinah" (p. 287), speaks of the same freedom of expression among the Bedawin : "Friends and comrades greeted each other, regardless of rank or fortune, with affectionate embraces and an abundance of queries, which neither party seemed to think of answering. The general mode of saluting was to throw one arm over the shoulder and the other round the side, placing the chin first upon the left and then upon the right collar-bone, and rapidly shifting till a *jam satis* suggested itself to both parties." If one is apt, however, to regret our own shamefacedness and coldness of manner which forbid the full expression of feelings that are often warm and even passionate beneath, we must remember that the same absence of restraint which shows itself in moments of friendship, equally shows itself in moments of enmity or dispute, and that in the East hatred is as ungoverned as affection.

However, we may leave Mohammed and his friends to squat upon the ground and sip their coffee in the gathering shadows ; for ourselves, we must write up our journal and then retire to sleep, if the music of the wedding-guests will allow us to do so, for we have a longish ride before us to-morrow. Our camp last night was 680 feet below sea-level ; to-night it is 2749 feet above it.

\* The Rev. G. R. Lees, in his little book "Jerusalem and its People" (p. 32), speaks of what is, perhaps, the same custom, but gives it a somewhat different interpretation : "Articles may be carried about a room, but not conveyed from one house to another ; yet there is a way out of this difficulty : a rope is attached to two houses, or more if desirable, and sometimes to every house in a colony ; the whole may then be regarded as one dwelling."

## CHAPTER XVI

### FROM SAFED TO EL-KHÂLISAH

BY half-past seven the next morning our camp was struck, and we were dropping down into one of those wonderful wâdis by which Safed is surrounded. At the bottom of the steep descent was a bit of fairly level ground where men were ploughing, each plough being followed by a woman who dropped seeds into the furrow. We climbed the opposing height, beautiful with blue veronica, and found ourselves on the ridge which immediately overlooks the Valley of the Jordan. To our right we saw a part of the Sea of Galilee, to our left gleamed the Lake of Hûleh, and between them flowed the winding river.

Then followed a steep descent to the Plain of Hûleh, too steep even for our acrobatic horses, so we made the descent on foot, leading them by the bridle. The Plain of Hûleh is a wide stretch of fertile ground between the mountains and the lake of that name. To the north of the lake it expands into a great marsh, some five or six miles in breadth and ten miles from north to south, marking the area of what in the Pluvial period had been a sheet of water as large as the present Sea of Galilee.

Our road at present lay along the western border at some distance from the water and close to the foot of the mountains. It was a grassy stretch through which we rode, and I presently espied a little shepherd-lad, one of the negroid Bedawin, minding his flock. As I had been looking out for opportunities to photograph this particular type, I immediately dismounted; but at sight of my camera the little fellow was off like a shot, to the great amusement of our Arab groom, who burst into loud laughter and accelerated the flight of the terror-stricken boy by shouts of "Hûrra! hûrra!"

A couple of hours' riding brought us to the north-west corner of the lake, where a beautiful stream of considerable

breadth, known as Ain el-Mellâha, turns a mill before it loses itself in the waters of the mere. The long ride with the scorching sun at our backs had been very exhausting, and we were nothing loth to strip in the shadow of the trees and bathe ourselves in these crystal waters.

Lake Hûleh is marked in many maps as "The Waters of Merom," and if that identification is correct, the plain which we have just been traversing must have been the scene of Joshua's battle with the kings of the north. All the best authorities, however, doubt the identification, and in an atmosphere of doubt one cannot get up any historical enthusiasm. So we mounted our horses again and rode prosaically northward, with a promise of luncheon before us. This we found spread in another beautiful spot some five miles north of the "Waters," where a spring called Ain Belâta runs through a grove of oaks and loses itself in the marshes beyond.

The heat had seemed to us intolerable while riding, but I found that it was not really so great as we had supposed. Here, in the shade of the trees, the thermometer showed only  $80\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$ . Indeed, it was pleasant enough to lie here and watch the grand curves of a magnificent griffon who was wheeling round and round above the plain—such an eagle as the prophet Ezekiel describes (xvii. 3) "a great eagle, with great wings, long-winged, full of feathers, which had divers colours."\* We were interested, too, in a family of Bedawin (Fig. 15), who came to help us (in more senses than one) with our luncheon. The father was very ready to give a little assistance, and for that purpose tied the ends of his long white sleeves together, and threw the knotted loop thus made over his head, in this way drawing the sleeves up and leaving his arms bare. This arrangement is used when any manual work is performed, and also as a necessary preliminary to a fray; which latter usage explains the prophetic

\* Canon Tristram writes ("Nat. Hist. Bib.," p. 172): "There can be no doubt of the identity of the Hebrew *nesher* with the Arabic *nissr*, the name invariably applied, not to any eagle, strictly so called, but to the Griffon (*Gyps fulvus*) of naturalists, commonly known as the Griffon Vulture, or Great Vulture. It is unfortunate that in our language we have but one word, 'vulture,' applied alike to the noble Griffon and to the very useful, but very despicable scavenger, 'Pharaoh's Hen,' as Europeans in the East call the Egyptian vulture. Though the Griffon be a carrion-feeder, it is neither more nor less so than all eagles, none of which will kill their prey if they can find it ready slain to their hand."



FIG. 15.—BEDAWIN OF AIN BELĀTA



FIG. 16.—BRIDGE OF EL GHIMAR



metaphor (Isa. lii. 10), "The Lord hath made bare His holy arm in the eyes of all the nations."

Our Arab had with him two beautiful boys (one of them in particular had a very intelligent and attractive face), and presently the group was joined by some young girls of the family, carrying feathery reeds of papyrus. It was very charming to watch these lithe and graceful children at play. They would poise their reeds pretending they were spears which they were about to hurl at us, laughing and showing their gleaming teeth as they did so. Then one climbed a tree and threw down clusters of berries which they divided and ate. One of the boys had a pipe cut from a jointed reed, upon which he played a monotonous tune for our edification. I bought it from him for a penny, but have never yet found any European who could play it. It had no mouthpiece, but was lipped at the end as one would whistle with a key, and it had only five holes. I noticed that the lad never ended on what we should regard as the key-note, but always a tone above it. The "tune" consisted merely of an endless repetition of this phrase :



The boys as well as the father were armed with old-fashioned guns, very long in the barrel, but fired with a cap, not with a flint. In face these Bedawin had nothing of the negro, and could not have belonged to the Ghawârineh, but neither did they apparently belong to any of the great desert tribes. I asked them to what tribe they belonged, and they said they were simply called "The Tribe of Ain Belâtah."

After lunch we started up the valley again and passed large Bedawin camps. These were partly composed of the ordinary black Bedawin tents, but there were also long rows of somewhat more substantial looking tents, or rather, huts, made of mats woven from the stems of papyrus. Sometimes a combination of the two styles was adopted, the walls being of papyrus mats and the roof of black drapery thrown over the walls and supported by upright poles. Papyrus mats are an article of trade with these Bedawin, and we saw women toiling up from the marshes with huge bundles of the reeds upon their heads, which they would presently weave into mats and send away into the towns for sale.

The papyrus is called "Babir" by the Arabs, which is almost identical with the Latin word. It is, of course, the same plant as that which of old time was used in Egypt for the manufacture of "paper." At the present time it is said to be extinct in the Nile, neither in Asia is it to be found except in this district of the Upper Jordan. Mr. J. Macgregor in his volume "Rob Roy on the Jordan," gives an interesting account of his attempt to penetrate the jungle of papyrus which forms an impassable barrier at the northern end of Lake Hùleh. Its mode of growth is remarkable. The old stems of dead plants float upon the water, and an accumulation of them forms what is practically a floating shore. From this vegetable mass there spring the living plants, which rear their heads to a height of ten or twelve feet and send their roots downwards through the clear water into the mud at the bottom. "Can the papyrus grow up without mire?" asks Bildad the Shuhite (Job viii. 11). Mr. Macgregor succeeded in finding a channel through the great floating forest, and proved that it extends northward from the defined shore of the lake to a distance of at least three miles. The plant is also found to the distance of a mile or more south of the lake, and then does not reappear till we reach Ain et-Tin on the border of Gennesaret. The reedy mass to the north of Hùleh is inhabited by wild boars, pelicans, and innumerable water-fowl.

Round about these papyrus huts a busy domestic life seemed to be going forward. Near one of them a woman was winnowing by pouring grain upon the ground from a vessel held above her head, the breeze carrying the chaff to one side. At the door of another, two women were grinding at the mill; at another, a woman was baking flat cakes on a tin over a fire; and at yet another, two women were beating rice with mallets for the purpose of removing the husk. This, by the way, is said to be the only place in Palestine where the rice-plant grows. It is described as singular in its colour and flavour; reddish in appearance, and swelling in cooking to an unusual degree.\* The women seemed also to have the care of the poultry, which we saw feeding in goodly numbers where the threshing and winnowing was going on; and of course they looked after the children. One woman stood at her door and pulled a string with regular motion, as though she were rocking some primitive

\* Schwartz, quoted by J. Macgregor, "Rob Roy on the Jordan," p. 282 fn.

cradle, and an eye was kept upon the infants of larger growth who swarmed round the tents.

Many of the children were stark naked, and we could not but notice their enormous stomachs, which seemed to hang down with fatness. Sir Richard Burton mentions the same characteristic in the Egyptian children. "Travellers," he writes,\* "always remark the curious pot-bellied children on the banks of the Nile. This conformation is admired by the Egyptians, who consider it a sign of strength and a promise of growth." The same opinion, I was informed, obtains among the Bedawin of Palestine.

The plain, which stretched away on our right without the slightest undulation to the foot of the distant mountains, was dotted with horses and black cattle, with here and there a herd of buffaloes. Horse and cattle-breeding seems, indeed, to be the principal work of these tent-folk. Of course the herds supply them with abundant dairy-produce for their family needs. Near one camp we noticed a calf standing motionless in a peculiarly stiff attitude, and when we rode up to it found that it was, in fact, the skin of the animal stuffed with straw. Upon inquiry, we learnt that the calf had died, and that the Arabs, according to custom, had stuffed the skin and placed it erect that the mother might not cease to give her milk.

The Bedawin whom we were now leaving behind us seem to be all Ghawârineh—negroid Arabs, with woolly heads and thick lips—a low type compared with the pure-blooded Arabs of the desert; but they seemed to live in more comfort than any others whom we saw. Nature, indeed, has been kind to them. She supplies them with papyrus for fuel and for shelter, and with fowl and fish to shoot and spear; and these things, with their cattle-breeding and mat-weaving, add to that liberty which is the ideal of every Arab heart, a plenty which they do not all enjoy. I suspect, however, that one enemy which they often have to fight is that of fever, for the native is no more proof against fever than the European, and the marshes of Hûleh must be a very hotbed of malaria.

As we rode along the plain the chorus of frogs was such as I had never before heard or conceived. Miles of marsh-land breed myriads of these creatures, and the air seemed to be filled with the shrill, stridulous confusion of their voices. Having heard their deafening music, I can believe

\* "Pilgrimage to Al-Madinah," p. 406 fn.



what Canon Tristram says of them, that "in some of the lakes and pools of the Holy Land the frogs are so amazingly numerous that they cover the surface towards evening in one solid, unbroken mass."

That phenomenon we did not wait to see, but left the marsh-land behind us, and pushed forward towards the roots of Hermon. In the course of our ride we passed many sacred bushes hung with rags, such as I have already alluded to in describing the mukâm above Nazareth. Here, too, we heard for the first time that which will always mark this ride in my memory, the Syrian double-pipe, played with its right effect. Out in the wild country it is merry and inspiriting to a degree, reminding one forcibly of the Highland bagpipes when they are heard in their native mountains. Our camp to-night was in a grove of silver poplars at a place called el-Khâlisah, on a slight rise at the head of the Plain of Hûleh.

## CHAPTER XVII

### FROM EL-KHÂLISAH, BY THE SPRINGS OF JORDAN, TO MEJDEL ESH-SHEMS

EL-KHALISAH is hardly to be called a village ; rather is it a Bedawi camping-place ; but it has enclosures of poplars and a good deal of cultivated ground. It is situated on one of those westerly streams which form some of the head-waters of the Jordan, but are scarcely reckoned along with the three principal sources which we shall have presently to mention. The sound of running water seems to fill the air with music, and the mountains crowned by ruined castles lend to the place an additional feeling of romance.

On the left of our camp as we face in the direction of our journey is the old crusaders' castle at Hunin, and before us is the fortress of Subêbeh, crowning the mountain which overhangs Cæsarea Philippi. The castle of Hunin is noble and nobly situated, but has nothing oriental in appearance. Its massive round towers seem to take us back to feudal Europe. One portion of it, however, is said to be extremely ancient, being built of large bevelled stones, such as perhaps belong to Old Testament times. Thomson identifies the place with Beth-Maachah, in which case the village of Abil-el-Kamh, which lies below it, would be the Abel of Beth-Maachah mentioned in the story of Joab (2 Sam. xx. 14, 15). As to Kal'at-es-Subêbeh, the great castle above Bâniyâs, it is a mediæval building erected by the Franks, though it may well be that an older fortress preceded it ; for the position is one of immense strength and importance, and has often proved to be the key of Palestine upon the north.

We made an early start from el-Khâlisah, skirting a spur of the mountain by a long détour, and finally striking north-eastward by an ever-ascending road. More Bedawin camps were passed, mostly of reed-built huts, also large herds of

buffalo and flocks of brown sheep and long-haired goats. Then up and up towards the heights of Hermon by a villainous path among scattered boulders. Turning sharply to the east we crossed the Hâsbâni by the well-known Bridge of el-Ghajar. This river forms the most westerly of the three main head-waters of the Jordan, the chief sources being—that at Hâsbêya, from which this Hâsbâni river flows, ten miles north of the spot where we are standing; that at Tell-el-Kâdi, known as the Leddân, a mile or two eastward of this spot; and the third at Bâniyâs (the ancient Cæsarea Philippi) which lies yet further east. The first of these may be regarded as *the* source, if the rule is followed which accords that honour to the stream rising furthest from the mouth; the second, if the question is which throws up most water; and the third, if the principal source is that which is best known to history.

The Nahr Hâsbâni, over which we are now crossing, must geologically be a remarkable stream if that which Thomson says of it be true, that “during the countless ages of the past it has cut a tortuous canal through the hard lava at least two hundred feet deep”! But, whether the deep fissure through which it flows was rent by some volcanic convulsion (for we are now in the region of volcanoes) or whether it is indeed due entirely to the action of the stream, it is impressive enough from the scenic point of view; for above it tower on the one hand the mountain ranges of Upper Galilee, and on the other hand the gigantic flanks of Hermon, while, far below in a wild and gloomy gorge, whose sides are rough with thicket of sycamore and oleander, there rushes a broad torrent of dark blue water as it plunges down to the abyss.

A couple of miles, or a little more, from the Bridge of el-Ghajar in a south-easterly direction, we reached the second source, Nahr Leddân, as it is called, which is one of the most wonderful sights, I should imagine, that a man may see. At the base of a thickly-wooded mound, and seeming to rise from the roots of the mound itself, there boils up as if in some titanic cauldron an enormous body of water. It is said to be the largest volume in the world rising from a single source,\* and one of the largest it must undoubtedly be. Robinson estimates that it is two or three times the size of the source at Bâniyâs, and four or six times the size of the Hâsbâni spring, but this I should have

\* Tristram, “The Land of Israel,” p. 572.



FIG. 17.—THE INFANT JORDAN



FIG. 18.—NEAR CAESAREA PHILIPPI



thought much understates its magnitude. It is in fact a river born full-grown. There is no gathering of rills, no gradual growth from tributary streams, but with one silent upward heave the whole river bursts from the womb of earth and swirls away to the south, a majestic flood from the moment that it sees the light. No wonder that Eusebius and Jerome and many other ancient writers regarded this as the real beginning of the Jordan ! \*

The mound from beneath or beside which the river rises is about fifty or sixty feet in height and one hundred feet in length, and is of great interest as being the probable site of the ancient city of Dan and the still more ancient Laish. The site is not, indeed, undisputed, the question lying between this and Bāniyās, which is about three miles to the east as the crow flies. In favour of Tell el-Kâdi, the mound which now faces us, is its name "The Mound of the Judge," for Dan means "judge" in Hebrew as Kâdi does in Arabic ; and the name of the stream itself, the Leddan, may also, as Canon Cheyne suggests, contain an echo of the name of the old city. Josephus, Eusebius, and Jerome all identify this spot with Dan or Laish, and the ruins upon the sides of the tell and within the basin which dips into its summit, are evidence that at some period a city did actually occupy this site.

Against this, only a single argument is urged, but it is supported by so high an authority as Professor G. A. Smith. It is that Bāniyās was "a better site than Tell el-Kâdi for the capital of a district," inasmuch as its position was, from a military point of view, much stronger. That might be of weight if the two sites were equally bare of all tradition, and if we knew that the ancients always thought only of military strength in founding a city ; but, as Canon Cheyne remarks, "From Judges xviii we do not gather that Laish was a place of exceptional national strength ; its inhabitants were a peaceful folk, who trusted not in their fortress but in their remoteness from troublesome people like the Danites."

This is strikingly true, and after seeing the two places I must say that it seems easier by far to locate here, at this rich tell rising amidst the fat fields of the Leddan, that old story of the five men of the children of Dan who went up to spy out a place which they might capture for a settlement,

\* Josephus, however, calls this the Lower Jordan, and regards the source at Bāniyās as the head-fountain of the sacred stream.

than it is to reconcile it with the wild broken country and the rocky fastnesses of Bâniyâs: "Then the five men departed, and came to Laish, and saw the people that were therein, how they dwelt in security, after the manner of the Zidonians, quiet and secure; . . . and they came unto their brethren . . . and they said, Arise, and let us go up against them; for we have seen the land, and, behold, it is very good: and are ye still? Be not slothful to go and to enter in to possess the land. When ye go, ye shall come unto a people secure, and the land is large: for God hath given it into your hand; a place where there is no want of anything that is in the earth."

Dean Stanley speaks of the hill itself as "apparently an extinct crater," but J. Macgregor, who seems to have made a careful study of the place,\* regards it as "wholly artificial." The truth, probably is that a small crater did exist here, for we are in a volcanic region where similar craters are not wanting, and that it was artificially adapted for habitation. The plan of the mound which Macgregor gives would favour this view.

The south-west corner of the mound is much higher than the rest (Canon Tristram says eighty feet high), and here, according to tradition, the golden calf, the fellow of that at Bethel, was set up by Jeroboam. It was a sacred spot long before his day, however; for here, doubtless, the children of Dan set up their graven image at the founding of their city (Judges xviii. 30), and earlier still, in prehistoric times, it may well have been one of the many river-sources which gathered tales of mystery around them. Such traditions live on and change their form and take long in dying. Even to this hour this is a venerated site, for the oak and the terebinth which stand near that same corner of the tell are hung, as we witnessed, with countless rags, the offerings of Moslem devotees.

Leaving Tell el-Kâdi behind us we continued our ride eastward up a long grassy slope bejewelled with bright blossoms, and especially beautiful with great bushes of hawthorn and of some white-blossomed pale-leaved shrub, which waved in the breeze and scattered its delicious fragrance on every side. This latter I at first took to be some kind of syringa, for its scent was very similar; but I learnt afterwards that it was the storax (*styrax officinalis*), a tree well known to the ancient Greeks, who extracted from

\* "Rob Roy on the Jordan," 2nd ed., pp. 214-8.

it a sweet-smelling gum used for incense. It is the perfume of which Herrick sings :

“ This, that, and ev’ry thicket doth transpire  
More sweet than Storax from the hallowed fire.”

I wonder whether these waving bushes which adorn our journey are descendants of those which yielded incense for the worship of Pan, whose cavern still yawns in yonder cliff !

We were now in that district into which Jesus retired with His disciples at the great turning-point of His life when He went with them “ into the villages of Cæsarea Philippi,” and put to them the momentous question, “ Who say ye that I am ? ” And a fit setting this is for the ever memorable event—wild, beautiful, tumultuous scenery, in harmony with the tragic grandeur of the crisis. A broad green road passing through groves of oak and olive leads up to a climax of rocky gorges, cliffs of ruddy limestone, torn rocks of gloomy basalt, dashing torrents and foaming cataracts festooned with briar and bramble and masses of drooping maidenhair.

We crossed the foaming current of the infant Jordan—the third of its headwaters—by a bridge of Roman masonry, and then in the midst of this tangled wilderness we sat and rested, almost overpowered by its melancholy beauty. On every hand were titanic walls, rent into massive blocks of masonry, which hung in threatening fashion over dark abysses. Here and there the shallow, brawling streams which coursed in the deep wadis found their passage barred by marble pillars and carved stones which lay athwart the bed. A lofty bridge across one of these wadis led to the gloomy ruins of an ancient fortress. Chasms yawned beneath us, mountains raised their heads above us, and in the midst of all, those tuneful birds, which we had missed so sorely in this silent land, raised their sweet voices all heedless of the human tragedies, the struggles for empire, the birth and death of faiths, of which in times long past this place had been the fitting scene.

We did not explore the ruins of Cæsarea Philippi, or inspect the modern village of Bāniyās. Having made up our minds that, come what might, we would spend at least one clear day here on our return journey, we contented ourselves with a moderate rest on the present occasion. As we sat at our midday meal an eagle swept in a swift curve

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so near to us that I could see his hooked beak, the turn of his neck, and the glitter of his cruel eye. We saw, indeed, in the course of this day's ride a large number of eagles and vultures, more than in any other part of our journey. The cliffs and crags of these mountain-spurs which run up into the Hermon range are a home well suited for all such birds of prey.

From Bāniyās we continued our ascent, which now became considerably steeper. Our journey was along the mountain side with the castle of Subêbeh on our left. For two hours we travelled along a bad path among blocks of black basalt, then descended into a valley where there was some cultivation and where a mill-stream ran through a plantation of poplars, and finally after another half-hour's climb saw our camp below us in a green dip of the mountain just under the village of Mejdél esh-Shems. We were now well up on the main Hermon range, with the highest point of it looking down upon us. It is generally a mass of gleaming white, but this year the spring being unusually warm, the snow had been reduced to a few patches near the top.

Mejdél esh-Shems means Mejdél of Damascus, Esh-Shâm being the native name for the city as well as for Syria in general (including Palestine). It is doubtless so called to distinguish it from Mejdél near Ascalon and from that other Mejdél in the Plain of Gennesaret which we had already visited. The particular Mejdél where we were now encamped is a Druse village. It is inhabited, that is to say, by people of the brave and handsome mountain race who are the great enemies of the Maronite Christians in this region. What the Druse religion itself is, over and above being violently anti-Christian, or at any rate anti-Maronite, it would be difficult to say with any particularity. They believe in an ineffable, unapproachable God, who incarnates Himself from time to time, the latest incarnation being the Khalif Hâkim Biamrillâh, who lived at the beginning of the eleventh century. They are therefore allied religiously to the Shi'ite or heterodox Mohammedans of Persia.

As to race, they are Syro-Arab, with a great preponderance of the Syrian element. To the beauty of their faces I can myself bear witness, for one of the loveliest boys I ever saw hung about our camp on the evening of which I am writing, hand in hand with his sad-eyed and beautiful mother, who was offering lace for sale. The whole place swarms with

children, and many of them are so pretty that the traveller is at first greatly attracted by them. Perhaps that is one reason why they are so fearless and so intrusive. However, the tourist soon wearies of their incessant cry for bakhshish, and the camp-attendants have to take the matter in hand to prevent him from being hopelessly mobbed.

The village is built on a steep terraced slope, just above the grassy hollow in which our camp is pitched. The houses have flat roofs and arched doorways and are mostly windowless. In spite of our sheltered position the place strikes bitterly cold after the sweltering heat of Hùleh, and it is difficult to believe the thermometer when at 7.30 P.M. it shows as much as 55°; it feels more like 35°!

## CHAPTER XVIII

### ON MOUNT HERMON

OUR camp at Mejd el esh-Shems was about 3780 feet above the sea, the wind in the night was violent, and the flapping canvas like the noise of guns. I rose feeling very unwell, a severe chill being added to other ailments of long standing. The ride northward from Mejd el was consequently a long-drawn wretchedness; my remembrance of it, chiefly a nightmare of many miles of black and barren country strewn with huge masses of cinder-like rock, full of holes, like gigantic bits of black pumice-stone, dismally suggesting a projection of my own inward state.

Yet certain gleams of heavenly loveliness broke through this nightmare at times and touched the soul to momentary forgetfulness of its suffering body. At the very start there was such a moment, when there floated in the valley below us a long line of light cloud with wisps of gauzy mist streaming upward from it and paling the sun to a moonlike dreaminess of hue. Then there was the view of the purple mountains of the Haurân, and the moment when the vast blue plain of Damascus broke upon us; and there was the point at which we first touched the snow, and the excitement of crossing the infant Pharpar (if indeed the Nahr Barbar is so to be identified). But for the most part the ride was for one of us sheer misery, and the happiest moment was when after a short day's journey the sufferer crept between the blankets. Our camping-place was at Kefr Hawar, where most travellers who take this road halt for the night.

The next day was Sunday, March 24. We ought to have been in Damascus, but the journey on the previous day, short as it was, had finished me up. A freezing wind had been blowing during the greater part of our ride, and the morning found me aching in every bone. So Mohammed the groom was despatched to Damascus to bring stores for the camp and medicines for the invalid.

Monday came, and I thought I might struggle on, but was glad enough to know that 'Hammad had not yet returned, and that I might retain the horizontal position for a few hours longer.

At ten o'clock Hanna begins looking anxiously toward the low rounded hill which rises to the north, but no 'Hammad appears upon its brow. The men begin to take down the tents that we may start the moment that our stores arrive; but, still no 'Hammad. Up springs a strong south-west wind, at which Hanna looks serious. The sheikh of the village, who has been our sentinel for the past two nights, is set to work to make a fresh supply of tent-pegs. He proceeds to do so with a small sickle of exceeding bluntness. The cook joins him with the kitchen chopper, and together they progress at the rate of one peg in every five minutes.

The sheikh is dressed in the blue baggy trousers used in Syria and Northern Palestine, a loose cotton coat striped with yellow and black, and has his head wrapped in a large cotton hood fastened round the crown with the "agal." A girl, perhaps his daughter, has just come into the camp. She, too, wears loose blue trousers, confined at the ankle, and over them a blue skirt which reaches to the knee or a little lower. She has a flowing white veil hanging down her back and tied round the crown of her head with a coloured cotton handkerchief. Now and then, if she sees that you are looking at her, she draws her veil over the lower part of her face. I notice that her face is tattooed and that she has a jewel in the side of her nose. Some little boys of five or six years are playing around. They wear little white skull-caps, which contrast well with their black hair and dark faces, and blue or red striped gowns open in front from the neck to the stomach and showing their little brown bodies.

It is nearly eleven, and Hanna looks over the hills every five minutes: he is plainly getting uneasy. The bridle-road to Damascus lies to the north-east of our camp. At the foot of the hill over which it disappears, and a little to the north of the road, lies the village of Bêt-Ima. To the west rises the head of Hermon—"the white-haired old man," as the natives call it. To the south and south-east stretches a barren, rocky hill, which we see only partially through the beautiful veil of silver poplars which is doing its best to screen us from this boisterous wind.

In the camping-ground itself are fig-trees and large old

vines which writhe and coil along the ground like snakes, and end by hanging themselves over the lower branches of the trees. The sheikh has just fetched in a great bough of hawthorn in full flower to cut into tent-pegs. One of the gaunt hungry-looking dogs of the village is smelling round the tents for bits of food.

Noon, and still no sign of Mohammed. The wind has risen to a gale, and Hanna says we must keep in the shelter of this clump of trees and not attempt to travel over the exposed slope of Hermon. So the men put up the tents again which they had taken down, drive in the new pegs, and fasten additional ropes round the tree-trunks.

Mohammed returned from Damascus at one o'clock, having been robbed of some of his parcels, including a bottle of my physic, and having also had his pocket picked of his purse. The people of Damascus have a bad name for thieving.

The wind dropped at sunset, but at the same time the temperature fell, and clouds came rolling up over Hermon so that we rather feared snow on the morrow. The stars were piercingly bright. In the early hours of the night sudden gusts would come at long intervals, rising with an alarming crescendo, shaking the tent and threatening to overthrow it, then ceasing as suddenly as they had begun. At length, profound quiet, save for a distant chorus of dogs in some far-off village, and we slept the sleep of the just.

It was disappointing, but Damascus had to be given up. The choice lay between that and omitting some portion of our Palestine plan ; and the latter was not to be thought of. Before we turned in, therefore, it had been agreed that on the morrow we should retrace our steps and take the downward road to Cæsarea.

And now, before we turn southward, let me say a word about the northern dress which I have just described. I have often wondered whether the difference in dress between the north and south of Palestine was as marked in the days of Jesus as it is now. I can hardly imagine the scene between Peter and the servants at the High Priest's palace taking place if the Galilean dress had been the same as it is to-day. To-day the peasant of Galilee assimilates his dress to that of Syria proper ; if he wears the kaftan at all he wears it short enough to show the trousers beneath it. In the streets of Jerusalem the northerner is known at once by his attire, and no such debate as that recorded in the Gospel of St. Matthew, ending with the decisive criterion of dialect,

would need to take place. It is true that to-day as then the Galilean's "speech bewrayeth him," but one would not now depend exclusively on that, for his costume "bewrays" him from the first.

The difference between the north and south extends also to the custom of tattooing.\* Here again we have what is strictly speaking a Syrian custom. The workers in tattoo are generally Syrian, and the decoration is seen mainly in Syria and Northern Palestine; it is scarcely ever seen in Judæa, at any rate in the mountain districts, although it is found I believe in Philistia.

The inference one would be inclined to draw is that in the north the ancient Jewish customs have given way before foreign influence, and that Judæa affords at present a nearer approach to Bible attire and decoration than Galilee. Ancient Jewish law forbade the Israelite to "print any marks" upon himself (Lev. xix. 28); tattooing was a Canaanitish custom which he might not follow. It may well be, therefore, that as tattooing has invaded Galilee, so the Syrian dress has invaded it, and that neither the one nor the other was found there to any extent in New Testament times.

There is, of course, no certainty about this inference. "Galilee of the Gentiles" was probably never very strict in matters of Jewish law and custom. But the Petrine incident referred to above goes to bear out the view that the disciples of Jesus were dressed in the flowing kumbāz and abā of Judæa, rather than in the costume which is worn by the Galilean of to-day. And we would judge by analogy that the graceful dress and the freedom from tattooing which to-day characterise the women of Southern Palestine belonged in the time of Jesus to the north also. Artists are possibly right, therefore, even from an archæological point of view, in representing Mary the mother of Jesus, as they generally do, in the long robe and drooping veil of Judæa.

\* "The Immovable East." P. G. Baldensperger. P.E.F.Q.S. Jan. 1904.

## CHAPTER XIX

### BACK TO CÆSAREA PHILIPPI

ON Tuesday, March 26, we began our southward journey. It will not be interesting to the reader to mark the fluctuations of the writer's health : suffice it to say once for all that from this time to the end of the tour he was more or less ailing, which somewhat crippled our enterprise.

We started early, and retraced our steps first through a cultivated plain and then through the black wilderness of volcanic stuff already mentioned. We could not but notice the industry of the fellahin, who had ploughed up patches of ground high on the rocky sides of Hermon far above the line of the lowest snow. Wherever some hollow on the sunny side had caught and kept a little earth, there these poor peasants ploughed and sowed in the hope of saving something from the withering blast of the mountain winds and the cruel rapacity of the Turkish tax-gatherer. The chief feature, of course, in the ride southward is the series of lovely views of the blue mountains of Palestine. I will not attempt to describe this ride, nor to detail the accident which happened to our cook, whose horse came down with him and lamed him. Nor need I speak further of the folk of Mejd el esh-Shems who swarmed down upon us at our mid-day rest. It will be sufficient to remark that in the course of the afternoon we found ourselves once more looking down upon Bâniyâs.

Then began a long and precipitous descent from the mountains, and again I noticed the extraordinary number of eagles and vultures which haunt the southern spurs of Hermon. They were of several kinds, though the commonest was the black and white vulture known in Egypt as Pharaoh's Hen, which is mentioned in the Levitical law \* among the unclean birds.

\* Translated "gier eagle" in the Authorised Version, "vulture" in the Revised Version.



FIG. 19.—CAESAREA PHILIPPI: THE CASTLE GATE  
FROM THE BRIDGE



FIG. 20.—CAESAREA PHILIPPI: THE CASTLE GATE  
FROM WITHIN





We had taken spiralwise the hill upon which the castle of Subêbeh stood, leading our horses by the bridle, and had just remounted before the last drop into Bâniyâs, when suddenly our ears were assailed by a burst of merry music. From cliff to cliff it echoed, and seemed to set the whole spirit of the place a-dancing. No soul was in sight, and one could almost fancy that Pan himself, whose grotto lay just below us, was piping from his cave. Nearer and nearer came the happy strains, till at length our eye detected the musician, a young Syrian peasant, stepping briskly along and blowing away into his twin pipes as though he were sending his very soul through them. Presently we came up with him, and a pastoral dialogue ensued between Corydon and our guide, Hanna extending his arm with a dignified not to say commanding air, the simple shepherd smiling, shy, shaking his head, and pleading plaintively. It ended in the hills sinking into silence while Hanna rode off with the musical reed. Too late I learned that it was on my behalf that the chaffering had taken place, that Corydon had sold his soul for ninepence, and that he had done so with reluctance. I asked Hanna what the boy had said. "He said," replied Hanna, "that he loved his pipe better than he loved himself;" and in a sense I believe the boy spoke truly, for never otherwise could he have sent those wild notes wandering among the hills with such a soul in them.

We camped within sight of the Grotto of Pan and the Jordan source, our tents being pitched on a grassy slope beneath some fine spreading trees. The slope broke off at a narrow, rocky channel, down which the little river tossed and foamed, making music to us through the hours of the clear night.

The ruins of the citadel of Bâniyâs, which were the first of the relics we visited on the following morning, are a strange mixture of many ages. They are approached by an ancient bridge thrown across the wâdi, which is said to be partly Roman, but the walls and piers of which contain materials more ancient still. At the further end of the bridge is a gateway superscribed with an Arabic inscription; yet the adjacent walls are mediæval, with marble pillars of the old Græco-Roman time, showing their circular butt-ends among the squared stones of the twelfth-century masonry (Fig. 19).

Passing through this portal you find yourself among the houses of the modern village, which are crowded to-

gether within the castle walls. They are built from the stones of the ancient ruins, their roofs being flat and composed as usual of timbers and brushwood and hardened mud. Perched on the tops of the houses are the curious summer shelters, composed of leafy boughs and shaped like beehives, which are common in the country. The men who loaf in the shadow of the walls wear the shirt and trousers of the northern peasantry with the Bedawin keffiyeh and agâl (Figs. 21, 22).

Back of the village is the red limestone cliff, over a hundred feet in height,\* where the foot of the mountain (one of the spurs of Hermon) is torn away. This cliff is pierced now as in ancient times by a vast cave, no other than the celebrated Grotto of Pan, which gave the place its name of Paneas (Fig. 23). "When Herod the Great had conducted Cæsar to the sea," writes Josephus, "and was returned home, he built him a most beautiful temple, of the whitest stone in Zenodorus's country, near the place called The Paneion. This is a very fine cave in a mountain, under which there is a great cavity in the earth, and the cavern is abrupt and prodigiously deep, and full of a still water; over it hangs a vast mountain; and under the caverns arise the springs of the River Jordan." The threshold of the cave is blocked now by a great heap of earth and stones which have fallen from above, diminishing the size of the opening and smothering the pool of "still water." The river, which, when Josephus wrote, must have flowed from the cave itself, comes filtering to-day through this mound of rubbish (Fig. 24). The "temple of whitest stone" which Herod dedicated to the worship of Cæsar is represented now by a little Moslem shrine dedicated to the prophet Elijah.

The term Paneion, according to Prof. G. A. Smith,† was applied to the whole group, hill, cavern, and fountain. Paneas, a feminine form of the adjective, was applied to the district and town of the Paneion. Philip the Tetrarch named the city Cæsarea Philippi, and Agrippa named it Neronias, but the old name could not be killed out. The rank and file of the people are apt to take this matter of names into their own hands, and the ancient name often survives when the aristocratic and fancy name dies out. So it was in this case. The city ceased to be called

\* Stanley says 80 feet; Robinson says 100 to 150 feet.

† Smith, "Hist. Geog." p. 474.



FIG. 21.—THE VILLAGE OF BĀNIYĀS, BUILT FROM  
THE STONES OF CESAREA PHILIPPI



FIG. 22.—SUMMER HOUSES ON THE ROOFS  
OF BĀNIYĀS



Cæsarea or Neronias, but retained its old name of Paneas, and to this day the name lingers on the lips of the native in the softened Arabic form of Bāniyās.

I clambered up the great slope of débris which leads to the cave. In the hard surface of the rock, beside and above the cavern's mouth, are niches which once held statues, and inscriptions looking in some cases as sharp as if the chisel had lately left them. The dedication to Pan and the Nymphs is still perfectly clear to read.

Passing through the opening, you drop suddenly down from the ridge formed by the fallen rubbish and find yourself in a cave of much vaster size than you realise at first. Indeed, it was not until I had been seated there for some minutes enjoying the transition from the glare of noonday to the refreshing shadow of this retreat that I discovered some one else besides myself enjoying the same. At the back of the cavern were a number of black cattle, who had fled from the scorching heat and the tormenting flies into this cool recess. I then realised the true proportions of Pan's rustic grotto.

Cæsar's temple has disappeared, though its materials doubtless lie all around. One may guess, however, that it stood on that rocky platform just above the cave and a little to the left, where the white Moslem shrine of Elijah mentioned above now stands. It is the custom for one religion to adopt the sacred sites of another and change the dedication, and it is likely enough that the Arab weli has superseded the Roman temple.

What a mixture of religious associations we have at this place ! This doubtless was the Beth-Gad or Beth-Hermon "in the valley of Lebanon under Mount Hermon" which "is thrice mentioned as marking the northern limit of Joshua's conquests."\* Here Baal-Gad, the lord of good luck, was worshipped even as late as the days of Isaiah.† In later times came the Macedonian Greeks to set up here the worship of the god Pan. Then Herod the Idumæan built his temple here to the Roman Cæsar. And while the Greek and the Roman worship were still living here side by side, Jesus came with His disciples "into the villages of Cæsarea Philippi," and from His momentous question : "Who say ye that I am ?" sprang the Christian religion. In the fourth

\* "Encycl. Bibl." art. "Baal-Gad."

† Schwartz, quoted in Macgregor, "Rob Roy on Jordan," 2nd ed. p. 225.

century of our era a bishopric was founded under the patriarchate of Antioch. In the twelfth century the Crusaders rescued it from the Saracens and founded a bishopric under the Latin Church. Finally the Moham-medans reconquered it, and there on yonder cliff stands to-day their little weli of Elijah.

Long we stood musing by the infant Jordan, where in a broad and sparkling stream it flows from the foot of the cliff. Cattle were standing in it, children were dabbling in it, and in one cool nook within the shadow of the trees a brown-skinned Arab was bathing. We turned from the lovely spot with regret, and pushed our way through tangled growth and over prostrate ruins to our tents beneath the spreading oak.

In the afternoon a hot breeze began to blow from the east, and induced a feeling of languor which kept us lounging in camp. Towards night it rose to a strong wind, a touch of sirocco. Even at 8 P.M. the thermometer showed 81°, and the hours seemed to grow hotter instead of cooler as they passed. The wind rose to a storm, and the men were up all night driving in tent-pegs, tightening cords, and guarding the shaking tents. There was little sleep for us, and we rose next morning unrefreshed.



FIG. 23.—CAESAREA PHILIPPI: THE CAVE OF PAN



FIG. 24.—CAESAREA PHILIPPI: THE SOURCE OF  
THE JORDAN





## CHAPTER XX

### FROM CÆSAREA PHILIPPI TO GENNESARET

WE left Bâniyâs at our usual hour, about seven o'clock, retracing our steps to Tell-el-Kâdî and the bridge across the Hâsbânî, and then dropping downward and ever downward till we reached once more the Plain of Hûleh and were greeted by the same old deafening chorus of countless frogs which we had wondered at a week before and which I suppose had never for a moment ceased since we left the place. Then, past village after village of reed-built huts, swarming with little black Bedawin children (Fig. 25), at one of which I dismounted intending to photograph the little creatures, but at a signal from one of the women, hey ! presto ! they all vanished in a twinkling. Great herds of long-horned Indian buffaloes tended by wild-looking Bedawin grazed between us and the marshes, while many of them lay in the water like hippopotami, or were immersed in the mud of pools and ditches.

When we reached our old bathing place, Ain Belâta, the Marble Fountain (so-called, they told us, because it flowed from a white rock) we found that 'Hammad had arranged for our mid-day halt there beneath a large oak. It is a lovely spot, and as we had plenty of time before us, we somewhat extended our usual interval. There, resting under the deep shadow, we watched far, far up in the transparent air—so high that they seemed beyond the plane in which the clouds float or even that in which the stars shine at night-time—a great flight of white birds. They were only just within the range of vision, and looked no larger than a swarm of bees. When the sunlight caught them they flashed like silver, then as they turned aslant they would as suddenly disappear ; and so, shining and vanishing every minute, they took their pathless way through the cloudless heaven. What were they ? White storks ? Wild swans ? It was impossible to say, but there

was poetry in their flight so high above this sordid world, and in that annual swarming northward at the return of spring which has never ceased from the days when Jeremiah prophesied or Solomon's Song was written.

We mounted again, and pursued our southward journey. I have hardly alluded to the abundant traffic which we met whenever we touched any of the caravan-routes. On this very morning, we had met near the Bridge of Ghajar a curious train of donkeys carrying ploughs—two wooden ploughs on the back of each donkey. And here again, in the Plain of Húleh, we met many traders' caravans, long strings of asses laden with pots and jars packed in bulging nets woven from palm-tree fibre, and great processions of camels with bundles of mats piled upon their backs plaited from the reeds which grow in the Húleh marshes.

Our ride to-day was short, not more than five or six hours in all, so we reached our camp early. The men had pitched it beside the mill at Ain Melláha, a rushing stream near the north-west corner of the lake. There was again a threatening of sirocco, the temperature in our tent at 4 P.M. being 92°, and not much less in the coolest shade outside. So we contented ourselves with sitting in the tent-door and watching the exquisite little dragon-flies of bronze and brown and blue and the great purple adder-spears which flitted to and fro, and with listening to the cattle-bells and the piping of a Bedawi herdsman and the voice of the flowing water.

As dusk drew on a weird and romantic spectacle was granted us. The Bedawin of this district spear the fish of the lake, attracting them to the surface by lighting fires. For this purpose they had this evening set light to the dry sedge and reeds along the further shore. Opposite to us was a line of flame over a mile long, and there were two other fires away to the south. Looking across the flat of the intervening marsh one noticed a wavy black line inked on the blood-red background. It flickered and quivered unceasingly against the dazzle. It was the surface of the lake. No human figures could be seen from the place where we sat, which was two miles or more from the scene of the fishing, but there was a sound of drumming and a barking of dogs, and there floated slowly upward, mounting above the hills, rolling out into the open sky, and drifting far, far away to the north across the face of Hermon, a mighty column of smoke, brown and luminous.

The night deepened, the Bedawin drums became more distant, an army of frogs and crickets invaded the whole



FIG. 25.—BEDAWI VILLAGE: PLAIN OF HULEH



FIG. 26.—FISHING BEDAWIN OF LAKE HULEH



plain with their rattling and their fising, a bat flitting to and fro made a moving blot against the flare of the distant fires. Through the darkness came the voices of our muleteers, a mosquito hummed in our tent, and the sentinel who had just been posted for the night had already begun the monotonous chant by which he meant to while away the hours of watching. The moon and stars shone calm above us all.

The next morning we had a glimpse of our fishing friends. I wandered down the mill-stream alone before sun-rise, stripped, and plunged into the crystal stream. While I was in the water the edge of the sun peeped over the eastern mountains, and instantly, as if a spring were touched, heaven opened. The lower sky of every-day was reft asunder, and far, far above it, beyond the lift of any earthly sky I ever saw or dreamed of, a canopy of gold and carmine—a very tabernacle for the God of glory—was spread abroad. Just then, as I stood awe-struck at the wonder, there came strolling up the stream one of the black Bedawin, spear in hand, peeping this side and that side, peering into all the holes on either bank, plainly on the look-out for fish. I half wondered whether he might not find some welcome fish in the pockets of my clothes, but he merely glanced at the naked white man without moving a muscle of his face, and passed on. After breakfast, at about half-past six, when we were preparing for our start, a small crowd of these black fellows visited the camp and stood gazing at us while we packed (Fig. 26).

I could not see their hair, since their heads were covered with the black keffiyeh, but their flat noses and thick lips told of their semi-negro blood, and the map of the Palestine Exploration Fund marks the district as inhabited by "Ghawārineh." These are the fellows who captured Macgregor in his canoe and kept him prisoner at their camp; but I believe they are friendly enough in the general way, and even on that occasion were probably moved more by curiosity than by any thought of plunder. The fishing-spear which each man held must be a very ancient Palestine implement, or the mode of fishing at any rate must be ancient, for when Jehovah answered Job out of the whirlwind He asked, "Canst thou fill the head of leviathan with fish-spears?" (Job xli. 7.)

We realised in the course of this morning's ride how great a drop the Jordan makes from Lake Hūleh to the Sea of Galilee. It falls, in fact, 690 feet in the ten miles or so

of direct distance. We start about 40 feet above sea-level and finish 650 feet below it.

In due time we reached the cross-track from Safed by which we had struck our present route when making our northward journey. After this our road was new to us. The new elements were, however, not those of romance, but those of strict and non-picturesque utility. For here we passed through one of the principal Jewish farm colonies subsidised by rich European Jews ; and the place looks like what it is, the reverse of a natural growth—a bit of Europe plumped down into incongruous surroundings. Here were European roads and carts, European drivers, dressed in semi-European garments, and beyond all, worst of all, here was European barbed wire. But the mile-long avenue of poplar and eucalyptus, with hedges of mimosa, gave a very grateful shade, for the heat was fierce to-day ; and water from a tap, which we could drink without fear of typhoid, was a veritable luxury, albeit the farmyard where we found it was singularly unibiblical.

"Twenty years ago or more," says a recent American writer, "Baron Edmond Rothschild of Paris, who, as a practical man, does not thoroughly sympathise with the Zionist movement, undertook at his own expense to try an extensive experiment to demonstrate the problem. He purchased large tracts of land in different parts of Palestine, and settled upon them some twenty or more colonies, with about ten thousand Jews from Roumania, Poland and other parts of Europe. The experiment has cost him at least ten million dollars, and he admits that it is a failure. He has abandoned this vast scheme of philanthropy, transferred all of the land and other property to the Jewish Colonisation Society of London, and has given it ten million dollars more to carry on the work." \*

The passing impression which one receives in riding through this Hùleh colony is certainly that everything has been done which money can do. But when one sees the pale languid faces, and the lank weakly frames of the "labourers" as they lounge along by their teams or peck feebly at the soil, the conviction comes home to one that there are things which money cannot do, and that this task of turning the emaciated Jews from Western towns into successful tillers of Eastern soil is one of them.

\* "To-day in Syria and Palestine," by W. E. Curtis, p. 327. Chicago, 1904.

From this point we travelled by a mountain road to Khân Jubb Yûsuf, the old half-ruined khân which, in our northward journey, we had reached viâ Kherâzeh ; and thence we dropped by the broad caravan road to Khân Minyeh, by the Ain-et-Tin. The greater part of this track is on one of the main routes of the country, a very famous and ancient road. It is, in fact, no other than the Via Maris, the old Roman road between the Mediterranean and Damascus. From time immemorial the caravans have travelled by this identical line of march. Coming from Damascus they crossed the Jordan by the Bridge of the Daughters of Jacob, south of Lake Hûleh, thence climbed to the point where the khân of Joseph's Pit now stands, and so descended to Khân Minyeh. From this place, or the city which then stood here, they followed one of three roads: they either struck westward out of the Plain of Gennesaret up the Wâdi Rubudiyeh and reached the Mediterranean under Carmel ; or left the Plain by the Wâdi Hamâm, crossed Esdraelon, and travelled by Sharon and Philistia to Egypt, or they kept southward through Tiberias and Bethshan to Jerusalem. There is no long-used road in the world which is not full of poetry ; but is there anywhere a road so full of poetry, so full of history and of sacred associations, as this old "Way of the Sea" ?



## CHAPTER XXI

### ROUND ABOUT CAPERNAUM

It had taken us five hours to ride from Ain-Mellâha to Ain-et-Tin, taking the détour over the mountains by Khân Jubb Yûsuf, and then we felt that we had earned our rest, so here we made our mid-day halt. The thermometer stood at 94° in the shade, and I would fain have prolonged my siesta by the Fountain of the Fig-tree, but this was the only chance I should have of studying this important place in connection with the great Capernaum question, so I wearily dragged my limbs among the scattered ruins in the neighbourhood of Khân Minyeh and took what notes I could. They were scanty enough, for, as the hours advanced, so did the heat: in fact, it was on the same afternoon (March 29) that Dr. Torrance's thermometer at the neighbouring town of Tiberias reached 105° in the shade at 4 P.M.—eight degrees higher than the highest record for the month of March in the previous ten years.

The details of my observations are given elsewhere,\* but I may here briefly remark that my earlier impression† that there had at some period been a town of considerable size here was confirmed. Robinson, I find, although on his first visit he spoke slightly of the ruins, wrote, when he visited them a second time, "the remains . . . are much more extensive and considerable than my former impression had led me to anticipate." Lieutenant (now Lord) Kitchener also speaks of them as "extensive ruins." The group of ruins of which I myself examined the traces, appearing sometimes only on the surface of the ground and sometimes rising into bold obstructions to the plough, covered an area of some five or six acres. But Robinson and Tristram both describe additional ruins lying nearer to the shore of the Lake, and to these we must add ruins mentioned by Schumacher, Wilson, Merrill, and others, on

\* See Appendix D.

† See ante, p. 72.

the hill above the khân. So that, all taken together, we have traces of a town comparable in size with that which stood at Tell Hûm.

As to the Fountain of the Fig-tree (Ain-et-Tin) that is indeed a lovely pool, crystal clear, and, in spite of what Dr. Thomson says in "The Land and the Book," its water is sweet to the taste.\* But it cannot possibly be the spring Capharnaoum which Josephus mentions as irrigating the plain, for it is nearly on a level with the lake, and the plain could never, therefore, have been irrigated from this source. It is full of small fish and tortoises, but it is not, I believe, a haunt of the "Coracinus fish," as the Fountain of Capernaum was said to be.

It does not, however, follow in the least that because this little spring at el-Minyeh cannot have been the Capernaum Fountain, el-Minyeh itself cannot have been Capernaum village. For, as already explained, the Fountain of Capernaum may have been separated from the village by this rocky promontory, and its water brought across the top of the rock through the channel which traversed it and which still exists. Whether that channel is road or aqueduct is still to some extent a debated question. Those who consider it to be a road rely upon the fact that there are no remains of cement on the sides or bed of the channel; also, upon the doubt, which, strange to say, still remains, as to whether the source of the Tâbigha spring is above or below the bed of the channel. To my own mind the question appears to be practically settled by the testimony of Master John Sanderson, set forth in "Purchas His Pilgrimes," which seems to prove that as late as A.D. 1601 the waters of et-Tâbigha came pouring through this channel, and were carried along through the midst of el-Minyeh.†

The mental picture of old Capernaum—the Capernaum of Jesus' day—which, standing in the midst of these ruins, I formed, was something like this: The main part of the town was clustered here to the south-west of the rocky promontory which closes the northern end of the Plain of

\* It is curious how travellers are divided in their opinion upon the quality of this water. Burckhardt says that it is sweet, so does Tristram; but Thomson and Wilson both declare that it is brackish. Perhaps the difference in opinion arises from their not having all tasted the very same spring; for, Robinson in his "Biblical Researches" records that near the main source are several other springs, and that his guides said these springs were somewhat salt.

† See Appendix D.

Gennesaret. It was supplied with sweet water from this beautiful pool and Fountain of the Fig-tree. The houses climbed the slope of the hill towards the Roman castle, which reared itself, "exalted unto heaven," above the rocky height, and in which the centurion and his soldiers resided. The ancient caravan-road came down the mountain-side near to the castle walls, and the garrison kept watch upon it and upon the custom-house where the publican sat at the receipt of custom, levying toll upon the merchandise which passed to and fro by land and water. The little town extended in the other direction to the shore of the lake, and here was a small harbour for the boats which plied to and fro upon the Sea of Galilee. It is partly silted up now, and forms a flowery marsh where the papyrus grows in profusion.

On the further side of the rock barrier was the fishing and tanning suburb. The great stream, one of the largest in Galilee, poured its warm brackish water into the lake, and round about its mouth then as now the fish were abundant. The fishing-boats were anchored or drawn up on the shelving beach of the little bay. The water of Ain et-Tàbigħa is said to be specially suitable for tanning, and we may suppose that in ancient as in later times it was used for that purpose. A part of the stream, however, was diverted into an aqueduct, and carried through a channel cut in the top of the rock to the main town of Capernaum. Its warm and fertilising waters were used for irrigating the Gennesaret gardens in the dry season ; probably, too, they filled the Roman baths, which were always to be found where Romans settled.

Add, as a setting to this picture, the rich sub-tropical verdure and the grapes and figs and divers fruits for which, according to Josephus, Gennesaret was famous ; and then, as a background to the whole, remember the green hill which rises close behind the town and looks down serenely upon its beauty—the hill into whose silences Jesus would love to climb. That is the chosen home of the Master as I picture it. To me it appears to fit the Gospel-story far better than any possible reconstruction built from the natural features of Tell-Hùm.

Well, the two or three hours, which were all that we could devote to el-Minyeh, were spent, and turning back upon our tracks we struck north-eastward across the top of the rock which divides Gennesaret from the Bay of Tàbigħa. A second time we passed through the far-famed channel

mentioned above, and again we noticed its semicircular bottom so ill-fitted for a road, so suitable for flowing water. When we see how it is worn by countless hoofs of countless beasts through centuries of traffic, it is little wonder that there are no traces of cement to be found upon its surface. Issuing from it and taking the path which leads from it down the hill-side toward the lake, we came presently upon the German Catholic hospice, at which we had called on a former occasion, but at which we were not then able to make any lengthened pause in our journey. On this occasion we made a longer stay and obtained permission of the residents to examine the fresh-water spring which descends through their grounds and which they insist is the real Ain et-Tàbigha. It is but a small runnel of water rising from under a rock, but made more important by the German *pfarrer*, who has fashioned a rocky basin, and built a stone dam, and planted beautiful trees round the pool thus made.

Then we went on to the big, brackish Ain et-Tàbigha, which came rushing down the mountain-side, pouring over broken aqueducts and ruined walls. Close beside it our tents were pitched, and we were glad enough to creep into their friendly shade.

A naked fisherman was at work near by with a casting-net, standing in the water up to his waist to throw it. This is the very same ἀμφίβληστρον which Simon and Andrew were "casting in the sea" when Jesus called them "to become fishers of men" (Mark i. 16). The Sinaitic and the Vatican manuscripts say that they were "casting nets here and there into the sea," and this very graphically describes the mode of operation with the ἀμφίβληστρον. This net, which is still in use on the Phœnician coast as well as here at the Sea of Galilee, is leaded round the circumference, and has a cord fastened to the centre. When it is thrown it expands, and the leaded circle falls about and encloses the fish. It is, in fact, much such a net as I have myself used in boyhood to catch minnows for "live-bait." It is now one of the principal instruments for fishing used in the Sea of Galilee, because the larger nets require a boat, and boats are so heavily taxed by the wretched Turks that the poor Galilean fishers cannot afford to use them. Even the ancient Romans were more merciful.

Hanna goes up to my brown-skinned fisher and begins

to talk with him. The man's black eyes sparkle and his speech is eager and vivacious. Presently Hanna comes strolling back to say that the fisherman had told him of another fresh-water spring which I might like to see. So again I issued forth, and after wading through some of the Tâbigha streams we arrived at a round-topped knoll, less than a quarter of a mile beyond the main stream, from the base of which the water flowed. I tasted it and found it sweet. I wonder that the Fathers at Tell-Hûm do not get their water here instead of at the German settlement; it would shorten their journey by a good step.

The story which the fisherman told about the spring was a little difficult to understand. He said that it was called Ain el-Hâsel; that it was formerly covered by a round stone with a hole in it, through which the water forced itself up into a fountain, but that the stone had been broken by the Bedawin, though the pieces of it still exist. He said moreover (so Hanna interpreted him) that the water from it was carried by the aqueduct to Khân Minyeh, where it turned a mill, the ruins of which remain. I suspect, however, that there is some confusion here, and that mill and aqueduct were both on the Tâbigha side of the Minyeh rock. I did not find the stream marked in my Survey Map.

The cook gave us for dinner a fish which had a biological as well as a culinary interest. It was a kind of bream with a very broad side and almost circular body. I have no doubt that it was the *Chromis Nilotica*, one of those Egyptian fishes which are common in this lake, although both head and tail seemed smaller and the flat side more circular than the figure of that fish as given in Tristram's "Natural History of the Bible" (9th ed. p. 282). It was very good eating and less insipid than the bream of our fresh waters.

Tristram mentions that of fourteen species of fish which he obtained from the lake, four were essentially African: a very remarkable fact when taken in conjunction with other inhabitants of this wonderful Jordan Valley. We had only an hour or two before seen the Egyptian papyrus growing at Ain et-Tin, and only yesterday left behind us the great papyrus-jungle of Hûleh; and many other plants and many birds of the valley have African affinities. Even the human inhabitants with their woolly hair and thick lips are practically African; though I suppose this latter fact has no geological bearing, but merely indicates that the climate in the Ghôr

encourages negro fugitives and nomads to live and breed here.

One of the African fishes in the lake is that mentioned by Josephus, the *Coracinus*, the presence of which in or about the Fountain of Capernaum, according to his account, led to the popular belief that that spring was connected in some mysterious subterranean manner with the Nile. The fish in question is identified with the *Clarias macracanthus*, or Sheat-fish, a curious eel-like creature with feelers above, beneath, and on either side of its head. It buries itself in the sand, leaving only its head with these long feelers free. Mr. J. Macgregor records that the Arab fishermen whom he met called it Barbût, and alleged that it was found plentifully in the lake, and was exported by thousands to Damascus and Beyrût; and he quotes an interesting passage from Rabbi Schwarz, who says, "There is found in the Sea of Chinnereth a very fat fish, 'al Barbud,' which has no scales, wherefore it is not eaten by Jews; I consider it to be a species of the eel."

This identification of the *Coracinus* with the Sheat-fish is not, however, universally accepted, for some writers speak of it as being like a perch; which should be a warning to topographical controversialists not to depend too much on the *Coracinus* argument in their search for Capernaum.\* Perhaps after all the fish we dined off may have been the classical creature which has figured so often in heated discussions as to that holy site! However that may be, it was certainly a *Chromis*, and as such has one element of interest which Josephus himself and all the theologians to boot could never draw from any other genus. For these are the fishes that have the most amazing cradle for their young that any creature on this amazing earth has ever yet invented. The father fish takes the tiny eggs of the spawn one by one into his mouth, and there he hatches them. For several weeks the paternal mouth, which is furnished with pouches for the purpose, forms the home of the "small fry"; and they live there till they are nearly four inches long, so that the poor parent cannot even close his jaws!

The climate, I suppose, of this deeply embosomed sea has something to do with the extraordinary fertility of its waters. "The density of the shoals of fish in the Sea of Galilee," says Tristram, "can scarcely be conceived by those who

\* See Appendix D. 2.

have not witnessed them. Frequently these shoals cover an acre or more of the surface ; and the fish, as they slowly move along in masses, are so crowded, with their back-fins just appearing on the level of the water, that the appearance at a little distance is that of a violent shower of rain pattering on the surface." This, perhaps, may account for those "large dark patches on the water," of which Professor Stapfer writes as though they were something unaccountable.\* Dr. Torrance, for many years a resident in Tiberias, whom I questioned on this point, had never observed these "patches" as a phenomenon special to the Sea of Galilee. The roughening of the surface by a breeze or by the slow passing of a shoal of fish he knew ; and these one who spends but a few days by these shores may see for himself, but beyond them I saw nothing to justify Professor Stapfer's remark.

In the evening I sat near the camp and watched some black and white kingfishers at work. It was wonderful to see the little creatures hover for a minute and then pounce upon their prey. They did not seem timid like our British kind, for a pair of them went on quite unconcernedly with their fishing, although I was fully in sight. I learned that beside this black and white kingfisher, two other kinds are found here—a large blue, and a small blue.

Well, should we for ever fail to locate Capernaum, the fish and the birds remain the same ; the shores, the lake, the mountains remain as of old ; the flowers which grace these grassy slopes, the little fire-flies which glance among the bushes in the dusk, must have been known to Jesus. Nay, even Capernaum must have stood within two miles of our camp to the right or left. Tell Hùm and Khurbet Minyeh lie but some three miles apart, and one or other of them was the home of Christ.

\* "Palestine in the Time of Christ." Eng. Trans. p. 40.

## CHAPTER XXII

### TWO DAYS IN TIBERIAS

WE commenced the next day with a delicious bath in the lake in the cool of the morning. Before we could get our dip, however, with any comfort or sweetness we had to walk a good step from our camp in order to get to windward of a putrid corpse of a donkey which lay upon the beach. My fellow-traveller had been in a high state of indignation on the previous day concerning this presence, and had offered a reward for its burial, but his offer was met by the wooden faces which the Arabs always wear when they mean to refuse or disobey.

This hateful custom of letting animals lie and rot wherever they may chance to fall dead obtains all over the country. No one, apparently, ever dreams of burying them. The bodies of horses, sheep, and camels are met with in every day's march, fouling the air and offending the eye. Vultures, dogs, and flies do the work of sextons and scavengers—all the work, at any rate, that is ever done—and the bare bones are then left to bleach for months beneath the staring sun. In part, no doubt, this is due to indolence, but in part also to that total want of reverence for animal life which is characteristic of the fellah.

After breakfast we sent the tents and baggage to Tiberias, while we ourselves sailed thither in a fishing-boat. The water was rough enough to give us a good tossing, but to my regret we saw nothing like a storm at any time during our stay by the lake.

The coasting-trip from Tâbigha to Tiberias is a matter of some seven miles, and for nearly half the way we are sailing past the shore of Gennesaret. This is, perhaps, the best way to get a general idea of the plain. One sees the mountains grouped in the background, and the way in which the wâdis open out from them. In particular one is struck by the abrupt and unexpected gap where the Wâdi Hamâm



comes down. It is with a thrill that one sets eyes for the first time on this wild "Valley of Doves," so famous in Jewish history. For here stood Arbela, and here took place that romantic assault upon the robbers' caves by Herod's soldiers of which Josephus writes in his "Wars of the Jews."

I would fain know more about these same "robbers." Their magnificent heroism is such that it is difficult not to believe that some greater motive than "robbery" lay behind their deeds, some despairing patriotism or bitter rebellion against the ruling forces of the world. The story tells how they were defeated by Herod in a pitched battle, "for their skill was that of warriors, but their boldness was the boldness of robbers"; and how a remnant of them fled to their caves in this same Valley of Doves, and defied all Herod's assaults, till he let down his soldiers from the top of the cliff in chests bound about with iron chains. And then it goes on to tell of the terrible fight upon the narrow terraces which were cut in the face of the cliff and upon which the caverns opened, and how one of the robbers, the father of seven children, stoutly refused to let his wife and children surrender themselves; but, standing at the cavern's mouth, commanded them to pass out one by one and, as one by one they came, cut them down with his own hand, children and wife, and cast their dead bodies down the precipice, and last of all threw himself down after them rather than yield to the Idumæan.\*

Before we are out of sight of Wâdi Hamâm, there is one other association with the place which we ought to bear in mind. It was down this wâdi that the old road from Nazareth came. When Jesus left His mountain home to begin His life-work, He travelled to Capernaum by way of this wild gorge. He passed beneath the robbers' caves, and as He looked up at them knew well that story of desperate deeds. For, the weird fight had taken place within forty years of His birth and within a few miles of His boyhood's home, and He must often have heard the story from His father's lips.

We landed at Tiberias at about 10 A.M., and while my companion went on to the camping-ground, I went to call upon Dr. Torrance at the Scottish Mission to ask his advice about travelling down the Ghôr, in view of the heat which had overtaken us. For, to-day again the sirocco assailed us

\* Josephus, "Ant." xiv. xv., 4, 5; and "Wars," i. xvi., 2-4.

with its hot breath, and the thermometer showed 102° in the shade and 119° in the sun. Like the good Christian that he is, the doctor immediately insisted that we should leave our camp and stay for a bit in his cool stone house, where the walls were thick and the floors sprinkled with water. So a messenger was dispatched to bring my comrade back, and we found ourselves revelling in the comfort of a home. And here it was that we had a novel experience.

It was about four o'clock, and the sirocco was still blowing, when one of the servants came in and said something to the doctor in Arabic. "The locusts have come!" exclaimed the doctor, and we hurried into the garden to see the sight.

What we saw was a yellow snow-storm. The air was thick with the insects driving with the wind just as the snow-flakes drive in a heavy fall. The valley was full of them coming from the lake and drifting up between the mountains. Seen against the sky they were like a plague of black flies, and their multitude was so great that they darkened the air. The westward drift of the swarm continued for an hour, then all of a sudden a sort of miracle seemed to occur. The wind quite suddenly changed to the exactly opposite quarter. In a moment heat was changed to coolness, and in a moment the flight of the locusts was checked. For a time there was a confused mixing of the swarms, just as we see when snowflakes are whirled about by gusts. Then a steady drift in a contrary direction set in, and the whole flight was driven back to the wilderness by the way that it had come. It was difficult to realise, as we saw them thus at the mercy of every breath, that these particles were all alive. Their helpless drifting greatly impressed me, and although it did not occur to me at the time, I was interested afterwards to find that the same thing had been used as a figure by one of the Hebrew Psalmists to express the helplessness of one subjected to a bitter fate; "I am poor and needy, and my heart is wounded within me. I am gone like the shadow when it declineth: I am tossed up and down as the locust" (Ps. cix. 23).

Another scriptural passage was also illustrated by what we had seen. The swarms had been brought us by an east wind, and the sudden change to the west had driven them back. Just so in the story of the Egyptian plague

we read how "when it was morning the east wind brought the locust," and afterwards how "the Lord turned a mighty strong west wind, which took away the locusts" (Ex. x. 13, 19). The parts which the east and the west winds play in this phenomenon are of course explained by the fact that these insects are bred for the most part in the Arabian desert.

The swarm which we had seen must have been an unusually early one; for, Tristram speaks of May 18 as an early date for the appearance of the young,\* and here we had the fully winged insect on March 30! It is of course in the pupa state that the locust does the greatest harm, but in the winged state also they are very far from being harmless, as the doctor ruefully told us while he gazed at them swarming over his garden. The wonderful description by the prophet Joel of the march of the locusts refers to the pupa state before the wings are developed.

In the evening we walked through the hospital of the Mission—all delightfully ordered, cool, sweet and airy; the patients looking comfortable and happy, the nurses brisk and clean as nurses always are. The doctor has introduced and enforces the rule that those who can pay shall pay what they can: the poor pay nothing. At first the well-to-do objected, saying that they understood that it was "work for God," but the doctor stuck steadily to his principles, and has taken in fees from the rich as much as £110 sterling in one year, which goes to the funds of the hospital, and therefore benefits the poor to that extent.

Dr. Torrance says that epileptics are very numerous in the country. They are believed by the people to be possessed by demons, and are usually taken by them to the native doctors, who say incantations over them and write charms to expel and ward off the devils. Such facts remind one irresistibly of the New Testament stories of poor folk possessed by evil spirits; and it is possible that even Jesus was so far subject to the limitations of His countrymen as to use some form of incantation when He "stood over" Simon's wife's mother "and rebuked the fever."

Certainly in respect of belief in supernatural agencies the Palestine of to-day is one with the Palestine of New Testament times. People of all ranks and creeds use charms both for themselves and their children to protect

\* "Nat. Hist. Bibl." 9th ed. p. 308.

them when they are well, and to cure them when they are in sickness. Dr. Thomson narrates that he was called to see the sick son of one of the most respectable Moslems of Sidon, and that he found the patient's head laid upon an old rotten rag as filthy as the vilest hermit could make it. When he suggested that this should be removed it was explained that this could on no account be permitted, since it was part of the sheet of a very holy man then living in Joppa, and had cost several thousand piastres. The child died all the same.\*

Many diseases are caused, of course, by the "evil eye," and Colonel Conder mentions that often the peasants not only leave their children's faces dirty, but if they are accidentally too clean they "even besmirch them to avoid the consequences of an envious look."

The Jews are quite as superstitious as the Moslems in these matters. They use incantations and wear charms and have various methods by which they hope to cheat the Angel of Death. Mr. Robinson Lees, who lived for six years in Jerusalem, tells a strange but authentic story of one such device. "A Jew had had six wives, all of whom had died at the birth of their first child. When about to marry for the seventh time he bought a cow and tied it outside his window. The marriage ceremony was performed between him and the cow, and he placed a ring on its horn. The contract was even drawn up mentioning the cow. At the close of this peculiar ceremony the cow was killed and its flesh distributed amongst the poor, and the rite of marriage again performed with the girl who became his seventh wife. He felt quite satisfied that all would be well, as his sacrifice to the Angel of Death was in place of his wife. She lived and bore him many children."†

In reading the New Testament it should always be borne in mind that it was among such people as these that Jesus lived and taught, and it was in such an atmosphere that the story of His deeds took shape.

The change of wind brought a change of weather. At midnight there was a shower, though only of brief duration. I was still more or less in a state of collapse, and spent much of the time reclining in the garden among the tall cypresses and huge spreading aloes. The pomegranates

\* "The Land and the Book," 1866, p. 152.

† "Jerusalem and Its People," 2nd ed. p. 40.

were in flower with their exquisite coral bloom, and through their branches one could see the bright blue of the lake. However, I wandered for a part of the morning about the town and found my way down to the beach. The shore was lined with Jewish women washing their furniture in the waters of the lake (Figs. 27-28). So busy were they with this cleansing process that I began to think that the Jews of Tiberias had been maligned, and that they were as cleanly as well as a godly people. I learned, however, that this cleanliness is not a daily but an annual custom. The Passover was approaching, and every article of the household use must forthwith be washed ; so these good women had hauled their chairs and tables, their bedsteads and plate-racks, from their houses to the beach, and were at work upon this useful, if ceremonial, ablution.

Tiberias is inhabited chiefly by Jews, and yet there was a time when no Jew would enter it unless he was forced to do so. It was founded by Herod Antipas just about the time that Jesus came to live in Capernaum—at any rate, not more than a year or two earlier—and during the building many tombs were removed and houses erected in their place, which of itself was enough to make it an unclean city. Add to this that Herod peopled it with heathens and slaves, and we can understand how repugnant such a place would be to the Jew who cared for ceremonial purity.

It was at first a purely Greek city, and it is doubtful whether Jesus ever entered it : at any rate, it is never mentioned in the first three Gospels. Neither is the lake called in them the Sea of Tiberias ; at the time that they were written the city was too new for it to give its name to the lake.\* After the destruction of Jerusalem, however, Tiberias became one of the chief centres of Judaism. For many years the Sanhedrin had its seat here, and a famous Rabbinical school came into existence. It is still to the Jew one of the four sacred cities of Palestine. I have already mentioned

\* And in the fourth Gospel the only mention of Tiberias is John vi. 23. "Furrer, writing on the 'Geography of the Fourth Gospel,' refers to the consensus of critics that the words *τῆς Τιβεριάδος* in John vi. 1, are a gloss attached before the diffusion of our manuscripts. Jewish writings of the second century and Pausanias afford, as he shows, the first evidence of the superseding of the old name, 'Sea of Galilee,' or 'Gennesareth,' after Tiberias had acquired its later predominant importance. But the Appendix (John xxi. 1.) has 'the Sea of Tiberias' pure and simple, Furrer, therefore, dates it 'bedeutend später.'" Professor Bacon, in "Hibbert Journal," ii. p. 343.



FIG. 27. —TIBERIAS : JEWESSES PREPARING FOR  
THE PASSOVER



FIG. 28.—TIBERIAS : JEWESSES PREPARING FOR  
THE PASSOVER



their quaint superstition that in the last days the Messiah will emerge from the waters of the lake. I wonder whether those two young Jewesses who are sitting this morning perched upon a rock off-shore amid its waters with clasped hands and far-away gaze are thinking upon that strange coming of the great Deliverer ?



## CHAPTER XXIII

### FROM TIBERIAS TO GADARA

WE left Tiberias in the cool of the morning, riding along the shore of the lake past the ancient Hammath, where the famous baths are fed by a hot sulphur-laden spring. Not far from the baths is the tomb of Rabbi Meir, one of the great Jewish scholars of the second century. Indeed, we are surrounded here by the heroes of the later Jewry. The tomb of Rabbi Akiba, Meir's master, is not a mile distant; and the great Maimonides is buried close to Tiberias.

Of Rabbi Meir it was said by his contemporaries that to see him disputing in the college was like seeing great mountains torn up from their base and rubbed against each other to dust. But it is not for the sake of his tremendous dialectics that we halt for a moment before his tomb, rather is it in pity for the human tragedy of his life and in admiration for a courageous albeit a somewhat erratic individuality. We see him in Rome, disguised as a Roman, rescuing his wife's sister from a life of public shame at the risk of his own life. We see him standing hand in hand with his noble and learned wife Beruria by the bier where her two sons lie stretched in death, acknowledging that the Lord had a right to take back what He had only lent. We see him fleeing to Babylon in search of oblivion from that tragedy which never could be forgotten—his wife's suicide by reason of his own masterful mistake and dire transgression. And we see him in exile stretched upon his death-bed, sending his proud message to his countrymen in Palestine, "Tell the children of the Holy Land that their Messiah has died in a strange country." It was by his own wish that his body was brought here to Tiberias and laid beside the sea-shore. The whole touching story is told by Edersheim in his "History of the Jewish Nation." All we can do now is to drop a tear for the great Rabbi and still more for the noble Beruria, as we pass his tomb in our southward journey.



FIG. 29.—OUTFLOW OF THE JORDAN AT KERAK



FIG. 30. CROSSING THE JORDAN AT KERAK



We shall very shortly say farewell to the Sea of Galilee, so we seize our last chance of a bathe from its clean white strand, somewhere near Khàn Kadish, which we used to be told was Kedesh, the ancient city of refuge, until the real Kedesh was found far to the north. Then we ride on to Kerak, at the southern extremity of the lake, where the Jordan flows out; and here we dismount, for we have reached the place where we are to cross by ferry to the eastern side of the river, in order that we may see something of the Ghôr and of certain cities of the Decapolis.

The business of unloading the mules and piling the baggage into the boats that are awaiting us, and then of swimming the animals across, is a long one. But it is an interesting place for a wait, and we by no means regret having the chance of a leisurely survey of this historical spot, which is in all probability the Taricheæ of Josephus.

We cannot, indeed, be sure of this identification; for a controversy rages round this, as around so many other Palestine places. Taricheæ, wherever it may have been, was an important city in the time of Jesus. It was not so new as Tiberias, for in 52 B.C. it had a large population.\* Great ship-building and fish-curing industries were carried on there, and it had a harbour which could shelter a fleet of vessels. So that it would be interesting to fix the site of it for certain, and picture the place as it showed itself to the eyes of the great Nazarene.

The whole trouble in identifying the place arises from a very slight omission by Josephus. He tells us that Taricheæ was thirty furlongs distant from Tiberias, but he does not tell us whether it lay to the north or south of that city; and by a series of strange coincidences the arguments for each direction are very evenly balanced. They are evenly balanced, that is to say, so long as we confine ourselves to literary evidence; but I cannot help thinking that if sufficient weight were given to the natural features of the place, this "tell" at Kerak would be felt to have greatly the advantage in the argument. Let us climb the mound and look around us and compare what we see with the description of Taricheæ given by Josephus.

The Jordan as it leaves the lake does not, you observe, flow southwards, but swirls round and flows due west (see (Fig. 29), embracing in this eccentric course a tongue of

\* See Josephus, "Ant." xiv. vii. 3.

land which is thus surrounded on three sides by water with only a narrow landward outlet. This corresponds with his description of it as strongly fortified on those sides "not washed by the sea." Again; turn your back to the lake and look at the great plain of the Ghôr. Here you have that "plain that was before the city," upon which Vespasian when he besieged Taricheæ saw that "a great multitude of the enemy was gotten together." Here, too, just below the mound, is the port with room for a double fleet of ships; and yonder to the north-west is the site of Sinnabris, which Josephus says could be "easily seen by the innovators" or insurgent reformers who were besieged in Taricheæ.\* No other place upon the lake corresponds in anything like the same way to the history of Vespasian's siege as given by Josephus.†

The one difficulty is in the fact that Josephus describes the archers of the Roman enemy as shooting at the besieged from the neighbouring mountain. Now, Kerak might possibly be described as "under a mountain" (ὕπὸ ὄρους) as may be seen from the accompanying photograph (Fig. 29); but the mountain is not near enough to Kerak for archers to shoot from it with any effect. It is quite possible, however, that there may have been a portion of the town separated from the port, like a miniature Athens with its Piræus.‡ But we must now descend from the "tell," for our baggage has crossed the river, and the boat is waiting for us to go on board.

When we reached the further side we found ourselves in a hot dusty plain, across which we rode wearily for a matter of five miles or more till we came to the banks of the Yarmûk—a wild river dashing down a deep cleft towards the Jordan, of which it is one of the principal tributaries. In the time of Jesus the Yarmûk was the boundary between the Perea and the tetrarchy of Philip, and it is by nature a dividing stream, not only because of the great gorge which rends the mountain range to form its bed, but because the country north of it is of a totally different character from

\* "Wars," iii. ix. 7.

† The argument for Kerak is clearly summarised by Colonel Conder in P.E.F.Q.S. for 1878.

‡ There is said to be a certain Mellaha or Place of Salt on the hill-slopes in the neighbourhood. Perhaps that is where the people of Taricheæ obtained brine for curing their fish,—see Smith, "Hist. Geog." p. 454, fn. 1,—and, perhaps, a part of the city lay near there, close under the hills.

that on the south. Southward it is all of cretaceous limestone, while northward lies the basaltic region of the Jaulan, where volcanoes, whose extinct craters may still be seen, have covered the limestone with their molten streams.

A great and strange battle was once fought upon the cliffs which overhang this gorge. It was between the Jewish King Alexander Jannæus\* and an Arabian army, and happened within the century before Christ. The Arabs conquered by means of a wild and unheard-of device. They gathered a mighty herd of camels, drove them furiously against their foe, till by sheer weight and rush the whole army was flung down these precipices into the chasm beneath, Alexander himself barely escaping with his life. Strange to say, the very same device was used in the same neighbourhood some seven centuries later, when the Byzantine army was thrown into a defile in a similar manner.

On the banks of the torrent we found a great concourse of fellahin, met together, as they told us, in order to make a united effort to dam the channel and turn the water upon their crops. The season was indeed a disastrous one for these poor peasants. The "latter rain" had entirely failed, and everywhere we noticed withered fields, and in places even the wheat was dying.

The Sheri 'ât el-Menâdireh, as the Yarmûk is now called, was much lower than it usually is at this time of year, and was fordable, though by reason of its swiftness not altogether without difficulty. It was not above three or four feet deep, yet the horses seemed as though they could scarcely keep their legs against the rush of the current. However, we struggled through, and after continuing our southward course for a short distance, we presently turned sharp to the left up the mountain-side. For more than an hour we zig-zagged up a precipitous ascent, then, gaining the level of the plateau, crossed a stretch of cultivated land. Here and there we noticed in the fields stray locusts which had been left behind by yesterday's swarm, but we did not observe that any considerable damage had been done by their visitation. I think it was in these same fields, or it may have been among the limestone débris which lay just beyond them, that we saw magnificent specimens of an iris of the rhizomatous kind, the blossoms of which, closely

\* The tomb near Jerusalem, known as Absalom's Pillar, is probably that of Alexander Jannæus.

veined with narrow purple stripes, measured from four to six inches across. But our eyes were soon drawn away from flowers and insects by the distant prospect of the ruins we had come to visit.

Our first impression was that of a confusion of unmeaning wreck. Fragments of walls and heaps of stones covered a vast area ; beyond which, far in the distance, rose a mound on the hither slope of which stood a crumbling structure which we surmised to be the ruin of the ancient theatre of which we had read. Such was our first view of the far-famed Gadara, once the chief city of the Decapolis—now represented only by this desert of rubble and by a mean Arab village which lies behind yonder mound, known by the name of Mkès.

We halted by a large heap of earth and stones crowned by a bush, the branches of which were completely covered with shreds and rags. The camp was then sent forward to the village with instructions to treat with the sheikh for a camping-place, and Mohammed tethered our horses and spread our meal beneath the shadow of this sacred shrub.

I have already mentioned in connection with the mukâm above Nazareth and the sacred tree at Tell el-Kâdi this curious custom of hanging up rags as offerings. Burton, in his "Pilgrimage to Al-Madinah,"\* tells how, when entering upon the desert in company with Arabs, he followed their example in adding a rag to those which hung upon the Pilgrims' Tree, and he mentions that Park in Western Africa did the same ; also that the Tartars worship mountain spirits by hanging dry branches with bones and strips of cloth and planting them in enormous heaps of stones. He regards the practice as one of the many relics of fetish-worship which have entered into the Mohammedan religion.

Fundamentally the custom would seem to be the degenerate form of a more primitive notion. The original offering has dwindled down through the influence of the vicarious or representative idea. Just as the Egyptian shab-ti, the little image of a mummy, came to represent the real mummy and was buried with the rich man in place of the embalmed labourer who at one time went to the tomb with him as his servant in the spirit-world ; so these shreds represent the complete garment, and that in its turn represents the wearer of the garment.

\* Vol. i. p. 155, fn. 1.

Such offerings, however, although they may once have embodied the sacrificial idea, do not appear now to retain much of their primitive meaning. They are not now gifts in the ordinary sense ; rather are they channels connecting the worshipper with the object or person worshipped.\* The garment or shred is left at the holy place (and therein survives perhaps a remnant of the idea of propitiating the presiding spirit), but, in exchange for it, that which has been in contact with the holy place is taken away and worn as a charm. Holiness is, indeed, to the Palestine peasant a sort of liquid which may be absorbed by physical contact. The man who hangs a rag upon this bush at Gadara will take from it and wear about his person another rag which has become soaked with the virtue of the place by hanging there ; and this magical idea overshadows and obscures, it would seem, the original notion of a sacrificial offering.†

After luncheon, we decided to walk through the ruins to our camp, and Mohammed was therefore sent forward with our horses while we advanced toward the village on foot, approaching it from the west. The ruins which lay scattered round were the most extensive that we had hitherto seen, but so utterly demolished by the shock of earthquakes and by the hands of time and the barbarian, that, with the exception of the great theatre which fronted us, it was difficult to get any idea of the buildings which they represented. As we drew nearer, however, the plan of the old Greek city as explained by Schumacher and by Dr. Merrill began to reveal itself. It was strongly situated. On the north is the deep valley of the Yarmûk, or, as the Greeks called it, the Hieromax ; on the south, the cleft which is now called the Wâdi el-Arâb ; on the east, a natural slope of considerable steepness ; and on the west, the deep valley of the Jordan.

There was a wall all round the city, the traces of which

\* "Encycl. Bibl." art. "Dress," sec. 8.

† The custom is not confined to Islam. In the Harâm at Jerusalem there is a window through which one looks down upon the Birket-Israin, the pool which the Crusaders believed to be Bethesda. The iron-work of the window is covered with pieces of rag tied to it by (presumably) Christian pilgrims. At the church of St. Ouen in Rouen, the figure of St. Lawrence is similarly decked. Kakasu Okakura in his "Ideals of the East" (p. 21) mentions the Sakaki, or tree of the gods, "upon which are hung pieces of brocade, silk, linen, cotton, and paper, cut in special devices." In our own island, pin-wells and rag-bearing bushes still survive.



remain ; it was about two miles in circuit. In the centre was the Acropolis, formerly occupied by temples and public buildings. This had theatres on two sides of it, cut into the slope of the mound, one upon the north and the other, which I have already mentioned, upon the west. Westward of this central group of buildings were streets of private houses occupying the area through which we had just advanced ; eastward was a city of tombs, the remains of which are at this day one of the most remarkable ruins of the kind in existence. As to the modern village, that is marked by Schumacher as lying to the east of the Acropolis, but at the present time it has invaded the hill itself.

The people of Mkès are rough and dirty, with a bold and insolent air. Most of them carry a round-headed club as well as the usual long-barrelled gun. They are both Bedawin and fellahin, and among them are settlers from the neighbourhood of Nablûs, who keep themselves somewhat aloof from the other inhabitants and are said to be fanatical and uncivil. In the course of our wanderings among the ruins we came upon a slope overlooking the valley, where some plots of soil had been cultivated. Near by stood two Bedawi women in violent altercation. One of them was accusing the other of stealing beans from her plot, and the accused raised her hand to heaven and swore by Allah that she was guiltless. We stood for a few moments watching their fierce gestures and listening to their harsh voices, strongly reminiscent of a like argument in a London slum, and then turned toward the western theatre of which we desired to have a nearer view.

Prof. George A. Smith speaks of this as an "amphitheatre," but that is obviously a slip upon his part. It is a semicircle in form, or little more than a semicircle, certainly not a completed circle or ellipse. It was not, in fact, a place for gladiatorial shows at all, but for stage-plays. Its date I have not seen discussed, but in form it is evidently Græco-Roman. It is partly scooped out of the side of the hill in the Greek fashion, but it is also built in part above and away from the slope of the hill, and it has interior passages or tunnels behind and beneath the seats, just as we find in those Roman theatres which were built upon the flat. There are also seven stairways ascending from the orchestra to the topmost bench, and cutting across the tiers of seats in their ascent. This again is evidence of Roman influence, for in the Greek theatre the number of stairways was always even.

The orchestra, it is true, is not of orthodox Roman form, for the Roman orchestra was exactly a semicircle, while this is more than a semicircle. But neither is it orthodox Greek, for the extension is not formed by continuing the arc of the circle, but by describing a parallelogram upon the diameter of the semicircle, as in the large theatre at Pompeii.\*

As Gadara was not founded till after Alexander the Great's time, its theatres belong, of course, to a date long subsequent to the great dramatic period when actors and chorus all occupied the orchestra or level space below the seats, with the altar of Dionysos in their midst. The theatre at which we are looking had a stage raised above the orchestra and facing the audience. Yonder doorway upon our right, of which the arched headway rises above the débris, opened upon the orchestra; the proscenium or stage was immediately on this side of it. Beneath was the ghost-chamber, in which the metal thunder-jars were kept, and from which the ghosts who figured in the tragedy passed upward by a stairway—Charon's steps, as they were called—to the stage itself. *Al al*, actors and spectators alike are ghosts now!

The back of the stage was just where we are standing and consisted of a lofty *scena*, what we should call a back-scene, which with the ancients was not a pasteboard affair, but a good substantial wall. These great blocks heaped in confusion at our feet are the stones of the fallen *scena* and of the *postscenium* or chamber behind the scene, into which the actors retired.† Look before you, and you will see what brought them down. The horizontal shift of the stones in so many parts of the auditorium shows that earthquakes have been at work. The lofty wall of the *scena*, not being supported like the semi-circular *cavea* by a hillside backing, was usually the first to go.

Dr. Merrill, in his interesting book "East of the Jordan," writing about this same theatre, remarks that "the spectators, from their seats in the west theatre, could overlook the

\* See plan given by Schumacher in his "Northern Ajlûn" (p. 55).

† Schumacher's plan does not give any postscenium, but he makes the stage twenty-two feet broad, and as the orchestra was sixty-seven feet, five inches in diameter, and the breadth of the Roman stage was reckoned at a quarter of the diameter of the orchestra, this would leave about five feet for the postscenium. This would certainly be narrower than usual, but when one has seen the chaos which lies where the *scena* and *pulpitum* once stood, it is difficult to believe that Schumacher can have given us very precise measurements.

finest portion of Palestine." And this is, doubtless, a true estimate of the character of the prospect; but it is scarcely true that the spectators could see it. The glory of the view was almost entirely shut out by the lofty wall just described. What they had before them was probably the representation of a palace or temple built flat against the wall; or perhaps they had a painted canvas hung in front of the permanent palace-scene, for such temporary scenes were in use in the Roman theatres from 99 B.C. onwards.

But let us pass forward across the orchestra to the semicircle of seats where the spectators sat of old. The seats are wonderfully well preserved. There are fifteen rows, with stairways and landings. In the orchestra itself there may have sat, after the Roman fashion, a few of the most distinguished officials—magistrates and priests. Next comes, slightly raised above the level of the orchestra, a semicircular pavement twelve feet wide; and from this five rows of seats ascend. These are the seats of the privileged people—the aristocracy—they are, in fact, the "stalls" of that period. Then comes a landing nine feet and a half wide, which runs round the entire semicircle. This landing is backed by a perpendicular wall nearly seven feet high, pierced, as may be seen in the photograph (Fig. 31), with round-headed doorways which lead into a corridor to be presently described. Above this wall are ten more rows of seats for the rank and file of the Gadarene men. And above these again, separated from them by a three-foot wall with a cornice, were probably two or three more rows of seats for the women.\*

From the *præcinctio* or landing, mentioned above, we now pass through one of the doorways into the corridor, which is built below and behind the upper or main tier of seats. It is a roomy passage with an arched roof, running round the semicircle from end to end. The arrangement is, in fact, just like that of our modern theatres with their corridors behind the boxes. The floor has been broken through in places, and reveals another corridor below (Fig. 32). The natives call these corridors "the prison," and they use them for storing their grain, several heaps of which lie piled within their shelter. There seems, however, at one time to have existed among the population a truer tradition as to the purpose of these theatres, for the rocky

\* See "Encycl. Brit.," 9th ed., art. "Theatre," where authorities for this position of the women's seats are cited.



FIG. 31.—WESTERN THEATRE AT GADARA



FIG. 32.—THEATRE AT GADARA: THE CORRIDORS



platform, in the sides of which they are carved is still known to the villagers as El-Mel'ah, "the place of the play."\*

To that platform we now climbed, and found ourselves among the native hovels. As usual, the dogs of the village rushed out upon us with fury, barking and snarling and showing their teeth, but keeping out of arm's reach. Cutting across a corner of the mound, we descended on the northern side and found our camp pitched close to the second theatre—a structure in a far more ruinous condition than that which we had just left. That had well-defined tiers of seats retaining their form and sweep, and built of hard clean-cut blocks; but this northern theatre is little more than a heap of earth and stones; the rows of benches can no longer be counted, and were it not for the arched openings at either end of the semicircle, which tell where doors once opened on the orchestra, the traveller might almost pass by this scoop in the hillside without recognising its origin or purpose.

Soon after our arrival at the camp, the sheikh of the village paid us a visit. Unlike most of his fellow-villagers he seemed a decent sort of man, with kindly eyes and an intelligent face. I made inquiries of him concerning the old city-gate of which I had read, and which Schumacher describes as flanked by pillars of basalt, and having a well-preserved cornice. The sheikh informed me with much simplicity, and with the air of having performed a meritorious deed, that he had pulled the gateway down to furnish stones for building his own house. He showed me where it had stood; it was a few steps beyond the northern theatre, spanning the paved road which passes it. He told us, moreover, that within his recollection there was another gateway besides this, leading up to the theatre itself. I find that Schumacher has noted the vestiges of this gateway in his book on "Northern Ajlûn" (p. 49). The sheikh was far more curious concerning his surroundings than is usually the case with the peasants. He made many pertinent inquiries as to the history of the place and to whom it had formerly belonged. Before he left us we engaged from him a man to act as our guide to the ruins of Pella on the following day.

The paved road just mentioned leads westward from the northern theatre to a considerable distance. It is formed

\* Schumacher, "Northern Ajlûn," p. 50.

of large blocks of basalt carefully fitted, and was originally flanked by colonnades like the "Street of Columns" in Samaria. This was, in fact, one of the principal streets of the city, and the mark of the traffic which passed along it may still be seen, for here are the grooves cut by the chariot-wheels of generations, where the great people—Greeks and Romans—once thundered along on their business or their pleasure.

A great part of the afternoon I spent in wandering about with my camera. Once when I was alone and at some distance from our camp, a native with a bludgeon came up to me with a truculent air, and I quite expected to be robbed; but if he entertained any such idea, it was averted by the amusement of looking into the "finder" of the camera at the small pictures of the surrounding scene, which apparently afforded him great delight.

One of the natives brought me a handful of coins, and among them were one or two of interest. Here, for instance, is a typical Gadara coin bearing the figure of a ship with rowers, showing that at one time the territory of the city, extended to the shores of yonder lake. Each city of the Decapolis governed, in fact, a large territory extending far beyond its own suburbs and sometimes embracing many villages. This explains, of course, what is meant by the "country of the Gadarenes" in that reading of Mark v. 1 from which the Authorised Version takes its translation. The territories of Pella, Scythopolis, Gadara, and Hippos joined each other, so that the "borders of the Decapolis" through which Jesus came to the Sea of Galilee on His journey back from Phœnicia was a fairly solid belt of land.

Here, again, is another coin in the same handful, which illustrates, in a manner, that journey of Jesus to which I have just referred. It is a Phœnician coin, and reminds us of the constant intercourse that obtained between the cities of the Decapolis and the "borders of Tyre and Sidon."\*

It is this connection with New Testament times, yielding points of contact with the Story of the Gospels, which gives the thrill and the zest to our wanderings among these ruins. That great confederation of Greek cities established for mutual defence against Jew and Arab still existed and was

\* Another interesting coin included in the same purchase (Fig. 35), was struck at Tiberias in the reign of Domitian.

active in Christ's time. True, it had lost something of its independence and its glory beneath the dominion of Rome, but its cities were still Greek in their customs and their life, and contemptuous of that Hebrew race from which they felt themselves to be utterly alien.

It was with such thoughts that we returned to our camp and sat in the tent-door gazing into the depths beneath us. The view was magnificent, embracing the valleys of the Yarmūk and Jordan and the southern half of the Sea of Galilee, where Tiberias lay gleaming in the sunlight. Our tents were pitched amid the ruins of paganism and looked down upon the birthplace of Christianity. The paved road and the colonnaded street passed close to us, the great theatre spread its arms around us, the Acropolis overlooked us. The stage-plays, the athletic games, the chariot races, the pagan ritual—all have passed, but in Christ's time they were alive, and the humble Galilean looked up from yonder villages in wonder and resentment at this magnificence of the Gentiles who "exercised lordship over them." In the words of Professor George Adam Smith, "The Decapolis was flourishing in the time of Christ's ministry. Gadara, with her temples and her amphitheatres, with her art, her games and her literature, overhung the Lake of Galilee, and the voyages of its fishermen. A leading Epicurean of the previous generation, the founder of the Greek anthology, some of the famous wits of the day, the reigning emperor's tutor, had all been bred within sight of the homes of the writers of the New Testament. Philodemus, Meleager, Menippus, Theodorus, were names of which the one end of the Lake of Galilee was proud, when Matthew, Peter, James and John, were working at the other end."



## CHAPTER XXIV

### FROM GADARA TO PELLA

THE temperature in the tent at six o'clock the next morning (April 2) was  $50^{\circ}$ , but when we reached the valley of the Jordan one hour and a half later, the thermometer stood at  $70^{\circ}$ , and from that time the heat rapidly increased. We did not descend by the Wâdi Arâb, but by an easier path which brought us out to the south of that wâdi. On the way down we passed one of those isolated pillars which seem such a riddle in this land. This one was of great size, the largest I had yet seen, and appeared to be cut out of a kind of coarse conglomerate. It lay prone and broken in half and was far away from any building. Could it possibly have rolled down the mountain slope to this great distance from the town above? The thing seemed incredible.

In our descent from the hills many fine views were given to us of the land beyond the Jordan. Safed, Nazareth, Tabor, Little Hermon, Gilboa, and even Carmel were in sight. Near the bottom of the slope we caught our last glimpse of the lake, and a few minutes later we joined the road which runs from north to south down the length of the Jordan valley.

This bridle-road down the Ghôr is perfectly distinct and good. On our right was a great plain stretching away to the river. The course of the Jordan itself is marked by a long winding line of low cliff, very distant from our road which keeps close under the hills. This is doubtless one of those curious terraces left by the long lake-valley when, after the pluvial period, it shrank to the narrow channel which the river now fills. Below this cliff there is a line of tamarisk and thick sedge which harbours wild boars and other beasts, but which was too distant to be clearly seen by us. In parts the plain is cultivated with wheat, but elsewhere it grows only what gardeners call "rubbish"—not



FIG. 33.—GAWĀRINEH BOY



FIG. 34.—GAWĀRINEH BOY



grass, but coarse weeds and rank untidy looking tussocks. It is crossed by many clear and beautiful streams, none of them at this season too deep for easy fording. Some of these streams have been diverted from their natural channels and made to run lengthwise down the valley for purposes of irrigation.

On our left was an upland ridge of varying height and form. In places it was composed of not very high rocks, but for the most part of rounded hills almost like Sussex downs. This is perhaps the eastern bank of the prehistoric lake just mentioned. Here and there a wâdi breaks through this low range, and you get a peep of the real mountains which lie behind in majestic ranks, hidden from us for the most part by reason of our nearness to the foot of the low terrace.

The Ghôr is far from being desert. Wherever there is a stream you have masses of oleander bushes, which were now in full bloom. There were also quantities of single hollyhocks with pink blossoms. Now and then a gazelle would cross our path and scamper up the hills.

We passed large assemblages of black Bedawin tents. In one part the whole plain, almost as far as we could see, was dotted with black tents and black cattle. The women were decently dressed and some of them wore silver anklets; but the boys and lads who tended the cattle were very ragged and unkempt. They were of course all of the negroid type. One little shepherd-boy whom I photographed while Hanna engaged him in conversation was suffering from a disease which they call "jarrab": a scabby complaint which attacks both men and camels in the spring of the year.\* His tribe, as I understood the name, was called Schurah-Ghôr (*see* Figs. 33, 34).

As we journeyed down this wild valley, feeling that we were now very far removed from anything like civilisation, the illusion was suddenly broken by the apparition of a white tent flying a flag which bore the Turkish Crescent. Upon inquiry we learned that three fellahin had been killed by Bedawin in a dispute a few days before, and that this was the tent of an official who had been sent to inquire into the matter. The Turkish rule is in fact far more effective on the east of Jordan than it was some five and twenty years ago. Discipline of some sort is maintained; and if only

\* See "Survey of Western Palestine; Memoir on Physical Geology," &c., by E. Hull, p. 130.

the Turk could learn that punishing and taxing are not the only functions of government, but that such matters as irrigation and road mending are worthy of some attention, this tropical valley, so rich in soil and so abundant in streams, might become a region of phenomenal luxuriance.

It was interesting to remember that our journey down the Ghôr was taken at the same season of the year as that in which Jesus travelled down it on His last journey to Jerusalem, and to reflect that, so far as natural scenery and natural products were concerned, what we saw was much the same as what He had seen. I have thought that even the dryness of the season may have been the same. For had the season been as wet as it usually is before Easter, foot passengers would certainly have found some difficulty in crossing the numerous streams which intersect the valley.

On another point, however, one feels considerable doubt. Keim regards this route as being taken by Jesus because it was "unfrequented." He speaks of it as "quiet," "remote," "sparsely populated," and passing "few inhabited places," and other writers have adopted the same view. This might be accepted as a fairly correct description now, but is it a correct description of what the valley was then? Certain it is that even in the small portion of the valley which we traversed we passed, besides Bedawi villages, many pieces of ancient wall showing where substantial buildings had once stood. These ruined buildings may indeed have been watch-towers, or crusading fastnesses, or Saracen khans, or what not; but on the other hand they may indicate buried sites belonging to much older times, and one hesitates to accept Keim's theory of that Last Journey until something in the way of excavation has been attempted down the Ghôr.

At El-Waggâs (or Wakkâs) we halted for a rest. This is a mud-built village shaded by trees, with a white-domed stone weli in its midst (Fig. 36). We learnt its name from some lounging natives, and Hanna told us that it was a Bedawi village, the houses of which were mainly used for storage purposes, though in winter he said the Arabs left their tents and lived in them. Schumacher, however, who mentions the village in his "Abila of the Decapolis," says that the hamlet consists of winter-huts belonging to the village of et-Taiyibeh. The weli he describes as "an old Mohammedan Weli of Sheikh Wakkâs." After a short rest we continued our journey southward, crossing the Wâdi



FIG. 35.—COIN STRUCK AT TIBERIAS



FIG. 36.—VALLEY OF EL-WAGGÄS



FIG. 37.—PELLA : THE TERRACE



Siklad, the Wâdi Abu Said, and another stream, and then turned sharply to the left up the hillside to Tubukât Fahil, which was the goal of our morning's ride.

Fahil is pretty generally accepted as identical with the ancient Pella, a place of great historical, and especially of Christian interest. The origin of the name, it is true, is open to doubt. Professor George Adam Smith says that "it is impossible to understand how 'Fahil' could have arisen from 'Pella'"; but Thomson, on the other hand, says that his guide assured him that "Felah" was still the true name of Fahil,\* and Guy Le Strange quotes Arabic authority to prove that the name is foreign to that tongue.† The evidence for the identification does not however rest upon the existing name; it is historical and geographical. The arguments are too lengthy to be given here, but the reader who cares to study them may find them in the pages of Robinson,‡ who was the original discoverer, or of Dr. Merrill, who sets forth the principal points at some length.§ To the evidence there given one important fact mentioned by Le Strange || ought to be added, namely that among the Moslems the great Battle of Fahal was also called the Day of Beisân, and Beisân lies only a couple of hours away.

As to the history of Pella, the two points which were personally interesting to us and which had led to our visiting its ruins, were its position as a member of the Decapolis and its connection with Christian history. It was founded, of course, long before the League of the Decapolis was formed, having been originally built by the veterans of Alexander, and named after the Macedonian Pella, Alexander's own birthplace. Gadara and Pella were in fact two of the oldest Greek cities in Syria; by 218 B.C. they were already strong fortresses. The Jews hated these Greek cities and deprived them of self-government; but Rome restored their autonomy, together with the right of coinage, asylum, mutual association, and the power to hold property in surrounding districts; wherefore several of them, and Pella among them, reckoned their eras from the date of Pompey's Syrian campaign, 64-63 B.C.

It was at some time between this date and the time of

\* "The Land and the Book," p. 456.

† "Palestine under the Moslems," p. 439.

‡ "Later Researches," p. 323.

§ "East of the Jordan," pp. 442-7.

|| "A Ride through Ajlûn," p. 274.



Christ's ministry—the precise date is not known—that the League of Greek cities in Eastern Palestine called the "Decapolis" was formed. Mutual defence was the prime motive of the League (for Rome, although it was their overlord, was not ably fully to protect them against the desert robbers and other hostile influences), but the association had also the further aims of mutual aid in commerce and the fostering of Greek religion and social life.

The original ten cities which formed the Decapolis were Scythopolis, Pella, Dion, Gerasa, Philadelphia, Gadara, Raphana, Kanatha, Hippos, and Damascus; but other cities were afterwards added to this number. The importance of Pella as a member of the League lay in its situation on one of the great highways which traversed the region in which the Greek cities lay. Scythopolis (now called Beisân) lay a mile or two west of the Jordan, just at the point where the great road from the sea coast divided into three roads, which crossed the Jordan and intersected the trans-Jordanic Palestine. On each of these three roads a member of the Decapolis was situated; Hippos on the northern, Gadara on the central, and Pella on the southernmost road.

These cities, having power to acquire property in land, soon governed a large extent of territory, and the Decapolis, which Jesus visited in the course of His missionary tours, was a vast district lying partly in the west, but mainly on the east of Jordan. It has been surmised that Pella was one of the towns where He taught, and that in His last journey down the Jordan, when He had "set His face to go to Jerusalem," He turned aside into this city as into a place prepared by His previous ministrations. In this way it is sought to account for the fact that Pella seemed to have a hereditary sympathy with Christianity, so that when Jerusalem was besieged by Rome, it was to this place that the Christians fled.\*

Similarly it has been conjectured that this is the city which St. Paul made his place of retreat when he "conferred not with flesh and blood, neither went up to Jerusalem to them that were apostles before him, but went away into Arabia," for by "Arabia" we are perhaps to understand the Roman district of that name which would include this city.†

\* Merrill, "East of the Jordan," p. 463.

† Hausrath, "Times of the Apostles," English translation, iii. p. 73. In the same passage St. Paul adds that he afterwards "returned unto

All this, however, is mere matter of conjecture; the one certain link between Pella and the dawn of the Christian faith—the one enthralling fact which gave to its venerable ruins an absorbing interest in our eyes—was that on two occasions it became a refuge for the “Brethren” of Jerusalem, and that this, therefore, was almost the earliest home of that pre-Christian type of Christianity—that Christianity which existed before the name “Christian” was invented—the little heterodox Jewish sect which was the original “mustard-seed” from which the “great tree” sprang.

Eusebius says that at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, the Brethren removed and dwelt at a town beyond the Jordan, called Pella, “in accordance with a certain oracle delivered by revelation to notable men on the spot.”

Seventy years later, after the second Jewish War with Rome, Hadrian excluded the Jews entirely from the Sacred City, and changed its name to *Ælia Capitolina*, and on that occasion the Jewish Christians, who had returned to Jerusalem, again fled to Pella. From that time Jerusalem contained no Jewish Christians. The Church there, under their elder Marcus, consisted only of Christians of Pagan descent, mingled perhaps with some Jews who had renounced their nationality. Pella became the headquarters of the original community of Christians; there Christianity had never been severed from Jewish custom and belief, and there “a strictly Jewish-Christian Church maintained its existence down to the fifth century.” \*

What led the Christians of Jerusalem to select Pella in particular for their place of retreat is quite uncertain. It has been conjectured that the inhabitants of Pella, like those of Sidon, were tolerant enough to leave the Jews unmolested; or that, after the occupation of *Peræa*, in 68 A.D., peace was established here, and that this region was therefore practically beyond the area of political commotion at the time when the Christians fled to it. Whether the true explanation be of this sort; or, whether there was indeed some Christian nucleus in the place through the teaching of Jesus or of St. Paul, as has been suggested above; or, whether it was a case of that *genius loci*, unaccountable but quite real, which gives individuality to every town and

Damascus,” and the most important city on the road from Damascus through Arabia was the rock-fortress of Pella.

\* Neander, “General Church History,” ii. p. 13.

village in the world, it seems certain that for Christians of Jewish descent Pella had some peculiar attraction.

One other matter I must briefly refer to before we look round upon the existing ruins, and that is the reference to Pella in the Apocalypse of St. John. There can scarcely be a doubt that Pella was that "place prepared of God," which received the Church and nourished her when she "fled into the wilderness" (Rev. xii. 6). The passage which describes how "the serpent cast out of his mouth after the woman water as a river that he might cause her to be carried away by the stream," vividly reminds us of the winter rains and the swollen floods which warred against the Church when "they that were in Judæa fled unto the mountains." Josephus has given a terrible picture of a fugitive band of Jews pursued by the Romans, seeking in vain along the banks of the Jordan for some ford still passable amid the winter floods, and driven by their enemies into the stream to perish. But "there were given to the woman the two wings of the great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness unto her place where she is nourished." This city of Pella received and nourished the infant Church, and for that, if for no other reason, it is for us a holy spot.\*

I confess that, until I saw the ruins at Fahil, I had always thought of Pella as a remote and quiet nook, a secret village among the mountains. Most writers, indeed, lay stress upon its suitability as a hiding-place for the early Christians, from its situation if not from its obscurity. It could not, however, have been either secret or obscure. It is open to the Jordan Valley, and its ruins are perfectly visible from many places on the western bank of that river, notably from the tell at Beisân. It was, moreover, situated on a principal trade-route, and it could only in a certain particular sense be spoken of as in "the wilderness." The Decapolis was so far from being a "wilderness" in the sense of being uninhabited or uncivilised, that it exhibits even to-day the most remarkable remains of Greek civilisation which Palestine can show. Nevertheless, the Jew of Jerusalem doubtless always thought of the country on the east of Jordan as "the wilderness." By tradition it was Arab country, and the splendid cities of the Greeks which were built in Peræa were, after all, but a fringe of civilisation bordering the wild and

\* Rev. xii. 13-17. See Hausrath, "Time of the Apostles," iv. pp. 252, 253 (Eng. trans.).

limitless desert. In this technical sense Pella was in the "wilderness"; but the fancy picture of a hidden village must certainly be corrected; even in A.D. 70 it was not that.

Some of the ruins surrounding our camp doubtless belonged to later centuries, but the greater number and the most important date from the days of Greek commerce and Roman rule—from the lifetime of Jesus and the days of Israel's doom. To these ruins and to the general situation of the place it is now time for us to turn.

Our camp had accompanied us to-day instead of going on ahead, as dragoman and muleteers were alike ignorant of the country; so, as soon as we arrived, the men had set to work to pitch the tents. The spot chosen was the highest point available close to the mud village of Fahil, for, although an inviting valley lay below us with a sparkling stream which washed the ruins of the ancient Pella, we knew that to camp in the hollow near the marshy ground might mean fever, and even the dusty threshing-floor of Fahil was better than that.

The modern village occupies what was a sort of secondary Acropolis of Pella, the main Acropolis being on Tell el-Hosn—the summit rising on the south; for Pella is not, like Gadara, on the mountain-heights, but mainly on a plateau raised only a little above the Jordan Valley and overlooked by high hills both on the south and north. It may, however, be described as relatively high, and it has an intrenched position. On the north there is a depression which is partly artificial; on the east there is also a slope, though of no great height; on the west is the descent to the lower level of the Ghôr, and on the south is a very steep decline, almost precipitous in parts, which falls to the wâdi down which runs the beautiful stream just mentioned. The whole platform is about four or five acres in extent.

Round about the wretched huts of the villagers are strewn the remains of some of the principal buildings of the old city. One of these, which lies on the west of the village looking away to the Jordan, has been very fully described by Schumacher,\* and is stated by him to be a Christian church of uncertain period, perhaps a Roman basilica transformed into a Christian meeting-place, or perhaps a

\* "Pella," 1895, p. 45.

Crusading work added to a previous Christian church. The remains of another public building lay eastward of our camp, and is mentioned by Robinson in his "Later Biblical Researches" (p. 321). He describes them as those of "a temple, or perhaps a church."

The ride from Mkès to Fahil had taken only five hours and a half, so that by early afternoon we had refreshed ourselves with food and rest and were ready to explore the ruins. I asked the sheikh of the village whether he knew of any inscriptions among the scattered stones, and he took me at once to an oblong slab which lay among the remains last mentioned. It measured 5 ft. 10 in. by 2 ft. 2 in. by 9 in., and bore the name Thomas in Greek letters. I spent some time in taking a squeeze of the inscription, but found afterwards that it had been already noticed by Robinson.

The glare and heat of the sun were so fierce that I was now fain to take shelter in the tent till they had somewhat abated. Later in the afternoon I ventured forth again, and, leaving the withered, dusty hill, descended toward the crystal stream which wandered in the hollow beneath us (Fig. 38). This hollow is, in fact, a winding valley, though from some points of view the folds of the hills seem to shut it in and give it the appearance of an enclosed basin. The name of it is the Wādi-el-Jirm, and the spring which rises in it is the Jirm el-Moz. The steep descent to it is cut into terraces, parts of the retaining walls of which remain. These terraces are such a noticeable feature that it seems more probable that they gave rise to the name of the place, Tubukât Fahil (Terraces of Fahil), than that it was so called, as Robinson supposes,\* because a part of the town was built on the terrace or plateau which overlooks the Ghôr. A great part of the houses of Pella seem to have been built upon these steps in the hillside. A little to the east, where the slope is less abrupt, their ruins lie in orderly ranks, row above row, just as they have fallen. Their general appearance at this part may be seen from the accompanying photograph (Fig. 37). The man in the foreground is one of the inhabitants of the village. Round about the fountain which rises near the foot of this slope are hewn stones and fallen columns of great size, in which Schumacher recognised the ruins of yet another temple † (Fig. 39).

I searched among the ruins for some time in the hope of

\* "Later Researches," p. 321.

† "Pella," p. 22.



FIG. 38.—PELLA : THE WÂDI EL-JIRM



FIG. 39.—PELLA : TEMPLE RUINS



finding inscriptions, but without result, much to Hanna's distress, who proposed that I should mount and ride to the ruins on the southern height, where he thought there might be a better chance of discoveries. I was, however, too exhausted from illness, and too weary from the exertion of the day, inconsiderable as it was, for this to be possible. The ruins in question, which stand upon a hill 170 feet higher than Fahil, are those mentioned above as Tell el-Hosn, and, according to Schumacher, formed "the naturally protected Acropolis of Fahil, or Pella." I regretted not to be able to explore them, and still more to leave the place without penetrating to any of those caves which Schumacher found in the neighbourhood, and concerning one of which he says that "it may be accepted as beyond doubt that we here have a cave once inhabited by those Christian anchorites who, in the beginning of the Christian era and during the Jewish wars, found a refuge in Pella."



## CHAPTER XXV

### FROM PELLA TO SCYTHOPOLIS

WE rather dreaded going down into the Ghôr again, and still more did we dread travelling and camping there, as we must do if we were to carry out our idea of following the line of the Last Journey and keeping to the valley of the Jordan as far as Jericho. The heat grew greater each day, and worse than the heat was the oppression occasioned, I suppose, by the great depth of the valley below the sea, which increased, of course, with every hour, as we descended towards the Dead Sea. It was, moreover, not a comfortable thought that we were some days' ride from any doctor.

Finally, we decided to recross the Jordan and pursue our journey to Jerusalem by way of Beisân and Thebez. Beisân, the Bethshan of the Old Testament, and the Scythopolis of Josephus, was well worth seeing, and by this route we should travel for the most part over high ground, which was an important consideration.

Of course, directly we had made up our minds to this course, Hanna veered round and was for continuing the journey due southward. He had apparently lost by this time his timidity concerning the tribes of the Ghôr, and declared himself to be enamoured of the "beautiful road" which we had been following. The temperature, he declared, was quite pleasant, and, in short, we should make a great mistake if we altered our plan. We altered it nevertheless, and left Fahil for Beisân at eight o'clock on the morning of April 3rd, all the camp travelling together under the guidance of the village sheikh.

A dear old fellow that sheikh was, with a gentle, sorrowful face. He had enough, no doubt, to make him sad, for he told us that the drought had so utterly destroyed their crops that the village must be broken up. They rented their land from the Sultan, and the rent and taxes would absorb all the produce and more, and there would be

nothing left to eat. Half the people of the village had already departed, and the rest were making ready to go.

Where were they going? Who can say? In such cases the families disperse, each travelling where it thinks to find subsistence; passing perhaps to some other district where relatives may be living. Sometimes they even take to a wandering life, as in the case of the Ta'amireh tribe in the south, who are not true Bedawin, but fellahin who have reverted to the nomad state.

We dropped down the hill, with the old sheikh riding on a white horse at our head. As soon as we reached the valley we turned northward, retracing the way by which we had come on the previous day. After riding along the track in this direction for half an hour, our guide slanted off towards the river across a wild prairie gay with flowers. In the beds of streams were oleanders in full flower, tall reeds and sedge and jointed canes fifteen or twenty feet high. On the open plain were scarlet poppies, huge white umbels, yellow marigolds, purple thistles, pale yellow scabious, light pink mallows, hollyhocks pink and sometimes white, and the whole expanse was dotted with green mimosa bushes.

Across this flowery country we rode for about an hour and a half and then struck the Jordan, which we found flowing rapidly through a dense thicket of large tamarisk trees, very different from the puny bushes which wave their feathers in our English gardens. For a short distance we followed up the winding stream, till an opening in the thicket showed us a shelving shore and a broad channel. Our sheikh, on his white horse, quietly entered the water, striking diagonally down stream, in which direction, apparently, the shoal lay. Hanna had tried to frighten us by saying that the ford would be too deep, and that if we got across at all, it would only be by hiring camels for the passage; but as we sat in the saddle the water only reached to our ankles.

There was some difficulty in getting the donkeys across, but at length they and the mules with tents and baggage were safely landed, and we found ourselves and our belongings once more in Western Palestine. Just as we reached the bank a party of Bedawin came down to cross the ford from west to east. There were women with them, and a boy of twelve. I never saw a child of that age so terrified at water. He struggled and wept and utterly

refused to descend to the shore, till one of the men seized him, flung him across his shoulder and bore him through the river howling all the way. I asked the name of their tribe, and learned that they were Ghawârîneh. (Fig. 41).

The old sheikh now took leave of us. He came crouching toward me, fell upon his knees touching his brow and breast, and then seized my hand and kissed it. The expression of his eyes was most pathetic; there was suffering and fear induced by human tyranny, where naturally there would have shone only a gentle and affectionate spirit. It hurt me to have this good old man crawling at my feet.

Before we leave this ford I must mention that according to the Survey Map it seems to be the one which Colonel Conder identifies with Bethabara (Fig. 40). The whole Bethabara question we must hold in suspense until we have visited the fords near Jericho, only mentioning here that I did not find the name Abâra, which Conder says that he heard here, used to designate this ford. I asked the fellahin of Fahil what they called it, and they told me they knew it only by the name "Makhâda," while the Bedawin on both banks told me that their name for it was "Hammud." Hanna could not see what it mattered, since "Makhâda," he said, "means just the same as Abâra, your English word 'ford.'"

But whether or not this was indeed the Bethabara of John i. 28, it was certainly at one time a much-used passage across the river, since it lies on the main route to Bethshan or Scythopolis. Whether it was the Bethbarah of Judges vii. 24, which the men of Ephraim were set by Gideon to guard, seems as uncertain as whether it was the New Testament Bethabara, but it was doubtless by this ford that the men of Jabesh-Gilead crossed, when they stole by night to the walls of Bethshan and rescued thence the headless bodies of Saul and his three sons after the fatal battle of Gilboa.

To that city of Bethshan we now turned our faces. The modern village is still known as Beisân, the Greek name Scythopolis having dropped into oblivion, and its most ancient Hebrew name, with slight variation, having, as in so many other cases, returned to it. The path from the river-bank soon struck the broad, well-worn, and rather dusty road which conducts the traveller to the notable ruins and the lofty tell which mark the historic site. A ride



FIG. 40 CONDER'S "BETHABARA"



FIG. 41 BEDAWIN WOMEN BY JORDAN



of about an hour and a half from the Jordan bank brought us to them.

We had been strongly advised to encamp on the top of the tell, but Hanna said this was quite impracticable, the height and steepness were such that no laden beast could climb it, and he bade us look for ourselves if what he said was not true. Certainly it appeared so. The black tell reared its head from the plain and frowned upon us with a forbidding aspect. The sides were precipitous and appeared inaccessible. There was, however, if we had but known it, a fairly easy ascent from a saddle on the western side. Whether Hanna did not know, or did not wish to know this, I cannot say. For my own part, short as our day's ride had been, I felt quite unfit for anything but to get the tent pitched upon the most easily accessible spot and throw myself upon the bed to rest. The spot chosen was somewhat dry and dusty, but there was a beautiful orchard of figs and pomegranates near by, where we could get some shade.

We were on a low hill just outside the town, the edge of the great Plain of Jezreel, which here breaks off and drops suddenly by a descent of three hundred feet to the level of the Ghôr. It is, in fact, the bank of the great river-lake which filled the whole valley in the Pluvial period.

To the north-east we looked across a swampy valley, watered by a stream, to the artificial-looking tell behind it. On the slope just below our camp stood the ruins of the great theatre. A bridge, a colonnade, the ruins of a street, and other remains fill the valley. On the saddle to the west of the tell are columns of a temple and traces of the city wall.

The view from the tell I did not see, but from my fellow-traveller's account it must be fine. To the west lay the Plain of Esdraelon, stretching away between mountain ranges to the sea. To the east lay the Jordan Valley, with its curious mounds hiding the river from sight, and beyond it the great range of Gilead. The setting sun shone full upon the eastern hills. Their rounded masses of basalt, scored with deep hollows, lay piled terrace-wise higher and higher to the summits, beyond which they stretch away towards the desert. To the north-west lay the slopes of Gilboa, and a little to the east of north was Hermon, lined with a few remaining streaks of snow.

At Beisân we are still 320 feet below the Mediterranean,

low, therefore, in relation to the country on the west, though high with respect to the bed of the Jordan. The place is planted, indeed, as already explained, on the verge of a long terrace-slope. It is important, however, to remember that although this cliff running north and south breaks the surrounding country into two, there lies below it a breadth of plain stretching three miles or more to the east, and above it there lies the Plain of Jezreel running westward for a dozen miles or more and then issuing in the great battleground of Palestine, the Plain of Esdraelon.

It is this which explains why the people of Bethshan became famous for their chariots—"All the Canaanites that dwell in the land of the valley have chariots of iron, both they who are in Bethshan and her towns, and they who are in the Valley of Jezreel." The flat country by which they were surrounded gave them opportunity for the use of these dreaded chariots. This gave the people of Bethshan a great advantage; "Manasseh," we read, "did not drive out the inhabitants of Bethshan and her towns, . . . but the Canaanites would dwell in that land."

It is probable, indeed, that up to the very end Bethshan never became a Hebrew or a Jewish town. It retained its Canaanitish population long after the Israelitish occupation of Palestine; in Saul's reign it belonged to the Philistines: in the days of the Maccabees it was Greek, although there were many Jews settled there; and Josephus tells us how, so late as A.D. 65, the inhabitants massacred all the Jews within its walls.

In the time of Christ it was one of the chief cities of the Decapolis, and was known as Scythopolis.\* Whether Jesus ever entered it we cannot tell: the probabilities depend upon the view we take of the scope of His mission. If He confined that mission mainly to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel," it is unlikely that He entered Scythopolis. No pious Jew of His day would voluntarily enter so pagan a city. Everything he saw would be abhorrent, and the very stones of the place would defile him. The temples, the hippodrome, and this massive theatre below us were all alien and sinful; and yonder black Acropolis, crowned by its buildings and fortress-wells, which stood like some spirit of wicked pride

\* Possibly from a colony of Scythians, descendants of settlers left there during the Scythian invasion of Palestine, which, according to Herodotus, had taken place six centuries before. At the present day, the settlers in it are said to be of Egyptian origin.

frowning on the humble Jew as he toiled along the sultry road to Shechem, must have seemed to him like the embodiment of that heathen power which overwhelmed and oppressed him. But whether Jesus ever lingered there or not, His eyes must often have beheld its pagan grandeur, for the three roads through Decapolis gathered at this point into one, as we have already seen, and the main routes to Jerusalem through Shechem, and to Egypt from Damascus, passed beneath its walls, so that most Jews would have occasion at some time in their lives to pass along so frequented a road.

As to the theatre, although it is termed in Baedeker an "amphitheatre," it is, strictly speaking, not correct to call it so. It is semicircular, like the theatre at Gadara, with a proscenium 180 feet in length. There are six *cunei*, or sections, containing rows of seats ; and the *vomitoria*, or passages for entrance and exit of the spectators, are in perfect preservation. The whole building is very massive, and is constructed, like everything else at Beisân except certain marble pillars, of dark volcanic basalt.



## CHAPTER XXVI

### FROM SCYTHOPOLIS, BY THEBEZ, TO JERUSALEM

WE struck our camp early the next morning, and, turning our back upon the ruins of the ancient city, passed through the modern town. It appears to be a growing place. In England we should not consider it as ranking above a village, but as it has perhaps a hundred houses, many of which are built of stone, and a regular street with the houses ranged side by side, instead of being scattered promiscuously after the usual Palestine fashion, we may perhaps allow the term "town" to be used. On the outskirts of the place a troop of Turkish soldiers were making a road. They had fitted up as a roller the shaft of a venerable marble pillar, filched from the old Greek ruins, and were dragging the poor ancient to and fro over the loose rubble of the new roadway. There was something rather painful in the lack of veneration implied in these proceedings.

For a couple of hours or so our way lay along the upper terrace of the Jordan Valley. Once we passed some small plots of cultivated land through which a little stream ran, and here booths had been erected, made of the woven boughs of trees—some round, like those we had already seen on the roofs of the houses at Bâniyâs and elsewhere, but most square with flat roofs. These are, doubtless, the structures which the prophet had in mind when he spoke of forlorn Jerusalem as "left as a booth in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers." They looked pretty enough on this bright April day, with the growing crop around them; but when the crop is gathered, and the watchman gone, and the lodge left standing empty on the black earth, we can see how the simile applies.

Then, leaving the Upper Ghôr, we struck into the hills by a wâdi, the floor of which was of rocks polished by the traffic to such a degree that neither man nor horse could without the greatest difficulty stand upright upon their glassy

surface. We dismounted and led our beasts by the bridle, proceeding at a snail's pace, and taking it in turn to fall down. All the four horses we had with us—the dragoman's, the groom's, and our own—fell more than once.

This wâdi, which ran from east to west, led into another running north and south, and turning southward we were able at length to pursue our way with better speed. Presently Hammad trotted forward to prepare a place for our mid-day rest, and in due course we found ourselves lying under the shadow of a spreading tree, and listening to the cry of the cuckoo.

This was not the first time in our journey that we heard that homely bird. I had noticed it first at the end of March as I was wandering along the western shore of the Sea of Galilee; it called across the lake from the eastern cliffs. We heard it again on April 2 as we rode down the Jordan Valley from Gadara to Pella. And now, on the 4th of the month, its cry was frequent and persistent. This is earlier, of course, than we hear it in England, April 14 being known as "cuckoo-day" in our southern counties. According to Hanna, the Arabs call the bird "hûd-hûd," softening after their usual fashion the explosive consonants which we northerners prefer. Or, is that what the cuckoo really says, and is it merely tradition which makes us Britishers hear the guttural in the cuckoo's cry?

It seems strange that so noticeable a bird should not be mentioned in the Bible,\* but there are many such silences that are almost equally remarkable. The gorgeous butterflies, for instance, which we had seen in Galilee are never once alluded to, nor the fire-flies near Gennesaret; and there are many striking flowers—such as the lupine, the hollyhock, the oleander, and the beautiful scented mimosa—which one would have expected to meet with somewhere in the course of the Scriptures; though it must be admitted, no doubt, that much uncertainty lingers round the names of Scripture plants, and that the mimosa, for instance, may possibly be represented by one of the many Bible words for "thorns."

We reached our camp at Tûbâs after a four hours' ride. The name answers to the Scripture Thebez, and the situation tallies with that of Thebez as given by Eusebius and Jerome. In modern times it was first identified in 1838, when Robinson and Smith visited it, and described it in their "Biblical

\* The word rendered "cuckoo" in Lev. xi. 16 and Deut. xiv. 15 (A.V.) is given as "sea-mew" in the Revised Version.

Researches."\* Tourists do not often come here, and, indeed, beyond the beauty of the situation, there is little enough to see.

The modern village, like the ancient town, is built on the slope of a hill, with a fine plain before it, better wooded than most of the plains in this part of Palestine. Mount Gerizim can be seen from it, Nablús being, indeed, only ten or twelve miles distant.

This reminds us that Thebez is linked with Shechem in that weird story of Abimelech, the son of Gideon, killing his seventy brothers, and seizing upon the government in Shechem. And it fits the continuation of the story, which tells how three years afterwards Abimelech marched to this city of Thebez, which had made common cause with the Shechemites, and how he met his death here; for "Abimelech came unto the tower, and fought against it, and went hard unto the door of the tower to burn it with fire; and a certain woman cast an upper millstone upon Abimelech's head, and brake his skull."†

I told this story to Hanna, to whom it was new. He was greatly impressed, especially with the "cleverness" of the woman who dropped the millstone.

As to the village itself, there is little that is ancient about it. It consists mainly of the usual mud-built houses, nor could I see any traces of ruins. There are mounds, however, round about the village, which may perhaps contain relics of the ancient city. The village is said to be well-to-do. Formerly it paid a heavy bribe to escape the conscription; whether it does so still, I do not know; but certainly there seemed to be more well-clad men about than in most of the villages which we had visited. I watched them in the evening driving home their cattle, and the women carrying home great bundles of leafy firewood, which is here comparatively abundant.† (Figs. 42, 43.)

Up to five-and-twenty years ago, and perhaps later, Thebez constantly suffered from incursions of the Eastern Bedawin. A glance at the map shows the reason for this, for it lies almost in the line of that notable cleft in the

\* Vol. iii. (1841) p. 158.

† James Finn, at one time British consul in Jerusalem, mentions, in his "Byeways of Palestine," that "the natural soil here is so fertile that its wheat and its oil, together with those of Hanoon, fetch the highest prices in towns, and the grain is particularly sought after as seed for other districts."



FIG. 42. NATIVES OF THEREZ



FIG. 43. THEREZ: DRIVING HOME THE CATTLE



mountain-mass, which extends down the Jabbok on the east of Jordan, and up the Wâdi Fâra on the west. It is probable, indeed, that those wild and very ancient Bedawin, the tribes of Israel, passed into the land of Canaan by this very route, crossing the Jordan by the Ford of Damieh, when they took possession of the Shechem Valley, the earliest of Israel's settlements.\*

At Tûbâs we were but fourteen hours from Jerusalem, and it was now the Thursday before the Latin Easter ; so, as our men much desired to spend the feast in the Holy City, we resolved to ride seven hours on each of the next two days, that we might reach our journey's end by Saturday night.

Our southward way was through scenery which was often wild and grand. We passed Ain el-Fâra, which has been identified by some with Ænon, though it is about five miles from Salim, which is supposed to be the Salem to which Ænon was "near." Then we climbed the high slopes of Ebal, whence we looked down into the noble valley between that mountain and the opposing height of Neby Belan. From this mountain road we came down close to Askar, which may well be the Sychar of the New Testament and the Talmud. The Fountain of Sychar which the Talmud mentions is a very fine spring in the middle of the village, used by all the inhabitants. We crossed the Sâhil el-Askar, which is doubtless the Plain of Sychar also mentioned in the Talmud, and so arrived for the second time at Jacob's Well.

Thence we pursued the road, which in the reverse direction we had already travelled, across the green Plain of Makhnah, past our old camping-ground at Huwâra, where the children rushed out upon us noisily demanding bakhshish ; thence again to el-Lubban, which has been already described, arriving soon afterwards at Sinjil, where our camp was perched.

Nothing new occurred by the way except that a fellah who was travelling southwards on foot sought our protection. He explained that he had enemies in that district, who would attack and kill him if they found him alone. So for several miles he walked beside our horses, a living reminder that the ancient custom of the blood-feud still remains in force in this barbarous country.

\* See "Encycl. Bibl.," arts. "Israel" and "Jericho."

Sinjl,\* where we slept that night, lies high, and the air was cold and bracing. Its huts are surrounded by vines and fig-trees and by well tilled fields. The men of the village seemed lively and well-to-do as they sat in a circle near our tents engaged in eager talk. We had missed this place on our northward journey by reason of the détour which we had made to visit Shiloh. The junction with the path to the latter place was passed soon after we started next morning, and from this point onwards our road was identical with that which we had travelled in leaving Jerusalem four weeks before. It took us past Bethel, Beeroth, Ramah, Gibeah of Benjamin, and Shafât, and so along the weary length of newly-made road and over Scopus into Jerusalem. I fear that the joy of a safe return and the relief of knowing that now one could have a day's rest, needful physic, and suitable diet, caused me to act in a most undignified manner, for no sooner had we dismounted at the hotel door than seizing Hanna's hand in the open street I shook it warmly, to his unmeasured amazement.

\* Sinjl is a corruption of St. Giles, "one of the few names," says Professor G. A. Smith, "which the Crusaders stamped on the land," for here was "a castle or manor of the Order of St. John, presented to them by a Robert of St. Giles."

## CHAPTER XXVII

### JERUSALEM—CALVARY AND THE TOMB

AT last a day on which to stretch one's legs, a day with no packing or unpacking, no weary stiffening of one's back, a day for resting and strolling! Oh, the comfort of standing upon your own feet! It was April 7 and Easter Sunday; that is to say, the Latin Easter. For, as with the holy sites so with the holy seasons: everything in Palestine is duplicated. You not only take your choice between the Latin Gethsemane and the Greek Gethsemane, but also between the Latin Easter and the Greek Easter. The Greek Church keep to the old style, and their Easter Day will arrive a week later than that which is reckoned by the Gregorian Calendar.

Meanwhile, here was our own Easter morning, somewhat grey and chill, more like our home weather than the scorching heat and blinding glare which these Eastern skies had hitherto poured down upon us. It seemed fitting to-day to visit the tomb which we believed to have upon the whole the best claim to be associated with the Resurrection story—the sepulchre cut in the face of that cliff which adjoins what is known as “Gordon’s” Calvary.\*

After breakfast, therefore, we strolled to the north of the city, passed through the Damascus Gate, and crossing the broad road which runs parallel with the northern defences, found ourselves presently opposite to the far-famed hill or knoll which surmounts the ancient quarry known as Jeremiah’s Grotto. “Gordon’s” Calvary and “Gordon’s” Sepulchre are named after the famous General Gordon, because these were the sites he favoured as the scenes of the Gospel tragedy; although Conder pointed

\* Subsequent reading has led me to be more doubtful about this site than I was at the time of my visit to it. The whole subject of Calvary and Sepulchre has been exhaustively treated by the late Sir Charles Wilson in his posthumous work, “Golgotha.”



out this knoll as the probable site of the Crucifixion long before it was adopted by Gordon, and the tomb was visited by both Conder and Schick at the time of its excavation, in 1873, ten years before Gordon set eyes upon it.

It was not without a thrill that I stood before that ancient scarp and raised my eyes to the summit of the little hill upon which, as I believed, the Cross of Christ had been planted. It would not be true to say that I had no lingering doubts; in fact, the uncertainty attaching to nearly all the sacred sites is the most distressing element in Palestine travel.

However, here was the knoll, and here was the cliff with its tomb, and it was open to us at any rate to get a better understanding of the arguments "for" and "against" advanced by the champions of the rival theories through an examination of the spot itself. Our Easter visit to the tomb we reserved till we had first considered the Calvary.

The "Mount" is not, as I had imagined it, a semi-spherical elevation, giving one a representation of the crown of a skull. The top of it is but very slightly rounded, and that only at one point in the ridge. Sir Charles Wilson says, indeed, that this rounded surface is only the effect of accumulated rubbish, and that the rock bed is flat. However that may be, the name Golgotha could never have been derived from the form of the hill, if this is the hill so named. General Gordon's fantastic notion that the skull is to be found not in the shape of the hill, nor in any other appearance visible to the passer-by, but in the ground-plan or bird's-eye view of the hill itself may surely be disregarded. The hill could never have been named by cartographers. The name, whencesoever derived, was certainly given, as nearly all such place names are given, by the peasant population, or by the Jerusalem man-in-the-street.

Keeping to this idea we looked next for the skull-like face said to be visible on the cliff front. The morning being, as I have said, grey and cloudy, there were no deep shadows in the caves and fissures of the precipice to help the illusion; and I am fain to confess that at first I failed to see the death's-head before me. But my companion, being of a more perceptive nature, immediately pointed it out; and it is certain that the gigantic face of Death once seen can never again be missed, it catches the eye every time the place is passed.



FIG. 44.—"GORDON'S" CALVARY



FIG. 45.—"GORDON'S" SEPULCHRE



There is something grimly fascinating in the notion that this is indeed the "Gulgolta" or skull from which the populace had named the place ; and one awaits with impatience further evidence as to the history of this cliff, how and when through this rocky spur of the upland the great cutting was made which produced this broken surface and separated it by so wide a gap from the city wall. Was it made prior to the Crucifixion, and did it bear the same appearance then as now ? \* One is even inclined to say that wherever the true Calvary is situated, it must have been some such deathly apparition which suggested its designation ; the theory is so simple and does away at a stroke with the many far-fetched guesses as to the origin and meaning of the name.

A broad road runs between the cliff and the wall of the city ; and between the road and the cliff there are gardens. Skirting the gardens we climbed to the top of the little hill. The ascent is easy, for the hill is broken only on the one side, that which faces the city ; on the other sides the slope is gradual. In fact, the place is perfectly adapted for such a spectacle as that of the Crucifixion. It is the one obvious spot to which the procession leaving Antonia and issuing from the northern gate would wend its way. Here, as if made for the purpose, was a little hill set right opposite to the city, and separated from the new suburb of Bezetha by 600 or 700 feet ; so that women and quiet citizens, who did not care to mingle with the rough mob that thronged the plain below the knoll, or crowded up its sides, could stand upon the house-tops in Bezetha and view the tragedy "from afar."

And this would be possible, even if the execution was carried out at the foot of the cliff, and not upon its summit. For, in trying to reconstruct the scene, we have to remember that it is not certain that the Crucifixion took place upon a hill. We speak always of Mount Calvary, but we have in fact no Scripture authority for describing Calvary as a "Mount." The "Monticulus" from which our "Mount" Calvary is derived was artificially produced by cutting away the rock round the traditional or ecclesiastically-sanctioned tomb ; and it is possible that the Crucifixion took place not

\* Such evidence as exists has now been set forth in the late Sir Charles Wilson's posthumous work, "Golgotha," referred to above. It points strongly to the "skull" on the cliff being of later date than the Crucifixion.

upon a "mount" at all, but on some level space below the walls or house-tops. Quite apart, however, from the evidence or want of evidence furnished by tradition, the probabilities would seem to be in favour of such an elevation as this upon which we stood. Our own islands furnish many instances of the "Gallows Hill," and it is plain that convenience would dictate the use, whether in East or West, of carrying out executions on some hillock or platform which would more or less completely isolate the operators and the guards from the encumbering mass of spectators. On the whole the general appearance and surroundings of this place tend to conviction.

Descending now from the rocky platform to the level of the plain below it, we paid our Easter visit to the Tomb. To discuss the historical evidence for the Resurrection, or the spiritual evidence for that greater truth which it symbolises, would be out of place here: our Easter meditations may be left unrecorded. We are concerned only with the question which hung upon our lips as we approached the Sepulchre: Was this in truth the tomb "hewn out of a rock" in which they laid our Lord? If only that question could be answered! One longs to believe in it, for the spot is a fitting one, and it answers in many respects to the story.

Having paid our little fee and passed through the door in the enclosing wall, we found ourselves in a garden. It is shaded by pomegranates and fig-trees; brightly coloured poppies and sweet-scented stocks grow in luxuriant confusion; and in the crevices of the rock-face in which the sepulchre is hewn tufts of furry borage have taken root. The custodian tells us that this is "the hyssop that springeth out of the wall," but Canon Tristram identifies that scriptural plant with the caper.\*

In the garden there is a tomb, and at the threshold of the tomb is a long groove, in which, so it is said, the circular stone rolled to and fro to close and unclothe the door. "He rolled a stone against the door of the tomb." Certain it is that such rolling stones were in use at the beginning of our era, and that this groove is of the precise width of that of

\* The plant which hangs in tufts from the rock-face at the Sepulchre is, to be precise, the *Alkanna orientalis*, a plant allied to the borage. The caper grows in the crevices of the Harâm wall. Dr. Post believes that the hyssop was an *Origanum*.

the "Tombs of the Kings" in which the stone itself is still to be seen.

Passing through the narrow doorway, we stand in a low flat-roofed chamber hewn in the solid rock. To the right and the left of the short passage which bisects it are two *loculi* or trough-like receptacles for dead bodies. The one on the left is indicated as that in which the body of Christ was probably laid (Fig. 45).

Our guide points to the chisel-marks upon the left-hand wall and maintains that they show this wall to have been unfinished, proving that this was a "new" tomb, as the Arimathean Joseph's is recorded to have been. He also points to marks of places where wooden wedges were inserted which when wetted expanded and split the rock—the ancient method of blasting.

In spite, however, of all that one sees and all that is said, we cannot feel any high degree of assurance that this is indeed the tomb of the Arimathean Jew. One is haunted by the knowledge that this was for long years a Christian tomb, that Crusading folk were buried here, that crosses were painted on the walls of it; and by the recollection that the whole weight of the Sepulchre-theory hangs by so slender a thread as the suspicion or belief that, though at one time Christian and containing Christian additions and alterations, it was enlarged from a smaller tomb of Jewish origin. These matters, however, must be studied hereafter; the morning has been wearing on, and it is time for us to return to our hostelry. A visit to an alternative Sepulchre, known as "Conder's," is recorded in a later chapter.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### AN EXCURSION TO JERICHO

THE next day the sun showed himself again, though the air was still somewhat sharp. We left Jerusalem at two o'clock for an excursion to Jericho, where we were to spend a clear day, staying at the Jordan Hotel for two nights. It is a five hours' drive from Jerusalem to Jericho, nearly the whole journey being a precipitous descent. Our dragoman Hanna, who had now discarded the keffiyeh and agâl, and wore the simple scarlet tarbûsh, sat beside the driver, and we had as an outrider a mounted Bedawi, whom Hanna had engaged the day before.

The mode of engaging an Arab escort is peculiar. It is done through the "Sheikh of the Escorts," who resides in Jerusalem. Hanna had met him on the previous day as we were walking in the street : a tall, spare man, more imposing than the average Bedawi, who is rather short and small-made. Payment (which is virtually blackmail) is made to the sheikh, and you are then provided with a man of his tribe to accompany you, and are immune from robbery. How far there is really danger of robbery by a road which is now so much frequented I do not know, but I imagine it might still be unsafe for a European to wander unguarded in the neighbourhood of Jericho.

The escort provided by the sheikh was the best specimen of the true Bedawi whom I had seen. He was dressed in a black abâ and white keffiyeh, and was superbly mounted. He liked to show off his horse and his riding. Every now and then he would dart away from our side, gallop his horse furiously over a stretch of loose stony ground, plunge into some gully or behind some hill, and presently reappear at some unexpected point, or show himself like an equestrian statue on some lofty rock, with the dainty limbs of his glossy steed sharply outlined against the sky.

Our carriage followed behind a long procession of other

vehicles which were taking a party to visit the shores of the Dead Sea. Just outside Jerusalem, on the south slope of the Mount of Olives, we passed the slaughter-house. The filthy smell of the place had attracted a host of vultures, who wheeled round and round it in a slowly-revolving, never-pausing circle, like unclean souls of some Inferno. It reminded us forcibly of the words spoken of this very city: "Where the carcase is there will the eagles be gathered together."

Rounding this spur, we passed Bethany, which is just over the brow. The hill was parched and brown, the roads dusty and the village dirty; the poetry for the moment seemed wanting. The one touch of romance came from the ruined tower in the middle of the village, crowning it and giving to it some approach to dignity. This castle is said to belong to a time earlier than that of the Crusades, though its real age and purpose are, I believe, unknown.

After Bethany there is another slight ascent, and then our road drops rapidly, and we begin that wonderful descent of about 3,400 feet to that terrace above the Jordan bed upon which Jericho is built. Hour after hour down this steep mountain-side we descend till it seems as though we must be descending into the bowels of the earth. And so in a sense we are, for by the time we reach Jericho we shall be some 900 feet below sea-level, and those who go a little further and reach the Dead Sea shore will be no less than 1300 feet below the Mediterranean, and will stand upon the lowest dry land on the surface of this globe.

The drive is dreary and monotonous, through a sea of land-waves, parched and brown, stony, round-topped featureless hills. The whole landscape is redeemed from utter barrenness only by a few patches of green corn, where a little arable earth has here and there accumulated. Down the sides of these desolate limestone moors the road zig-zags mile after mile, our carriage enveloped in a cloud of dust, and the heat and closeness increasing with every league of our descent. The loneliness and desolation of the surrounding wilderness, whose stony undulating mass is intersected by a network of deep valleys sufficient to afford cover for a score of armies, helps us to realise why this was of old time a robber-country, and why Jesus located here that immortal parable concerning one who was "going down from Jerusalem to Jericho" and fell among thieves.



Half way to Jericho stands a khân, which tradition, turning parable into history, associates with that same story of the Good Samaritan ; and here we lingered, while our dragoman, our driver, and our escort refreshed themselves and their beasts before conducting us on our final plunge towards the Ghôr.

Resuming our journey, we found the hill still barren and forbidding, but with a gap now opening out before us, across which was stretched the distant range of Moab, standing like some Titan's wall across our way and lit up now by the sun which was slowly falling behind us. In about an hour after leaving the khân the carriage stopped, and we were invited to dismount and climb the bank on the left of the road. We did so, and saw one of the grandest sights of Palestine. All unknown to ourselves we had been skirting the southern side of the Wâdi el-Kelt, and here we touched a point where we could look down into that mighty rent in the limestone range. "Few mountain gorges in Western lands," says Canon Cheyne, "can compare with it. It is one of the most stupendous chasms in the 'ancient mountains,' so narrow that one can hardly measure twenty yards across the bottom, so deep that one can only just see the slender torrent stream which winds along amidst caves and rank rushes to the Jordan." Canon Tristram regrets that it could not be identified with the brook Cherith of Elijah, especially as he took two ravens' nests with eggs there. Ravens or no ravens, I could not but echo that regret. The place would form such a grand setting for that ancient drama : its wild stern grandeur be so exceedingly appropriate to the grim old prophet of Jehovah. Truly the march of knowledge is sometimes very exasperating, and one is half inclined to throw truth overboard and to shift the scene to suit the story !

Those, however, who remain obstinately determined to set the story in its actual scene will have to seek their brook Cherith somewhere in Gilead on the further side of the Jordan Valley ; perhaps, as Canon Cheyne suggests, in the Wâdi Ruhaibeh. This, at least, is what they must do if they accept the reading which that scholar gives of the word of the Lord which came to Elijah : "Get thee hence from Samaria and turn to the east and hide thyself in the torrent-valley of Cherith which is to the east of Jordan." \*

What, then, is this wild chasm into whose depth we are

\* See "Encycl. Bibl.," art. "Cherith."

now gazing ? If we divorce it from the Elijah tradition, is there any other historical event which we may associate with it in our minds ? It is in all probability the Valley of Zeboim mentioned in that grim story of Samuel, when Saul took upon himself to offer sacrifice because the prophet delayed his coming, and when he started upon his expedition without the prophetic sanction. Into this depth one of the bands of Philistine spoilers is represented as looking down as they skirted it in their march, just as we are looking now.

And there is a later interest. For, those treeless crags are pierced with caves which in early Christian days were inhabited by anchorites. I suppose they felt (as who would not ?) that the scene echoed in some way the tragedy of the soul. Some such feeling, perhaps, led the Greek monks of a later time to build yonder monastery so strangely perched on one of the rocky ledges which break the face of the precipice which fronts us. Or perhaps they hoped for cleansing from the water of the brook which comes down the length of the valley—the sacred brook of Elijah, as they deemed it, and as it is still believed to be by the monks who live there to-day.

We returned to our carriage, and soon afterwards had glimpses of the Jordan Valley and the upper end of the Dead Sea. In another hour we were in full view of the Plain of Jericho, with the course of the Jordan and a large stretch of the Dead Sea clearly visible. The aspect of the plain was disappointing. The traditional luxuriance seemed wholly wanting. Where, then, were the groves of palm, the tangled masses of flowering shrubs, the balsam gardens, the sparkling streams, the tropical glory of this far-famed spot ? What we seemed to see was a vast extent of burnt-up prairie, broken only here and there by little groups or streaks of foliage. Some way out on the plain were the mud hovels of the modern village with four hideous hotels, making this ugly place still uglier ; the only redeeming features being the poplars, tamarisks and cypresses which surmounted it and softened its harshness, and the black tents of the Bedawin, which suggested a very ancient past.

But again we could forget all ugliness as we looked beyond the village and beyond the parched plain and beheld once more the noble range of Moab. That curious scored and crumpled appearance so familiar in Palestine pictures—the prominences standing out in bright orange and ochre and the gullies marked in vertical streaks of deep blue—all

seemed so satisfactory and so fitting, so scriptural from long association, as well as so intrinsically dignified and lovely.

As to Jericho itself, the discrepancy between its traditional glories and its squalid appearance was presently in some sort explained by a certain dry stony reservoir, an ancient ruined pool, which lay upon our right as we neared the foot of the hill. It belonged, so antiquaries tell us, to the old irrigation works, which at one time spread a network of living streams far around, and gave to Jericho the name "City of Palms" and that reputation as an earthly paradise which lingers even yet in spite of the glaring reality.

Another still greater interest attaches to it, for there is little doubt that this is the self-same pool which Herod constructed near to his Jericho palace. We are standing, in fact, in the very midst of the New Testament Jericho, which did not occupy the same site as the Jericho of old Hebrew times, the latter lying some distance to the north. The group of dry mounds which rise on both sides of our road cover the remains of the Jericho of Roman times—the Jericho of Antony, of Herod, of Zacchæus the tax-gatherer.

According to Josephus,\* Cleopatra received from Antony the revenues derived from the balsam and palm-trees of this region, but afterwards Herod the Great compounded for them and came into personal possession of the place, and here it was that he built that royal residence in which he died his loathsome death. I believe we can actually see the place where the springs of Callirhoe run—those hot springs to which the tyrant resorted in his last illness. They still rise on the further shore of yonder blue sea, far away to the south-east. The coast in their immediate neighbourhood, at any rate, is in view; and it was thither that the wretched king painfully travelled, and there that he bathed in vain hope of curing the terrible disease from which he suffered.

Some thirty years after Herod's death a humble prophet of the people passed beneath the palace walls, on the way to his doom. As he issued from the shadow of the palms which waved their fronds above the white houses on the western outskirts of the town, a blind beggar was sitting by the wayside——. One knows the story. The incident is in the earliest record, it cannot be doubted, and it happened almost on the spot where we are standing. Turn round; look up the way we have just come: see the hot dry road, where it climbs those treeless heights. It was much the same

\* "Antiq." xv. iv, 1, 2.

then, for there was never any water between this place and Jerusalem. And the little procession of Galileans, with the rejoicing Bartimæus following the prophet, wended their toilsome way up that same road, just as yonder company of pilgrims with their village-banner is climbing the height to-day.

Another two miles and we halted before the rough wooden structure, dignified by the name of "hotel," which stands in the midst of the group of squalid huts known to the natives as Eriha. And here it may be as well to explain that there are no less than four Jerichos, of which this village of Eriha claims to be one.

The oldest city lies about two miles to the west of our "hotel" : it is buried beneath the mounds which border the so-called Elisha's spring, just below the traditional Mount of Temptation. This is the Jericho of the Old Testament. The second is that which we have just left : the noble and beautiful city of Herod. The traveller from Jerusalem passes through the midst of what must have been the main city, though the houses extended perhaps in scattered fashion as far south as the further side of Wâdi el-Kelt. The third is the Byzantine Jericho, which stood near the site of the Old Testament city, but further from the mountains. It is marked by loose building-stones and fragments of broken pillars buried among the thorn-bushes and coarse herbage in that part of the plain. And the fourth is the Jericho where we have just dismounted and in which we are to stay to-night. This is the Crusaders' Jericho ; and yonder square tower standing a little to the south-east of us, which the credulous tourist accepts from his dragoman as the "House of Zacchæus," is doubtless one of those towers which the Crusaders were accustomed to build along their pilgrim-roads for the protection of the faithful.

Nothing in the way of exploring can be done to-day. The evening is well advanced ; the sun is just about to dip behind the ridge which divides us from Jerusalem, lighting with its parting beams the brown and dusty desert by which we are surrounded, and giving even to that a burnished beauty not to be surpassed. The little clouds which hang in the west are flecked with rosy pink. Darkness falls, the stars come out, we lie down to rest. But sleep comes not ; the breathless heat of this Valley of Sodom smothers us. It wants about an hour to midnight when we rise and wander to the window in a vain attempt to get a mouthful

of freshness out of the stifling night. Shouts and the beating of drums come from a neighbouring camp of Coptic pilgrims. And then, silently, a tinge of silver spreads along the ridge of Moab, out yonder in the east, and slowly, solemnly, the waning moon floats up into the calm sky, and looks down with serene untroubled eye upon our feverish tossing, our troubled thoughts, our weird religions. So looked she down on that last sad journey of our Lord, when He travelled down this same valley of the Jordan on His way to Jerusalem. For I suppose that He slept in Jericho, at the house of Zacchæus, before the last stage of His journey—so at least the story as told by St. Mark would seem to indicate—and it was just at this season of the year. Upon that solemn grief and despairing hope this same Easter-moon looked down with this same untroubled calm. Did her calm seem cold to Him, austere and aloof? Or did it speak to Him of “peace in the high places,” and heal Him with the strength and serenity of God’s own presence?

## CHAPTER XXIX

### FROM JERICHO TO BETH-NIMRAH AND BACK

THE stifling night was over and the glare and dust of a new day begun. Little of freshness has the morning of an April day in Jericho. I had planned for to-day an excursion to Tell Nimrin, which some have held to be the true Bethabara. So I bade good-bye to my companion, who followed in the long tourist procession which was bound for the shores of the Dead Sea, while I and Hanna sought out our Bedawi guide and prepared to start in an opposite direction, for Nimrin lies somewhat higher up the Ghôr than Jericho.

My equine friend, who had carried me for so many days, had been brought over from Jerusalem, and the three of us, Englishman, Syrian, and Bedawi, were soon in the saddle and riding side by side over the withered plain towards the Jordan. I had now an opportunity of observing our Arab guide more particularly. He was a good-looking, lively fellow, undersized but active. Never did I come across such a talker. For fully two hours he kept up an incessant flow of Arabic, interrupted only at long intervals by a word from Hanna.

Our route ran somewhat to the north of east over a flat plain by a broad well-trodden track. Jericho, it must be remembered, stands upon the upper terrace of the Jordan Valley, 900 feet below the Mediterranean, but nearly 400 feet above the bed of the river. It was across this terrace, left by one of the long pauses in the subsidence of the great Jordan lake, that we had hitherto been travelling: and it was not till we had crossed four or five miles of this old lake-bottom (Fig. 46) that we came to the edge, where a further drop was to take us into the Lower Ghôr—the deeper, narrower rift, down the midst of which the river has cut its proper and still more straitened channel.

It was there that we entered that strange labyrinth of

fantastic mounds which never fails to excite the wonder of the traveller who sees it for the first time. Heaps of soft white marl, from twenty to fifty feet in height, have been carved by water and wind into every imaginable shape. Houses, castles, pyramids, cairns, ruined fortresses, terraced citadels, squared and buttressed platforms, are all crowded together, divided from each other only by narrow passages branching in every direction and leading nowhere—a goblin city, silent as the dead, barren as Sahara, grotesque as some nightmare dream. Through this network of alleys we must have ridden, one behind the other, for nearly a mile, without seeing a bush or a blade of grass, before we came into the open.

When we emerged from it we found ourselves not far from the Jordan bank. The river has worn for itself a deep channel, fringed with tamarisk. We crossed it by a quaint, rough-looking wooden bridge, with sides of trellis-work, the entrance being closed by a wooden gate which was guarded by a lodge, where the bridge-keepers resided. The bridge is the property of the Sultan, from whom the custodians rent it, and then extract what they like, or what they can, in the way of tolls from travellers.

On the further bank we entered a broad belt of copse, where for the first time I heard the song of the bulbul. I mistook it at first for that of the nightingale, for it has the same richness and liquid beauty; but I missed the long, piercing note, as if the songster were in pain, which in Philomel's song is so characteristic and unmistakable. But the bulbul, though its voice is so like, is in reality quite distinct from the nightingale, and is more nearly allied to the thrush, though it is, as Tristram says, of "a very marked and distinct species, of which we possess no representative."

After the copse came another zone of fantastic rocks similar to those on the west of the river, but not equal to them in extent or in strangeness of form. Passing through these we emerged on a wide and open plain, brown and withered like the Plain of Jericho which we had left, and strewn like that with loose stones, but studded somewhat more thickly with stumps of green bushes. Among the latter the mimosa prevailed. It was in fruit, and as we rode along our Bedawi gathered and devoured handfuls of the berries. Then, as though it were inhospitable for him to be eating while I fasted, he drew from his saddle-bag a



FIG. 46.— SHORE AND BOTTOM OF PREHISTORIC JORDAN LAKE



FIG. 47.— FORD OF NIMRÎN (BETHABARÂ?)





minute cucumber, which he handed to me with a smile, and of which I ate with relish, finding it very refreshing.

The heat being now oppressive and wearying, I casually asked our Arab when we should arrive at Nimrin.

He immediately answered, "We are in Nimrin already."

"Where, then, is the Tell?" I inquired.

"It is a long way yet to the Tell," he replied.

"Is, then, the whole of this country called 'Nimrin'?" I further inquired.

"The whole of it, down to the Jordan banks."

This struck me as rather important for the purpose of the problem which I had in mind, and I questioned and cross-questioned him, through the lips of my dragoman, but he consistently maintained that the whole district was called Nimrin "down to the very banks of the river."

And now, in a few words, I must explain to my reader why this seemed to me of some importance.

The theory that Tell-Nimrin is the site of Bethabara originated with the late Sir George Grove. In John i. 28, we read: "These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptising." But the oldest MSS. read Bethany instead of Bethabara, and the Revised Version has amended the passage accordingly. Origen, however, although he mentions the fact that almost all the copies of his time had "Bethany beyond Jordan," regarded this as a copyist's slip, and on topographical grounds retained the name Bethabara. It may be argued, moreover, that it is more likely that Bethabara should be altered to a familiar name like Bethany, than that Bethany should be altered to an unfamiliar name like Bethabara; and this may be taken as an additional reason for thinking that Bethabara was the original reading. And yet, on the other hand, there stand the ancient MSS., with their striking consensus in favour of Bethany, a fact which it is impossible lightly to set aside.

Now, it would not be an isolated phenomenon if the original name were some combination of the variants; in the text of the Old Testament instances are known of complex words branching off in this manner into two different components. Suppose, for instance, that the real name of the place had been Bethanabra; then one copyist, omitting or overlooking the final letters, might have substituted Bethany, and another, overlooking two of the middle letters, might have substituted Bethabra—a form of the name

which does, in fact, occur. In this way the alternative readings Bethany and Bethabara would be accounted for.

But this, one may be inclined to say, is merely guess-work. That, however, is not quite the case. For, strange to say, one ancient MS. of the Septuagint actually provides a very near approximation to the suggested name Bethanabra. In Joshua xiii. 27, we find in that copy, instead of the Hebrew name Beth-Nimrah, the form Baithanabra, which looks like a confirmation both of the suggestion that Bethanabra was the form which Beth-Nimrah ultimately took, and also that it is the original word of which Bethany and Bethabara are both corruptions.

It was this theory that Beth-Nimrah was the true Bethabara which had led me to undertake the present expedition. I was quite prepared, if the topographical aspect of the place did not contradict the etymological argument, to abandon the traditional scene of the baptism of Jesus, notwithstanding any prejudice in favour of the Jordan which association might have created. But when my Bedawi so unexpectedly informed me that Nimrin extended to the very banks of the sacred stream, it suddenly struck me that the philological argument and the traditional view might thereby be harmonised. For, suppose that the place where Jesus was baptised was the ford near the junction of the Wâdi Nimrin with the Jordan (Fig. 47). This ford, which is near the wooden bridge by which we had crossed, would at that time be the regular passage used by all who passed to and fro between Jericho and Beth-Nimrah. The town itself is five miles to the east, but the ford would naturally be known as the Ford of Beth-Nimrah, that being the nearest place for which it is available. On that supposition, even though Jesus were baptised in Jordan, the original tradition might very well have run, "These things were done at Beth-Nimrah." Afterwards, when the corruption "Bethany" crept in, the words, "which is beyond Jordan," would be added to distinguish it from the well-known Bethany near to Jerusalem.

However, leaving this speculative point aside for the present, my immediate object was to ascertain what the probabilities were from a topographical point of view. Did Beth-Nimrah look like a place for a public baptising?

This was the point I had chiefly in mind when at length we dismounted at the Tell (Fig. 48). I did not make any extensive survey of the neighbourhood, but saw quite suffi-



FIG. 48.--TELL NIMRIN



FIG. 49.--THE JORDAN NEAR THE MOUTH OF WADI NIMRIN



cient to prove that a town of some extent had once stood there. There were, it is true, no standing ruins, but there were plenty of foundations visible, lines and angles of squared stones, rising just above the surface of the ground—the vestiges of walls and houses of unknown date, overgrown now with brambles, or half-hidden by rank herbage.

Turning my attention next to the stream, I found it to be a mere dribble of water completely choked and smothered in a dense sub-tropical growth. Through the mass of vegetation, which was by no means easy to penetrate, the shallow streamlet, scarcely more than ankle-deep, slowly filtered its way. On the face of it, it seemed impossible that a public baptising could take place at such a spot.

This, however, would of course be a very hasty conclusion to form without further consideration. In the first place, it must be remembered that when Beth-Nimrah was an inhabited town, the vegetation in its neighbourhood would be kept within bounds, and the channel of the stream which is now choked with bushes would lie open to the sun. Then, again, much might have been done by means of damming; at certain seasons a head of water would be collected to be presently used for purposes of irrigation. Furthermore, we have to take into account that the spring of 1901, in which I visited the place, was exceptionally dry; that the rivulet was, therefore, lower than usual, and that a great part of it had been drawn off to water the crops of the fellahin, who cultivate some considerable tracts of ground in the neighbourhood of the Tell. I went to look at their irrigating channels, and found that some of the side-streams which they had conducted to their fields exceeded in volume the main stream which they left behind.

These main points being taken into consideration, no one can say that it is impossible for the baptising of the multitudes to have taken place in this Nahr of Beth-Nimrah. But, on the whole, I lean to the theory which I have suggested above. Those who favour the idea that John baptised close to the town of Beth-Nimrah would perhaps admit that so far as the individual baptism of Jesus is concerned, the original statement of the earliest Gospel that "Jesus came from Nazareth to Galilee, and was baptised of John in Jordan" is to be followed, and they would apply the words of the Fourth Evangelist—"These things were done in Bethabara"—not to the baptism of Jesus, but to John's interview with the deputation from Jerusalem. Bethabara,

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according to this view, would be merely one of several places where John baptised the multitudes.

But even with reference to the baptism of the multitudes, the banks of Jordan seem more probable than the suburbs of Beth-Nimrah. The fact that the words of St. Mark's Gospel are, They "were all baptised of him in the river of Jordan"; the well-known veneration in which that river was held making it the natural instrument of such a national consecration; the fact that Beth-Nimrah was a considerable town, while the Evangelist tells us that "John did baptise in the wilderness"; all favour the idea that the waters of the Jordan near to Beth-Nimrah, rather than those of the little stream which bathed its walls, were those in which the people were cleansed by the prophet.

Did John travel about baptising? Did he ever baptise anywhere except in the sacred river? It is impossible to say. One other passage in the Fourth Gospel mentions him as "baptising at Aenon (the Springs) near to Salim"; but neither Aenon nor Salim has ever been satisfactorily identified. Perhaps, after all, what the Ephesian Evangelist really wrote was that John was baptising at the Springs near Jerusalem, for it is to be noted that it is in connection with the baptism of the Judæans that the statement is made. By this vague statement he may merely have indicated those fords of Jordan which were nearest to the Holy City, the clause "because there were many springs there" being an explanatory gloss. But enough of speculation. These questions, arising from the topography of the Fourth Gospel, can never be settled until the origin and structure of that Gospel are more perfectly known, nor until its historical and symbolical elements have been more clearly distinguished.

On our return journey we kept nearer to the bed of the stream—the Wâdi Nimrin, as it is called—though in this case the term Wâdi is applied, not to any deep cleft in the hills, but to a very slight depression down which a stream, small in volume except perhaps in the winter months, finds its way to the Jordan. The stream does not rise near the tell; it rises in the mountains on the east. From its source until it reaches the tell, it is called, so our guide informed me, the Wâdi Sha'ib; from that point down to the Jordan it bears the name of Wâdi Nimrin. I measured its well-marked channel near the tell, and found it half-a-dozen paces across. The thick tangle of bushes hid the river from

sight nearly everywhere; but about half-a-mile above the Jordan a long gap occurred, and here I examined the channel again. It was broader here, dividing at places into two or three branches which afterwards reunited, but the bed was now quite dry, the whole of the water having been taken off for irrigation.

As we approached the Jordan I hoped to see the junction of the Wâdi with that river, but found a broad zone of dense and thorny copse preventing any approach to the river. I asked the Arab to see if he could find a way to the junction of the streams, and he immediately plunged into the thicket and disappeared from view. He was gone for about twenty minutes. Then there was a stir among the bushes near us, and presently his swarthy face emerged from the thicket. It was quite impossible, he said, to reach the place, and though he had penetrated for some distance in the required direction, he had lost his way in coming back. Abandoning this project, therefore, we made the best of our way back to the bridge, and here we saw an interesting example in the art of misgovernment. Just below the bridge the water, although too deep for horses, can be waded by camels; and while we were there a caravan of these beasts of burden arrived at the river-bank. The drivers, mounting their beasts, entered the water and proceeded to cross the river, when, lo! forth from their wooden tower issued the keepers of the bridge, shouting and flinging stones and attacking both men and beasts with their cudgels when they attempted to land. By this means they at length obliged them to recross the river in order that they might come over the bridge and pay toll! And this is a government-bridge, erected presumably for the benefit of those who need to use it, not for the compulsion of those who do not need it! Such is the practical effect of farming out tolls and taxes, the system in the Palestine both of the ancient Romans and the modern Turks.

We lunched in the shadow of the bridge, our Bedawi, so I noted, not being too proud to pick up the empty bottles which we had thrown away and carefully to store them in his saddle-bag. Any manufactured articles—cheap knives, or scissors, a bit of wire, an old nail, a broken corkscrew are always prized by these children of the wilderness, who have no factories of their own. We then paid our toll and recovered the western bank, traversed the sandy stretch beyond and found ourselves once more at the foot of the



cliffs and terraces which mark the shore of the primeval lake. On this return journey our guide conducted us, by way of a change, through a longer series of the fantastic terraces than that which we had passed through in the morning. It seemed, indeed, a perfectly hopeless intricacy : and I could not but be glad to remember that I had nothing in my pockets, and that Hanna was armed. Our guide was faithful, however, and we emerged in safety from this nightmare-place and soon "pricked across the plain," as the romances have it, to our sleeping-place at Eriha.

I found, upon our return, that the Dead Sea tourists were also back, so sought out my friend and, after a cup of tea we drove together to see the famous Fountain of Elisha. This place is supposed to be of surpassing beauty, a reputation which I cannot but think is echoed from the past rather than evidenced in the present. The banks of the stream, it is true, are not so wanting in life as much of the surrounding district ; clustering bushes mark the course of the channel, and in the springtime it is vocal with the song of birds. But the channel itself is of the most formal kind, for the natural banks a kerb like that of a London pavement has been substituted, and the curves of the flowing rivulet have been cut into sharp angles. The spring which supplies this very artificial conduit rises at the foot of a barren and dusty mound, the lower part of which is terraced by means of rough walls built of loose stones undraped by any trace of verdure.

The real interest of the place lies not in any fancied picturesqueness, but in that self-same dusty mound or hill which overhangs it. For this, as already mentioned, is no other than the tell in whose bowels are buried the oldest Jericho of all. The tell itself is something less than a quarter of a mile in length measured up and down the valley, and about fifty feet in height. But if we stand away from it and cast our eyes upward we see that towards one end of the ridge, mound rises above mound, the highest being almost double that number of feet above the plain. Whether these higher mounds mean some fortress or acropolis built to protect the city, or what other secrets of antiquity may be hidden in their bosom, no man knows. Some little attempt at excavation was made many years ago, but was not carried far enough to yield results of much interest. The fragments of brick-work which were exposed

were found to be peculiarly friable, and it was even conjectured at one time that the whole place was not a city at all, but one vast brickfield, where bricks were made for building other towns. Such a theory, however, would not to-day be entertained by any one. All authorities are agreed that there did once stand here the ancient walled city of Jericho. Only a few years ago, an ancient mud brick wall was laid bare near the face of the tell, and pottery not only pre-Roman but also pre-Israelitish has been found. So that if money were forthcoming and the Sultan's permission were obtained, we might yet hope to see laid bare some prehistoric city like that recently excavated at Gezer, and above this the Israelitish city of Old Testament times, with its vicissitudes marked in successive layers of masonry and débris—the city of Hiel the Bethelite upon whom the traditional curse of Joshua fell, the city where David's insulted ambassadors tarried till their beards were grown, the city whose inhabitants called in the magic of Elisha to heal the waters of its fountain, and that desolated city to which the 345 men returned from captivity in the days of Nehemiah. Wonderful that our generation should leave such an unopened page of sacred history buried in this desolate mound!

Upon one other question we must say a word before we leave this Old Testament site. What about the Jericho of Joshua, and the walls which fell before the blast of the invaders' trumpets? May we picture to ourselves the hosts of Israel crossing yonder fords and swarming over the fruitful plain? May we imagine them compassing the city seven days, and either with or without miracle breaching the brick walls and sacking the city?

In answer to this question I fear that we must banish the picture from the mind as anything more than poetry and symbol. At least we cannot historically attach it to this particular spot. The probabilities seem almost overwhelming that it was not here but at the Ford of Damieh, much higher up the river, that the crossing of Joshua's Israelites took place. If we read Joshua iii. 16, in the amended version of Canon Cheyne, we find that it runs as follows: "(It came to pass) that the water stood still; that which came down from above stood as a heap some distance from the ford of Adamah which is opposite Beth-Zur"; and the ford of Adamah there mentioned is without doubt to be identified with the modern ford of Damieh, at the confluence of the

Jabbok and the Jordan, the very ford, in fact, at which Jacob also is said to have crossed with his family and his flocks.

One interesting fact is that at this Ford of Adamah, where the Ephraimite Joshua led his troops across dryshod, an occurrence identical with that of the heaping up of the water described in the biblical narrative has happened in historical times. Near to that ford there are still to be seen the ruins of an ancient bridge which was built by the Sultan of Egypt in 1266. When that bridge was completed, part of the piers gave way ; and while the engineers were wondering how to repair them, the waters were arrested and the bed of the river left dry, although the Jordan was then in flood. This was doubtless regarded as a miracle ; though the cause of it was ascertained to be a very natural one, namely, a landslip which had occurred higher up the stream and which blocked the channel for several hours.\*

\* For the full account of this see P.E.F.Q.S. 1895, 256 ff.



FIG. 50. PILGRIMS TO THE TOMB OF MOSES



FIG. 51.—POOLS OF SOLOMON: THE MIDDLE POOL



## CHAPTER XXX

### THE RETURN TO JERUSALEM—THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE

THERE had been rain in the night, and the morning was cloudy, as the long line of carriages toiled slowly up the interminable ascent from Jericho to Jerusalem. As we passed the Herodian city I again took particular note that the tells were on both sides of our road, so that if the modern road follows the line of the ancient, as it is said to do, travellers from beyond Jordan must have passed through the very midst of the town on their way to Jerusalem.

The road climbs through the folded hills, which for the most part are rounded in form, but broken here and there into cliffs of white or grey. Numbers of Mohammedan pilgrims thronged the way, the greater part on foot, though now and then women were to be seen riding on horses or other beasts. They rode astride, of course, as women do in the East, being much more careful to cover their faces than their limbs. Here and there a family party might be seen, the woman mounted on an ass or camel and carrying a babe, while the father trudged beside her, reminding one of familiar pictures of the Flight into Egypt. This must have been from sheer inability on the part of the woman to perform the journey on foot, for it is not the common custom; the Palestine man usually rides while the woman walks behind. Many of the pilgrims were formed into procession, some of the men carrying spears and others banners and drums. One such procession I photographed over the back of our carriage, but the banner-bearer espied me as I was about to "snap" them, and hastily held his hand before his face that he might not be accessory at such a holy time to the sinful idolatry of the kodak (Fig. 50.) Soon after we had passed them, I looked back and saw the procession turn aside from the road and climb a neighbouring height to visit a sacred spring.

These pilgrim crowds were for the most part returning from the "Tomb of Moses," which it is customary at this time of the year to visit. The Bible tradition is that "Moses the servant of Jehovah died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of Jehovah, and He buried him in a ravine in the land of Moab, before Beth-peor; but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day." The Moslems, however, think they do know it; and departing from the scriptural account, they place the tomb of Moses not far from the monastery of Mar Sâbâ, on the west of the Dead Sea, which is of course the wrong side of the valley. Dean Stanley says that the authorities of Jerusalem fix the Greek Easter as the time for the pious to visit the tomb of Moses, so that if the city were surprised by the Christians who flock to Jerusalem at that time, there might be a body of Mussulman pilgrims on the spot to defend it. If this is true it seems a most ill-advised measure for the authorities to have taken; for the simultaneous presence of two fanatical mobs so mutually hostile as the Greek Christians and the orthodox Mussulmans is always a source of danger and has often issued in religious riots.

As we neared Bethany a new experience overtook us. It became bitterly cold, and presently down came a sudden rain, straight, violent, and icy. It was something of a surprise, for I had never associated that kind of rain with Bible countries. The abundant tropical rain one had of course heard of, but I had always imagined it warm and fruitful; here, however, was a cruel downpour, as spiteful as any experience in our northern climate. And yet it ought not to have been surprising at an elevation of something like 2500 feet above the sea. Moreover, out of some seventy or eighty Bible references to the rain, although the great majority speak of the rain as an unmitigated blessing, we have the other side too: in the Book of Ezra "the people sat trembling for the great rain," and in Ezekiel the Lord threatens to rain in the land of Israel with "an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone." Indeed, there is plenty of hail in the Bible "hail, snow, and vapour"; "tempests of hail"; "hail for rain and flaming fire." The sooner we rid our minds of the idea that Palestine is a hot land, the sooner shall we understand the meteorology of our Bibles. Palestine is as cold as it is hot; as must of course always be the case in a mountainous

country, whose heights are often snow-clad, though its depths are tropical.

We passed Bethany, descended the Mount of Olives, and, the storm being over, we took the opportunity of visiting the traditional Garden of Gethsemane.

Here it is a relief to doubt, and would be a still greater relief if one could entirely disbelieve. It would be inexpressibly painful to behold this little formal square, with its stone wall, its gravel paths, its flower beds and vulgar little shrines, if one knew that this was indeed the place where Jesus "sweat as it were great drops of blood." I have seen many a little suburban garden attached to a stuccoed villa with more of nature about it than has this enclosure since the Franciscans some sixty years ago took in hand to adorn it. They could not have made a greater blunder; for, the garden to which Jesus retreated (if it was a garden at all and not rather a small field or orchard) was Oriental: and an Oriental "garden" is a plantation of trees, not a geometrical arrangement of flower borders.

The one redeeming feature of the place is the group of venerable olive trees which remain in the centre of it. For centuries past Christian pilgrims have regarded those trees as witnesses of Christ's agony; and many a doubting tourist of to-day still tries to believe that it was beneath their shadow that Jesus knelt and prayed, "Father, if it be possible."

Perhaps, after all, the notion is not so absurd as it might seem at first to be. There were olive trees at Linternum in Italy, which in Pliny's time were said to be 250 years old, and they are recorded to have survived to the middle of the tenth century; and, according to Tristram, "there are many olive trees near Carthage, in Africa, not more antique in appearance, which, with good reason, are believed to date from a time before the irruption of the Vandals."

Yet even these cases of longevity, supposing them to be proved, fall some centuries short of the age required to establish the desired belief concerning the trees of Gethsemane. And on the other hand we have to set the fact that it is altogether exceptional, if it has ever actually occurred, for olive trees to attain so great an age, and the still more patent fact that these particular trees are never mentioned till the sixteenth century.

There are, moreover, other considerations which militate against the claim made for these arboreal patriarchs. It is



expressly stated by Josephus that when Titus laid siege to Jerusalem he cut down all the trees round Jerusalem ; and as to this particular side of Jerusalem, we know that the Tenth Legion were encamped there, and we know moreover that in the course of the siege a wall of circumvallation was carried along the Kidron valley, which must have passed close to the spot now known as Gethsemane. It is extremely unlikely, therefore, that under these circumstances this particular group would be spared.

But, apart from this question of the olive trees, is there any reason for believing that the true Garden of Gethsemane was situated just here ? All we learn from the New Testament is that from Jerusalem it lay beyond the "Kedron," and that it was at or on the Mount of Olives. Luke says, "He went unto the Mount of Olives ;" the fourth Evangelist, "He went over the brook Kedron, where was a garden." It is not distinctly stated in any Gospel that it was *on* the Mount. So far as situation is concerned, therefore, the traditional garden satisfies the Scriptures. But so would a hundred other spots ; and we are forced ultimately to rely upon tradition ; and the tradition, alas, will scarcely bear the weight of our reliance. One very suspicious circumstance is that it is first met with in the fourth century, soon after the time when the Empress Helena came to Jerusalem and gave her royal authority to other sacred sites, including that of Calvary. It was upon this visit that she discovered the true cross, a discovery which throws some doubt upon all other discoveries made by her. Nevertheless, it is impossible to prove a negative, and supposing that the traditional Gethsemane, as well as the traditional Calvary, received the sanction of the Empress, it may of course quite possibly have been based on some local memory or native knowledge, the chief consideration against the existence of any such surviving knowledge being that extensive terracings had been carried out by the Emperor Hadrian in the Kidron Valley a couple of centuries earlier, which must considerably have altered the whole appearance of the place.

For my own part, I think I may say that the one thing which weighed with me above all others, as I stood within the garden itself, was its proximity to the road. In Christ's time it stood in like proximity to the then existing Roman road to Jericho. And that a place so situated should have been chosen for a retreat (for as such Jesus seems to have used it) is well-nigh incredible. Even if it were ten times the size

of the present garden (which covers less than half an acre) it would not be much of a retreat, so near to the dust and noise of passers-by. Rather would I picture the chosen place for rest and meditation well up the mountain-side. In the lifetime of Jesus the whole of the western slope was thickly clothed with olive trees. Many an olive garden such as the one which Jesus chose must have hung there. "Gethsemane" means "the olive-press"; it is an Aramaic word, a word of the people. Some one among the people of Jerusalem owned the little farm, grew olives there, and had fashioned within its borders a press for the extraction of the oil. He or she was a disciple of the prophet, a follower of this spiritual Messiah, and loved to have Him shelter here in the deep shadow of the grey branches, taking refuge from the noisy throng, the heated controversialists, the crowding disciples, the staring day.

The hillside, as we now see it, almost denuded of trees, woefully disfigured with hideous churches and the still more hideous houses of the rich, scored this way and that with newly-made roads, and desecrated by crowds of scampering tourists "doing" Jerusalem in a day, does not, it is true, readily lend itself to such a picture in any part of its wide sweep. But it was not so then. Many a shady grove was there, many a natural oratory; but not here by the public road and in the bottom of a stifling valley; up yonder, rather, withdrawn from the public highway and lifted nearer to heaven.

## CHAPTER XXXI

### A DRIVE TO BETHLEHEM

IN the afternoon of that day we drove to Bethlehem. Our road ran to the south over a high plain or tableland, desolate and stony like the greater part of Judæa. Of course we saw the little wayside pool, called the Well of the Magi, where they found again their lost star, and besides which also the Virgin rested on her way to Bethlehem. It is not generally known what finally became of the star, but at Bethlehem they will tell you that it fell at last into a spring near the Church of the Nativity, where it remained, and where to this day virgins, and virgins only, can see it. For we are here quite in the land of legend. We do not look south of Jerusalem for New Testament history : what of Bible history can be illustrated here belongs not to the Son of David, but to David himself, and even that is full of doubt.

Soon after passing the Magi's Well we begin to get glimpses of the Dead Sea, far away upon our left ; a lovely gleam of blue among its grey hills. There is more "atmosphere" to-day than we have usually seen in Palestine. Mount Nebo far away beyond the sea looks as it should look, wonderful, mysterious, and dreamy, and we can almost see upon its summit the vast and shadowy form of Israel's Lawgiver looking abroad upon the land of promise.

On the road we meet numbers of Bethlehem women trudging to Jerusalem in twos and threes. Their dress proclaims at once the town from which they come, for the Bethlehem costume is peculiar to Bethlehem. It consists of a long blue garment with sleeves loose and open at the wrists, and in most cases with gay needlework upon the breast and arms. Over this is worn a little tight-fitting, sleeveless, scarlet jacket, very brightly embroidered. The head-dress is remarkable. It is a stiff brimless hat, in

shape and colour something like a fez, decorated with numbers of gold and silver coins sewn upon the front. The coins in most cases are shams, but rich women wear real money upon their caps, and it is said that many a time this display has been the incentive to highway robbery. Over this gorgeous headpiece an embroidered veil is thrown, made generally of muslin or fine linen, and worked round the border and at the corners in coloured wools, but the veil protects only the neck and ears, the face being left uncovered.

The origin of this striking costume I have been unable to discover. It is probably more modern than Bible times. The veil, at any rate, as it was worn in Bethlehem in Old Testament days must have been far more substantial than that which is worn to-day, or Boaz could never have measured six measures of barley into Ruth's veil. That might still be done into the Jerusalem veil, but not into that of modern Bethlehem. The whole costume, indeed, appears to be unlike anything else in Palestine. The complexion too, of the Bethlehem people is different, and seems to argue a different race. They are fair-skinned and light-haired; a peculiarity which it is conjectured they owe to Norman blood derived from the Crusaders. The children, in particular, are of striking beauty.

In the course of our drive we pass many vineyards, not differing, indeed, from those which we have seen in other parts of Palestine, but bringing specially to mind in this locality the Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen, because it must have been in Jerusalem and against Jerusalem that Jesus spoke that parable. The vineyards are surrounded by walls built of loose stones, similar to those which are seen in Cumberland and Westmorland. When Mark says that the owner "set a hedge about it," he can hardly mean a quick hedge, for although in Christ's day Judæa was under better cultivation than now, it was essentially the same stony district. "He hedged it round about," says Matthew, and that is perhaps nearer to the spoken word, meaning, of course, that he surrounded it by a wall.

The "tower" which the owner built is seen to-day: every vineyard has its tower. It is sometimes square, sometimes round, but the round towers seem rather more characteristic of this part of the country. They are used as lodges for watchers when the grapes are ripening, and very necessary they must be in this land of thieves. At present, when

the vines are scarcely showing life, the towers, of course, are empty.

Another biblical reference is recalled by the little domed well known as the Tomb of Rachel. We pass it on our right about a mile this side of Bethlehem. The building itself is a comparatively modern erection, but Rachel's Sepulchre has been located here for many centuries, and if we could take the Scripture story as it stands and regard it as plain history, one might almost accept the site, the chief difficulty in that case being that "a voice was heard in Ramah" cannot be made to fit this tomb, since the only Ramah known is far away to the north of Jerusalem. The story cannot, however, be taken as it stands. There are, in fact, three stages in the history of "Rachel's Sepulchre," which we must consider in estimating its topographical interest.

The first stage is the historical. And here we are met by the discomfiting disappearance of Rachel altogether as a historical personage: she melts into the personification of a clan. Rachel was in fact the eponymous mother of the tribes of Israel. Her name "Rahel," meaning "a ewe," indicates, perhaps, that the ewe was the totem of the original clan. The second stage is the legendary, in which Jacob makes a journey from Paddam-aram or Mesopotamia to the Tower of Eder between Bethlehem and Hebron. On this journey Rachel died and was buried at some point on the road between Bethel and Ephrath, "and Jacob set up a pillar upon her grave; the same is the Pillar of Rachel's grave unto this day" (Gen. xxxv. 20). The "day" unto which the pillar had stood there was somewhere near the end of the ninth century B.C.; and there apparently it continued to stand until the time of Jesus.\* But that pillar did not stand where Rachel's Tomb is now shown, it stood by the roadside near to Ramah between Bethel and Jerusalem.

The third stage is that of Christian Invention; at least, that seems on the whole the most probable origin for the modern site. A time of tumult, destruction, and dispersion had swept away both the pillar and its tradition, and the site of Rachel's Tomb was transferred to the Bethlehem road, south of Jerusalem, perhaps to fit the story of Rachel weeping over the massacre of the Babes of Bethlehem. The only circumstance that gives us pause in thus assigning the invention to the age of Constantine is that Jews,

\* See Hausrath, "Time of Jesus" (Eng. trans.), vol. i. p. 30.

Christians, and Moslems all agree upon this Bethlehem tomb, a combination which might perhaps argue an older date.

Of patriarchal interest, at any rate, this little tomb has none. And it is so extremely doubtful whether in Jesus' day it was ever looked upon as a sacred spot, so probable that the tomb to which Matthew alludes was the pillar at Ramah, that it is almost equally devoid of New Testament significance. Only in one connection can it have some interest for New Testament students: it may be in fact that which M. Clermont-Ganneau believes it to be—the tomb of Archelaus mentioned by Jerome.

Bethlehem itself we found to be a busy, energetic place. It has an air of industry, reminding one in this respect of Nazareth. The Christian towns in Palestine seem always to be the most progressive, the one fact to be regretted being that in their progressiveness they imitate too much the architecture, dress and manners of the West. Here, as at Nazareth, there is a good deal of building going on; new houses springing up in all directions, not always of the Oriental type. One of the chief industries of the place is the making of "objects of religion" from mother-o'-pearl and olive-wood. Unfortunately, the imitation of "progressive" nations is here extended to one of their chief vices, a large proportion of the objects being hastily and roughly made, and the beads of the rosaries often strung on the flimsiest thread for cheapness' sake. The annual export from Palestine of these and other "articles of Christian veneration" amounts to no less than 2700 cwt.; they form in fact one of the principal articles of commerce.

To one who has abandoned the belief that Bethlehem was the birthplace of Jesus, its chief biographical interest gathers round the name of David. Accordingly I requested Hanna to conduct us to "David's Well," that famous "well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate," whence the three mighty men drew the water which David would not drink, "but poured it out unto the Lord." Our dragoman naïvely asked which of David's Wells I wanted to see, since there were two of them. "Both," I answered. So he took us first to the Latin well, or rather to the insurmountable wall surrounding it. We hammered lustily at the gate, but no one came. The custodian of the Greek well, which was just across the road, poking his head out of his own entrance to ascertain the cause of the disturbance, was delighted to

see the opposition shop closed against its own customers, and beckoning to us frantically he entreated us to come and see the true and only David's Well on his side of the way. This, after some more fruitless pounding, we resolved to do, and having presented the Greek gentleman with a coin of small value about the size of a cartwheel, were admitted to the sacred precincts.

I am afraid I had overlooked the fact that the Scripture story designates David's well as a "bor" and not an "ain," and I was expecting a living spring of crystal water which would explain and justify David's exclamation, "Oh, that one would give me water to drink of the well of Bethlehem!" Why he or any one should ask to drink water from a *cistern* by the town's gate it is difficult to understand, unless it be indeed but another way of expressing a desire that the gate, and therefore the town, might be recaptured from the Philistines.

However that may be, I was repelled by the appearance of the dirty, stagnant pool, shown to us as the historic well, and asked the custodian whether this was indeed a well or only a tank. The old man replied without hesitation that it was only a tank. "But," he added, pointing his thumb over his shoulder at the establishment across the road, "no more is his; the only difference is that our water comes off the roof, and *his*" (with an accent of supreme contempt) "comes off the road."

From David's Well we went to the Church of the Nativity. It is a building of the greatest interest, and I could not but regret that our moments there were so brief. In spite of dilapidations and repairs and restorations, it remains a sixth-century, and in part a fourth-century church, and an example of the earliest Christian architecture. The nave, as we enter, is noble in its simplicity, and before the modern wall was built, which now cuts off the eastern part of the church, the effect of this simplicity leading up to the mystery and gorgeousness which surround the high altar must have been beautiful indeed.

The nave is separated from the double aisles by rows of great red marble pillars twenty feet high, the shaft of each being cut from a single stone. Hanna solemnly assured us that these pillars had been brought there from Solomon's Temple.

From the nave we passed to the transept and choir, and with this part of the church I was deeply impressed. The

architectural details may be read in any descriptive handbook, but the picturesqueness of the scene and the mysterious beauty and venerable antiquity of its setting are what can never be conveyed. Armenians and Greeks both have altars here, and service was going on at each. The church was alive with a crowd, or rather several crowds—groups and knots of folk in curious Eastern dress, various in their fashion, brilliant in their colouring. Priests gorgeously arrayed, pictures, mosaics, multitudinous burning candles and swinging censers, the dazzling light broken by intense mysterious shadows, and the air sweet and dim with scented vapour, combined to produce an effect phantasmagoric and dreamlike, taking possession of the imagination and suggesting more than can ever be expressed. The church itself was obscured as to its symmetry, screens breaking its unity, doorways leading into mystery, flights of steps in unexpected places diving into darkness, everywhere that disorder in the midst of order, that uncompleted, fragmentary, dimly-hinted harmony which is so stimulating to the fancy, and so emblematic of the orderly disorder of the strange world in which we live. One felt, indeed, that we had something here which transcended the mere historical question of the manger; we had an embodiment of the great *idea* of the manger—the idea, vital and vitalising throughout the Christian centuries—the Incarnation of the Divine.

One grim fact, however, amid all the gorgeous confusion remained very obvious and very literal—two Mohammedan soldiers sitting upon a stone bench to keep order among the Christians. Hanna pointed out a strip of carpet laid diagonally which marked the line where the Latin Christians may tread, and beyond which they must not wander. Only Greeks and Armenians worship here, the Latins have a chapel of their own adjoining the choir but beyond and outside it on the north. From that chapel the Latins can descend by their own steps to the crypt of the manger, lest if they used the other flight, which descends to the same crypt from the Greek choir, Greeks and Latins should come into conflict, as indeed, notwithstanding these precautions, they often do.

We descended to the crypt by the stone staircase just mentioned, very steep and very worn, and found ourselves in a small dark cavern, lighted by the dim flames of fifteen oil lamps suspended from the roof. A silver star in the



floor marks the spot where Christ was brought forth by the Virgin. Then down three steps we passed into a recess where a ragged hole in the rock showed where the manger had been before it was cut out and carried to Rome. Thence proceeding through long and winding passages past several spots having scriptural events assigned to them (all crowded for convenience into the one cavern) we arrived at one which I had much desired to see—the Cell of St. Jerome. For St. Jerome believed in the cavern and the manger and the Divine Babe, and here he is said to have lived and written many of his works and died. To my horror, however, I found that the rocky walls of the cell had been carefully stuccoed in recent years, and that the whole now formed a neat and symmetrical little chapel, the only remaining antiquity being a flight of rock-cut steps leading to the cell from above, much worn, and exhibited now through a pane of glass like a sixpenny show. Alas for prose and vulgarity!

Our regret would be keener if we were more certain about the cell. It does not seem to be mentioned in literature earlier than the fifteenth century, and in the more ancient records of his life Jerome's residence at Bethlehem is stated to have been in the monastery which his disciple, the Lady Paula, built. So that even here, as almost everywhere in Palestine, we find ourselves once more on doubtful ground.

This was our last day with Hanna. When we returned to Jerusalem, we found there the well-known geographer and scholar and our very good friend, Professor George Adam Smith, with a large party about to start upon a long tour. To them we handed over our faithful and experienced guide, and engaged instead for the small remainder of our stay in Palestine a young dragoman named Nassar.

## CHAPTER XXXII

### A DRIVE TO HEBRON

ON the following day, being April 11th, we took the long drive to Hebron and back, with our new dragoman on the box. The first part of the way is identical with that which we had traversed the day before ; but at a distance of four miles or thereabouts from Jerusalem the road forks ; the left-hand road, which we had already travelled, being the way to Bethlehem, the right-hand, which we now followed, being the high-road to Hebron.

About three miles beyond this fork we reached the Pools of Solomon, which were among the principal objects of our excursion. Near to the pools and hard by the roadside is a square castle, erected, it is said, as a protection against the Bedawin, but used now as a khân, though some portion must, I think, be retained as a lock-up, for just as we reached it a prisoner handcuffed and bound about the arms was marched toward the gateway between Turkish guards. Just before they entered, as though he knew it to be his last chance, the wretched-looking captive made a dart for liberty, but was recaptured before he had taken many steps.

Alongside the walls of the castle runs a stream of water, fed from a fountain known as "The Sealed Spring," and conducted into a little old conduit which passes almost close to the Pools of Solomon.

The great pools themselves are three in number. They are, I suppose, ascribed to Solomon merely because they are large and magnificent, and because Ecclesiastes, the pseudo-Solomon, says that he made him "pools of water." Their real date no one knows. They are said to show traces of Saracenic workmanship, but that must surely be the result of repairs or restoration ; for it is certain that the aqueduct, large sections of which still remain between this place and Jerusalem, brought water hence to the Temple ; and it seems likely that the pools, which form part of the same water

system, also existed when the Temple service was still performed. One may guess that they were made, or at any rate enlarged, by that great builder Herod, though it is likely enough that pools existed here at an earlier date.

A theory has been entertained that the lowest pool which is a splendid basin nearly six hundred feet long and over two hundred feet broad at the larger end, was used as an amphitheatre for naval displays, the steps or terraces which form the sides and one end of the pool being intended to seat the spectators. It occurred to me, however, to compare these steps with the natural terraces of the limestone slopes which adjoin the pools, and I am quite convinced that the steps both of the middle and lowest pools, the two which are thus terraced, are continuous with the layers of limestone of the adjacent hillsides; they are, in fact, formed by the native rock being cased over with masonry to save the labour of cutting it away (Fig. 51).

Resuming our journey we passed sundry places of historical or legendary interests. Some bits of old wall, great numbers of hewn stones, and many rock-tombs represented Gedor of Joshua. Then, on the left, Nassar pointed out Ain-ed-Dirweh, the spring in which Philip is said by Eusebius to have baptised the eunuch, and opposite to it on the right, standing conspicuously on a hill a bit of a ragged old tower marked the site of Beth-Zur, famous in the Maccabean Wars.

Just before reaching Hebron, Nassar showed us on the left of the road what he called the Terebinth of Abraham—a tree of no great age or size, close to a small half-ruined mosque or weli, backed on the hillside by a village which he dubbed Râmet el-Khalil—a good illustration of the way in which dragomans' fancies caused the sacred sites to shift and change their places to the bewilderment of travellers; for the place corresponded neither with the description of Dean Stanley nor the instructions of Baedeker, and by subsequent inquiries made in the town we afterwards found the true spot.

As to the traditional oak, that corresponds neither with Nassar's terebinth nor with Dean Stanley's Grove of Mamre; it lies to the north-west of Hebron at the distance of a mile and a half. We did not visit it, since it can claim no interest beyond that of having been gazed upon by pilgrims and tourists for some four or five centuries. Even if Abraham were accepted as a flesh-and-blood patriarch

living at the time assigned to him by Archbishop Ussher, the difficulty would remain that the "Oaks" of Mamre were not oaks at all, but terebinths, while the dying monarch whose remnants are still visited by tourists is a true oak. Leaving, therefore, the whole question of Mamre and its terebinths until our return journey, we made our way with all speed into Hebron—the "City of God's friend," as the Moslems call it.

The ancient city lay to the west of the modern town, on the olive-coloured hills across the valley. This is proved by the existence there of mural fragments of great antiquity. In the low ground between the ancient and the modern cities lie the two pools, one of which, at least, dates from Old Testament times, while the Harâm, which covers the traditional Cave of Machpelah, lies on the eastern border of modern Hebron, and is far removed from the ancient city.

Previous to visiting these antiquities, we betook ourselves for luncheon to the upper room of a small Jewish hostel kept by a veritable Shylock. Hooked nose, thin and furrowed face, avaricious eyes, straggling ragged locks, side curls, fur cap, and long gaberdine clothing a bent, spare figure, formed an exaggerated edition of the traditional stage-Jew. The room was hung with Hebrew samplers of quaint design. The wine, which the old man sold at an exorbitant price, was a light hock made by the Jews of Hebron from the famous grapes of Eschol.

Such at least is the belief of those who hold that the ten miles of vineyards through which we had lately passed do verily lie in the Valley of Eshcol, and that the Spring of Kashkaleh, at the head of that valley, is no other than the "brook of Eshcol," unto which the twelve spies came, "and cut down from thence a branch with one cluster of grapes, and they bare it between two upon a staff." Dr. Thomson solemnly remarks that he has not seen a cluster of that size in the neighbourhood, nevertheless he accepts the branch of grapes by faith.

However that may be, the land is to-day a land of vineyards, and in connection with that fact a curious little bit of etymology noted by Dr. Thomson may be mentioned. The Moslems as well as the Jews grow vines; but as they do not make wine, those grapes which are not disposed of by them in the market or dried into raisins, are boiled down into a kind of thick molasses. This substance is frequently mentioned in the Bible under the Hebrew name "debash,"

in some passages translated "honey," in others "grape-syrup," but the word is in fact akin to the old school-boy word "dibs," which in my boyhood was the common term for "treacle" among the junior fraternity.

The room in which we lunched opened on a stone terrace which overlooked the roofs of some of the neighbouring houses. Strolling out there after lunch I beheld a beautiful and truly Oriental scene. On the flat roof of an adjoining dwelling stood a very lovely Jewish girl, with long luxuriant hair streaming in waves of raven blackness over her shoulders and below her waist. She wore a loose, flimsy, orange-coloured robe, hanging in graceful folds from neck to ankle. Leisurely and gracefully she moved to and fro, hanging over the low parapet which surrounded the roof some long gaberdines and other garments striped in all the colours of the rainbow. The picture was lighted by dazzling sunshine, while a palm tree planted beside the house lifted its curved and feathery fronds to form a canopy above the roof, flecking the girl's face and neck with shadow as they waved in the gentle breeze. One thought of the story of Bath-sheba, and how David saw her as he "walked upon the roof of the king's house." These houses, built on the hillside, looked down the one upon the other, just as in Jerusalem at this day the people who live near the city-walls do not like strangers to walk there, lest they should pry upon the privacy of domestic life.

From the same terrace of our khân we had a wide view over the city, its houses flat-roofed or crowned by the low white dome which, owing to the scarcity of timber for beams, is characteristic of Southern Palestine. Palms and orange trees grow among the dwellings, the low rounded hills of Judæa formed a background of hazy blue, and below us, shaded by surrounding buildings, the cool waters of one of the ancient pools rippled in the breeze.

To this pool we now descended, leaving our cloaks and travelling-gear in the care of the old Jew. Its modern name is Birket-el-Kazzâzin : the Arabic "Birket" corresponding to the Hebrew "B'recah," which is applied to the Hebron Pool in 2 Sam. iv. 12, and indeed to all such artificial reservoirs throughout the Old Testament Scriptures. It was doubtless by one of these two pools of Hebron that David hanged Rechab and Baanah, the murderers of Ishbosheth, Saul's crippled son. The "King's Pool" is the one with which tradition associates the event, but that is probably



FIG. 52.—UPPER POOL OF HEBRON



FIG. 53.—POOL OF HEZEKIAH



because it is the larger. The upper and smaller pool has the more ancient appearance ; and, though the whole matter must be almost entirely guesswork, still the small and quaint and unpretending belong usually to an earlier stage of society than the magnificent (Fig. 52).

From the Upper Pool, which lies to the west of the present town, we pass by winding and narrow streets to the Harâm on the east. From the ancient city this would be half a mile distant at the least, but that, of course, would be nothing exceptional for a place of sepulture, such as the traditional Cave of Machpelah, whatever be its true history or origin, undoubtedly was. In approaching its venerable walls, one would fain share Dean Stanley's enthusiasm and awe when he exclaims that it is "marvellous 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 was) lonely and beautiful spot." But the later study of Bible literature, and the advance in comparative religion and folklore, forbid us to indulge in such fascinating dreams. The most that we are permitted now to believe is that Abraham *may* be a genuine personal name, and that there may be a kernel of tradition in the patriarchal narratives. For the rest, the Father of the Faithful was probably the object of a kind of national cultus, and this cultus was probably performed at Machpelah. But "that the traditional hero was actually buried there cannot be affirmed. Even among the Arabs there is hardly one well-authenticated case of a tribe which possessed a really ancient tradition as to the place where the tribal ancestor was interred."\*

However this in truth may be, there is no doubt at all that the historic building before whose walls we now stand is one of the most ancient places of worship in the world. Even in David's time it was already looked upon as a place of primeval sanctity. In the Gospels it is not mentioned ; but we know from the pages of Josephus that in New Testament times the tombs of the patriarchs were shown there ; and though Jesus perhaps never travelled so far south, the knowledge that among the southern hills which He looked upon from the walls of Jerusalem or the heights of Olivet, there lay that hoary city, grey with the burden of centuries, holy before Jerusalem itself was holy, must have entered

\* Cheyne, art. "Abraham" in "Encycl. Bibl."



into His consciousness and contributed to the creation of that awful patriotism which brought Him to his death.

We had engaged a Turkish guard to accompany us, as the Mohammedans of Hebron are extremely fanatical, and as we approached the steps which lead to the mosque, our soldier-guide pointed out to us the limit to which the infidel may go. Only to the seventh step may the unbeliever ascend, and since we were sceptics even among the unbelievers, we allowed ourselves only to the fifth. Opposite the fifth step is a hole in the wall, said to extend down to the tomb of Abraham ; but the hole, like so many other matters in the region of faith, was perfectly dark, and, peer as we might into the sanctified orifice, neither perception nor understanding gained aught for all our gazing.

It was something, however, to see the enclosing walls of the holy place. The masonry of it is superb, the stones comparable with those of the Wailing Place in Jerusalem. In fact this also is a wailing-place, for here as well as at Jerusalem the Jews meet to pray and weep over their departed glories.

Leaving the Harâm, we visited the King's Pool, which lies in the west of the town—a fine reservoir, much larger than the Upper Pool which we had already seen. As we stood there, a procession passed us—a disorderly stream, hurrying through the glare and dust, and sending up as it went a loud and unmusical wailing. We soon perceived that it was a funeral procession hastening towards the Mohammedan cemetery which lies on the north-west of the town. In their midst was carried the corpse, stretched upon a rude bier. Their rapid pace, their fierce fanatical faces, and the weird noise of their dirge, combined to produce an effect strangely foreign to all our associations with a scene of mourning. Here in Hebron the sound of this customary sing-song lamentation, always demanded by Eastern opinion, reminded us of the story of Abraham ; how "Sarah died in Hebron : and Abraham came to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her."

Returning to Shylock's house, we suddenly found ourselves in the centre of a brawl. For some unexplained reason Nassar and the Jew danced round each other shouting unspeakable epithets of which we did not understand a word, while an admiring group of picturesque natives formed a ring round the two vituperators. A momentary lull occurring, we managed to learn that the Jew had

impounded all our traps and was doubling his fees before he would let them go. In the end the Jew got the best of it, and Nassar with a crestfallen air was forced to pay the coins which the Jew demanded. We then mounted our carriage with our property and commenced our homeward journey.

In Hebron our young dragoman had succeeded in discovering the whereabouts of the true Râmet el-Khalil, and soon after leaving the town to return to Jerusalem we stopped at a rough track which led off the main road to the right, and at a distance of 300 yards found the spot described by Dean Stanley. It is sufficiently identified by the cistern and two ancient oil-presses, although the courses of stones which were *in situ* when Stanley went there are now thrown down, and the walls of the enclosure almost level with the ground. I suppose that the materials have gone to build up the boundary walls of the neighbouring fields and vineyards, for the place is not now bare and solitary as it once was, but in the midst of cultivated ground. This is certainly the traditional Mamre according to the Jews, and is probably the spot mentioned by Josephus where in his time the great terebinth (not oak) was standing, although he places it at six furlongs from Hebron, which is a good deal below the mark. The people of Hebron, so Nassar ascertained, call the place "The Grove of Abram" and the surrounding country "The Valley of Terebinths." The peasants working in the fields hard by told us that the place is never visited nowadays by travellers, but that the Jews come up there periodically to pray. To us the main interest is that, whatever be the literal truth concerning the history of Abram, it is practically certain that in New Testament times this is the spot which was recognised as Mamre, where Abram had "dwelt by the terebinths," and where he had entertained angels unawares.

## CHAPTER XXXIII

### JERUSALEM—IN SEARCH OF BETHESDA

JERUSALEM is built upon a limestone rock, almost devoid of water ; and the supply of that prime necessity of life has always been one of the city's chief problems. St. Mary's Well in the Kidron Valley is the only natural spring in the immediate neighbourhood, and that spring is some little distance beyond the walls. In the great days of the capital, when it was still alive and vigorous, aqueducts brought water from distant sources, and mighty reservoirs were built in which rain-water was collected, and so the daily wants of the city as well as the needs of the elaborate ceremonial washings in the Temple-service were successfully met; but now that the community is languishing under an oppressive and bankrupt government and deprived of all natural initiative, it suffers much from drought and from epidemics occasioned by the filthy state of the half-ruined cisterns out of which the people draw nearly all their water.

Since our visit to the East something indeed has been done to remedy this state of things, though the supply, I am told, is still most inadequate. The drought from which the people were suffering during our visit led to a certain expenditure upon the water supply. A great part of the money assigned for this purpose found its way, as usual, into the pockets of Turkish officials, but enough was left to carry out the design of bringing water by a line of pipes from the springs near Solomon's Pools ; not enough, however, to lay the pipes properly ; instead of being buried to a sufficient depth in the soil they were laid on the burning surface of the ground, and now a small stream of water does, indeed, arrive in Jerusalem, but it arrives there hot.\*

\* At the annual meeting of the Palestine Exploration Fund in 1904 it was stated that £6000 had been spent in laying these pipes, with the result that the supply was far inferior to what might have been obtained by the repair of the old Herodian aqueduct.

On the day after our drive to Hebron we devoted the morning to visiting certain of the ancient pools, not, however, with reference to the modern water supply, but with reference to biblical, and especially New Testament history. In particular, the vexed question of Bethesda was present to my mind, and all the pools but one which we went to see had some bearing upon that question.

Our guide Nassar, having been informed of our desire, led us first down Christian Street, crowded now with a motley and unruly stream of beasts and people, for Easter was at hand. Russians, Armenians, Jews, Turks, Englishmen and Americans, were mingled with sheep, donkeys and camels; and all were jostling and pushing without respect of persons and with no rule of the road whatever. "Take care of your pockets," said Nassar as we plunged into the *mélée* and forced our way along the bazaar.

Presently he paused before a shop where a Turk was making coffee, said a few words to the proprietor, and we were forthwith conducted through the premises to a long gallery behind, which overhung an enormous reservoir of antique appearance. This was the famous "Pool of Hezekiah," sometimes called the "Patriarch's Pool," though the natives more correctly termed it the "Pool of the Patriarch's Bath," a name derived from the fact that it is used for filling a smaller pool to the south-east of Christian Street, known as the "Bath of the Patriarch." Josephus calls it the Pool Amygdalon, which one would guess, but guess wrongly, to mean the Pool of Almond-trees. As a matter of fact it was known in Josephus' day as the Pool of the Towers, but because he wrote in Greek the historian saw fit to change the late Hebrew Migdalin (towers) into the Greek Amygdalon (of almond-trees). It is very interesting to note that as we look across the pool towards the south-west corner, we see rising above the surrounding buildings the so-called "Tower of David," which is in reality no other than the Tower Phasaelus, one of the three towers built by Herod, the proximity of which gave the pool its name (Fig. 53).

"Hezekiah's Pool" probably existed long before the time of Josephus, but there is nothing to show that it dates back to the days of the monarch whose name it now bears. Its popular designation is derived from the surmises of earlier topographers,\* who argued as follows. In Hezekiah's

\* See "The Land and the Book," 1866, p. 655.

time there was a pool called the Upper Pool, which had a conduit and was near a highway (Isa. xxxvi., 2). Hezekiah stopped the upper watercourse of Gihon and brought it "straight down to the west side of the city of David" (2 Chron. xxxii. 30). Now, the Patriarch's Pool has a conduit, for it is fed by one to this day from the Birket Mamilla, which thus brings water "straight down to the west side of the city of David." Therefore the Birket Mamilla is the Upper Pool of Gihon, and the Patriarch's Pool is the pool into which Hezekiah conducted its water.

This whole argument, however, rests upon the theory that the City of David was situated on the western hill, whereas it seems now to be satisfactorily made out that it lay on the eastern hill, and that the passages quoted above refer to the spring in the Kidron Valley already mentioned, from which spring an ancient conduit brings the water westward to the Pool of Siloam at the foot of Ophel.\*

We cannot, therefore, definitely connect the noble "Pool of Hezekiah" with Old Testament history, but with New Testament history, or at any rate New Testament times, we can; and it is with supreme interest that we realise that we have here a veritable bit of old Jerusalem, and that Jesus Himself must often have stood beside these waters and seen that self-same tower of Herod's palace rising as it does to-day above the surrounding buildings.

It did not, however, in His day present precisely the same appearance; for this pool, as we learn from Josephus, was one of the Columbethrai, or swimming-pools of Jerusalem. It was surrounded, therefore, not by these grey walls with their projecting casements and tufts of hanging weed, but by cloisters or "porches" where the bathers dressed and undressed and lounged in the welcome shade. In this fact we already have a reminder of the "porches" of Bethesda, although this particular pool is not one of the claimants to the honours of that poetic site.

It is so quiet here and so impressive, that one could linger for hours endeavouring to recall in imagination the "year of the Lord"; but our time is brief, so we return shortly to the scrimmage of Christian Street, and turning presently to the right, into the north-eastern or Moslem quarter, we find ourselves in the far-famed Via Dolorosa,

\* For a clear statement, by the late W. Robertson Smith, of the grounds of this theory, see "Encycl. Brit.," 9th edition, art. "Jerusalem."

one of the most picturesque streets in the city, spanned as it is in parts by huge flying buttresses, passing up and down ancient stairways, and plunging through dark mysterious archways.

This street, which is generally marked erroneously upon the maps as though it touched the very boundary of the city at the eastern gate of St. Stephen, extends properly only from the barracks at the north-west corner of the Temple area to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The street is named, of course, in accordance with the theory that the Prætorium where Jesus was tried was at the Fortress of Antonia, which was situated where the Turkish barracks now stand, and that the Church of the Holy Sepulchre marks the place where He was crucified. But the more probable theory is that Pilate's Prætorium was at the Palace of Herod, just by that ancient tower which we saw a few minutes since near the Pool of Amygdalon, and that Jesus was crucified on the north of the city. Yet, even on this latter hypothesis it is not improbable that the street after all is rightly named, for, after the trial at Pilate's Prætorium, it is likely enough that the victim would be conducted to Antonia, where the two robbers were imprisoned, and that the whole procession would pass thence by the northern gate of the city to the place of execution. Thus, in either case, this street, or part of it, would have to be traversed.

However, the actual roadway which those sacred feet trod so painfully is some yards below the present surface ; and when the houses are different, the street different, and the whole surroundings different, one cannot feel that thrill which the actual scene and situation would bring. The so-called Ecce Homo Arch, which spans the street near the site of Antonia, is a Roman triumphal arch of later date, and the "Stations of the Cross" with which the street is marked at intervals are, of course, vain imaginations.

At the Ecce Homo Arch, just mentioned, we may pause for a moment, for here we are near to the first of our Pools of Bethesda. We are near to it, but cannot see it, for at the present time it lies below ground. Warren rediscovered and explored it in 1867. He found it to be a "double pool"—two pools, in fact, cut side by side in the rock, with a pier of masonry running up the centre, and arches thrown over them. They lie partly beneath the convent of the Sisters of Zion, the building on our left, and partly beneath

the street in which we stand, and they are known now as the Twin Pools. They measure, taken together, 165 feet by 48 feet, and they still supply the sisterhood with water for every purpose but drinking.

We have direct evidence that in the fourth century these twin pools were believed to be the Pool of Bethesda, for they were visited as such and described by the Bordeaux Pilgrim (A.D. 333). The Pilgrim mentions a curious fact about them, namely, that "these pools have water which, when agitated, is of a kind of red colour." Eusebius also mentions the redness of one of the pools. The phenomenon was probably due to heavy rain bringing the red earth down the aqueduct which fed the pool; but, according to Eusebius, it was popularly believed that the redness was due to the fact that the pool was near the sheep-gate, and that "it therefore retains to this day a trace of the victims that were formerly cleaned in it." \* One can understand how this feature of the place would help the belief that this was Bethesda.

There are grounds for believing that this double pool was in existence long before the Pilgrim's date—in fact, quite at the beginning of our era; and, if it is identical with the Pool Stronthon mentioned by Josephus (and its situation corresponds with that) we may take its existence at that time as certain. Add to this, that the form of the pool admits of "five porches," one on each of the four sides and a fifth on the dividing wall of rock, and one appears to have strong grounds for identifying it with Bethesda.† However, for the present we will hold our judgment upon the Bethesda question in suspense, for there are two other pools in the neighbourhood which we must now visit.

Leaving the Sisters of Zion, with their twin pools, behind us, we pass now beneath the well-known Ecce Homo Arch, a triumphal arch built, according to M. Ganneau, to celebrate the suppression of the great revolt under the pseudo-Messiah Bar Cochba.‡ We have now upon our right hand the Turkish barracks, standing upon the very rock whereon the Roman barracks stood in the days of Jesus—the historic fortress of Antonia. We are walking, in fact, upon the filled-up fosse which separated that fortress from the fine new suburb called "Bezetha,"

\* "Recovery of Jerusalem," pp. 197, 198.

† For further pros. and cons. see Appendix E.

‡ Palestine Exploration Fund, Mem., "Jerusalem Vol.," p. 212.

which had then only recently sprung up. A little further and we glance down a turning upon our right. It is a short narrow lane, with a gateway at the far end. That gateway none but the faithful may pass to-day, for it is one of the northern entrances to the Harâm esh-Sherif, and to-day the Moslems are holding a sacred festival there; to enter it, the dragoman assures us, would be our death. It reminds us how a still more ancient people once held that same area for their worship, and how with them also the law was death for an unbeliever to enter the sacred inclosure—not, indeed, in their case, the outer court, but the central part of it, the sacred 500 cubits. Just thirty years ago, very near the spot where we are standing,\* an inscribed stone was discovered, which bore in Greek letters the following inscription :

“No stranger is to enter within the balustrade round the Temple and inclosure. Whoever is caught will be responsible to himself for his death, which will ensue.”

That very tablet, it is likely enough, faced Paul on the day when he entered the Temple precincts and when the Jews attacked and sought to kill him because he had introduced, as they believed, a Gentile into the inclosure. And it is interesting to remember that the Apostle was rescued by the intervention of a tribune and band of soldiers, who were quartered in that same fortress of Antonia, overlooking the Temple area, whose site and successor we have this moment passed.

A few steps more and we come upon our right to the Birket Israin, our second Pool of Bethesda. The tradition, however, assigning the Bethesda miracle to this spot cannot be traced further back than the thirteenth century. It was probably not until the Twin Pools and the Pool of St. Anne (to be presently described) had become buried and lost to sight that the name Bethesda was attached to this place.

The pool, however, is very much more ancient than the tradition. It is true that the portion of the Harâm wall which now forms its southern side was probably not built till the beginning of the eighth century, when this north-eastern corner of the sacred inclosure was completed (as is supposed) by El-Walid, the son of Abd el-Melik, but the eastern wall which cuts across the little side valley in which

\* It was found by M. Clermont-Ganneau in the Moslem graveyard near the barracks.



the pool is contained, dates from Hadrian ; and, what is more to the point, the pool itself is found to be rock-cut, and may very well be much older than either wall.

However, there is no possibility here of "five porches," nor is there anything to be said in favour of the Birket Israin which does not apply with greater force to the "Twin Pools." So we proceed to the third Bethesda, that which lies within the precincts of the Church of St. Anne.

We reach the church by turning off to the left a little before we come to the Gate of St. Stephen. We are immediately conducted to a courtyard, or small quadrangle, to the west of the church, at one side of which is a flight of steps leading down to the pool. What we find at the bottom of the steps is a rock-hewn cistern, arched over with masonry in the manner of a crypt. And a crypt it actually is, for the pool was originally beneath the church, the courtyard already mentioned being in fact the roofless remains of the old Crusading sanctuary, upon the ruined wall of which we could even now trace portions of an ancient fresco representing the angel descending to trouble the water.

This, then, is the twelfth-century Bethesda ; what are its claims ? One argument brought forward in its favour is that it has five porches, which, though of the Crusading period, are "reconstructed on old bases." \* This does not go for much, since the twelfth-century church here was a rebuilding of an earlier seventh-century church, which would account for the "older bases" without supposing them to belong to a *κολυμβήθρα*. Another argument is that since Beit-Hanna and Beth-Hesda both mean "House of Mercy," the dedication of the church to St. Anne is an indication of its earlier name. This, again, is rather far-fetched. A third proof is supposed to be found in the discovery of a marble foot bearing an inscription to the effect that a certain Pompeia Lucilia was cured here.

But the really strong argument seems to me to consist in the fact that this, too, is a double pool, and a much larger one than that beneath the convent of the Sisters of Zion. The five porches cannot in reality be seen now, but the form of the pool was the only form admitting of the arrangement of five colonnades around the water. Only one pool is now uncovered, but the other is known to exist beside it ; it may be that when the Bordeaux Pilgrim passed it, one-half was

\* Rev. R. Lees, "Jerusalem Illustrated," p. 146.



FIG. 54.—ENTRANCE TO THE VIRGIN'S SPRING

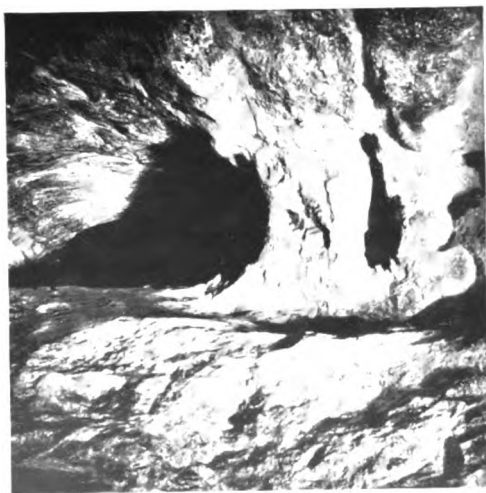


FIG. 55.—HEZEKIAH'S CONDUIT



covered as it now is, and that this is why the smaller Twin Pool was chosen at that time as the true Bethesda. On the whole, we may say that of the three pools which we have considered, this one at the Church of St. Anne, from its situation, its size, and its shape, has the greatest claim to be considered as the true Bethesda.

But now it was time for us to examine the evidential value of a phenomenon different from any which we had yet considered ; accordingly we directed Nassar to guide us, next, to the intermittent spring in the valley of the Kidron known as St. Mary's Well or the Virgin's Fount.

It was already nearing the hour at which the water usually rose ; we hurried, therefore, through the Gate of St. Stephen, and by the shortest path along the Kidron slopes to the Virgin's Spring. The spring is about a quarter of a mile to the south of the Harâm, on the eastern slope of Ophel. It is almost in the bottom of the Kidron Valley, looking up to the little village of Siloam on the east, and to the city walls on the north and north-west. The fountain is underground, the approach to it being a flight of thirty steps cut in the rock, and going down into the darkness, on which account the Arabs call it "The Spring of the Mother of Steps" (Fig. 54). At the bottom of the steps you stand upon a small platform, or landing, where the rock is levelled. In front of you is the mouth of a tunnel ; beside you, close to your feet, is a small boring, or well (Fig. 55). The tunnel is the conduit cut through the rock by Hezekiah, and leading by a serpentine course down to the Pool of Siloam, which lies something less than a quarter of a mile further down the valley ; the well is the opening through which the water rises, overflowing into the tunnel when it reaches the level of the platform, and running in a stream to fill the Siloam Pool.

The history of this spring and conduit is exceedingly interesting. It is one of the few tolerably clear and almost undisputed points in the topography of Jerusalem ; for there can hardly be a doubt that this is the conduit mentioned in 2 Kings xx. 20, "Now the rest of the acts of Hezekiah, and all his might, and how he made the pool, and the conduit, and brought water into the city, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah ?" The pool here mentioned is the Pool of Siloam, and the conduit is the tunnel through which the "Virgin's Fountain" feeds it. In August 1880 an inscription was found on the wall of the

tunnel about 19 feet from the Siloam end, the oldest Hebrew inscription known, which gives an account of the making of the tunnel. The forms of the letters are like those of the Moabite stone, and there is little doubt that it dates from the days of Hezekiah. It reads as follows :

"Behold the piercing through ! Now this was the manner of the piercing through. While [the hewers were lifting up] the pick, each towards his fellow, and while there were yet three cubits to be trodden through, there was heard the voice of each man calling to his fellow, for there was a [fissure] in the rock on the right hand [and on the left], and on the day of the piercing through, the hewers smote, each to meet his fellow, pick to pick ; and then flowed the waters from their channel to the pool twelve hundred cubits ; and [three fourths] of a cubit was the height of the rock on the head of the hewers."

The meeting each other and breaking through was evidently a triumph. And, indeed, one can see with the bodily eyes what desperate efforts these primitive engineers had to make in order to effect this meeting ; for the blind turnings and offsets where they had gone astray in their direction still remain in the tunnel, as also do the perpendicular shafts reaching to the upper air, which the two parties had constructed in order to ascertain where they respectively were, and in which direction they must correct their work in order to meet at last.

Hezekiah's object in making the tunnel was to bring the water within the walls of the city without its being available to a besieging army. Before his day the water had apparently been brought down by an open conduit, the remains of which still exist ; now that channel was disused, the spring was buried, and its waters were brought by the underground conduit to a pool within the city walls. The pool in question was that which was afterwards called the Pool of Siloam, but in Hezekiah's day seems to have been called the King's Pool. The city walls which now crown the summit of the hill came in that day to the foot of the slope, and old foundations seem clearly to show that they did actually encircle the pool as implied in the passage quoted from the Book of Kings.

Here, then, was the conduit which Hezekiah had made, and here was the spring which it conveyed to Siloam. Its intermittent character was the point which we had to examine, for this it is which has induced some biblical

topographers to identify it with Bethesda. The waters were said to rise generally at about eleven o'clock, and it was now ten minutes to the hour; we anxiously inquired therefore of some natives standing near the entrance whether the fountain had risen. Alas! we were a quarter of an hour too late. Well, it was useless to wait, for it was the time of year when the flow only takes place at intervals of four or five hours. All we could do was to come again another day, and content ourselves that morning with a visit to Siloam.

Before proceeding, however, to the pool in question we lingered a little, looking at the strange ways of the villagers who were gathered at the well. Some rough Arab boys were dancing just in the arch of the tunnel, looking very much like savages in a cave as they waved their arms to and fro and chanted a wild melody. Then came a mother with her boy; he stripped, and passing into the tunnel stood in a pool which the overflow had formed on the uneven floor. The woman proceeded to pour water over her son in the fashion of the old pictures of John baptising Christ, and we remembered that to this day the waters of this spring are sacred and are believed by the natives to have healing powers. Then came a middle-aged woman, one of the Siloam villagers, to fill her water-skin. While she was there I was proceeding to photograph the arch of the conduit, when immediately she fell into a passion of anger. Screaming, shouting, and gesticulating violently, she pointed at me and my camera, and it was evident that I was giving unspeakable offence. I thought that she might be under the impression that I was photographing her, as to this many of the women object; but Nassar said this had nothing to do with her rage; she was complaining that it was because travellers came making pictures of the place that the water had of late so woefully failed.

This was the second strange reason that we had heard that morning for the failure of the water; for, at the church of St. Anne, a Jerusalem resident of the better class had assured us that St. Mary's Well had failed ever since the Pool of St. Anne was uncovered, proving, as he considered, a causal connection between the two events! Two other reasons were supplied by Nassar, for he said that some of the folk believed that a magician had come and taken away a treasure that was hidden there and had left a curse behind him; and that others held that the failure of the water was

due to the removal of the ancient inscription from the wall of the tunnel (for the Hebrew inscription mentioned above was cut out of the rock by the Turkish Governor and sent to Constantinople, being broken of course in the process). Little incidents like this, which are of frequent occurrence in Palestine travel, bring home to one how devoid the Palestinian is of any notion of cause and effect. He remains, indeed, to-day just what he was of old when he "demanded a sign," living in a world of arbitrary and chaotic occurrence, and seeing the supernatural everywhere around him.

The true cause of the spring's failure has since been discovered. A fissure had occurred in the rock, and the water escaped through it before it reached the "Mother of Steps." The crack has now been mended, and the stream has returned to its former abundance.\*

My good-hearted companion thought to soften the heart of the wild woman by offering to fill her water-skin, but his offers were angrily rejected. Possibly the frantic gesticulations by which he earnestly sought to make the Arab woman understand English were not altogether so soothing as they were meant to be. So, we left her to her rage and bent our steps toward Siloam.

But now, before we leave St. Mary's Well, let us take a farewell glance at this fourth claimant to the honours of Bethesda—at the heaps of earth and rubble, the narrow opening of the stairway, the steep descent to the dark tunnel. Do these things fit the Bethesda story? There are ruins of a mosque near by, but no traces of a pool with stoæ; and the well itself, ever since the days of Hezekiah, has apparently been underground. It is conceivable, indeed, that further excavation might bring unknown things to light; but so far as present evidence goes, the probability would seem to be that this superincumbent mass of earth

\* The intermittent character of the spring is due to a siphon-action, which arises from the position and nature of the source in relation to the outlet. The water of the spring is derived from a slow accumulation in a limestone cavity within the rock on which the city is built. This cavity is high above the valley where the fountain issues. As soon as the water has accumulated to such a height as to reach the lip of the rocky basin, it begins to flow down the precipitous and narrow channel to the point of outlet; the siphon-action then comes into play and completely empties the basin, so that no further flow can take place until this natural cistern has once more been filled by the slow tricklings from the surrounding rock.



FIG. 56.—THE OLD POOL.

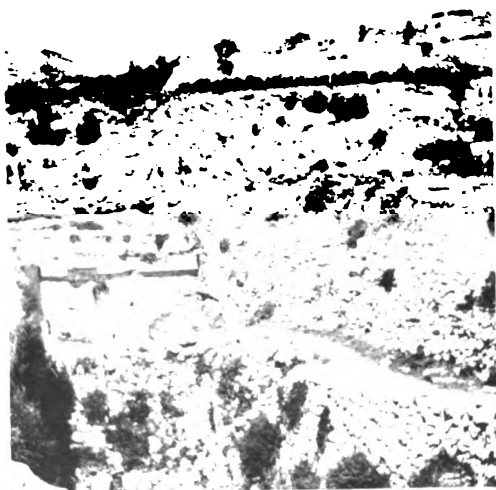


FIG. 57. THE POOL OF SILOAM





and stone was piled there by Hezekiah himself when he buried the spring to withdraw it from his enemies. And looking at the well itself, with its long steep stairway and the confinement of its spring, is it possible that a columbēthra with its stoæ could ever have pertained to such a "pool"—if pool it can be called? The narrowness of the stairway fits in, it is true, with the difficulty of the poor man in getting to the water before his stronger fellows, but that feature is not by any means needed to explain his perplexity, it is sufficiently explained in the words "I have no man when the water is troubled to put me into the pool." In fact the one and only thing in favour of this spring is the intermittent troubling of the water; unless, indeed, we add that which it shares with other pools (the Hammam esh-Shifâ, for instance), a reputation for healing properties.

From St. Mary's Well we proceeded to a still lower point in the valley where there is a pool of some size formed by a strong masonry dam across the depression. It is situated just where the Tyropœon opens into the Kidron Valley, and on maps it is marked as "Old Pool" (Fig. 56). How old it really is seems to be an unanswered question: the masonry of the dam is extremely massive, and is pronounced by the highest authorities to be "probably of great antiquity."\* It may be the "King's Pool" which Nehemiah visited on his night journey when he viewed the ruined walls of Jerusalem (Neh. ii. 14), and it may also be the "Pool of Solomon" where Josephus says the city wall took a bend. But some find these sites at Siloam, and others at St. Mary's Well.

Ascending now the slope towards the city, we arrive in a few moments at the Pool of Siloam (Fig. 57). This is one of the few undisputed sites in the topography of Jerusalem. It retains its old name, for the Arabs know it as Silwân, and it has an unbroken chain of tradition for over eighteen centuries. But what we see is at first disappointing. It is little but a pitful of loose stones, for the sides have for the most part fallen in, and the building-stones which lined it are worn and rounded. These are, in fact, not the walls of the *κολυμβήθρα* which Jesus knew; they are modern walls hastily piled up from the ruined remains of Crusaders' and Saracens' work: the masonry of Jesus' time is gone.

Yet the spot is the same; and both the pool and its sur-

\* Palestine Exploration Fund. Mem., "Jerusalem Vol.," p. 346.

roundings can be reconstructed in the mind, as we stand and look around us.

Picture, then, a pool fifty-two feet square (for that was its original size as proved by excavation). It is cut in the solid rock, and enclosed by colonnades. Northward rises the slope of Ophel, that spur of the Temple-hill which we still see crowned by the walls of the Harâm. The east side of that spur, from Siloam where we stand to the Upper Gihon which we have just left, is adorned by the King's Gardens, rising terrace above terrace. Ophel itself is covered with houses, for here are the priests' quarters. Down the centre of the slope comes a street of steps, descending from the Temple to the pool—"the stairs of the City of David."

We may imagine that it is the Feast of Tabernacles and "the last, the great day of the Feast." That wall up yonder is the same boundary and in part the identical wall which enclosed the Temple in the days of Jesus. There is a gateway in that wall which has existed from His days to ours, though it is to-day no longer open. But as we gaze toward it, imagination sees its doors swing apart, and down the stairs of the long slope a procession comes to the sound of a flute and the chanting of a weird old Hebrew psalm. The procession is headed by a priest bearing a small golden pitcher. The people behind him carry in their right hand a triple spray—myrtle, palm, and willow tied together—and in their left hand a fruit-bough with the fruit upon it.

Down the steep, terraced street, between the houses of Ophel, the procession advances towards us. At this ancient Pool of Siloam it pauses. The priest fills his pitcher with the sweet clean water, and then the company returns, timing its ascent of the slope so as to arrive at the Temple-gate just as the morning sacrifice is ready for the burning. As they cross the threshold the trumpets sound a three-fold blast, the golden pitcher is borne to the altar, and the water of Siloam is there poured out before the Lord, while the chant of the Great Hallel rises into the air, the voice of the Levites crying, "Praise, O ye servants of the Lord, praise the name of the Lord," and all the people responding with one voice, "Praise ye the Lord."\*

Apart from the Bethesda question, the chief New Testament interest attaching to Siloam is the story of the blind man whose eyes Jesus anointed with clay, "and said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam (which is by

\* See Edersheim's "Jesus the Messiah," 9th ed., vol. ii. p. 159.

interpretation sent)." The story is obviously symbolical. Jesus as Light, Jesus as Water, two of the Evangelist's most favourite symbols come into its symbolism. The "sent" waters of the Conduit, the "sent" Messiah of God—such is the parallel implied in his "interpretation" of Siloam. But the narrative may nevertheless be based on fact. Siloam even in Jesus' day was venerable and sacred; its waters even then were believed to have healing properties; the use of spittle, too, as a healing agent is quite consistent with historical probability; Jesus shared with His contemporaries these associations and beliefs. For my part I have confidence enough in the truth of the basic event to look with interest on the ancient pool and picture the poor man washing the clay from his eyes in hope of healing.

But now, what of Bethesda? Well; I do not remember to have seen Siloam claimed as the true Bethesda, and yet to myself it seems the most likely site of all. The whole story, it is true, is more or less of a poem; we must not therefore look to find all its details to fit this or any other scene; but, taking it as in its main features historical, the one salient point is the troubling of the water. And this troubling was evidently intermittent, lasting but a short time, and, when over, involving another long wait before it occurred again. Now, the Virgin's Fount is not the only place where such an intermittent "troubling" would occur; the connection of that fount with Siloam would produce a corresponding troubling in the pool. Whenever the fountain rose, the water rushing down the conduit to the pool occasioned a corresponding troubling there. In fact the word "troubling" (*ἔσαν παραχθῆ τὸ ὕδωρ*) fits the pool far better than it does the spring. The spring is not merely "troubled," it bursts upwards—rises—overflows (as I myself saw on a subsequent day), but the pool is "moved" or "troubled," precisely that and no more.

And Siloam was a columbēthra: it was a swimming-pool, with porches: Josephus explicitly names it as such. No other columbēthra of Jerusalem, no other pool, at least, which we know to have been such, shows this intermittent troubling.\* This one salient feature, then, outweighs in my

\* It has been stated that the Hammam Esh-Shifâ is an intermittent spring ("Recent Discoveries on the Temple Hill," by Rev. J. King, 1884, p. 117). If this were so, the claims of that pool would have to be more closely considered. It could hardly, however, claim to have been a *κολυμβήθρα*, which is a serious objection to identifying it with Bethesda.

mind all other considerations and assures me that if the story is based on fact at all, it was at this Pool of Siloam that the incident actually occurred.

There is the difficulty, no doubt, that the Evangelist knew Siloam, and speaks of it elsewhere by its proper name. Why, then, should he call the same pool in this passage by the name "Bethesda"? But this difficulty disappears when we remember the character and origin of the Fourth Gospel. That Gospel we take to be founded upon fragmentary materials, partly common to the Synoptics, partly belonging to a different line of tradition; it is, possible, therefore, that the fragment which recorded this healing act at the pool of troubled waters did not name the pool. In such a case it would be in the manner of the allegorist to supply a significant name, and, whether we take "House of Healing" or "House of Bubbling-up" to be the true interpretation of the name Bethesda,\* either meaning would fit the story. In short, it is not here suggested that the Evangelist had Siloam in mind when he narrated and applied the legend; it is claimed, only, that the original and historical incident upon which the legend was founded took place, if anywhere, in all probability at the one pool where water mysteriously troubled is seen as an actual fact at intervals of a few hours throughout the day.†

But is it intermittent? It is described as "an underground cave-well" ("Encycl. Bibl.," "Jerusalem," 2414). Dr. Chaplin, who explored it in 1871, says: "No appearance of a fountain was discovered, though carefully searched for," and adds that "every fresh observation tends to confirm the opinion that its water is derived solely from the percolation of the rains through the *débris* upon which the city is built" (P.E.F. "Jerusalem Vol.," p. 262); and Socin says that it contains only "rain-water which has percolated through impure earth" (Socin in "Baed." 1898, p. 55); while Conder says that "the only place near Jerusalem where a periodical 'troubling of the waters' is now known to occur is the Virgin's Fountain" (P.E.F.Q.S., 1888, p. 134).

\* Edersheim, "Jesus the Messiah," 9th edition, i. p. 162.

† See, further, Appendix E.

## CHAPTER XXXIV

### JERUSALEM—THE TEMPLE WALLS

A CHAPTER on the Temple Walls and the Temple Area, and the long and intricate controversy on the Temple Site, might easily expand into a volume. Moreover, descriptions of the Harâm, and brief accounts of the numerous points of interest without and within its walls, are to be found in every Palestine guide-book ; I shall confine myself, therefore, to one or two points which were especially interesting to myself.

The first of these was the Jews' Wailing-Place, which we visited on the Friday afternoon after our return from Siloam. It is a small open area at the end of a blind turning, and is situated on the west side of the Harâm at about one-fourth of the distance between the south-west and north-west corners. This situation for the traditional Wailing-Place has been advanced as an argument in favour of the theory that the ancient Temple was situated in the south-west corner of the present area, and not opposite to the Sakhra, or sacred rock. The argument seems, however, rather far-fetched, for, as a matter of fact, from this point northwards there is no other point at which you can see even a few contiguous yards of the west wall ; so that the Jews would seem—at any rate, at the present day—to have no choice in the matter.

It was about half-past three, too early for the Friday liturgy, which is not read until four, but a number of Jews, young men and white-headed fathers, were already gathered together, and were praying, or reading their psalters, or kissing the great stones of the Temple wall. Some of the more poverty-stricken of them, I am bound to confess, left their prayers upon sight of us, and besieged us with requests for bakhshish ; but, for the most part, the worship was devout, and the tears and lamentations apparently genuine. The men were variously habited, some in semi-European,

others in Oriental dress ; some in cloth coats, others in long cotton gowns ; some wore the tarbûsh, others fur caps, and yet others the bowler-hat, which so many of the Jews affect (Fig. 58).

On the other side of a canvas screen, which divided the little courtyard into two, were the women, standing against the sunlit wall of the Temple, or sitting in the shade with their books. They wore, for the most part, cotton gowns and Manchester shawls, with a folded handkerchief by way of headdress, and they carried very Western-looking black umbrellas (Fig. 59).

This Jewish custom of wailing over the lost Zion is of immense antiquity, dating, indeed, from Roman times ; for Jerome tells us how the Jews had to "buy their tears" of the Roman soldiers. By Hadrian they had been entirely excluded from Jerusalem, but Constantine permitted them to stand upon the neighbouring hills and view their ancient capital from afar ; and soon afterwards they were allowed once a year, on the anniversary of the capture of the city by Titus, to enter within its walls and wail over the ruins of the Temple. From that time forth the custom has probably remained unbroken. In the twelfth century, at any rate, Benjamin of Tudela mentions it as then existing, and the allusions to it in later times are frequent.

The published fragments of the liturgy used at this place are very affecting. They are such as the following :

For the Palace which is deserted  
We sit in solitude and mourn.  
For the Temple which is destroyed  
We sit in solitude and mourn.  
For the Walls which are broken down  
We sit in solitude and mourn.  
For our majesty which is departed  
We sit in solitude and mourn.

For our great men who lie dead  
We sit in solitude and mourn.  
For the precious stones which are burned  
We sit in solitude and mourn.  
For our priests who have stumbled  
We sit in solitude and mourn.  
For our Kings who have contemned Him  
We sit in solitude and mourn.

Lord, build, Lord, build—  
Build Thy house speedily !



FIG. 58.—THE JEWS' WAILING PLACE



FIG. 59.—JEWESSES AT THE WAILING PLACE





In haste ! in haste ! even in our days,  
Build Thy house speedily !  
In haste, in haste, even in our days,  
Build Thy house speedily !

So the passionate entreaties ascend by the face of these grey stones—the veritable stones of ancient Zion. But no response comes.

The stones are themselves full of interest. As we raise our eyes from the base of the wall to its summit nearly sixty feet above us, we see at a glance that there are three periods represented in its masonry. Above the present surface of the ground you have, first, five courses of gigantic stones, mostly with marginal draughts, averaging  $3\frac{1}{2}$  feet in height and several feet in length ; one of them is 13 feet, another 16 feet, long. These courses, it is now generally agreed, are Herodian, the prepossession in favour of Solomon, which has so often been a drag upon Jerusalem archæology, having given way to a more reasonable view.\* Next above these are four courses of great square stones with plain faces, which are said to be late Roman or Byzantine. And at the top are sixteen courses of small stones representing Arab work.

It struck me as very remarkable that while some of the huge Herodian stones are wonderfully preserved, others have crumbled into an almost shapeless irregularity. This is due, I am told, from their being quarried from two different strata found at Jerusalem—the “mezzeh,” or soft limestone, and the “melekeh,” or hard—and it has been used as an argument, but not a very convincing one, that the materials belong to different ages. That the wall at this place has been rebuilt is, nevertheless, possible, for it is noticeable that the joints between the stones gape wide in some instances, instead of fitting so closely, as they do in most parts of the wall, that a knife cannot be inserted between them.

It is not wonderful that such signs of reconstruction should occur here and there, considering the desperate sieges which the Temple, as well as the city, has sustained :

\* Masons' marks painted on the stones of the foundations of the south-east angle and elsewhere were pronounced to be Phœnician, and supposed on that account to prove that the wall dated from Solomon, “but their forms are too rude to give any clear indication of their age. They may have been painted by Herod's masons quite as well as by Solomon's” (P.E.F. Mem., “Jerusalem Vol.,” p. 244).

they do not form any sufficient ground for doubting the opinion, formed after careful and laborious examination of the west wall at every point where it can be inspected, that the whole wall in its lower courses is mainly of one age, and that age, as has already been said, the Herodian.

Take a good look at the masonry of the "Wailing-Place" before we leave it; for this is the recognised standard of comparison in all discussions on the character and age of the Harâm walls in the various parts of their circuit. Any such discussion would be too lengthy for insertion here, but we may briefly remark that the conclusion to which it would lead us would be that (disregarding, of course, the upper and later courses) the west, the south, and the east walls are all the work of one period and one builder. The only reasonable doubt attaches to the north-east corner. With that exception we can say with some confidence that these are the very walls with which Herod surrounded the sacred precincts; they are the walls upon which Jesus looked.\*

And now let us leave the Wailing-Place and proceed toward the south-west corner of the Harâm—that corner about which there is not, and never has been, any dispute, all admitting that this, at least, was Herod's work. Nassar takes us round by some very filthy streets (for houses abut upon the wall, and prevent a straight course), and lands us presently at a spot a little north of the corner where dust and rubbish and formidable clumps of prickly pear encumber the base of the great rampart. It is very hot and very glaring and very unsavoury. But look there upon your left! What do you see? One of the most interesting relics of Christ's Jerusalem. A stranger to Jerusalem topography might pass it, perhaps, without realising its significance, for it appears to be nothing but a rough projection from the ancient masonry—the spring of an arch, perhaps.

Just so! that is precisely what it is—the spring of an ancient arch. "Now in the western part of the Temple enclosures," writes Josephus, "there were four gates, the first led to the King's Palace, and went to a passage over the intermediate valley." This arch was part of that same "passage over the valley." The valley is almost filled up now; the curve of the arch begins but a few feet from the ground. But originally the arch rose to a height of forty-two feet; its

\* The details of the masonry of the Harâm walls are fully described in a paper by the late Sir Charles Wilson, in P.E.F.Q.S., 1880, p. 33. See, also, Appendix F to the present work.

span was forty feet from pier to pier, and its depth fifty feet from back to front. The bridge of which it formed a part joined the Palace of the Maccabees to the Royal Cloister of the Temple. It was built of great stones like those of the Wailing-Place, and in the lifetime of Jesus it formed one of the principal features of the city.

The relic is known as Robinson's Arch, after the name of its discoverer. The ground beneath it was excavated by Warren, who found the central pier of the bridge rising from an old pavement, that identical pavement upon which Christ and His disciples walked whenever they went down the Valley of the Cheesemakers to the Pool of Siloam. And upon the pavement Warren found the great stones of the arch lying where they fell when the ruin which Jesus predicted was accomplished.

Warren furthermore broke through this pavement and, after passing through another twenty-two feet of rubbish, found the stones of a still earlier arch, which had been destroyed before ever the pavement of Herod's day was laid. This, there cannot be a doubt, belonged to the bridge destroyed at the time of Pompey's siege in 63 B.C.; for Josephus tells us how in that siege "the adherents of Aristobulus being beaten, retreated on the Temple, breaking down the bridge which connected it with the city."

But the later bridge upon whose fragments we are now looking, was Herod's bridge, the bridge which spanned the valley with two great arches in Christ's time. Standing upon it you might at that time have seen some of the most magnificent features of what was then a noble city. On your right as you faced northwards would be Ophel, the priests' quarter, and the vast walls round the Temple; higher still, the Temple itself rising terrace above terrace, a pile of snowy stone and yellow gold. Below you the deep cleft of the Tyropæon with the "Lower City," or business quarter, stretching north and north-west. Here too, upon your left, was the Xystus, or Forum, on the western slope of the valley, with the Palace of the Maccabees above it;\* and higher still, the Upper City, the "West End," the quarter of palaces and mansions, the houses of the rich ranged terrace

\* Jos., Bell. Jud., ii. xvi. 3. αὕτη γὰρ [i.e., Ἀσμωναιων οἰκία] ἦν ἐπάνω τοῦ ξυστοῦ πρὸς τὸ πέραν τῆς ἄνω πόλεως, καὶ γέφυρα τῷ ξυστῷ τὸ ἱερόν συνήπτεν.

above terrace. Such was Jerusalem seen from this ancient bridge in the days of Jesus.\*

And now let us turn from this bit of the old bridge, and taking a few steps southward pause at the corner of the wall. This corner stands not, as might be supposed, in the bed of the Tyropœon Valley, but high on the western slope of that valley. This remarkable fact is obscured now by the filling up of the valley down its whole length with the débris of the ruined city, but the rock levels obtained by excavation from the Wailing-Place southward, and from the Double Gate westward, show that the Tyropœon at this part of its course bore south-eastwards, and actually cut across this south-west corner of the Temple area ; or rather that this corner of the great platform actually crossed the valley and planted its extremity on the opposite bank.

It was a bold idea for an architect to conceive, and it could only be carried out by making the retaining wall of the most massive description, and then filling in with earth and rubble the great space left between the wall and the eastern slope of the valley. And the masonry at the south-west corner is just what might be expected. It shows the most gigantic blocks, in some cases approaching forty feet in length.† And the wall has never been disturbed ; none of the rebuilding which may possibly have taken place at some points has ever occurred here ; the joints are perfect and the masonry "has every appearance of being *in situ*."

Look at the height of the wall here, and remember that this is but a third of the whole height measured from the foundations ; that will give you some idea of the largeness of Herod's conception and the strength of his will. In Jesus' day the wall was hidden to a third of its height from the base ; but allowing for that, and measuring only from the pavement to the summit, this rampart of cyclopean blocks, said to be "the finest example of mural masonry in the world," towered to a height of 100 feet above the spectator's head, and the wall of the Royal Cloister rose for

\* Edersheim, "Jesus the Messiah," 9th ed., vol. i. p. 112 ; Stapfer, "Palestine in the Time of Christ," p. 52.

† One stone, built into the wall at a height of 62 feet from the base, measures no less than 38 feet 9 inches in length, and is 4 feet thick and 10 feet deep, and others are of scarcely less size (Wilson, P.E.F.Q.S., 1880, p. 9).

another fifty feet above that. Near the south-east angle an even greater height was visible above the surface. There wall and cloister together soared to a height of about 185 feet from the ground, and below the wall was a precipitous descent to the bed of the Kidron, which at that time was 126 feet beneath the exposed base of the wall. It was on this east side of the Temple that the disciples, crossing the Kidron to the Mount of Olives, were struck with wonder at the sight. And truly when we remember that the great stones were then pure white, that the platform above them was surrounded by four marble cloisters, one at least of which was longer and higher than York Minster ; \* when we remember moreover that these cloisters embraced a building of marble and gold, approached by a porch or gateway 150 feet in height, † higher, that is to say, than the façade of St. Peter's at Rome, we feel that we too might well have exclaimed, in the words of the Galilean disciple : " Behold what manner of stones and what manner of buildings ! " Truly as we stand beside their wrecked remains we are impressed anew with the greatness of Him who so profoundly realised the nothingness of all material splendour in comparison with the things of the spirit, that He could exclaim with deep conviction concerning this marvel of His age, " Destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another made without hands." ‡

And how long did this Temple of Herod last ? It was completed in the procuratorship of Albinus (62–64 A.D.), and it was burned in 70 A.D. It lasted about six years !

\* " Recovery of Jerusalem," vol. i. p. 9.

† " Fncycl. Bibl.," s.v. " Temple."

‡ See Mark xiv. 58. One may believe that the words which Jesus really said were those suggested above. It is noteworthy that in Mark xiii. 1, 2, the passage previously alluded to, while the disciple calls attention to the stones and the buildings, it is the buildings only (*i.e.*, the *ιερον* and the cloisters which crowned the cyclopean platform) concerning which Jesus said they should be " thrown down "—a subtle indication of His reasonableness and perception of probability.

## CHAPTER XXXV

### THE TEMPLE AREA

AT seven o'clock the next morning (Saturday, April 13) we made our way to the Harâm esh-Sherif, the great platform upon which the Temple once stood, and whose retaining walls we had gazed upon the day before. We started thus early because the Easter-eve celebrations of the Greek Church were to take place that day, and already the streets were becoming thronged : at a later hour, we were warned the ways would be so crowded with pilgrims as to be almost impassable. For an hour past, indeed, the pavement round about the Jaffa Gate had been appropriated by petty merchants selling their wares, coloured fabrics, oranges, sweets, relics, glass bangles, endless frippery. The foot-passengers were crowded off into the road among the donkeys, mules, and camels, while the side-walk, wherever one existed, was filled with costermongers, loungers, and barbers.

By the by, speaking of barbers, one notices here a curious illustration of a passage in one of St. Paul's Epistles. The operation which for the most part the street barber seems to be performing is that of shaving his customer's head with a razor. As the warm weather approaches, every male, it appears, has all his hair shaved off in this manner. And it is to this custom that the Apostle alludes when he writes : "If a woman is not veiled, let her also be shorn : but if it is a shame to a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be veiled" : in other words, "if she means to be a man let her be a man outright"—a truly Oriental view. Both customs, the veiling of the women and the shaving of the men, are practised to-day precisely as they were then.

But to return to our expedition : we took with us, besides our own dragoman, a "kawass" or official attendant from the British Consulate, and a soldier from the Turkish barracks. It is unsafe, especially at feast-times (and the



FIG. 60.—THE HĀRAM ESH-SHERĪF. N.W. ANGLE



FIG. 61.—THE DOME OF THE ROCK





Moslem festival only ended yesterday), to visit the Harâm without being thus attended.

We entered by a gate in the north-west angle, and were deeply impressed by a most unexpected experience. The contrast between the sordid streets we had just left and the grandeur of this sacred inclosure was such as almost took our breath away. The Mohammedans have good right to name this the "Noble Sanctuary." In place of evil-smelling filth, rough jostling, narrow roadways, decay, disorder, and noise, you enter suddenly upon spaciousness, cleanliness, silence, nobility, beauty. A conviction seizes upon you that this people has ideals, that its religion is alive; the pity is that those who can thus appreciate the spiritual value of quiet and purity do not apply it to their civic life.

The quadrangle occupies about thirty-five acres, a sixth of the whole area of the city. It is nearly a mile in circuit. At the corner where we are standing there is a considerable area of rock, bare except for patches of weedy growth (Fig. 60); in other parts there is grass which would be green but for the drought which has withered it; but a great part of this vast area is paved with flagstones which are kept neat and clean. Cypressess and sycamores are planted here and there, some of them being trees of considerable age. Mastaba, or raised places for prayer, and sebil, or fountains for religious ablution, are dotted about; the Mesjid el-Aksa, on the site of Omar's Mosque, occupies the south-west corner; and in the midst of all rises the noble and graceful building known as the Kubbet es-Sakhra, or Dome of the Rock.

And now, disregarding the numberless "sights" usually shown to travellers, most of them things to which silly fables are attached, let us confine ourselves to the one or two matters of biblical interest which are contained within the Sanctuary. To begin with, there is the rock upon which we are standing. We have entered at the most northerly gate of the west wall, and we are facing eastward. The whole of the north-west corner is, as I have said, neither paved nor turfed, it is the bare native rock. But the rock has been lowered and artificially levelled. This is evident from the fact that the barracks upon our left hand (successors to the ancient Antonia) stand upon a rocky platform which is scarped on the south. The base of the barracks gives you the natural level of this part of the Harâm, and the scarp gives you the depth of rock which has been cut away. This

lowering of the general surface has had the effect of isolating the barracks on the north and the platform of the Dome upon the south : formerly they must have been connected by a continuous ridge.

When did that lowering and levelling take place ? Well ; we read in the First Book of Maccabees and in the Works of Josephus, of a certain Akra or Citadel which stood higher than the Temple, and which, when it fell into hostile hands, was a serious menace. We also read that when Simon Maccabæus captured it from the Greeks, he levelled the hill upon which it stood, so that the Temple might be the higher, a work which occupied three years. It has always been a debated question where this Greek Akra stood. Some have placed it at the west, across the Tyropæon ; some to the south, on a hypothetical rock separated from the Temple site by a doubtful hollow ; \* but Professor Robertson Smith places it on the north, and identifies it with Antonia. I wonder, then, whether the suggestion is worth considering that the Baris, or Akra, occupied a much larger platform than Antonia ; that the Antonia rock, which measures only fifty feet from north to south, is in fact a mere remnant of the Akra rock ; that the latter approached in the time of the Maccabees much nearer to the Temple than this narrow Antonia strip which stands at a distance of some 130 yards from the Temple site ; and that this great rocky area, which adjoined and vied with the Temple platform, is the rock which was cut away ? If so, this flat surface of the native limestone, upon which our feet are at this moment planted, is accounted for, and it presented the same appearance in New Testament times as it does to-day.

The alternative hypothesis is that the levelling of this part of the Sanctuary took place at a later date, when the Temple area was extended toward the north so as to bring the Sacred Rock more nearly into the centre of the Sanctuary. According to this view, the lowering of the north-west corner took place at the same time as the filling up of the north-east corner, whether by Hadrian, as some suppose, or by Abd el-Melik, as is supposed by others.

\* The strong point in favour of this view is the association of Akra with the Fountain in Siloam, in Jos. " Bell. Jud.," v. vi. 1 ; but the passage by no means necessitates the view that the Akra was above the fountain. It runs as follow : κατέειχε καὶ τὴν πηγὴν, καὶ τὴν Ἀκραν—αὕτη δὲ ἦν ἡ κἀτω πύλος,—καὶ τὰ μέχρι τῶν Ἑλλήνων βασιλείων, τῆς τοῦ Μονοβάξου μητρὸς.

And, speaking of the north-east corner, we must not leave our present standpoint at the north-west till we have noticed the difference of level between the two. Notwithstanding the obvious fact that the ground where we are standing has been considerably lowered, it is still ten feet higher than the corner which faces us. This is due, of course, to the former existence of the side-valley whose filling-up I have just alluded to. In Herod's day a combe or hollow cut diagonally across yonder angle, sloping rapidly down to the Kidron; and the later character of the masonry at that part of the east wall proves that it was not till long after Herod's day that a part of this hollow was walled in and filled up so as to extend the general surface of the Temple enclosure. If we wish, therefore, to picture the ground-plan of the enclosure as it existed in Christ's time, we must altogether exclude yonder north-eastern part, and place the northern boundary just on the hither (northern) side of that dais which supports and surrounds the Dome of the Rock.\* Antonia stood on our left as we are now facing, just outside the existing north-west corner. From that fortress to the inner court of the Temple (the Temple standing, we are for the moment assuming, where the Dome of the Rock rises now) there ran a colonnade. Such is the reconstruction which we must make upon the north; but for the rest the limits were the same then as now; the south-west and south-east angles remain as they were.

It is time, however, that we moved on and visited what is to myself the most interesting of all the objects of veneration—the Sakhra, or sacred rock, from which the Moslems say that Mohammed took his night-journey to heaven, but which actually marks, as I believe, a spot intimately connected with the Jewish Temple-worship.

The vast and beautiful building which covers the Sakhra, known as the Dome of the Rock, stands upon a raised platform of about five acres in extent and ten feet in height, to which ascent is made by broad flights of steps (Fig. 61). The platform is paved, but is itself doubtless a solid mass of rock, and the Sacred Rock merely the highest

\* Near the north side of the platform on which the Dome of the Rock stands, a scarp of the rock has been found beneath the present paved surface; the line of that scarp produced eastwards would cut the eastern boundary wall just at the point where Herod's masonry joins the later masonry which runs northward from the Golden Gate.

peak of the same. The Sakhra is a rough, irregular piece of the native limestone, rising five feet about the general surface of the pavement, and standing there in isolation amid the marble and mosaics which surround it.

At the top of the three flights of steps which lead up to the platform there stands a graceful arcade, which surrounds and encloses the sacred ground upon which the great Dome stands. Here we are stopped and told to remove or cover our shoes. Slippers are accordingly tied over our boots lest we should defile the sanctuary, and we pass beneath the arch and pause for a minute to look at a beautiful little building which stands before the entrance of the greater building, and which is almost a replica in little of the latter. This exquisite little oratory, known now as "The Dome of David's Chain," figures in the accounts which the Moslem historians give of the erection of the greater Dome. Their story is that Abd el-Melik, the ninth successor to Mohammed, having lost possession of Mecca, conceived the idea of making Jerusalem the principal place of pilgrimage, and proceeded to build a dome over the Holy Rock. For this purpose he set apart "a sum of money equivalent in amount to the whole revenue of Egypt for seven years. For the safe custody of this immense treasure he built a small dome, the same which exists at the present day to the east of the Cubbet es Sakhras, and is called Cubbet es Silsileh. This little dome he himself designed, and personally gave the architect instructions as to its minutest details. When finished, he was so pleased with the general effect that he ordered the Cubbet es Sakhras itself to be built on precisely the same model." \*

Such, then, is the origin of the Dome of the Rock, and of its little companion the Dome of David's Chain. That this is the true account of the latter has been doubted; yet there seems nothing intrinsically improbable in it, and no rival tradition disputes the claim. The former is often confused with the Mosque of Omar; but the two were distinct buildings: the Dome is in fact not a Mosque at all; it is an oratory—a sacred spot for private devotion, not a place of public worship. The Mosque el-Aksa, to the south of the Dome, which was built by Abd el-Melik, there can be little doubt, occupies the same position as the original Mosque

\* Besant and Palmer, "Jerusalem, the City of Herod and Saladin" (1889), p. 87.

of Omar, which, according to an early pilgrim who saw it, was a simple square building of timber.

We now proceed to enter the Dome itself. We could not perhaps see the interior of this beautiful building to greater advantage than we do at this moment, when the early morning light is streaming through the upper windows and lights up the gorgeous mosaics and marble pillars. Round the base of the cupola runs an inscription recording in old Arabic letters that the oratory was erected in the year 72 of the Hegira, that is in A.D. 687. It is said that originally the inscription gave the name of Abd el-Melik as the builder (which is no doubt the truth), but that the name of el-Mamûn, who did not live till more than a century later, has been substituted.

There is a quaint story told by the Moslem historians of a narrow escape which the Great Dome had about 200 years after it was built. In A.D. 846 a great earthquake occurred, and the guards who were watching on that fateful night "were suddenly astonished to find the dome itself displaced, so that they could see the stars and feel the rain splashing upon their faces. Then they heard a low voice saying gently, 'Put it straight again,' and gradually it settled down into its original state." \*

It is not our business to describe the Mohammedan shrine, wonderful as it is. Our immediate concern is with that for the sake of which it was built—the Sakhra, which lies within its walls. To some it seems childish and irrational to feel interest in that which is associated with historical events by mere locality or physical contact: it seems akin to the passion of the Oriental for sacred trees and sacred hills and the sacred ground which the body of a saint has touched. Yet I confess that it was with deep emotion that I approached this venerable rock. By no other relic in the holy city had I been impressed and thrilled as I was by this one. When I came to myself and found my mouth parched with the absorbing interest of the moment, I began to get an inkling of what the Prophet meant by his "night-journey to heaven" when he knelt upon this rock.

This fascination was due to my firm conviction (and subsequent study has not shaken it), that this was the actual spot upon which stood the altar of burnt-offering in the Temple of Solomon, in the Temple of Zerubabel, and in the Temple of Herod. From the high point where the

\* Besant and Palmer, "Jerusalem," p. 104.

natural rock, untouched by any tool, rose above the surrounding courts, the smoke of sacrifice ascended through the long history of Israel's worship till the days of Jesus; and it was upon this same spot that His eyes too were fixed at the hour of sacrifice when He came up to His "Father's House" a lad of twelve, and when in after years He attended the feasts with His friends or His disciples.

The controversy as to the site of the Temple is a long one, and at one time was strangely bitter. The late Sir Charles Wilson, a biblical scholar of very high repute, held to the very last that the Temple stood in the south-west corner of the Harâm; but, at the present time all Continental and nearly all British scholars place it at or near the spot where we are standing.\* The entrance to the Holy Place was to the west of the rock: the altar faced the Temple.

My first impression as I stood by the Sakhra was that the altar must have stood at its western end, and the priest when he went to offer sacrifice must have ascended the gradual slope of the rock from east to west, in obedience to the commandment: "Neither shalt thou go up by steps unto Mine altar." The shape of the rock favours this idea, for while the ascent is gradual from east to west, the western termination of the rock, which would face the Temple, is abrupt. That cannot, however, have been the arrangement in Herod's Temple, for, at that time, the altar occupied the whole surface of the rock.† Moreover, the Mishna distinctly states that the approach to the altar by which the priest ascended was on the south side. May it not be that in Solomon's Temple the ascent actually was from east to west, and that the altar, which was much smaller than Herod's, occupied the western end of the holy rock? When Herod's magnificence demanded a larger altar, he adapted that to the form of the rock, not daring to touch the latter with a tool, and built of unhewn stones the ascent on the south side which the Mishna describes.

However this may be, it is clear that the altar upon

\* Upon this point, see Appendix F.

† In the Temples of Solomon and of Zerubabel the base of the altar measured only 20 cubits each way; but in Herod's Temple the Mishna says that it measured 32 cubits (nearly 48 feet) each way. Josephus (B.J. v. v. 6) says 50 cubits, but the statement of the Mishna may perhaps be preferred. The length of the cubit is uncertain. In "Encycl. Bibl." the probable lengths of the longer and shorter cubits are given as 20.67 inches and 17.72 inches respectively. The present size of the Sakhra is 58 feet by 44 feet.

which Jesus looked must have occupied the whole of the rock. We must picture it as built up in stages to a height (so Josephus says) of fifteen cubits, and approached from the south by an acclivity constructed of unhewn stones, carefully arranged so as not to form steps, but a gradual slope.\*

Though we have no evidence upon the point, we may assume, I suppose, that the Jews kept the rock in its rough state in obedience to the same sentiment that forbade them to build the altar itself of hewn stones, "for if thou lift up thy tool upon it thou hast polluted it." Unfortunately, the rock is not now quite in its original condition, for the Crusaders did lift up their tool upon it: they covered it with marble, and traces of the fastenings can still be seen upon the surface. The Moslems, however, leave it untouched to-day, except that they keep it clean by covering it apparently with some kind of lime-wash, just as the Jews used to white-wash the unhewn stones of the altar.

We went down into the cave under the Sakhra, and we saw the marks of the Archangel Gabriel's hands; for, when Mohammed was caught up into heaven, the rock wished to go too, but the Archangel held it down, and he left the marks of his fingers where he clutched it. Then we left the Dome, and as we did so, we were called by a group of four or five turbaned men to stay and see the stone which covered Solomon's Tomb. Into the stone Mohammed had driven nineteen nails, and one nail falls through into the tomb at the end of each æon till the world ends. There are three and a half nails left, and it was incumbent upon us, so it seemed, to lay bakhshish on these miraculous time-measurers. We attempted to pass on without doing so, but were pursued by the whole gang, and saved our lives at the expense of sixpence.

We visited the Mosque el-Aksa,† which, as I have said, occupies the site of the original Mosque of Omar, saw the traditional footprint of Christ behind the pulpit, the old armoury of the Knights Templars, and many other sights legendary and historical; and then, descending to the vaults beneath the Mosque we were led to one of the most interesting of the relics belonging to New Testament times.

A flight of steps near the entrance to the Mosque brought

\* "Encycl. Bibl." and Smith's D.B. "Altar."

† Called by native historians El Jâmi el-Aksa: the Masjid el-Aksa is properly applied to the whole of the Harâm.—Besant and Palmer, "Jerusalem" (1889), p. 92.



us down to the upper end of a vaulted passage. This passage ran beneath the centre of the Mosque, sloping gently downwards towards the south wall of the Harâm. Walking along it for about 200 feet we arrived at the top of eight steps, by which we descended into a porch or vestibule about 40 feet square, at the further end of which is the famous Double Gate.

The Double Gate is now blocked up ; for the south wall of the Harâm, in which it is situated, is now one of the walls of the city ; but in Gospel times the city wall lay much further south, at the foot of the Ophel ridge, and this gate was one of the principal entrances from the town into the Temple. At that time the sill of the gate lay at the level of the ground outside the Temple wall, and a long tunnel sloped up from it to the paved surface of the Temple area, as may still be seen. It was this tunnel which gave to the entrance the name of Huldah, or Weasel Gate.

What makes the gate and tunnel so deeply interesting is that it was through them that the water procession from Siloam entered the Temple of old ; so that at feast-times Jesus must often have passed through the vestibule and up yonder ramp. Much of the ancient masonry remains ; and we feel here, what we can so seldom feel with any certainty, that we are looking on the very thing that His eyes beheld.

Around the porch in which we stand are huge stones of the mighty Herodian type with which we are familiar ; and in the centre is a gigantic monolithic column. The capital of this column, which is said to be "of the Greek, rather than Roman Corinthian order," is an indication to us of the style of decoration in Herod's Temple. The acanthus alternates with the water-leaf, "as in the Tower of the Winds at Athens, and other Greek examples." \* The floor of the vestibule is spread with mats, for it is now used by the Moslems as a place for prayer.

As to the Double Gate itself, it consists, as its name indicates, of two arches. These are divided by a massive rectangular pier built of large Herodian stones, and the lintels are still in position. It is significant also that the breadth of the whole gateway is precisely the same as that of Barclay's Gate, one of the original entrances on the west side. Thus, there is every indication of the gateway being the veritable structure as it left Herod's hands. On the

\* Smith, D.B. (1893), "Temple," p. 1461.

outside, indeed, there is evidence of rebuilding. There we find two highly ornamental arches dating from Julian's time ; \* but these are loosely and roughly inserted into the original structure of the gateway, and held in place by metal clamps. They, as well as a topsy-turvy inscription, dating from the second century, form no part of the massive Huldah Gate of Jesus' time ; but here, at the interior, the Gateway, the Portico, and the "Weasel" tunnel sloping up to the Temple area, are the very entrances through which He passed when, as one of the worshippers, He followed the procession of the priests at the Feast of Tabernacles, carrying the fruit-laden bough in His hand.

Returning now to the Harâm, we proceed to the south-east corner. Here we descend by a flight of steps to the "Cradle of Christ," which, our guide informs us, is no other than the cradle in which Jesus was laid when as an infant He underwent the rite of circumcision. How it came about that a niche belonging to a pagan statue, built haphazard into the wall in a horizontal position was used for this purpose, he did not say. Thence more steps led us down to Solomon's Stables, vast vaults supported by no fewer than eighty-eight columns. Solomon's Palace undoubtedly lay to the south of the Temple, and he is declared in Scripture to have had forty thousand stalls of horses for his chariots ; moreover, the Knights Templars actually found these underground avenues convenient as stables for their own steeds, so those who like can put these facts together and call the place Solomon's Stables. But a soberer view recognises in them a reconstruction, probably belonging to the age of Justinian, of those substructures which Herod built to support his cloisters, when he extended the area of the Temple Courts. Some remains indeed of Herod's original work, and a good deal of the original material, may still be seen. Perhaps the most interesting historical association of the place is that on that dread day when the city was stormed by Rome, hundreds of poor panic-stricken Jews crowded these hidden spaces for refuge from inevitable death.

To the extreme west of these vaults, at a distance of one hundred yards from the south-east angle, is situated an ancient gateway known as "The Triple Gate." Originally it appears to have opened into a vestibule similar to that

\* Smith, D. B., 2nd ed., "Jerusalem," p. 1656. "Recent Discoveries," by Rev. J. King, pp. 73-77.

which we saw at the Double Gate ; and like the Double Gate it led up by an underground ramp to the Temple Courts. It is blocked up now, but the form of the original entrance is very clear.

The main interest of this gateway is that its situation affects the question as to whereabouts in the Harâm the original Temple area lay. Josephus says that the Weasel Gates were in the middle of the south wall. If, therefore, the two arches of the Double Gate are to be identified with the Weasel Gates, the school represented by the late Sir Charles Wilson was right, and the south side of the old Temple area did extend for about six hundred feet from the south-west corner. But the discovery of this Triple Gate upsets that conclusion, for this gate also had a tunnel sloping upward to the light, and the Weasel Gates may therefore have been the Double and Triple Gateways taken together. Now, the Triple Gate is about the same distance from the south-east corner as the Double Gate is from the south-west, so the two together may be considered as "in the middle" of the southern Harâm wall, and the whole southern part of the Harâm belonged in that case to Herod's Temple. The one theory would oblige you to put the Temple in the south-west part of the Harâm, the other would permit you to place it, in accordance with later views, where the Dome of the Rock now stands.

Reascending now to the level of the Temple plateau, and turning the corner, we proceed along the east wall. At about two-thirds of its length as we go northwards we come to the far-famed Golden Gate. This was probably the northern limit of Herod's Temple. In New Testament times a side valley cut diagonally across what is now the north-east corner, and was not filled up until a later date ; so that this gateway must then have been near the north-eastern extremity of the enclosure. It is significant that just here the masonry of the external wall changes its character ; also, that the Golden Gate is almost exactly in a line with the northern scarp of the platform upon which the Dome of the Rock now stands.

As to the name "Golden," it represents the Latin "*aurea*," which in its turn was a corruption of the Greek *ὡραία*, beautiful. The *θύρα ὡραία*, or Beautiful Gate, was, in fact, so named because it was supposed to be the Beautiful Gate of the Temple "where Peter healed the lame man" (Acts iii. 10). But Peter's "Beautiful Gate" was certainly not in

the outer wall of the Temple, but in the inner sacred enclosure, and it has utterly disappeared with the Temple itself. We cannot, therefore, connect the Golden Gate with that New Testament event. Can we connect it with any other?

Well, as to the existing gateway, that is generally admitted to be Byzantine, and dates, it is believed, from the reign of Justinian. But it was in all probability built upon the site of an older gateway, the Gate Shushan of the Talmud, which was the only gate on the east side of the city. If so, it was at this point that Jesus entered the city riding upon an ass on that first Palm Sunday, when "they that went before and they that followed cried 'Hosanna: Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.'" The Moslems believe that some day another conqueror will enter by the same gate, and that he will wrest the city from the Moslems and give it to the Christians. Therefore they keep this gate walled up, so as to put off the decree of Fate to the last possible moment, or possibly circumvent Fate altogether!

From the Golden Gate we proceed to the north-east corner, peer through a grating covered with bits of rag, the offerings of pilgrims, and look down into the Birket Israin, regarded by the Crusaders as the Pool of Bethesda, but now a mighty dustbin, filled almost to the brim with all kinds of city filth and ordure. So, back to the north-west corner from which we started, and home through the crowded streets an hour before noon.

I have said nothing about the great cisterns with which a large part of the Harâm is honeycombed. They are not included in the sights shown to tourists, but are of great importance in determining the boundaries of Herod's Temple, as well as the levels of the rock upon which it was built. They are of two kinds: large rock-cut cisterns roofed by the natural rock left uncut; and excavations in the rock arched over with masonry. The former are ancient, the latter comparatively modern. Those of the ancient kind have been made by mining out the layer of soft limestone and leaving over it the roof of hard limestone which overlies the soft: they probably date from a time when the arch had not come into common use. One of them, known as the Great Sea, could contain three million gallons; and the tanks all taken together would hold more than ten million gallons.\*

\* "Recovery of Jerusalem," p. 17; Hastings, D.B., "Jerusalem," p. 598.

The significant facts about these tanks are that none of the ancient sort are found north of the Dome of the Rock, and that all the tanks in the North-east corner are roofed with masonry; which accords with the theory as to the northern boundary of Herod's Temple-plateau which has been advocated above. On the other hand, the greater number of the ancient tanks lie quite in the southern part of the Harâm, and this is claimed by the advocates of the south-west-Temple theory as a circumstance in their favour. It is not, however, very conclusive as an argument, since it is agreed that Solomon's Palace, which would also need tanks, occupied the south of the Harâm; also it is to be remembered that three of the largest tanks are not to the south, but close to the Dome of the Rock; and finally, many if not all of the tanks are connected with each other and form one system. This vast water-system was in Herod's day, and perhaps before, supplied by means of the aqueducts which brought water from the southern springs as mentioned in a previous chapter.

## CHAPTER XXXVI

### JERUSALEM—THE HOLY FIRE

AT noon that same day, Saturday, April 13, being the day before the Greek Easter, we were taken under the protection of officials from the British Consulate and marched with a few other Britons to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, where the miraculous fire was expected to burst from the Tomb at two o'clock precisely.

The streets were now thronged with men and women of many nationalities and religions ; multitudes of pilgrims from all parts of the world where the Greek Church is to be found were pressing through the crowds of Jews and Moslems, their streams converging on the great Cathedral, where the annual miracle was to take place. The tall gentlemen in velvet and braid, whom the Consul had sent, did their best for us ; their silver-tipped wands rang upon the pavement, and their stern voices bade the mob fiercely to make way for us ; but we had finally to fight our way into the church all the same. As we came near to it the narrow avenues were so polished with the tramp of the thousands that it was difficult to keep one's feet, and human dung along the sideway reminded us that vast armies had encamped in these streets for four-and-twenty hours or more.

Once in the church, however, we found that the Consulate had provided us with good seats in a gallery high up in the rotunda, whence we could look down on the crushed, seething mass of humanity below us. At first we could see very little, for the church was very dark ; what light there was came through the open doorways and from the windows in the central dome, if we except the dim red flare of torches down yonder in the black depths. The air was thick with smoke and dust and human steam, and through this fog a shaft of white sunlight struck across the dome.

As our eyes became accustomed to the gloom we began to make out the amazing scene below us, a mob possessed by a fury, a frenzy of religion. The crowd was of the most motley description, Arab Christians with turbaned heads, Armenians, Syrians, Copts in dark robes, Abyssinians in white, and a large contingent of Russian pilgrims with their long matted locks and thick woollen coats. For these poor, filthy, pathetic Russian peasants the prayers and hopes of a lifetime were to be fulfilled; many of them had slept in the precincts of the church all night; to fail to light their bundles of candles at the holy fire would be despair, a loss to them in the next world as well as in this. They looked dim down there in the shadows and the thick air—these fighting, bruised, frantic masses; and there floated up to us an indescribable and sickening stench.

Around the gorgeous erection which contains the Sepulchre a lane was kept open by Turkish troops with rifles; and from this circumambient lane avenues radiated to the entrances, which were kept free by muscular giants in Arab costume, who rushed up and down laying about them with thick whips. We could hear the hiss of the lashes as they cut among the living flesh. Screams and shouts rose above the dull roar of the multitude, the women trilled their strange shrill note, and the butts of the rifles rattled on the pavement of the church.

At about two o'clock a religious procession appeared in the central lane, which the soldiers guarded. It passed once round the Tomb and then retired. After this followed a long procession. Then another procession appeared—twelve banners, followed by ecclesiastics in strange, gorgeous, barbaric apparel. Three times they walked slowly round the central sanctuary, and then from their midst the Patriarch stepped, cross in hand, and passed within the Chapel of the Tomb, all the vast concourse shouting again and again a sentence which I was told meant "God bless the Patriarch!" Then followed a time of suspense, the crowd almost silent: one could feel the intensity of anticipation, the strained, eager, breathless waiting of the people. Suddenly, the beating of brass, frenzy, fury, fighting! The fire has appeared, a flame has flashed through the fire-hole in the side of the chapel; the runners have lighted their torches from it and rushed furiously down the guarded avenues. At the door a horseman waits to gallop with it to

Bethlehem. Other messengers fly off with it to the Greeks, Armenians, Copts in different quarters of the Eastern world. (A priest told me that the Copts pay 2000 dollars for the right to sell the holy fire in Egypt!)

Meanwhile, inside the church the soldiers have been overpowered; their line is broken, and they gather together in a compact knot surrounded by a frantic struggling mob fighting for a share of the flame. Thousands of arms are stretched out, thousands of candles are thrust towards every kindled centre, and in two or three minutes the whole church is one blaze of light. Far beyond the rotunda, in the aisles which have hitherto been hidden in darkness, vistas of many thousand lights are seen. High up the church, in a gallery which surrounds the rotunda, native women, dressed in white with streaks and spots of bright colour, hold burning tapers in their hands, and trill out the weird *zaghârit* in a frenzy of excitement. The smoke of the torches and candles fills the dome, so that the sunbeam which has been travelling round as the hours advanced looks like a solid thing.

There can be no doubt as to the people's belief in the efficacy of the fire. We could see them passing their hands through the flame, wiping it on their heads, their faces, their breasts. Meanwhile, on the roof of the gilded shrine priests were at work lighting the candles and oil lamps with which it was adorned. When they had finished their work all the pilgrim-lights in the centre of the church were put out, and then followed a series of processions representing the various divisions of the Greek Church, each procession being headed by its bishop, gorgeously arrayed, and all the clergy carrying lighted candles. Round and round the central shrine they circled till the eye was dazed and the head sick. We wearied at length of this endless wheel of superstition, and left the church.

The upper and middle classes of Jerusalem of course are well aware how gross is the imposture which is thus annually played upon the poor ignorant peasants of the Eastern world. They know well that the Patriarch when he enters the Holy Tomb carries with him a box of matches wherewith to kindle the "miraculous" fire. The Patriarch himself is uneasy over the part he plays: at least, in the year of which I am writing he preached a sermon before the festival, in which he explained that the fire was to be taken as a symbol of the spiritual fire which breaks from the Tomb of



the Redeemer ; but the sermon was so obscurely worded that the common people were not scandalised. Had they been aware of the drift of the discourse, I was assured that they would have torn the Patriarch to pieces, so convinced are they of the miraculous nature of the occurrence.

## CHAPTER XXXVII

### JERUSALEM—CONDER'S SEPULCHRE—AN ADVENTURE AT THE VIRGIN'S WELL

IN the morning following upon our dream of the Holy Fire—for as we look back upon it, it seems like a weird vision more than a reality—we took our young Christian dragoman with us and visited the tomb which Conder has regarded as possibly the true Sepulchre of Christ. It is situated about 200 yards from "Gordon's Calvary" (the road runs between that knoll and Conder's tomb) and it is cut in the east face of a rock-platform scarped on all sides, which is believed by many to have formed the foundation for a tower. It is approached through a rough open recess in the rock, from which a narrow passage on the right leads to a tomb with a single loculus. Passing this entrance and going straight forward you enter a rude, much broken doorway cut in the rock and having a window four feet square on each side of it (Fig. 62). You descend two steps and find yourself in a chamber measuring six feet by nine. The places for the bodies open out from this, on the right, on the left and in front. In all three directions run very narrow passages, in which it is just possible to stand, and each passage has a rock shelf or bench on the right, on the left, and in front, every bench being broad enough for two bodies. The whole inner tomb would thus hold eighteen bodies.

When the tomb was first excavated a slab was found in it, with the words *θήκη διαφέρους*, "Private Sepulchre," and a cross. The slab would date from the fifth or sixth century A.D., and is Christian; the tomb, however, it is confidently asserted, is not of Christian origin, but belongs to "the centuries immediately preceding the Christian era.\*"

It may be noted, in connection with this tomb, that in Christ's time the Jewish cemetery then in use lay to the north of the city, a circumstance which tells, of course, against

\* P. E. F. Mem., "Jerusalem Vol." p. 434.

the traditional Calvary and Sepulchre, and in favour of the neighbourhood of this tomb which we have just visited.

When we had explored this interesting and tantalising spot I left my companion to wander as he would, and went off with our young dragoman Nassar to the Virgin's Well, where I had been disappointed on a former occasion in my hope to see the rising of the waters. I was determined upon this occasion to be in time, and was on the spot at ten o'clock, the rising of the water being expected at eleven. Some women, we were told, were washing themselves in the water for the cure of their diseases, and we could not descend the steps to the well until they came up. Presently they appeared, clad in their loose blue gowns and long white veils, and we descended.

The long flight of thirty steps is divided into two. I left Nassar on the landing at the foot of the first flight, and descending the second flight alone, seated myself on a camp-stool close to the hole by which the waters rise, which is just large enough to admit the body of a man, and is about eight or ten feet deep. For nearly an hour I sat there "waiting for the moving of the waters," but still no water came. A number of women and girls from Siloam had by this time gathered with their jars and water-skins. At the bottom of the well was a little pool of water into which a driblet from the spring was flowing. The water ought to have come before this, and the women were tired of waiting, so a young girl let herself down the hole, taking with her a tin mug. The skins were then let down to her one by one, and she baled the water into them. She kept this up for about half an hour, and then an old woman took her place.

A crowd of thirty or forty women had by this time arrived with their skins and pots: the steps were thronged with them. They were all women of Siloam, a very rough set, strong, tall and well-knit, but of a coarse type, reminding one strongly in voice and demeanour of our coster-girls at home. They shouted and screamed at the top of their voices, laughing loudly or quarrelling loudly as the case might be. A man of equally coarse type came down the steps, pushing his way through them; and, hustling me very rudely as he passed, disappeared into the tunnel which, as explained in a previous chapter, joins this spring with the Pool of Siloam. He stank horribly, and was probably suffering from some skin-disease. We heard him presently



FIG. 62 — "CONDER'S" SEPULCHRE



FIG. 63.—THE VILLAGE OF SILOAM



splashing himself with the water of one of the pools which form on the uneven floor of the tunnel. Presently he reappeared out of the darkness and ascended the steps, and only the screaming crowd of women and girls was left.

Still the water did not come. The women began to get insolent, pushing me and shaking their fingers in my face. They were evidently angry with me ; but as I did not know their tongue I could not tell the cause of their anger, and continued to sit upon my stool with my eye fixed upon the opening from which the water was presently to flow. One splendid creature, a girl of two or three and twenty, planted herself with her back against the wall of the cave, and her long straight limbs outstretched in such a way as to hide the orifice of the well from my sight. There she leaned, laughing in my face, every curve of her body revealed by the loose flowing drapery of her dark blue gown, the embodiment of health and energy. What her object was, whether coquetry, or obstruction, or sheer impudence, I could not tell : but Nassar explained to me afterwards that the women believed I was exercising the evil eye, and this they thought was why the water did not rise at the usual hour. They were angry, he said, that I kept my gaze fixed so steadily upon the well, and this girl was trying to interpose her body between the well and my blighting vision. He also said that they threatened to beat us or push us into the water, and that he had been forced to bribe them with a promise of bakhshish if they would keep quiet till the water came.

At length, at a quarter to twelve, the old woman down the pit got tired and scrambled up, and a young girl went down to do the baling. Scarcely had she vanished into the hole when suddenly her head reappeared ; she came clambering out in the utmost haste, sounding the shrill "zaghârit," and all the women set up a great scream. Silently, swiftly, the water rose in the well, rushing up the eight or ten feet in a few seconds, and beginning to flow down the tunnel in which I was standing. Ordinarily the water would have risen high in the arch, almost filling the conduit in places where the roof is low, but for a year or two the water had not risen to its normal height, some defect or fissure having drained off the spring before it reached the dipping-hole.\* Very soon, however, it reached the top of my boots, and I took refuge on the bottom step. It rose to this level also ;

\* This has since been discovered and remedied ; see p. 212 *ante*.

but beyond that it did not come. There was quite sufficient water, however, for the stream to go rushing down Hezekiah's Conduit on its way to the Pool of Siloam, and one could well understand how, upon its reaching that pool, a considerable troubling of the surface would take place.\*

Well, I had seen the wonderful sight, and began to climb the steps toward the sunlight and fresh air. Then came a scene of confusion and uproar. Those to whom Nassar had, all unknown to me, promised bakhshish began to clamour for payment. The youth distributed what small coins he had, but could not of course find nearly enough to satisfy the crowd of girls and women by whom he was being mobbed. They began to clutch hold of me and feel my pockets, and I was in the awkward dilemma of having to hit out, which in a crowd of women I could not bring myself to do, or allow myself to be robbed. I did what I could by rapping their mischievous knuckles with my umbrella, and pushed my way as speedily as possible through the angry throng. But the vigorous use of my elbows left my side pockets unprotected, and very soon sketch-book, note-book, Baedeker, letters, silk handkerchief, and many other articles were in the hands of the enemy. Some things I got back by force, others I bought back, but the handkerchief of coloured silk was too highly prized to be parted with, and that I never recovered.

Before we leave the subject of Siloam and St. Mary's Well, I must mention one sight which interested me much. While we were waiting at the well I inquired of the Siloam women, through my interpreter, whether they knew of any place in their village named Zahwêleh. I suppose my pronunciation was defective, for they answered in the negative. But presently a bright girl exclaimed, "Zahwêleh! yes! the place where the steps come down." Afterwards, when we had escaped from the furies and clambered up the slope towards Jerusalem, we turned and looked across the narrow ravine at the village of Silwân on the opposing steep (Fig. 63); and then Nassar pointed out to me the steps cut in the face of the rock, where a woman bearing a water-pot was at that moment descending with cautious tread. "Zahwêleh," said Nassar, "means slippery."

This rock has been identified with "the Stone of Zoheleth" mentioned in 1 Kings i. 9, and at first sight the

\* See *ante*, chap. xxxiii.

identification seems probable enough. But of course the name alone is hardly sufficient to fix the place. At the root of both names is a verb meaning "to creep" or "crawl": in Job xxxii. 6 it is used of one who walks with faltering feet. It is quite possible, therefore, that the people of Silwān may use the word of a rock with slippery steps, while the ancient Hebrews may have used it of a stone named after the creeping serpent. Zohēleth may mean "serpent," and the stone of Zohēleth may mean the Serpent-stone, and it may quite possibly have nothing to do with the rock-cut steps of Siloam.

One reason for refusing to identify the Rock Zahwēleh with the Stone of Zohēleth is that "Eben," the word here used for stone, cannot properly be used of a rock, but means always a movable stone; and taking this into account, the probability would certainly seem to be that the Stone of Zohēleth or Serpent Stone was a rude pillar or menhir standing beside the Serpent Spring—the Dragon's Well, as St. Mary's Fount is often called to this day.\*

Instead of supposing, therefore, that Adonijah's sacrifice and coronation-festival was held at the rock Zahwēleh across the valley yonder, as some have imagined, I would suggest that the true account of the matter is as follows: The ancient spring en-Rogel, which largely determined the site of the City of David, was held to be sacred, and was known as the Serpent's Well. Beside it stood a sacred stone, known as the Serpent Stone. In accordance with widespread primitive custom, kings must be crowned by or upon this stone.† Adonijah with his party comes down there, is crowned, and returns to Jerusalem to feast.‡ Then comes the priest Zadok, bringing Solomon and the opposition party to the same spot in the valley of Gihon. Solomon likewise is crowned by the stone and returns to the city; the main part of Jerusalem follows him; and Adonijah flees.

\* Compare Cheyne, "Encycl. Bibl.," "Zohēleth."

† Compare the Scottish Coronation-stone and the stone at Kingston-on-Thames.

‡ See 1 Kings i. 45, "They are come [not 'gone'] up from thence rejoicing, so that the city rang again."



## CHAPTER XXXVIII

### A DRIVE TO BETHANY

BETHANY is an easy walk from Jerusalem, but our morning's tramp had wearied us, so we hired a carriage and drove thither in the afternoon, crossing the Kidron, passing the slaughter-house with its everlasting wheel of vultures, and ascended the slope of Olivet. You pass over the brow of the mountain; and a short mile beyond, on the further or Eastern slope, just before you come to the steep, almost precipitous, descent towards Jericho, stands the little village of Lazarus, as the Arabs call it. There is almost unanimous consent as to the spot, although the old name has disappeared. Certainly the situation suits the story, and the tradition is unbroken from the fourth century. Schwartz, however, finds Bethany in Beth-hanan, on the Mount of Offence, above Siloam.\*

From a little distance the village is beautiful. The houses nestle among oaks and olives and almond-trees, and in their midst a grey and ruined tower forms a most effective feature. As to this tower, it is curious that no one has so much as a guess to offer who built it, and why, and when. The character of the masonry proclaims it as older than Crusading times. Perhaps it is Roman, but late Roman one would say. It is not likely that it stood there in Christ's time.

Indeed, there is no sort of relic to connect the village with Him for whose sake we have come here. You may see the house of Mary and Martha, and the house of Simon the Leper, and the tomb of Lazarus; and we saw them: we even took our lighted candles and descended the long flight of steps into the so-called "tomb." But these sites have such a way of shifting themselves from time to time, at the call of convenience, that faith refuses to spread her wings, and we are left to crawl among the dust and filth

\* Smith, D. B. (1893), p. 404.

of this very dirty little village, which, like many other holy things and places, is beautiful only from a distance. That, at least, would have to be our verdict, but for one supreme bit of loveliness which Bethany has painted on the memory—the glory of the blossoming pomegranates.

Returning, we left our carriage and walked over the summit of the hill by the old mule-track. There are, as pointed out by Dean Stanley, three possible routes by which travellers from Jericho through Bethany can approach Jerusalem: one towards the north between Olivet proper and Scopus; a second, the mule-track, over the summit; and a third, to the south between Olivet and the Mount of Offence. It is by the last that he supposes Christ's triumphal procession to have travelled. That is, indeed, the natural route to take, and the most usual one for caravans or processions such as that which followed Jesus. My object in following the old mule-track was to see whether it offered an extensive view of the Holy City at any point antecedent to its junction with the lower road. There is one point in its course, I found, whence one sees the southern part of the city, with a small part of the Harâm; but the Dome of the Rock, where the Temple stood, is not in view. The glimpse one gets does not, indeed, differ materially from the first sight of the city obtained in travelling by the lower road, as described by Dean Stanley. So that there is by this route no spot which can compete with that at which Stanley supposes the lament of Jesus to have been uttered.

In short, supposing the Gospel account to be historical in detail, the Dean's topography may, I think, be accepted. "As he was now drawing nigh, even at the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works which they had seen; saying, Blessed is the King that cometh in the name of the Lord." That outburst takes place at the first sight of the city, the imperfect partial sight which one gets just "at the descent of the Mount," by whichever route, the middle or the southern, one is travelling. A few minutes further, just where the old mule-track joins the lower road, the city is again hidden from view. Ten minutes more and the road rises again, the whole panorama of Jerusalem bursts upon the gaze, the eastern and northern walls are seen to their full extent, and in the midst of the picture rises the Dome of the Rock

and the whole area of the Harâm. This must, without doubt, if the account is historical at all, have been the spot where the great lament was made : "When He drew nigh, He saw the city and wept over it, saying If thou hadst known in this day, even thou, the things that belong unto thy peace ! But now they are hid from thine eyes."

In spite, however, of this topographical fitness, one cannot but doubt whether it was upon this occasion that Jesus wept over the city. There is no hint of any such weeping in the oldest Gospel, neither is there any trace of it in St. Matthew. Luke alone gives it, and it is to be noted that he gives us two such weepings. According to him the first one took place in Galilee, when Jesus uttered the beautiful lament, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem,"\* and the second took place at the Entry into Jerusalem when He uttered the words quoted above.† But Matthew places the former lament at the close of Christ's great invective uttered in the Temple,‡ later than His triumphal entry, and after the chief priests and elders had openly rejected Him.§ One is fain to think that the two laments were one, and that they were not made upon that day of rejoicing when the multitudes had joined cause with the new Messiah, and when there was yet hope that the Holy City itself might be won for Him ; but rather, as St. Matthew records, after that hope had been dashed to the ground, and the great men of the city had declared their hostility.

It may nevertheless well have been at this turn in the road from Bethany that "He saw the city and wept over it," perhaps upon one of those many walks from the house of Mary and Martha to the Holy City, in those days when death was hanging over Him, and when every night He "went forth out of the city to Bethany, and lodged there."

\* Luke xiii. 34.

† Matt. xxiii. 37.

‡ Luke xix. 42.

§ Matt. xxi. 23.

## CHAPTER XXXIX

### A WALK THROUGH JERUSALEM

THE morning of our last clear day in the Holy Land (Monday, April 14) we devoted to a walk through the streets of Jerusalem. Our friend, Mr. Khadder, the Bishop's curate, most courteous and helpful of men, took us under his wing and showed us many sights illustrative of Scripture words which we should never have discovered for ourselves.

The Easter excitement has partly subsided, but the streets are still very crowded. Here is a group of donkeys tethered by the city gate, there is a string of them trotting along the narrow street, with the men behind them shouting, "Oo-wà! Oo-wà!" A camel comes swinging along, filling the bazaar from side to side. On the kerb sit bread-sellers, with loaves in their laps, a Jew of the Ashkenazim passes, thin and bent, a round felt hat on his head, beneath the brim of which hang the two long curls, one on either side. Two men stand in lively converse, friendship beaming from their eyes: they hold each other's hands all the time they talk, just as some gushing old ladies do in England. Here and there are women of the upper classes wearing black veils, and wrapped in white mantles, which just reach to their high-topped opera-dancers' boots.

As we passed a wide street near one of the gates, Mr. Khadder pointed out a number of men standing, lying, or squatting on the pavement; they were waiting for employment—"Why stand ye here idle all day? Because no man hath hired us." Here again were a number of Jewish money-changers in their shops; just such people doing their business in just such a way as when Christ cast the money-changers out of the Temple.

We saw many artificers at work. In one place a tanner

had laid his leather in the street, so that every one who came that way might walk upon it; this was a primitive way of hardening the leather. In another place a brass-worker exposed his wares, among them brass-topped staves with the name of Allah worked into the design; these are the magic wands of the dervishes. We saw the process of silk-weaving by hand; the warp is of hair, the woof of silk. We went into the shop of "Alexander the copper-smith," and saw him pewtering a copper-pan. We saw a dyer with his vats full of dyes; he ladled them out by means of gourds, the stem of the gourd forming the handle of the bowl. In another shop we saw quantities of woven goat-hair, used for tent-making, which our friend told us had been actually woven in Tarsus, where St. Paul worked at the same handicraft.

In a corn-dealer's we saw a woman buying corn. The method of purchase is for the buyer to pay so much for a measure of corn and then to fill the measure herself. The good woman whom we watched "shook it together" and "pressed it down" repeatedly, the process taking quite a long time. Then she piled it up till it "ran over" the rim, then patted the heap all round, and tried to pile on a little more till it ran over again—"pressed down, shaken together, and running over": I suppose when the Gospel-spirit prevails the seller will do this rather than the buyer. Mr. Khadder asked the man who sold the corn, and who wore the loose dress of the fellahin, how he would carry home such a measure of corn if he were buying it, and he promptly answered "in my bosom," looping up his dress to illustrate his words.

We next saw a potter using the old potter's-wheel of Scripture. It consisted of two solid horizontal wheels, an upper and a lower, connected by a perpendicular spindle. The clay is put upon the upper wheel, which is whirled round by placing the naked foot upon the lower and larger wheel and giving repeated shoves; there is no treadle. We entered a soap-factory, and saw soap being made of olive-oil and lime. The oil is kept in skins, through which it appeared to sweat and ooze to a considerable extent.

Our kind friend then took us to visit the house of a Mohammedan tax-gatherer (a "publican") in the Turkish service. He was a man of the better class, in command of soldiers whose duty it was to collect the taxes with or

without the whip.\* He told us with pride that his family had been in the service of the government for 150 years, and that he was descended from one of the twelve companions of the Prophet. Lemonade was served in glasses; then more conversation, and then *café à la Turc*, very strong and very sweet, in tiny cups. The guests wiped their mouths on a long towel, which was handed round to all the company. Of course we saw nothing of the women. They prepared the coffee downstairs, and it was brought to the "guest-chamber" upstairs by a boy.

We were next taken to a Christian house of the middle-class. The family consisted of father, mother, and one son Ibrahim, of fifteen. The father, a builder by trade, received us, then the mother appeared in a silk dress and shook hands all round. She was unveiled, but had a bright blue gauze handkerchief over her head. The house consisted of two rooms. The coffee was made downstairs; the room in which we were received was a large, airy, comfortable apartment, containing at one end a great four-posted bedstead with enclosing curtains, and a smaller bed beside it, presumably for the son Ibrahim. At the other end were a broad comfortable couch and some chairs.

Here the hostess managed the hospitality, and of course it was much better done than in the Moslem house where the man managed matters. First we had lemonade flavoured with orange-blossoms, which was very delicious. Then each guest was provided with a long towel to serve as a table-napkin, measuring about four feet by one, with fringe at each end. If this is, as Mr. Khadder affirmed, the traditional shape, it would explain Christ "girding Himself" with a towel after supper. Next came Turkish coffee, followed by a liqueur-glass of *arak*, tasting strongly of aniseed. The anise, which with the mint and cummin was tithed in the old times, is commonly used in the East in the manufacture of cordials. The *arak* was accompanied with a pot of jelly and a teaspoon. It is correct to swallow the liqueur at a gulp and take a spoonful of jelly immediately after it. Each guest was then served with a small sweet cake shaped like a dumpling. If you do not wish to eat this, the etiquette is to put it in your pocket, but you must

\* The taxes are often ruinous. Fruit trees, for instance, are taxed not according to what they bear, but according to what it is estimated they ought to bear; consequently in bad fruit seasons whole villages are sometimes deserted for fear of the soldiers' lash.

on no account decline it. Finally a dish of freshly cut roses was handed round, most deliciously scented, being of the kind from which the attar is made ; each guest was pressed to take two or three. Then we shook hands, carrying with us a delightful impression of genial and smiling hospitality, gentleness and refinement of demeanour, and of the face of a Christian man not to be forgotten.

## CHAPTER XL

### FAREWELL

EN ROUTE for Jaffa ; half-past seven in the morning at the Jerusalem railway station ; the usual Oriental confusion ; no sign of organisation, no attempt at it. Nassar managed to get us seats, but with luggage around us and atop of us ; people and portmanteaus all wedged together in such a way that the people could not move nor their luggage be moved. The ticket-collector tried to enter the carriage, but gave it up, and we departed with tickets unclipped. Pilgrims were piled upon each other in stacks, regardless of the class to which the carriage professed to belong. Once a fierce fight occurred, but not much damage was done by reason of the fact that the fighters were too much hampered by their surroundings. Four hours of this and we were set upon the quay waiting for our steamer.

On the afternoon of Tuesday, April 16, we took our seats in the rowing-boat, and, to the sing-song of the Arab boatmen, were shot through the narrow slit in the reef and rowed toward our steamer, which lay outside. The smiling face and waving hand of Nassar vanished into the distance, and a gentle melancholy stole over me to think of the kind countenances that I should never see again, the suffering peasants who would continue to suffer, the sacred spots so sadly desecrated, the great Divine life of the Master so hidden in the twilight of the past that all our labours and fatigues could help us but a very little to realise it as it was really lived. And then, as we pulled out to sea, and the boat leaped the wave, and the breeze blew fresh about our temples, there sprang up within us happiness and down-right glee to feel that our faces were once more set toward a land which, with all its faults (and they are many), is nevertheless a holier land than that which we had left behind.





## APPENDICES

### A. THE NAZARETH QUESTION

(See p. 45.)

CANON CHEYNE, in the article "Nazareth," in the *Encyclopædia Biblica*, puts forth the startling surmise that there may have been no "city called Nazareth" existing in the time of Jesus; and that at any rate the name Nazareth was originally attached to a large district, in fact to the whole province of Galilee.

No such town as Nazareth, he tells us, is mentioned in the Old Testament, in Josephus, or in the Talmud; and there are two New Testament passages which may well suggest a doubt whether Nazareth was at that time the name of a town at all.

One of these is Matt. ii. 23: "And He came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, 'He shall be called a Nazarene.'" The term "city" we are to disregard, for the theory goes behind the existing text of the Gospels. The question is, to what prophecy is reference here made? It cannot, says Dr. Cheyne, be held with any probability to refer, as a current interpretation would have it do, to the "neser" or "branch" of Isaiah xi. 1, but is rather to be taken as an allusion to Isaiah ix. 1, "In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulon and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter times hath he made it glorious, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the nations." But if the allusion is to that prophecy, and if that prophecy, as seems likely, was taken by the early Christians to predict the whole Galilean ministry of Jesus, then "Nazarene" must be taken to mean Galilean, and "Nazareth" to mean Galilee in general.

The other passage upon which our critics rely is John i. 45, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" There is, it seems, some ground for supposing that the  $\tau\iota\ \delta\gamma\alpha\theta\acute{o}\nu$  should be  $\acute{o}\ \delta\gamma\iota\acute{o}\varsigma$ , and that the true reading is, therefore, "Can the Holy One proceed from Nazareth?" Comparing this with John vii. 41, "Doth the Christ

come out of Galilee?"—it is inferred once more that Nazareth is synonymous with Galilee; an inference which is considered to be supported by a comparison with the following passages: Matthew xxvi. 69, "Thou also wast with Jesus the Galilean"; Matthew xxvii. 71, "This man also was with Jesus the Nazarene."

If, now, we grant that Nazareth is equivalent to Galilee, an obscure phrase which occurs in the Talmud is said to be explained. The phrase in question may be read "Bethlehem nōserīyyah," Bethlehem near Nazareth, or, in the district of Nazareth, which our author takes to be identical with "the Galilean Bethlehem," just as the southern Bethlehem was called Bethlehem of Judah.

We now (so he observes) begin to see why Nazareth was called the "fatherland" (*πατρίς*) of Jesus. It was called so, not because Jesus was born or brought up in a town called Nazareth, but because He was a native of the district Nazareth (*i.e.*, Galilee). His real birthplace was probably Bethlehem of Galilee, which would account for some of the discrepancies in the birth narratives, and for the apparently discordant traditions—on the one side that He was born at Nazareth, and on the other that He was born at Bethlehem.

Cheyne's argument depends largely upon the cumulative effect of various slight indications, and upon that readers must judge for themselves by reading the full article in the *Encyclopædia*; but, upon the salient points which I have set forth above I would venture, though with some diffidence, to make the following suggestions:

As to the *argumentum e silentio*, it is always a dangerous argument, and there is really no reason why Nazareth, especially if it was a small place, should necessarily be mentioned in Hebrew or Jewish literature; while the Scriptural and Talmudic passages, though they may possibly admit (in their conjectural primitive forms) of the equation Nazareth = Galilee, admit equally well, one would say, even in their conjectural forms, of the supposition that Nazareth was a town with a village Bethlehem near to it. Bethlehem, as a matter of fact, is only seven miles from the existing town of Nazareth, lying at the foot of the hills upon which Nazareth stands.

As to the assertion that Nazareth is spoken of as the "fatherland" of Jesus, there are but eight verses in the New Testament in which His *πατρίς* is spoken of, and every one of these eight refers to the self-same event, while none of them necessarily implies that Nazareth (*i.e.*, Galilee) was the *πατρίς* spoken of. Matthew's statement (and the others are similar) is this: "And coming into His own country (*πατρίς*) He taught them in their synagogue."\* But such a statement, so far from going to prove that Galilee is the "country" spoken of, tells rather the other way, otherwise Galilee

\* Matt. xiii. 54.

might be supposed to contain only one synagogue. The passage is much more consistent with the idea that the "country" in question means simply the district, undefined but not extensive, round about His native town. It is, in fact, just such an expression as might be used if Jesus had been born at Bethlehem of Galilee and had gone to preach at Nazareth—to preach, that is to say, not in His own town but in a town *in His own district*.

Against the negative surmise, there is, moreover, one positive though not, perhaps, conclusive fact to be set—namely, the existence of ancient rock-cut tombs up the hill toward the west of the modern town. This fact is passed over by the writer of the article with a "notwithstanding," but it is, I cannot but think, significant. These old remains are a sure sign that a town or village of some sort stood here in very early times. What, then, was the name of that town or village? We know from innumerable instances that for thousands of years the names of places in Palestine will cling to the old sites; yet for this site there is no name known but that of en-Nāsira—a name which has belonged to it, at any rate, from the fourth century, for Eusebius mentions it. And this, taken with the fact that at an earlier date still, when the Gospels of Matthew and Luke took their present form, there was believed to have existed in Galilee a πόλις λεγομένη Ναζαρέτ, surely forms rather strong presumptive evidence that this is no other than the Nazareth which is eleven times mentioned in the Gospels and four times called a "city."

## B. THE BETHLEHEM QUESTION

(See p. 46.)

IN the following note an attempt is made to balance the probabilities as to the true birthplace of Jesus; whether Bethlehem of Judah, Bethlehem of Zebulun, or Nazareth is to be so regarded. It may help to a clear understanding if the line of argument is previously indicated. This may be done as follows:

I. The details of Luke's birth-story may probably be disregarded, but we have nevertheless to reckon with a tradition, which evidently did exist before his time, that Jesus was born at Bethlehem of Judæa.

II. How did this tradition arise? Was the Rabbinic teaching that Christ should come from Bethlehem-Judah so prominent as to make it likely that an overwhelming popular demand for its fulfilment led to the *creation* of the story? No; but the Rabbinic teach-

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ing on the point was sufficiently definite to incline the scale towards Bethlehem, if in any way apart from sheer invention, a Bethlehem story could have arisen alongside the Nazareth story.

III. There is some evidence that a double tradition Bethlehem-Nazareth did actually exist, and an explanation of the way in which it may have sprung up is suggested. Although Jesus was called "Jesus of Nazareth" He may have been born at Bethlehem of Zebulun, which was known as Bethlehem-Nazareth.\*

Lastly, a consideration is added, which may, perhaps, notwithstanding this possibility, incline the scale to the view that Jesus was actually born in Nazareth, and that the Bethlehem which was reputed to be His birthplace was, in fact, the Bethlehem near Jerusalem.

I. The Gospel of Mark, which, taking the Gospels in their present form, is probably the earliest of the four, tells us nothing whatever about the birth of Jesus. He first appears upon the scene at the Baptism of John, and what we read is simply that He "came from Nazareth of Galilee." As to Bethlehem, it is never so much as mentioned in Mark's Gospel. How, then, did Luke, who stands next in order of time, come to believe that Bethlehem was the birthplace? He did not derive the idea from Matthew, for the narrative parts of Matthew's Gospel are later than Luke, and there is nothing in Matthew's Logia to lead to such a belief. We can only infer that already, in A.D. 85 or thereabouts, there were some sources of which we do not know—some of those "many narratives" to which Luke himself alludes—which stated that Jesus was born at Bethlehem.

Now, Luke essays to tell us how it came about that Jesus was born there. He has a story of Quirinius, governor of Syria, enrolling the people by decree of Augustus Cæsar, and explains that because this was done by tribes and families Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem, the city of David, Joseph being of that house and family, and so it chanced that Mary was delivered of the Child while they were in that town. Did this story, then, form part of the original record or records which Luke consulted, or was it merely an historical setting which he himself supplied?

To this question it is answered on one side that there is every appearance of the story being a belated and unfortunate attempt of Luke's to harmonise the fact that Jesus was always known as "the Nazarene," with the tradition, which the Evangelist found elsewhere, that He was born at Bethlehem. The erroneousness of the

\* The theory that Jesus was born at the northern Bethlehem I first met with in the pages of Prof. Edward Stapfer, of Paris ("Le Palestine au Temps de Jésus-Christ," 6<sup>me</sup> éd., p. 44 fn.) Neubauer is said to have previously hinted at it, and it was adopted by Gratz.

history, as given by St. Luke, is said to be shown by the following considerations :

1. It was legally impossible that any enrolment of the whole empire should be taken in Judæa and Galilee in the reign of Herod.

2. Quirinius (or Cyrenius) was never governor of Syria before Herod's death.

3. Even if the census in Judæa, taken under Quirinius in 6-7 A.D., is the one Luke has in mind, and even if it be granted that this may have been part of a census of all imperial provinces, yet could it not in any case have applied to Galileans.

4. It neither would nor could have been taken at the ancestral home of the subject, but at the actually existing home.

5. Mary would not have had to go, even if Joseph went.

To these objections answers more or less hypothetical are given as follows : It is true that Herod was an ally and not a subject, and that legally speaking an imperial decree, that an enrolment should be made, would not apply in the reign of Herod to Judæa and Galilee ; yet it may have been politic for him to comply with a *request* for such a census, and we know, as a matter of fact, that it was particularly to his interest at the time in question to conciliate the imperial power. It is true, again, that the well-known enrolment under Quirinius did not take place until 6-7 A.D., and that Josephus speaks of this as being a new and unheard-of thing among the Jews ; nevertheless, Luke says so emphatically, "This was the *first* enrolment made when Quirinius was governor of Syria," that he probably does refer to some previous enrolment of which we do not know. Once more, it is true that Quirinius was, strictly speaking, only once governor of Syria, but there are reasons for thinking that he commanded the armies and directed the foreign policy of Syria in B.C. 6, when Varus was governor of the internal affairs, and this may be the *ἡγεμονία* of which Luke speaks, using it merely as a point to date from, not as implying that the census was carried out by Quirinius. So that if Jesus was born not, as is popularly supposed, in B.C. 4, but in B.C. 6, this would justify the historical statement with which Luke's Gospel opens.\*

As to the objection that even if the census made in Judæa in A.D. 6-7 is meant, it could not have applied to Galileans, and the further objection that if it had applied to Galileans it would have been taken at the existing, not at the ancestral homes, both these difficulties are met by the supposition that Herod, in endeavouring to satisfy the imperial decree without offending the Jews, may have carried out the enrolment by tribes, thus obscuring the civil and

\* "Was Christ born in Bethlehem ?" By W. M. Ramsay. Second edition, p. 244.

imperial meaning under a national and religious veil; while the argument that Mary would not have had to go to Bethlehem even if Joseph went, is met by the answer that Mary, notwithstanding her condition at the time, may have preferred to go rather than stay at home without Joseph's protection.

So far, the answers are of a very conjectural character, and although a conjecture here or there might be permitted, a whole series of conjectures makes but a weak chain on which to hang an historical statement. So that the presumption, it must be confessed, is rather strong that Luke had in mind, but miscalculated the date of, the great enrolment under Quirinius in A.D. 6-7, of which we know from another passage (Acts v. 37) that he was aware. And when he speaks of it as the "first enrolment," he says, in fact, nothing else than Josephus himself has said ("Ant." xviii. i. 1) when writing about this same well-known census. The presumption, moreover, is strengthened by the fact that in other parts of his writings Luke has fallen into chronological errors.\*

There is, however, another line of argument which must be taken into account before we leave this part of our subject. It is surmised that the enrolment of which Luke speaks was not an imperial census at all, but a local enrolment and numbering of the population, one of many held in various parts of the empire. It is true that Luke speaks of it as "a decree from Cæsar Augustus that all the world should be enrolled"; but it is noticeable that he uses the present tense (*ἀπογράφεσθαι*), which would seem to indicate that what Augustus ordered was a systematic series of enrolments; if he had intended a single enrolment he would have used the aorist. Now, comparatively recent discoveries have shown that periodical enrolments by households were actually made in Egypt under the Roman empire, the period being one of fourteen years; and if it can be shown that such enrolments were also extended to other parts of the empire, and that one of the dates for enrolment fell at the time of Jesus' birth, Luke's statement is justified.

But there are indications that such enrolments *were* made in other parts of the empire, and there is positive evidence that in Syria, in particular, the first, the second, and the fourth of a series of enrolments beginning in B.C. 8, and repeated every fourteenth year were observed.† So that the case for St. Luke (so it is argued), if it is not completely made out, is at any rate shown to have great probability.

With reference to this argument it must be remarked, that even if the rather obscure evidence be held to support the propositions which the proof requires, the year of the supposed Syrian enrolment is

\* "Encycl. Bibl." "Chronology," col. 808, fn. 2.

† Ramsay, *op. cit.* p. 167.

neither that which is popularly accepted as the year of Jesus' birth nor that which Dr. Ramsay, the ardent exponent of the theory, favours. If Jesus was born in B.C. 4, Luke, who on the former hypothesis was ten years too late, is by the present hypothesis four years too early. If, as Dr. Ramsay holds, Jesus was born in B.C. 6, there is, even then, an error of two years; a difficulty which the learned apologist evades by supposing that Herod's kingdom was in such a condition at the time when the enrolment was due that it had to be put off till two years later.

On the whole, while this new line of argument may possibly reduce the magnitude of Luke's error, there is still, as it seems to the present writer, too much adjustment and too little coincidence to outweigh the probability that the Evangelist was merely supplying an historical setting to the Bethlehem tradition which he had found in some of the "narratives" which he had consulted.

II. But now, how did that Bethlehem tradition arise? The first and most obvious suggestion is, that although Jesus was really born in Nazareth, the expectation that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem was so general and so strongly rooted that the facts of His birth were perverted in order to meet the expectation. Matthew is believed to be voicing the popular belief when he represents the chief priests and scribes as quoting the prophet Micah to prove that Christ must be born in Bethlehem of Judah.

What weight shall we give to that view? Was the tradition of the synagogue so strong that even deliberate perversion of the facts in order to meet the popular demand is credible? Would the early Christians themselves find it hard to believe that Jesus was the Christ unless they also believed that He was born in Bethlehem?

Now, even the reader ignorant of Rabbinic Hebrew may to some extent test this question for himself. Dr. Edersheim has given, in an Appendix to his "Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah," a list of Old Testament passages Messianically applied in ancient Rabbinic writings; and in the American journal "Hebraica"\* there is a similar list by Dr. Pick, in which a full translation of the Rabbinic texts is printed.

Of these Rabbinic passages, which number more than five hundred, only four have any bearing on the present inquiry.† One of the four, commenting on Isaiah xli. 25, speaks of "Messiah who is in the North coming to build the Sanctuary which is in the South," but has no distinct reference to Messiah's *birthplace*. The other three distinctly say that Messiah is to be born in Bethlehem-

\* Vols. ii.-iv., 1885-1887.

† Jerus. Berachoth. fol. 5, col. 1. (on Ps. xviii. 50); Midrash on Lam. i. 16; Targum on Micah v. 2; and Midrash on Num. vii. 12, where Isa. xli. 25 is Messianically applied.



Judah or Bethlehem-Ephratah, but two of the three are identical, the one being merely a quotation of the other. There are thus practically only two traditional passages for us to consider, and it may perhaps interest the reader if they are given here in full.

The first is the Targum on Micah v. 2 : " But thou, Bethlehem-Ephratah, thou hast been little to be counted among the thousands of the house of Judah, yet out of thee shall come forth before me Messiah, to exercise dominion over Israel, whose name is spoken of from of old, from the days of eternity." This is of course the ancient traditional comment upon which the Evangelist Matthew relied.

The other is a very curious story, and raises questions. As given in the Jerusalem Berachoth, it runs as follows : " A certain Jew was engaged in ploughing. His ox bellowed. An Arab passing, and hearing the ox bellow, said, ' Son of a Jew, son of a Jew, loose thy oxen, and loose thy ploughs, for the temple is laid waste.' The ox bellowed a second time. The Arab said to him, ' Yoke thine oxen, and fit thy ploughs, for King Messiah has just been born.' The Jew said, ' What is his name ? ' ' Menachem ' (*i.e.*, comforter). He asked further, ' What is the name of his father ? ' ' Hezekiah,' replied the other. ' Whence is he ? ' asked the Jew. ' From the royal palace of Bethlehem-Judah,' replied the Arab. At this the Jew sold his oxen and his ploughs, and became a seller of infants' swaddling-clothes. And he went about from town to town till he reached Bethlehem. All women bought of him, but the mother of Menachem bought nothing. When the other women said to her, ' Mother of Menachem, mother of Menachem ! come and buy something for thy son,' she replied, ' I would rather strangle the enemy of Israel, for on that same day on which my son was born the temple was destroyed.' They replied, ' We hope that as the temple was destroyed for his sake, it will also be rebuilt for his sake.' The mother said, ' I have no money.' The Jew replied, ' What matters it ? Buy bargains for him, and if you have no money to-day, after some days I will come back and receive it.' When he came back and inquired of the mother after the welfare of the child, she replied, ' After the time you saw me last, winds and tempests came and snatched him away from me.' "

One would like to know the date of this story with its allusions to the mother in Bethlehem buying swaddling-clothes, and the destruction and rebuilding of the temple ; for it has to be borne in mind that the Jerusalem Talmud was not completed until about the middle of the fourth century A.D.

In any case it is plain from the foregoing that there was (at any rate in the Targum quoted) a distinct Rabbinic teaching that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem of Judæa ; but at the same

time it is equally plain that there was *no great body* of teaching to that effect. We do not find in these five hundred Rabbinic texts that the reference to Messiah's birthplace is repeated again and again, as we find, for instance, that the prediction that He will come riding upon an ass is repeated. It is clear that the latter belief was popular and widespread; it is not clear that the former was so.

No doubt the fact is to be taken into account that in these Talmudic passages the title Son of David is continually repeated, and was generally and popularly accepted; and perhaps this may have carried with it a popular inference that He would come from David's city. But there is no direct evidence to that effect. And on the whole the probability seems to be that, while there was no such general and popular expectation that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, as would form an overwhelming demand for the precise fulfilment of the prophecy, there was nevertheless such definite Rabbinic teaching on the point as would lead the first Christians to welcome any apparent evidence that such an expectation had been fulfilled.

III. It remains to show that such apparent evidence did possibly exist in early Christian times, in the form of a double tradition, one pointing to Nazareth and the other to Bethlehem; and that there is a very probable explanation of the way in which it sprung up.

If we take the Gospel of Matthew and read it by itself, banishing from our minds Luke's theory about the birthplace, we shall find that the assumption is that the parents of Jesus had their home in Bethlehem of Judæa, and that Jesus was born there in consequence of that being their usual domicile. There is no preliminary explanation to the opening statement "When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judæa in the days of Herod the King," such as Luke in his Gospel supplies. Joseph and Mary did not need to be *brought* to Bethlehem; the story starts there. The flight into Egypt follows, and when the time comes for the Holy Family to return, their first thought is to go back to Judæa from which they started. Why so, if their home was in Nazareth, and if the visit to Bethlehem had been a brief and casual occurrence brought about by a political duty? In that case their natural intention would be to go home to Nazareth. But this does not enter Matthew's mind. He represents them as intending in the ordinary course of things to go back to their Judæan home, and he has to use a device to get them to Nazareth, where the Nazareth-tradition demands that Jesus should be—the story, namely, of the dream warning Joseph to "withdraw into the parts of Galilee"; and so it happened that "he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth."

Note the phraseology. He did not go home, he "*withdrew*."

He did not return to the familiar haunts, he proceeded to these outlying "*parts of Galilee*." He did not arrive at the well-known town, he "*came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth*."

If we now take the Gospel of Luke and read the first two chapters without allowing our minds to be influenced by Matthew's Gospel, we shall find that all this is reversed. The story of Jesus opens with the visit of the angel Gabriel to Mary, the betrothed of Joseph, in their home at Nazareth; and Luke's device, contrary to that of Matthew, is used to get Jesus to Bethlehem, where He has to be born to satisfy the Bethlehem-tradition. This he does by means of the enrolment-story of which we have spoken above; when "Joseph went up to Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judæa, to the city of David."

Thus we see that Matthew starts with the Bethlehem-tradition and endeavours to account for the Nazareth-tradition, while Luke starts with the Nazareth-tradition and endeavours to account for the Bethlehem-tradition.

Suppose now, that the Talmudic phrase referred to on page 46, *ante*, "Bethlehem nōserīyyah," indicates the name by which the northern Bethlehem was known, and suppose that in the earliest form of the Evangelical-tradition this Bethlehem-Nazareth is the place where Jesus was said to have been born, we can easily see how the twofold tradition would arise. Bethlehem-Nazareth was a little-known place, and some of those who handed on the tradition would say that Jesus was born at Bethlehem, while others would say that He was born at Nazareth. Bethlehem without the suffix would naturally be supposed to mean the well-known Bethlehem near Jerusalem. Thus, even if the Rabbinic doctrine that Jesus was to be born at Bethlehem-Judah was not popular or widespread, the tradition might nevertheless gain footing, and those who knew of the doctrine would appeal to it both as confirming their tradition about the birthplace and as fulfilling Scripture.\*

This theory appears to me to gain some confirmation from the fact that another such transference from the northern to the southern Bethlehem has almost certainly taken place in the case of the Judge Ibzan. "Ibzan of Bethlehem," says the Book of Judges (xii. 8), "judged Israel," or, as suggested in the margin of the Authorised Version, "North-east Israel," and the same Ibzan "was buried in Bethlehem." Josephus and Jewish tradition assign this Ibzan to Bethlehem-Judah, but most scholars take the Bethlehem spoken of to be Bethlehem of Zebulon.†

And now, finally, there is one consideration which may, perhaps,

\* Cf. "Encycl. Bibl." art. "Nazareth."

† "Encycl. Bibl." art. "Bethlehem," No. 2.

be taken to nullify the previous argument so far as the birth at the northern Bethlehem is concerned. Besides the most ancient Rabbinic writings referred to above, it has to be remembered that there are also passages of a later date, in which it is said that the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem, or in Beth-Arabah, near Bethlehem.

Now, although these passages are all much later than the Christian era, they may nevertheless point to a pre-Christian condition, for, written though they were with full knowledge on the part of the Jews of the story of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem, they would not be *derived* from that knowledge: the Jewish bias would be in the opposite direction. Jewish teachers would hardly have said that *Messiah* was to be born there, unless they had an older, independent tradition to that effect.\*

This consideration may be taken to strengthen the probability of a popular pre-Christian belief in Bethlehem-Ephratah as the birth-place of Messiah; and the truth of the matter may, therefore, after all, be that Jesus was born in Nazareth, and that it was this popular belief which led to His birth being nevertheless assigned to the city of David.

## C. THE BETHSAIDA QUESTION

(See chap. xiii.)

THE Bethsaida question involves three separate inquiries. First, Was there one Bethsaida, or were there two? Second, If there was only one principal place of that name, had it, nevertheless, a suburb or dependent village of the same name attached to it? Third, Where was the Bethsaida, or where were the Bethsaidas, of the Gospels situated?

There are two considerations which point to the existence of a second Bethsaida. The first consideration is that while Luke says (or, rather, implies) that the feeding of the five thousand took place in a desert place at or near Bethsaida, Mark says that after the feeding Jesus constrained His disciples to go unto the other side of the Sea of Galilee *to Bethsaida*; so that if both accounts are accepted, there must have been two Bethsaidas situated on opposite sides of the lake. The second consideration is that, according to the Gospel of Mark, the disciples are sent on before Jesus *to Bethsaida*, and yet they land in the Plain of Gennesaret; so that it looks as if there

\* I am indebted for this suggestion to Mr. I. Abrahams, of Christ's College, Cambridge.

were a Bethsaida in the Plain of Gennesaret on the western shore, as well as the "Bethsaida Julias" mentioned in Josephus, which is known to have been situated at the north end of the lake.

Now, in examining a question of geographical fact like this, the first thing naturally is to ask what the character of the documents may be upon which we are called to base a judgment. And we must confess that the incidents which occur at this part of Mark's Gospel are particularly legendary in appearance. Are we, in fact, dealing here with history at all? Can such incidents as the feeding of the five thousand and the walking on the water be supposed to have so much as a germ of historical truth? Even Edersheim has noticed their exceptional character. He traces a curious correspondence between some of these incidents and the events of the Passion.\* In any case, and even supposing that the stories, though ultimately used as parables, contain a nucleus of historical truth, they remain of such a character as to afford a very slender basis for any such geographical inference as that which we are considering.

Our suspicion of the unhistorical character of the data upon which that inference is based receives confirmation when we find that a comparison of the Gospels of Mark and Luke reveals strong reasons for believing that an interpolation has taken place in the former Gospel, and that this interpolation is of such a kind as to destroy altogether the order of events upon which the evidence for the second Bethsaida depends.

The following are the textual facts upon which the inference of an interpolation is based. If we compare the histories as given by the Synoptics, we shall find that up to and including the feeding of the five thousand, the Gospel of Luke gives, with more or less fulness, almost everything given in the Gospel of Mark, the only exception being the short parable of the "seed cast upon the earth."† We find, moreover, that the incidents of the narrative follow very nearly the same order. But at that point a great break in this correspondence occurs, and the thread of Mark's narrative is not again taken up by Luke until Jesus departs with His disciples to the neighbourhood of Cæsarea Philippi, where Peter's confession, "Thou art the Christ," took place.‡ From that point the correspondence continues to Luke ix. 40. This suggests that for the earlier portion of his Gospel Luke used a document, or an extended oral tradition, which corresponded very largely with Mark i.-ix. 40 as we have it, except that chapters vi. 45 to viii. 26 of our present Mark were wanting.

Upon closer scrutiny, however, we find that vi. 45-52 and

\* "Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah," 9th ed., vol. ii. p. 4.

† Mark iv. 26-29.

‡ Mark viii. 27; Luke ix. 18.

viii. 22-26 were also probably in Luke's document or tradition. The traces of these two sections are found in certain curious phrases used by Luke, which can best be accounted for by supposing that the narrative which Luke consulted contained them both, that they were in close juxtaposition, and were immediately followed by the account of the confession of Peter.\*

If these two sections, containing the story of the walking on the water and the healing of the blind man of Bethsaida, were in the written document or oral tradition which Luke used, we can understand why he may nevertheless have omitted them. The former he may have taken to be a variant of the story of Christ's ruling the winds and waves, which he had already given, and the latter he may have objected to or doubted on account of the means said to have been used. But the same cannot be said of the other omitted sections. In particular it is very strange that, writing as he did for the Gentiles, he should not have given the story of the Syro-phenician woman, if he had it before him when he compiled his Gospel. Our theory, therefore, is that in the early narrative which Luke used for this portion of his Gospel, chapters vi. 53, viii. 21 were wanting,

The theory will, perhaps, become clearer if we place the continuous narrative of Luke side by side with the supposed original Mark, and attend carefully to the correspondences which are printed in heavy type :

MARK.†	LUKE.†
vi. 30 And the apostles gather themselves together unto Jesus, and they told him all things whatsoever they had done, and whatsoever they had taught. <b>And he saith unto them, Come ye yourselves apart,</b> 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. And they went away in the boat to a desert place apart, and <i>the people</i> saw them going, and many knew	ix. 10 And the apostles, when they were returned, declared unto him what things they had done. <b>And he took them, and withdrew apart to a city called Bethsaida.</b> But the multitudes perceiving it followed him: and he welcomed them, and spake to them of the kingdom of God, and <b>them that had need of healing he healed.</b>

\* "Withdrew *apart* to a city called *Bethsaida*" (Luke ix. 10). Compare "Come ye yourselves *apart*" (Mark vi. 31), and "He constrained His disciples to go before Him unto the other side *to Bethsaida*" (Mark vi. 45). "As He was *praying alone*, the disciples were with Him" (Luke ix. 18). Compare "He departed into the mountain to pray . . . He *alone* on the land" (Mark vi. 47), and "He asked *His disciples* saying unto them" (Mark viii. 27). The suggestion is that in omitting the story of the walking on the water, Luke has joined up the two ends with this rather awkward seam. "And they come unto Bethsaida. And they bring unto Him a blind man" (Mark viii. 22). Compare Luke ix. 10, 11, "He took them . . . to a city called Bethsaida . . . and them that had need of healing He healed."

† Text of the Revised Version, used by permission of the University Presses.

*Or, by land.* **them**, and they ran there together\* on foot, from all the cities and outwent them. And

34 he came forth and saw a great multitude, and he had compassion on them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd : and he began to teach them

35 many things. And when the day was now far spent, his disciples came unto him, and said,

36 The place is desert, and the day is now far spent : send them away that they may go into the country and villages round about. and buy themselves somewhat

37 to eat. But he answered and said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they say unto him, Shall we go and buy two hundred

\* See marginal note on Matt. xviii. 33.

pennyworth of bread, and give them to eat? And he saith unto them, How many loaves

38 have ye? go and see. And when they knew, they say, Five, and

\* *Gr. recdine.* 39 two fishes. And he commanded them that all should sit\* down by companies upon the green grass.

40 And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds, and by fifties. And

41 he took the five loaves and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake the loaves ; and he gave to the disciples to set before them ; and the two fishes divided he among

42 them all. And they did all eat

43 and were filled. And they took up broken pieces, twelve basketfuls, and also of the fishes.

44 And they that ate the loaves were five thousand men.

45 And straightway he constrained his disciples to enter into the boat, and to go before *him* unto the other side to **Bethsaida**, while he himself sendeth the multitude away.

46 And after he had taken leave of them, **he departed into the mountain to pray.** And

47 when even was come, the boat was in the midst of the sea, and **he alone on the land.**

48 And seeing them distressed in rowing, for the wind was contrary unto them, about the fourth watch of the night he cometh unto them, walking on the sea ; and he would have passed by

49 them : but they, when they saw him walking on the sea, supposed that it was an apparition, and cried out : for they all saw him and

And the day began to wear 12 away ; and the twelve came, and said unto him, Send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages and country round about, and lodge, and get victuals : for we are here in a desert place. But he said unto them, 13 Give ye them to eat. And they said, We have no more than five loaves and two fishes ; except we should go and buy food for all this people. For they were 14 about five thousand men. And he said unto his disciples, *Gr. recdine.* Make them sit\* down in companies, about fifty each. And they did 15 so, and made them all sit\* down. And he took the five loaves and 16 the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed them, and brake ; and gave to the disciples to set before the multitude. And they did eat, and were all 17 filled : and there was taken up that which remained over to them of broken pieces, twelve baskets.

And it came to pass, **as he 18 was praying alone, the**

50 were troubled. But he straightway spake with them, and saith unto them, Be of good cheer :  
 51 it is I ; be not afraid. And he went up unto them into the  
 52 boat and the wind ceased : and they were sore amazed in themselves ; for they understood not concerning the loaves, but their heart was hardened.

viii.

22 And they come unto Bethsaida. And they bring to him a blind man, and beseech him  
 23 to touch him. And he took hold of the blind man by the hand, and brought him out of the village ; and when he had spit on his eyes, and laid his hands upon him, he asked him,  
 24 Seest thou aught ? And he looked up and said, I see men, for I behold *them* as trees, walk-  
 25 ing. Then again he laid his hands upon his eyes ; and he looked steadfastly, and was restored, and saw all things clearly.  
 26 And he sent him away to his home, saying, Do not even enter into the village.  
 27 And Jesus went forth, and his disciples, into the villages of Cæsarea Philippi : and in the way he asked his disciples, saying unto them, Who do men say that I am ?  
 28 And they told him, saying, John the Baptist : and others, Elijah ; but others, One of the prophets. And he asked them,  
 29 But who say ye that I am ? Peter answereth and saith unto him, Thou art the Christ.

disciples were with him : and he asked them, saying, Who do the multitude say that I am ? And they answering, 19 said, John the Baptist ; but others say, Elijah ; and others, that one of the old prophets is risen again. And he said unto 20 them, But who say ye that I am ? And Peter answering said, The Christ of God.

If this was originally Mark's account, the order both of places and events becomes clear.\* Jesus proposes to His disciples to escape from the crowds, as He had done before, by entering into a boat. They row to a desert place, probably on the same side of the lake as Capernaum, their starting-point. This, however, is not sufficiently remote ; the multitudes follow. The feeding of the five thousand takes place, and when the evening approaches Jesus sends His disciples across the lake to Bethsaida, where they will have a better chance of quiet than in their own town of Capernaum. Bethsaida is correctly described as "on the other side," if the well-

\* It is not to be understood in what follows, or in any part of this chapter, that the writer maintains that the events are historical. The supposition is merely that the story was originally narrated by one who was acquainted with the position of the localities to which the events, whether historical or not, were assigned.



known Bethsaida Julius was meant, for that town lay east of Jordan at the north end of the lake.

As soon as the disciples have gone away in the boat, Jesus dismisses the multitudes and departs into the mountain (*εἰς τὸ ὄρος*) to pray. Not into *a* mountain, but *the* mountain; \* that is, the well-known mountain behind Capernaum, which was His accustomed retreat.†

In this order of events Luke follows Mark's narrative; provided we give to Luke ix. 10, *et seq.*, its natural meaning—that Jesus and the disciples set out originally for Bethsaida, and that the feeding of the five thousand took place on the way. In abbreviating the narrative he falls into the awkward expression "withdrew apart to a city called Bethsaida," which, however, is quite consistent with his interpretation of the narrative; and he also manufactures the still more awkward "seam" whereby the "praying alone" is made to take place on the same occasion as Peter's Confession. Such things are possible, however, to an ancient editor.‡

It should, I think, be taken as a confirmation of our hypothesis, that by its adoption the following difficulties, among others, disappear:

1. It has generally been held that a part, at least, of Jesus' motive in leaving Capernaum for Bethsaida was that He might escape from Herod's territory, Herod having recently heard of His fame. If so, why did He immediately return and stay there? § Now, in our supposed tradition Jesus does not return to Galilee; He passes from Bethsaida, which is on the east of Jordan, to Cæsarea Philippi, and so remains in Philip's territory.

2. In Mark's Gospel, as we have it in our Bibles, the disciples are sent before to Bethsaida,|| and yet they land at Gennesaret. This has been explained in various ways, as, for instance, by the supposition that they were driven out of their course by the storm, or by the suggestion, now under discussion, that there was a second Bethsaida not mentioned in Jewish history. The hypothetical "Mark" does away with all need for any explanation; the difficulty disappears.

3. The occurrence of the feeding of the five thousand and of the four thousand in the same Gospel, although they are so obviously variants, cannot but be regarded as a difficulty if the

\* See Revised Version.

† See Matt. v. 1; xiv. 23; xv. 29. Mark iii. 13; vi. 46. Luke vi. 12; ix. 28. John vi. 3, 15.

‡ In John vi. 1, for instance, the evangelist (or his editor) retains a phrase from the earlier document which does not fit into the edited narrative, with the result that Jesus is represented as departing from Jerusalem to "the other side of the Sea of Galilee," as though Jerusalem were situated on the shore of the lake.

§ Mark vi. 53.

|| Mark vi. 45.

Gospel of Mark is early and is the work of one hand. The hypothesis which we have adopted removes both the narrative of feeding the four thousand (viii. 1-10) and the allusion to it in viii. 16-21.

4. Dr. Menzies, in his book, "The Earliest Gospel" (p. 149), says that the conflict with the Pharisees given in vii. 1-23, "must belong to the late ministry, when the difference of principle between the authorities and Jesus has come to be recognised." This difficulty is by our hypothesis removed.

5. The enigmatical phrases, 'He took them, and withdrew apart to a city' \* and "As He was praying alone, the disciples were with him," † are explained by our hypothesis as mentioned above. ‡

Now, it is by no means necessary, for the purpose we have in view, to insist upon this particular form of the earlier "Mark"; it is sufficient that some such form may have existed. A comparison of the Gospels shows that there is at least much uncertainty as to the order of events originally set forth; and, so long as that uncertainty exists, it is quite gratuitous to invent a town, for the actuality of which we have no other evidence than that the relation in which these events now stand to each other. Apart from the order of the Gospel stories there is no evidence of the existence of a second Bethsaida, and that order being in the highest degree doubtful, we may take it as sufficiently probable that there was but one. Whether the "desert place" and "the mountain" were on the east or on the west of the lake, a considerable bay would have to be crossed in order to reach Bethsaida on the north, and on either supposition the geography becomes sufficiently clear, so far as Bethsaida is concerned. The well-known Bethsaida mentioned by Josephus answers every demand of the narrative.

Taking it, then, as sufficiently probable, that there was only one Bethsaida in the neighbourhood of the lake, namely, that near the point where the Jordan enters upon the north, it remains to inquire whether this town of Bethsaida had a suburb or dependent village of the same name connected with it, as some geographers have supposed to be the case.

The reason for such a supposition is that, whether or not Jesus

\* Luke ix. 10.

† Luke ix. 18.

‡ It is worth noting by the way that in the account of the feeding of the four thousand, as given by Matthew (xv. 39), the disciples landed after it at Magadan. This is identified with Mejdel in the Plain of Gennesaret, and suggests that the feeding of the five thousand, after which they land at Gennesaret (Mark vi. 53), is a variant of the feeding of the four thousand, after which they landed at Magadan, and that both are based upon some incident unconnected in fact with the coming to Bethsaida. This would point back to a still earlier form of Mark's Gospel, in which vi. 35-44 also was wanting.

did, as some hold, actually make Bethsaida His headquarters for some time after his flight from Herod's territory to that of Philip. He did at any rate perform many "wonderful works there"; and yet it was not customary for any pious Jew, and appears not to have been customary for Jesus, to so much as enter such a purely Greek town as that of Julias. The difficulty would be met if the old village of Bethsaida remained Jewish, while the new town of "Bethsaida Julias," which grew from it, had a practically separate population. Josephus mentions that Nero gave to Agrippa "Julias, a city of Peræa, with fourteen villages that lay about it."\* Was one of these villages perhaps the original nucleus of Bethsaida Julias, just as Old Hastings with its fishing-boats has long lived side by side with the modern town of Hastings, separate and yet important? The origin of Julias would make such an idea quite probable, for what we read in Josephus' history † is that Philip "advanced the village Bethsaida, situate at the lake of Gennesareth, into the dignity of a city, both by the number of inhabitants it contained, and its other grandeur, and called it by the name of Julias, the same name with Cæsar's daughter."

Now, "Bethsaida" means Place of Fishing or Hunting—of fishing we may say in this case, since it was the city of Peter, and he was the fisherman. But et-Tell is more than a mile from the lake and a good half mile from the Jordan, so that if et-Tell is indeed the site of Bethsaida Julias, it is likely that the foregoing is the true account of the matter—the town of Bethsaida has to be distinguished from the old lake-side village which gave to the town its name. It has accordingly been suggested that el-Araj, the ruins of which are said to have been joined to et-Tell by a Roman road, was the original village of Bethsaida.‡ The distance from el-Araj to et-Tell would be about  $1\frac{1}{4}$  miles.

There is, however, another site, which, before accepting this theory, ought to be carefully considered; it is that of el-Mesadiyeh. Thomson, in "The Land and the Book," says that when he was there in 1855 the Bedawin in the Butaiha applied the name Bethsaida to this place.§ Moreover, the name Mesadiyeh, by which it is more generally known, is "a derivative from the same root as Bethsaida, both having reference to *fishing*." One is tempted at first to say, "Why, then, seek any further? Here is the place with the name still surviving." The difficulty, however, in the way of identifying this place with the ancient village of Bethsaida, is that if et-Tell was Bethsaida Julias, then this dependent village was two miles

\* Josephus, "Ant." xx. viii. 4.

† *Ibid.* xviii. ii. 1.

‡ Schumacher, quoted in "Encycl. Bibl." art. "Bethsaida."

§ *Op. cit.*, ed. 1866, p. 360.

from its principal, and divided from it by a broad estuary into which three streams run; while, if we give up the idea of a suburban Bethsaida, and take Mesadiyeh to be Bethsaida Julias, we are in conflict with the description of the situation of Julias given by Josephus. Josephus speaks of a battle in which an earth-work was raised "a furlong off Julias, near to the river Jordan"; \* and he elsewhere describes the Jordan as "passing by the city Julias"; † phrases which fit et-Tell admirably, but are scarcely applicable to Mesadiyeh; for Mesadiyeh is a good mile and a half from the mouth of the Jordan.

Professor G. A. Smith (citing Thomson, "Land and Book," ed. 1877, 360), in his article on Bethsaida in the *Encyclopædia Biblica*, speaks of the site as having been fixed "either at et-Tell, a mound with many ruins, close to the Jordan where the latter issues from the hills, or at Mesadiyeh, by the mouth of the river." But "the river" by the mouth of which Mesadiyeh is situated, is not the Jordan, but the stream which flows down the Wâdi es-Saffâh and empties itself by a triple channel into the broad estuary marked on the Survey Map as W. el-Mesadiyeh. It lies on the east side of the estuary, which forms a natural barrier, cutting it off from et-Tell and from the channel of the Jordan.

Whatever may be thought, therefore, about the old Jewish fishing village of Bethsaida, the situation of et-Tell accords much more closely with Josephus' account of Bethsaida Julias than Mesadiyeh does.

Moreover, et-Tell is a place "where there are many ruins," and its situation on a mound of some height in the midst of the Plain of Butaiha makes it a likely, and the only likely place, for a town intended to dominate the surrounding district.

One other fact is mentioned by Thomson which appears to me rather significant. It is that there is another site named Mesady "on the rocky hill west of the Jordan, and higher up the gorge." Is it not possible that this was one of the "fourteen villages" around Bethsaida Julias which Nero gave to Agrippa? And is not, perhaps, the true account of the matter this: that Bethsaida was a small district consisting of Julias (et-Tell) and fourteen dependent villages lying on both banks of the Jordan near about its outlet into the Sea of Galilee?

Such a theory would harmonise several conflicting matters. It would explain why Bethsaida is said by Josephus to be in Lower Gaulonitis, and yet is called by the Evangelist John "Bethsaida of Galilee." It would permit us to retain the identification of Bethsaida Julias with et-Tell, and yet would consist with Bethsaida

\* "Life," sec. 72.

† "Wars," iii. x. 7.

being "the city of Andrew and Peter," the fishermen. It would harmonise the practice of Jesus as a pious Jew avoiding the heathen Julias and yet working many mighty miracles in Bethsaida. And it would account for the name "Mesady" lingering to this day on both banks of the Jordan, in the one case near the lake and in the other at some distance from the shore.

As to the question where stood the particular village which Jesus frequented—the old home of Andrew, Peter, and Philip—our first impulse would be to assign it to the high bank along the lake shore now known as Mesadīyeh, where, as I have said, the identical name Bethsaida is reported still to linger among the Bedawin who camp there. True, it is somewhat far from the central mound upon which we believe that Julias stood; but if, as we are supposing, the name Bethsaida was given to the whole group of villages, this would be no valid objection; and it is, moreover, to be observed that although the triple stream of which I have spoken above seems to form an obstacle to any close connection with et-Tell, yet these streams are not always impassable, and, as a matter of fact, a road exists at this day which cuts across all three. Either this or el-Arāj seems by far the most probable site; and of those two, one is situated on one side of the estuary mentioned above, the other on the opposite side, so that it matters little which we choose, the outlook and surroundings, the relation to the story, are so nearly identical. In either case the estuary of the W. el Mesadīyeh would serve as a natural harbour for the fishing-boats of Bethsaida.



## D. THE CAPERNAUM QUESTION

### PART I. THE FOUNTAIN OF CAPERNAUM

THE keystone of the Capernaum question—the question, that is, where Capernaum, the later home of Jesus, was situated—is to be found in the description which Josephus gives of the Plain of Gennesaret. His description is as follows:

"This country also which lies over against this lake hath the

same name of Gennesareth ; its nature is wonderful as well as its beauty ;—it supplies men with the principal fruits, with grapes and figs continually, during ten months of the year, and the rest of the fruits as they become ripe together, through the whole year ; for besides the good temperature of the air, it is also watered from a most fertile fountain.\* The people of the country call it Capharnaum. Some have thought it to be a vein of the Nile, because it produces the Coracin fish as well as that lake does which is near to Alexandria." †

According to Josephus, therefore, there was a *spring* called *καφαρναουμ*. But the name of the spring thus given corresponds in spelling with the name of the town as it appears in the New Testament Manuscripts  $\aleph$ BDZ. The natural inference is that the town Capernaum stood at or near a spring of that name. Can we, then, identify the spring from the description which Josephus gives ?

### 1. *The Spring Capernaum watered the Plain of Gennesaret.*

The first point is that the spring is *γουμεωδότης*. I am not sure whether it is justifiable to translate this, as Professor G. A. Smith has done, by the word "copious." Josephus is not insisting so much upon its size as upon its fertilising properties. But in any case it must have been a noticeable spring, or Josephus would not have so emphatically remarked upon it. The Plain of Gennesaret contains several springs : is any one of them more noticeable than the others ?

Travelling from Mejdél northwards you first cross a stream which comes down the Wâdi Hamâm, or Valley of the Doves ; next, that which flows from the Round Fountain, known as Ain Mudawarah ; third, a stream which issues from the Wâdi Rabadiyeh ; fourth, one which comes from Wâdi el-Amûd ; and fifth, you have at the extreme north of the plain, close to the ruins of Khân Minyeh, the Ain et-Tin, or Fountain of the Fig-tree. These, I think, are the principal springs and streams which cross the Plain of Gennesaret, although there are said to be minor springs rising in the plain itself which are nameless. Tristram, in fact, speaks of Gennesaret as "rendered very marshy" by its streams ; and one wonders at first why Josephus should have spoken of it as watered by any particular stream when there are so many to water it.

We must remember, however, that it is not always springtime or winter in Palestine, and that in the summer even a plain like that of Gennesaret can be anything but "marshy." Tristram's remark was made during a spring visit ; but when I was there in the unusually dry

\* Πηγὴ διάρδεται γουμεωδότης. A good deal depends, as will presently be seen, upon this phrase.

† Whiston's "Josephus," "Wars," iii. x. 8.

springtime of 1901 a great part of the plain, especially the northern half, was very parched. For this reason, irrigation is necessary in the Plain of Gennesaret as well as in most parts of Palestine, and it is pretty clear that some particular stream was used to irrigate the plain, on which account Josephus says that the plain *διὰ παντός* (is watered throughout) by it. The streams mentioned above cut across the short breadth of the plain, and none of them by its natural flow can be said to "water the plain throughout," but some of them have been and are used for irrigation, and it is possible, therefore, that it was to one of these Josephus referred.

Taking the waters mentioned above in their topographical order, that which comes from the Wâdi Hamâm may be neglected. It is less in importance than either the second or the third, could never have watered more than a portion of the southern end of the plain, and has been claimed by no one as the stream Capernaum. The second spring, known as Ain Mudawarah, or the Round Fountain, is more noteworthy; it sends a considerable stream to the lake, from which it is about half a mile distant. But this, again, as an irrigating agent seems to be out of the question. Dr. Selah Merrill, who examined it more than once, has no hesitation upon this point. "I visited again," he writes in 1876, "Ain Mudawarah, or the Round Fountain, on the Plain of Gennesaret, and am certain that only a small portion of the plain could ever have been irrigated from it. It lies too low by fifty or sixty feet, and there are no means of raising the water to such a height." \* Robinson, writing some forty years earlier, had also noticed that this spring watered only "the ground between it and the lake." †

The third stream, coming from the Wâdi Rabadiyeh, is noticed by most explorers as one which might possibly, by aid of proper irrigation works, "water the plain throughout." Robinson speaks of it as "a very copious stream of pure water, which is scattered over the plain in all directions, by means of small canals and water-courses," and in comparing it with the other springs of Gennesaret, and especially with the Round Fountain, he says: "The main irrigation comes from the more abundant stream of Wâdi er-Rabadiyeh, which is now, and doubtless was of old, carried to various parts of the plain on both sides of that fountain." Dr. Merrill, too, after rejecting the Round Fountain, continues: "In the Rabadiyeh stream, however, there is a copious supply of water, and it is at such a height that it could easily be carried by canals to all parts of the plain." ‡

The fourth stream, Wâdi el-Amûd, is a stream of small import-

\* "East of the Jordan," p. 300.

† "Biblical Researches," 1841, vol. iii. p. 284.

‡ "East of the Jordan," p. 300.

ance compared with the preceding. It was dry when we passed, and it has not, so far as I am aware, appeared among the claimants to the honours of Capernaum.

The fifth fountain, the Ain et-Tîn, has received more attention than it deserves. The beauty of the pool in which it rises, lying in the shadow of a great rock and overhung by an aged fig-tree, has prejudiced travellers in its favour; and since it happens to flow near ruins which have on various grounds a strong case to present in the suit for the title of Capernaum, some travellers have tried hard to persuade themselves that this is the spring of which Josephus speaks. Robinson, following a reading *ποτιμωτάρη* instead of *γονιμωτάρη* described Josephus' spring, Capernaum, as "most potable," in which respect he declared that Ain et-Tîn agreed with the description. Whereupon, good Dr. Thomson declares, "I can never abide this water of Ain et-Tîny, but always drink that of the lake," a verdict with which the present writer, having tasted both, can in no wise agree.

The question of potability is not, however, of importance; it is clear from Josephus' description that the fountain of Capernaum did irrigate the plain, and it is equally clear from observation that Ain et-Tîn can do nothing of the sort. Thomson says that the Ain "comes out close to the lake, and *on a level with the surface*."† Dr. John Wilson more cautiously observes that it "cannot with propriety be said to be that which distinctively waters the plain, properly so called."‡ Sir Charles Wilson says, "Ain et-Tîn is a small weak spring, and could never have irrigated anything."§ Tristram gives the course of the stream from the fountain to the marsh by the lake-shore as only ninety-five feet,|| and says that it cannot have watered the plain through its course. Mr. J. Macgregor, who made some careful observations here, says that the level of the spring is about eight feet higher than that of the lake.¶ In fact, no one who has seen the place can imagine for a moment that the plain can ever have been watered from this pool by the shore.

So far, then, the Rabadiyeh stream is the only one which we need seriously consider in relation to the question of irrigation. But now, before we more closely inquire into the possibility of this being the fountain mentioned by Josephus, there is yet another source for us to consider.

When the traveller riding northwards through the Plain of Genesaret has crossed the various streams which we have enumerated,

\* "Later Bibl. Researches," p. 350. See also another gloss in "Bibl. Researches," p. 291, where "aiding in watering and fertilising" cannot fairly give the force of *διάρρηται*.

† "The Land and the Book," p. 350.

§ "Recovery of Jerusalem," p. 377.

|| "Land of Israel," pp. 424, 430.

‡ "Lands of the Bible," vol. ii. p. 139.

¶ "Rob Roy on the Jordan," p. 366.



he comes at the further horn of the crescent to a barrier of rock which runs down to the very margin of the lake and actually projects into its waters, thus closing in this fertile plain and apparently preventing all direct advance. At this point his guide will turn away from the shore, and climbing the slope will presently point out a trough cut across the top of the rocky bluff, enabling the traveller to continue his journey in the northerly, or rather north-easterly, direction. This curious road, thus hollowed out in the rock, conducts him to another small plain, in which he discovers to his astonishment a magnificent torrent. When he sees this river leaping and foaming down the mountain-side, and hears it roaring over the broken parapets of old aqueducts, his first thought is, "Why have I been searching among the dribblets of Gennesaret for the fountain of Capernaum, when here, hidden only by a bar of rock, is this glorious rush of water? This most assuredly is the fountain which caught the eye of Josephus and dwelt in his imagination when he described this district." But the enthusiast is suddenly pulled up by the recollection that the fountain of Capernaum "watered the plain of Gennesareth throughout," and even supposing (what is possible) that Josephus included this little Plain of Tâbigha in the whole Plain of Gennesaret, yet this great stream of Tâbigha, abundant as it is could never, one might say, have watered *the whole length* of the plain, since the greater part is cut off by the rocky headland which we have just passed.

It is at this point that we must bring into the argument the discovery of recent years that the waters of Tâbigha were probably carried at one time into the Plain of Gennesaret by that trough cut in the dividing rock, which I have already noticed as being used for a road at the present day.

Robinson, in his "Later Researches," which were undertaken in 1852, without fully appreciating the bearing of his observation (for he maintained to the end that Ain et-Tîn was the Fountain Capharnaum) wrote as follows respecting this road connecting the Plain of Gennesaret with the Plain of Tâbigha: "One feature of the excavation surprised us, namely, that for most of the way there is a channel cut in the rock, about three feet deep and as many wide, which seemed evidently to have been an aqueduct once conveying water for irrigating the northern part of the Plain el-Ghuweir. There was no mistaking the nature and object of this channel; and yet no waters were near, which could be thus conveyed, except from the fountains of et-Tâbighah." \*

Thomson seems to have accepted this discovery, and mentions in his dialogues (which he dates 1857, but which are in part based

\* *Op. cit.*, p. 345.

on earlier observations), "the channel of the ancient canal which conveyed the water from Tabigha westward to this Plain [of Gennesaret]" \*

In 1869-70 Captain (afterwards Sir Charles) Wilson surveyed this district, and worked out in detail this hypothesis of an aqueduct from the spring of Tâbigha to Gennesaret. "Connected with this fountain," he says, "are the remains of some remarkable works which at one time raised its waters to a higher level, and conveyed them bodily into the Plain of Gennesareth for purposes of irrigation. The source is enclosed in an octagonal reservoir of great strength, by means of which the water was raised about twenty feet to the level of an aqueduct that ran along the side of the hill. Strong as the reservoir was, the water has at last broken through it, and there is now little more than two feet left at the bottom, in which a number of small fish may be seen playing about. After leaving the reservoir the aqueduct can be traced at intervals following the contour of the ground to the point where it crossed the beds of two watercourses on arches, of which the piers may still be seen; it then turns down towards the lake, and runs along the hillside on the top of a massive retaining wall, of which fifty or sixty yards remain, and lastly passes round the Khân Minyeh cliff by a remarkable excavation in the solid rock, which has been noticed by all travellers. The elevation of the aqueduct at this point is sufficient to have enabled the water brought by it to irrigate the whole Plain of Gennesareth; and though we could only trace it for a few hundred yards inland, it was not improbably carried right round the head of the plain; the same causes which have almost obliterated it in the small Plain of Tabighah would fully account for its disappearance in Gennesareth." † On this last point Sir Charles Wilson remarks elsewhere,‡ that from the mouths of each of the valleys which debouch into Gennesaret, "aqueducts are carried to the right and left, for the irrigation of the plain. Some appear to be very old, and may formerly have been connected with the Tabighah spring, which would supply water when the streams were dry."

Wilson's observations were confirmed by Kitchener in 1877. He found "considerable remains of the masonry of the aqueduct leading to the rock-cut portion, and a small piece beyond, with the water-course coated with thick cement." The levels which he took showed that the "height of the top of the reservoir" was fifty-one feet above the surface of the lake, while the rock-cut aqueduct was fifty-two feet four inches above the same. So that, *in its original condition*, before it was ruined, the reservoir would give a sufficient fall to the

\* "The Land and the Book," 1866, pp. 350, 354.

† "Recovery of Jerusalem," p. 349.

‡ *Ibid.* p. 352.

aqueduct. The aqueduct itself he found had a fall of seven feet in the mile toward the Plain of Gennesaret.\* The conclusion was accepted by Merrill† and other authorities. Macgregor remarked that the section of the rock-cut aqueduct was "like an inverted horseshoe; the very least convenient form for a road, and the very best for a channel."‡

Colonel Conder, however, revisiting the spot in 1882, came to the conclusion that the aqueduct theory was improbable, "and that the rock-cutting in the Minieh cliff represents an ancient road." He based this conclusion partly on the view that the Plain of Gennesaret would more easily have been irrigated from the springs in it, than by bringing the water from el-Tâbigha,§ to which it may be answered that in the summer the northern half of the plain is at the present time very dry and parched, and that the supply of water required for such gardens and orchards as Josephus describes, would be greater even than that required at present. In part he appealed to observations on the construction of the supposed aqueduct, "that there are no remains of any cement on the sides or bed of the channel"; that "to the east a paved path continues from the rock-cut portion, and gradually descends to the shore of the lake||; that the level of the channel, *as far as could be judged by* observations taken with an Abney's level, *seems to be possibly* ten or twenty feet above the top of the reservoir"; that "the mortar and plaster of the Birket appear to be modern"; that it "was built up to its present height by one of the sons of the famous Dhahr-el-Amr in the last [18th] century," and that "between this spring and the passage there are no traces of any aqueduct."¶

Only two of these objections appear disastrous to the aqueduct theory: namely, that which relates to the relative levels of the spring and the channel, and that which alleges an absence of any traces of an aqueduct connecting the two. Both of these are in direct contradiction to the observations of Wilson and Kitchener; we must await their settlement by experts.\*\* As to the masonry of the octagonal reservoir, Conder admits that the lower blocks are of larger size; Dr. John Wilson †† and Canon Tristram ‡‡ speak of the work as Roman; and we are free to believe that the son of

\* "P.E.F.Q.S." 1877, p. 123.

† "East of the Jordan," 1881, p. 457.

‡ "Rob Roy on the Jordan," p. 372.

§ "Tent-work," p. 294.

|| This paved path may, of course, be a later addition. "At Ain-Fijeh precisely similar rock-cuttings, made for aqueducts, were afterwards used for roads." P.E.F.Q.S., 1882, p. 225 fn.

¶ *Ibid.* pp. 223-4, and "Tent-work," p. 294.

\*\* Since the above was written, Prof. Wm. Knight (late of St. Andrews), at my suggestion, has tested the level with an aneroid, and found the spring ten or twelve feet above the highest point of the aqueduct. See "Expositor," July, 1906.

†† "Lands of the Bible, vol. ii. p. 142.

‡‡ "The Land of Israel," p. 425.

Dhahr-el-Amr, when he set his mills going, merely heightened the broken wall of an ancient reservoir,\* and cemented the whole with the "modern" cement referred to by Conder.

To my own mind, such doubts are almost or quite outweighed by a passage in "Purchas His Pilgrimes" which seems to me something like proof that the rock-cut aqueduct was actually in operation as late as A.D. 1601. Mr. Macgregor refers to the passage in a footnote,† without, as I think, fully appreciating the importance of the reference. The quotation is from "The Voyages of Master Iohn Sanderson," who left Jerusalem on July 8, 1601, reached Jenin on the 11th, and Tiberias on the 12th. Master Sanderson continues the account of his journey as follows: "We came to *Almenia*, which hath beene a great Citie also, seven or eight miles off, close built by the Sea-side, along through which runneth a Channell of Iordan; this undoubtedly is *Capernaum*, for that it is over the point of the Land, where we lodged."‡

Upon this passage Mr. Macgregor remarks that the "sound of the word [*Almenia*] very much resembles that of *Khan Minyeh*." We would suggest that it not merely "resembles," but is practically identical with the name, not indeed of the *Khan*, but of the place—that *Almenia* and *el-Minyeh* are to all intents one and the same. There is, in fact, evidence extant that in 1430 the place was called *El Munya*, which is probably no other than the Spanish name *Almunia*,§ and it is likely enough that Sanderson received it in this form from the (probably Spanish) Jews with whom he travelled. It is moreover abundantly evident from the context that *Minyeh* and no other was the place where Master John Sanderson lodged.

Now, what is that "Channel of Jordan" which he mentions? It cannot have been any of the streams which cross the plain, all of which are somewhat distant from *Minyeh*, and cross at right angles to the direction of the *Jordan*: still less can it have been the little *Ain et-Tîn*, with its crystal pool; and to *Tâbigha* Master Sanderson did not go. It must surely have been some considerable flow of water running in a line with the direction of the *Jordan*. Suppose that Master Sanderson, camping at *Minyeh* under the limestone promontory behind the *Khân*, sees issuing from a channel across that promontory a swift and abundant river, which flows along the plain in a direction parallel to the shore of the lake, what would be his natural inference? He has not been beyond the rocks of *Minyeh*, and is unaware of the existence of the great springs of *Tâbigha*; he knows, however, that he is but a short distance from the head of

\* On this point, see Kitchener in "P.E.F.Q.S.," 1877, p. 123.

† "Rob Roy on the Jordan," p. 373 fn.

‡ "Purchas His Pilgrimes," Part ii. p. 1635. § Smith, "Hist. Geog." p. 456 fn.

the lake where the Jordan flows in. He infers, of course, that this flood is a side stream of the Jordan. "Coming from so high a level," as Mr. Macgregor remarks, "the stream might readily be mistaken for a canalette from the river, like those we have described in connection with the Abana,\* and, indeed, quite similar to these both in purpose and in construction."

In A.D. 1601, therefore, this channel was, it seems, still in use to convey the water of Tâbigha, a fact which ought to set at rest the question "Road or aqueduct?" Taking this into account it seems clear that Ain Tâbigha must be admitted as having a strong claim to be the spring described by Josephus.

To sum up this part of the question, we must say, I think, that if we have regard only to the question of irrigation, the evidence is fairly strong that the Fountain Capernaum was either the Rabadiyeh stream or that of Ain Tâbigha, and that if we take copiousness and prominence into account the balance seems to be in favour of the latter. The streams of Tâbigha flow from five fountains, one of which "is by far the largest spring in Galilee, and was estimated to be more than half the size of the celebrated source of the Jordan at Banias."† It is likely, therefore, to have attracted the historian's attention, and I think it has been shown that in all probability this spring did actually "water throughout" the Plain of Gennesaret.

## 2. *It produced the Coracin Fish.*

The question, "Where was the Fountain of Capernaum?" cannot, however, be yet regarded as concluded, for the fact that it irrigated the Plain of Gennesaret is not the only fact mentioned by Josephus. He mentions, also, that it was thought by some "to be a vein of the Nile, because it produces the Coracin fish ‡ as well as that lake does which is near to Alexandria." And when we take this additional statement into account, the whole question seems at first to be thrown back into the melting-pot.

Travellers long searched in vain the various streams for the Egyptian Coracinus, and, not finding it, were content to argue in an *a priori* fashion about what could and could not be. Robinson proved conclusively that the fountain of Josephus could not be the Round Fountain of Ain Mudawarah, because the latter was so far inland that no fish of any size could pass to it; but he thought that in all probability it was Ain et-Tin, because that was just such a spring as the fish could reach.§ Thomson quite agreed that it

\* A district, by the way, which John Sanderson had previously visited.

† Wilson and Warren, "Recovery of Jerusalem," p. 348. See also p. 377 of the same work.

‡ Concerning this fish, see *ante*, p. 119.

§ "Biblical Researches" (1841), iii. p. 291.

could not possibly be the Round Fountain, but thought that Ain et-Tin was equally unlikely.\* Then comes Tristram in 1864, and upsets every one by finding the *Coracinus* in the Round Fountain in abundance and of unusually large size.†

This discovery of Canon Tristram's naturally induces one to reconsider the question of Ain Mudawarah. However, it does not dispose of the difficulty that, next to Ain et-Tin, Ain Mudawarah is just the most impossible spring ever to have watered the plain to any extent; and the safest course seems to be to inquire more particularly into the relation between the *Coracin* fish and *all* the streams of the neighbourhood. Is it always in Ain Mudawarah; and is it never anywhere else?

The first thing we note is that the *Coracinus* is *not always* in the Round Fountain. Mr. Macgregor carefully examined it all over and found none of the fish hiding in the sediment.‡ Other travellers have searched it with the same result.

A second point is that the fish is found abundantly *in the lake*.§ It passes thence up the streams and may conceivably be found in any of those which flow into the lake. It has not, as a matter of fact, been found at Ain et-Tin, though Thomson, Tristram, and Macgregor seem all to have searched that spring for it. Neither has it been found in any other of the Gennesaret streams, though the last-named traveller searched them all.|| But Thomson admits that certain kinds of fish delight to come *in cold weather* to those fountains that are tepid and slightly brackish,¶ and Tristram mentions Ain Tâbigha in particular, "where the water is hot and brackish," as a stream which the *Coracinus* would be likely to haunt.

At this point comes the very instructive evidence obtained by Mr. Macgregor on the habits of the fish: "After a diligent search in all the streams and fountains of Gennesareth, and a total failure to discover any of the *Coracinus* fish there, I made particular inquiries from the five fishermen who came to my camp in their boat by invitation, and were most courteous and intelligent in their talk. The men told me—and not in reply to any leading questions, but to the most formal and strict examination which a Templar could give to such witnesses—that the *Coracinus* fish is found in summer time (after the month of April) in the fountain of Mudawara, but *also* in that of Ain et-Tin; and that it ascends to both

\* "The Land and the Book," p. 354.

† "The Land of Israel," p. 431. Lieutenant (now Lord) Kitchener also found it there in abundance. P.E.F.Q.S., 1877, p. 122.

‡ "Rob Roy on the Jordan," p. 368.

§ Tristram, "The Land of Israel," p. 431. Macgregor, "Rob Roy on the Jordan," p. 369.

|| "Rob Roy on the Jordan," p. 369.

¶ "The Land and the Book," p. 354.

of these from the lake, where it is *always* found, but in the colder months only beside the hot springs of Bethsaida (Ain Tâbigha). Thither I rode at once to see further into the matter, and spent some hours on horseback, splashing among the tepid streams. At last in the lake itself, and just at the spot the men indicated—that is, where the waters are warmed by the heated rivulet—I noticed one of the fish in question darting out of the shallows of the warm sand, and a few yards off burrowing until its body and even its long tail were hidden again.” \*

This evidence goes to show that the “producing” of the Coracin fish is not a distinguishing mark which will enable us to pronounce with certainty upon one spring more than another. At the same time it perhaps gives a slight preference in favour of Ain Tâbigha, inasmuch as while the fish is found only in the summer at some fountains, it is found at all times of the year at the mouth of Ain Tâbigha. It may, perhaps, be worth noting that Josephus does not say that the Coracinus is found *in* the stream Capharnaum, but that the stream “produces” it, and that the unusual abundance of fish round about the mouth of the warm streams of Tâbigha has been noticed by several travellers.†

The upshot, then, of the full facts about the Coracinus is to destroy the preference which the Round Fountain at first received on account of Tristram’s discovery, and to restore the question very nearly to the position where the irrigation-argument left it—namely, Rabadiyeh and Tâbigha as alternatives for the Fountain of Capernaum—though Tâbigha may now perhaps be considered to have a slight advantage.

That is, perhaps, as far as we can get with the evidence at present before us. It will now be necessary to ascertain whether, associated with any of the streams which have been mentioned, and especially with the two which have been selected as answering to the description of Josephus, any ruins exist which may possibly have been those of the town of Capernaum.

\* “Rob Roy on the Jordan,” pp. 369, 370.

† See especially Macgregor, “Rob Roy on the Jordan,” p. 345. Kitchener, however, found numbers of fish in the octagonal reservoir itself, and saw no reason why the Coracinus should not be there. P.E.F.Q.S., 1877, p. 124. See “Encycl. Bibl.,” “Fish,” on the migration of members of this species up small and dwindling streams, traversing stretches where the water is insufficient to cover them, or is absent altogether.

## PART II. THE TOWN CAPERNAUM.

1. *The Search for Ruins.*

The preceding argument, if it favours the identification of either Ain Tâbigha or Wâdi Rabadîyeh with the Fountain of Capharnaum mentioned by Josephus, is yet hardly so conclusive as to make the search for ruins on the banks of the streams of Gennesaret altogether superfluous.

Taking the streams, then, in the order which we have hitherto followed, we come first to the Wâdi el-Hamâm. The banks of this stream were followed up the Wâdi for several miles by Mr. J. Macgregor, "but without any discovery of art employed, or even of much masonry."\* The next spring, the Ain Mudawarah, has received a good deal of attention on account of the Coracinus having been found in it. Robinson, to his great disappointment, found "nothing which could indicate that any town or village had ever occupied the spot."† Dr. Tristram found "only the faintest traces of other ruins" near the basin of the spring.‡ Sir Charles Wilson found there "no ruins of consequence."§ Only Macgregor thinks that the remains in the neighbourhood of the fountain, "though not distinct," might possibly be the vestiges of Capernaum.

The Rabadîyeh stream, more important as an irrigator, has no ruins upon its banks.|| On a slight eminence on the north side Robinson found the remains of a village, but "no traces of antiquity, no hewn stones nor any mason work."¶ The same place, however, was examined by Captain Wilson, who held that the existing houses were built "on the *débris* of an ancient village or town."\*\* But the spot is nearly a mile and a half from the lake-side, quite isolated from any other traces of habitations, and no one has claimed for it the honours of Capernaum. On the whole, Wâdi Rabadîyeh must, I think, retire from the contest.

The Wâdi el-Amûd, which comes next in order, has near it a single limestone column, "lying alone in the plain, some twenty feet long, and at least two feet in diameter." This solitary column is something of an enigma, but the solution cannot be "Capernaum,"

\* "Rob Roy on the Jordan," p. 367. The author appears to have confused the Ain el-Amud with the Wâdi el-Hamâm, but it is evidently the latter which he followed.

† "Biblical Researches," iii. p. 284. ‡ "The Land of Israel," p. 423.

§ "Recovery of Jerusalem," p. 352.

|| "Rob Roy on the Jordan," p. 367. ¶ "Biblical Researches," p. 285.

\*\* Lieutenant Kitchener reported (P.E.F.Q.S., 1877, p. 122) "no remains of importance to be seen; only a few basalt huts and some scattered stones."



for the travellers "could discern no trace of any site or ruins in the vicinity."

We seem shut up, then, so far as Gennesaret is concerned, to the ruins near to Ain et-Tîn, known as el-Minyeh.

### 2. *Tell Hûm in relation to the Fountain.*

But here, as all the world knows, another claimant has to be heard. Two and a half miles to the north-east of Khân Minyeh lie the ruins of Tell Hûm. They are (or were) the most considerable ruins on the lake-shore; and, though Tell Hûm itself has neither fountain nor stream, the question has arisen whether its distance from Ain Tâbigha is too great for it to have been called by an identical name. The controversy, in short, as to the site of Capernaum has of late years almost entirely resolved itself into a question between Minyeh and Tell Hûm.

So long as Ain Tâbigha was regarded as cut off from Gennesaret, both stream and town were more naturally looked for to the south of the Tell el-Oreimeh, or Rock of Minyeh; but now that it has been shown that Ain Tâbigha probably watered the plain, and may therefore be the spring Capernaum, we are free to look for the site of Capernaum town on either side of that stream.

So far as the proximity of the spring is concerned, Minyeh has a distinct advantage, for it is less than a mile from the source, and a main part of the stream actually flowed in all probability through the old town, while Tell Hûm has no such direct contact with the stream, and is nearly two miles distant from both stream and source. This distance can, however, hardly be considered fatal to the claim of Tell Hûm if in other respects it has a clear case in its favour.

### 3. *Was Capernaum in Gennesaret?*

One point that is urged on behalf of Minyeh is that Capernaum lay on or near the Plain of Gennesaret. Josephus, however, does not say so, neither can the Gospels be made to say so except by a comparison depending on the order of events and by a topographical inference; and we have no other evidence. Dr. Robinson depends upon these Gospel proofs in favour of Minyeh,\* while Wilson uses them in support of Tell Hûm.† We have seen in studying the Bethsaida question how difficult and hazardous these inferences from the order of the Gospel story are. The argument for Capernaum being in Gennesaret has been summed up by Lightfoot,‡ and to

\* "Biblical Researches," vol. iii. p. 289. † "Lands of the Bible," vol. ii. p. 145.

‡ "Cent. Chorograph.," ch. lxxx., cited by Tristram, "Land of Israel," p. 429.

that authority we may refer the reader who cares to depend upon this class of evidence. For ourselves we prefer to pass on to such characteristics of the town as may be gleaned from the Gospel statements without dependence upon the chronological or topographical sequence of the history.

#### 4. "*Capharnaum*" was a πόλις.

In the first place, it has been urged that Capernaum was a "village," and that this agrees better with Tell Hûm, which was unwalled, than with Minyeh, the city wall of which place has been excavated.\* The name "*Capharnaum*," it is argued, means village (kephar) of Nahum; also, when Josephus was wounded and carried thither he described it as a village (κώμη).†

The reverse argument has also been set forth—namely, that we learn from Matthew ix. 1 (εἰς τὴν ἰδίαν πόλιν) and Mark i. 33 (ὅλη ἡ πόλις) and other passages, that Capernaum was regarded as a "city," and that it was a place with a synagogue, a Roman garrison, a customs station, and a harbour; in fact, a place of some importance. This agrees, say some, better with Minyeh, a walled place, than with Tell Hûm, an unwalled. Nay, reply others, it agrees better with Tell Hûm, a place with ruins of considerable extent, than with Minyeh, where the ruins are unimportant.

Here we have a double confusion, first as to the fact, and second, as to the inference. What, then, was the fact of the matter? Was Capernaum a "town" or a "village"?

So far as concerns the word "*Capharnaum*," nothing surely ought to be inferred from that. Such a name is, of course, traditional; and that which was a village when the name was given might well have become a city in Roman times without losing or altering its appellation. St. Martin's does not now stand "in the fields," neither is Long Acre in any sense an "acre." And as to the story of Josephus, it raises this double doubt: First, that we are far from certain that it was to Capernaum he was carried; for, the name of the place was Cepharnômôn (κεφαρνωμων), or, according to another and more authoritative reading, Cepharnôkon (κεφαρνωκόν), and it is a mere guess that he means by this Capernaum. And, secondly, that if he did, no dependence can be placed upon his "*κώμη*," for he calls Arbela a "village" both before and after he had fortified it,‡ while elsewhere he calls the same place a "city"§; similarly, Eusebius, Jerome, and Epiphanius call Capernaum both "town" and "village."|| The fact, therefore, that Minyeh had a city wall, while

\* Tristram, "*The Land of Israel*," third edition, p. 430.

‡ "*Life*." Cf. sects. 37 and 60.

|| Keim, "*Jesus of Nazara*" (English translation), ii. p. 367.

† "*Life*," 71-73.

§ "*Ant.*," xii. xi., 1.

Tell Hûm shows no trace of one, tells neither one way nor the other, except in so far as it may show that Minyeh, as well as Tell Hûm, has at some period of its history been a place of some importance.

The truth would appear to be that Capernaum lay on the border line between "town" and "village." In size it did not, of course, compare with such cities as Hebron, Cæsarea, or Shechem; and to Josephus, who moved in the great world, it may well have appeared to be little more than a "village." It was, however, in New Testament times of sufficient importance to be called a *πῶλις*, and to have a centurion stationed there. In short, the question whether walled or unwalled is not of importance; but it does become incumbent upon those who argue in favour of any particular site to show that the ruins on that site are not entirely insignificant. On this general question, then, of the extent of the ruins, we may briefly take the evidence of travellers.

As to Tell Hûm, most observers are agreed that the ruins there are extensive. At a favourable time of year, when the rank growth does not obscure the remains, the traces of the town can be seen (so it is said) to cover a space measuring half a mile in length by a quarter of a mile in breadth. But the ruins of Minyeh are described by Sir Charles Wilson as "covering an extent of ground small in comparison with those of Tell Hûm or Kerâzeh"\*; and Robinson, on his first visit to the place, wrote: "The few remains seemed to be mostly dwellings of no very remote date; but there was not enough to make out anything with certainty."†

On a second visit, however, made in 1852, Robinson altered his opinion. "The remains," he writes, "are strewn around in shapeless heaps; but are much more extensive and considerable than my former impression had led me to anticipate. Indeed, there are here remains enough not only to warrant, but to require the hypothesis of a large ancient place."‡ Dr. Tristram says: "On the other side of [the marsh formed by the stream from Ain et-Tin] near the water are the traces, rather than the remains, of an extensive collection of buildings, an ancient city, now wholly ploughed over."§ Dr. Merrill says: "At Khân Minieh is a swell in the plain, in which peasants are digging, and, at a depth of four to six feet, they struck a finely built wall, which they followed to a depth of twelve feet. I do not know that they reached the bottom. They traced this wall until it turned an angle, and for some distance after that. About one mile south of this place is another low mound—a mere swell on the

\* "Recovery of Jerusalem," p. 350.

† "Biblical Researches," vol. iii. pp. 287-8.

‡ "Later Biblical Researches," p. 345.

§ "The Land of Israel," third edition, p. 425.

surface of the plain—over which a person might ride without noticing that it was not a part of the common field. Here also I found signs of a buried town.”\* Lieutenant (now Lord) Kitchener also reported to the Palestine Exploration Fund, in 1877, that there were “extensive ruins” there, and that he “was informed by two authorities that hewn stones and good walls existed below the present surface, and are excavated for building purposes.”†

To the foregoing my own observations, such as they are, may be added. I examined only one group of ruins. At a distance of 400 yards to the north of the khân were a pile of masonry and a stretch of broken wall standing well up from the plain, and consisting of roughish blocks of stone joined by hard cement. The nether stone of a large oil-press lay twenty yards south-east by south of this central ruin. One hundred yards west of this mass of masonry is another very similar mass, and 144 yards to the east is an oval hollowed stone standing on its end, the longer diameter measuring three feet. Between this stone and the central point first mentioned are distinct mounds, too stony for ploughing, and containing squared blocks, some of which measured 3 feet by 1 foot. The whole breadth, therefore, of the visible ruins from west to east was 244 yards; beyond these limits I saw no traces of buildings. The limit to the south seemed to be the dry bed of a stream, which crossed the path 120 yards from the same point of measurement.

The whole area of these ruins was, I suppose, not more than five or six acres. But the ruins which Tristram describes are evidently situated much nearer to the shore; and Robinson also describes the ruins as “extending down to the little bay along the shore,”‡ observations which greatly extend the area of the ancient town; and to these remains we must add the ruins upon the hill mentioned by Schumacher, Wilson, Merrill, and others, of which we shall presently have to speak more particularly. So that, without including the mound described by Merrill, which lay “a mile to the south,” or any possible extension of the city on the Tâbigha side of the rock, we have traces of a town comparable in size with that which stood at Tell Hûm.

At Tell Hûm, when the thicket of thistles has died down, the foundations of the houses on the bare stony slope may no doubt be easily seen, while at Minyeh they are for the most part buried in the deep rich soil of the place, and the plough has passed over the greater part of the city; but that a city stood there, and one of sufficient importance to answer to the hints of its [character given in the Gospels, cannot certainly be doubted. These hints we must now

\* “East of the Jordan,” p. 301.

‡ “Later Biblical Researches,” p. 345.

† “P.E.F.Q.S.,” 1877, p. 122.

examine and see with which of the two places they more nearly correspond.

#### 5. *It had a Roman Garrison.*

The first hint is given by the mention of the centurion who was stationed at Capernaum (Matt. viii. 5, and Luke vii. 2), which implies that it was a place with a Roman garrison. Now Minyeh has the ruins of a castle on the "bold bluff" which overlooks the town. It is called Khurbet el-Oreimeh, and was built, no doubt, to command the pass round the lake, the great caravan route to Damascus, and the road to the Mediterranean. This ruined castle is mentioned by Thomson,\* Merrill,† Kitchener,‡ and other explorers. Tell Hûm, on the other hand, has "no remains of a garrison," § and no particular need of one.

#### 6. *And a Customs Station.*

The second hint is given by the mention of Levi, the son of Alphæus, sitting at the place of toll (Matt. ix. 9, Mark ii. 14, Luke v. 27). We infer from this that Capernaum had a customs station, and it was presumably, therefore, on one of the great commercial routes. Now the great caravan road to Damascus passes Khân Minyeh, but does not pass Tell Hûm. The route, as given by Socin, is as follows. After leaving Mejdel, "it keeps by the shore only for a short distance. Having traversed the small plain of Gennesar, it begins again to climb the mountains where they approach the lake at Khân Minyeh . . . and then it goes on to Khân Jubb Yûsuf, strikes down again into the valley of the Jordan, and crossing the river at Jisr Benat Ya'kub, holds on across Jebel Hish to Damascus." || Professor G. A. Smith describes this as the route followed "from the earliest times"; ¶ Robinson,\*\* Wilson,†† Merrill,‡‡ Burckhardt,§§ Sepp,||| Keim,¶¶ all agree that this important commercial highway turned up the mountains at Khân Minyeh, and did not pass through Tell Hûm.

This was the great Via Maris, or Way of the Sea,\*\*\* to which allusion is supposed by some to be made by the Evangelist Matthew; "He came and dwelt in Capernaum . . . [by] the Way of the Sea"

\* "The Land and the Book," p. 350.

† "East of the Jordan," p. 457.

‡ "P.E.F.Q.S.," 1877, p. 123. See also Mr. Brass in "P.E.F.Q.S.," 1890, p. 178.

§ Merrill, "East of the Jordan," p. 458.

|| "Encycl. Bibl.," "Palestine," sec. 20.

¶ "Hist. Geog.," pp. 426-7.

\*\* "Biblical Researches," vol. iii. p. 296.

†† "Recovery of Jerusalem," p. 386.

‡‡ "East of the Jordan," p. 457. "Here the Roman road, coming from the south, touched the lake, and can still be traced." §§ Vol. ii. 558, cited by Keim.

||| Vol. ii. 106, cited by Keim. ¶¶ "Jesus of Nazara," English translation, ii. 369.

\*\*\* Ederheim, "Jesus the Messiah," vol. i. p. 147. Schumacher in "P.E.F.Q.S.," 1889, p. 73.

(Matthew iv. 15). That, however, is a somewhat forced interpretation; but what is important to note is that Capernaum was a customs station, and that Khân Minyeh was situated at a point where three branches of the great caravan-road gathered into one, and entering the narrow valley with no other issue, struck up the mountains away from the lake-shore. A more convenient place for collecting customs both from land and lake could not be imagined. Sir Charles Wilson, although he always held to Tell Hûm, admitted in the passage cited above that "the Roman road from Tiberias to Damascus certainly left the lake at Khân Minyeh, and struck up over the hills to Khân Jubba Yûsuf; and if Capernaum was situated on this, it would at once decide the question in favour of Khân Minyeh."

The points urged against this view are that there is no *direct* evidence that the road ran through Capernaum, and that the tolls which Levi was collecting *may* only have been town tolls.\* Both of which positions *may* be admitted; but, as the whole argument must necessarily depend upon the cumulative force of several probabilities, the situation of Minyeh upon the great highway remains an important element in the problem. It must be estimated in contrast with the fact that Tell Hûm "is two or more miles from the Roman road on which the custom-house where Matthew was would naturally be." †

### 7. *It had a Synagogue.*

The next indication which we gather from the Gospels is that Capernaum had a synagogue, built for the town by the centurion who was stationed there. This is a point which has been much insisted upon in favour of Tell Hûm ever since the celebrated White Synagogue was discovered there. Nothing, it is true, is told us as to the beauty of the synagogue which the centurion built, but there is something attractive in the idea of Jesus preaching in that marble building on the open sunny shore at Tell Hûm, which holds the imagination and gives a greater weight to the existence of these beautiful fragments than it deserves for the purposes of the argument; in a city of the size of Minyeh there must also have been a synagogue, but it is buried and we have never seen it.

The fatal objection to the White Synagogue of Tell Hûm being that which the centurion built is, that in the opinion of the best authorities, it dates only from the second century A.D. Colonel Conder says that it "seems probably (by comparison with those at Meirûn) to be the work of Simeon Bar Jochai, the Cabalist, who

\* Smith, "Dictionary of Bible," "Capernaum."

† Merrill, "East of the Jordan," p. 458.

lived about 120 A.D."\* That is a time at which Judaism was flourishing in Galilee. The Sanhedrin then had its seat at Tiberias. Indeed, it is not at all improbable that the city which now lies ruined at Tell Hûm is not a Scriptural city at all—neither Bethsaida, nor Chorazin, nor Capernaum—but a place which took its rise under Jewish auspices in the second century of our era.†

### 8. *It probably had a Harbour.*

At Capernaum lived Simon and Andrew, James and John, all of whom were fishermen, and had boats on the lake. Presumably, therefore, it had a harbour, or at least a quay. And if the *Κεφαρνωμων* to which Josephus was brought, when he was hurt in the skirmish with the Romans on Butaiha, was indeed Capernaum, that also would go to show that it was a place with a harbour for ships; for the object of Josephus was to get to Taricheae, and thither he was taken the same night, which could only have been accomplished if he went by water.

Now, Minyeh has a harbour used even at this day for landing wood from the east shore.‡ Under the shelter of the jutting rock which bounds Gennesaret and cuts off the beach of Minyeh from the bay of Tâbigha beyond, there is a pool still large enough for floating boats, which must have been much larger before it became half choked by *débris* from the cliff and by the bordering marsh. That marsh formed by the earth brought down in long centuries by the little streams from Ain et-Tin, now grows a great thicket of papyrus; what may be buried beneath the matted roots of the thicket we cannot tell. Macgregor paddled his canoe through the still open channel into this jungled pool and searched it for traces of buildings, but without success. Wilson, however, found "standing on the lake, near the point where the Ain et-Tin flows in," the shaft of a small basaltic column five inches in diameter,§ showing at any rate that the town extended to this shore, and increasing the probability that this bay was used as its port.

In addition to this harbourage, let it be taken into account that just on the other side of the rock lies the little Bay of Tâbigha, which "is admirably suited for boats. It shelves gradually, the anchorage is good, and boats can be safely beached . . . the water is deep, and nearly free from boulders until near the south-west end."||

\* "Tent-Work," p. 295. See also Merrill, "East of the Jordan," p. 458.

† See "P.E.F.Q.S.," 1879, p. 169. The "synagogue" is now (1906) being re-excavated, and rumour has it that the so-called "synagogue" is proving to be a Mithraic temple. ‡ Sepp, pp. 182, 191, cited by Keim (Eng. Trans. vol. ii. p. 371).

§ Wilson, quoted by Macgregor, "Rob Roy on the Jordan," p. 362.

|| Macgregor, *loc. cit.*

It is evident, therefore, that if Capernaum stood upon this rock and in the plains beneath, it was a place well furnished with accommodation for shipping on either side of its high central point.

And now, how does Tell Hûm compare with this? Dr. Pococke said that he "could plainly observe a round port for small boats." \* But the late Sir Charles Wilson, who gave no mere passing glance, but "eagerly searched" the shore for traces of an artificial harbour, confessed that his search was "without success"; and although he was an ardent advocate of the Tell Hûm theory, admitted that "the boats which formerly belonged to the town must always have taken shelter at et-Tabigha, or, as is just as probable, have been drawn up on the bank when not in use." † Mr. Macgregor, however, upon this particular point, deserves perhaps more attention than any other traveller, since he looked at the matter as an expert in the navigation of boats, and his testimony is emphatic. The nearest point to Tell Hûm suitable for fishing-boats to beach he considers to be the second bay to the west. As to Dr. Pococke's "round port for small boats," he declares it to be no port at all, but "a most treacherous reef"; ‡ and on the whole question of Capernaum and its harbour, his opinion about Tell Hûm is as follows: "In no part about this point is there any proper place for boats. The land is too rocky to beach them; the water is too shallow to moor them; the bottom is too stony to anchor them. There is no protection here from the worst winds, no pier, no harbour; and where you can neither beach, nor moor, nor anchor a boat in safety, how can that be the port of a large town?"

9. *It is spoken of as "exalted unto Heaven."*

The next point is one upon which I should lay more stress than many would think that it deserves. In the woe which Jesus pronounced upon Capernaum He seems to imply that it stood in a prominent and exalted position. To some§ this inference seems no longer to hold, since the agreement of the Codex Sinaiticus with the Codex Vaticanus led to the correction of the text. The revised version reads, "And thou, Capernaum, shalt thou be exalted unto heaven?" and this substitution of a question for direct assertion is supposed to nullify the argument as to the situation of Capernaum.

To the present writer a rhetorical turn of this kind seems to diminish scarcely at all whatever force the argument ever had. The passage still implies that Capernaum was, or thought itself to be,

\* "Travels in the East," Book I. ch. xviii., quoted by Wilson, "Lands of the Bible," ch. ii. p. 145 fn.

† "Recovery of Jerusalem," p. 346.

‡ "Rob Roy on the Jordan," second edition, p. 342.

§ E.g., Sir Charles Wilson. See "Recovery of Jerusalem," p. 346.



"exalted unto heaven." That is to say, it was differentiated from the other places mentioned in the context by being literally or figuratively lifted up.

Now, to myself it seems much more consonant with the method of Jesus' peasant-teaching to suppose that He drew His lesson from something which appealed to the eye, than to suppose that He used a rather far-fetched metaphor to indicate a spiritual or municipal pride which there is no particular reason for supposing that Capernaum ever felt. Of two places, one of which lay upon a gradually shelving shore, and the other stood upon a lofty cliff, it would seem natural to me to suppose that the allusion was to the latter.

This consideration ought, I think, to tell rather more strongly than it does with some in favour of Minyeh. The ruins of Minyeh are found not only upon the plain to the south of the cliff, but on the mountain-side above. It is even possible that the ruins called Khurbet Khureibeh, which stand upon the hills above et-Tâbigha, were connected with the ancient city. But, without insisting upon this, the remains of the old castle, Khurbet el-Oreimeh, already referred to, and some few other remains which exist in its neighbourhood, are sufficient to show that the city which clustered beneath the cliff, between the mountain and the lake, looked up to an acropolis upon the rocky mountain-side, which would be visible from far and near.\*

This would account for the phrase used by Sanderson in the description of Minyeh already quoted, wherein he says that it "is over the point of land." † Indeed, taking all things into consideration, the ruins on the hill, the ruins in the plain near the Khân, the ruins near the harbour, the fact that probably part of the existing aqueducts at Tâbigha and certainly the octagonal reservoir, are Roman, and that tesserae have been picked up along the little bay on that same side of the Minyeh cliff, ‡ it may be inferred that the ancient town which stood here included: A castle on the hill, commanding the caravan road, the Plain of Gennesaret, the Bay of Tâbigha and the Lake; grouped around this, other buildings for Roman and civil officers; a custom-house situated where the caravan-road turns up the mountain, possibly near the spot where the old Khân stands now; a residential quarter built on the plain to the south of the cliff, but climbing the mountain-side toward the castle; a sheltered port close under the cliff; a manufacturing suburb on the north of the dividing-rock, where at the present day the great Tâbigha spring rushes down and the broken aqueducts

\* See Wilson, "Recovery of Jerusalem," p. 351; Schumacher, "Zeitschr. des Deut. Palaest.," vol. xiii. 70, cited by G. A. Smith, "Hist. Geog.," p. 457 fn.; H. Brass, "P.E.F.Q.S.," 1890, pp. 178, 179; Merrill, "P.E.F.Q.S.," 1891, p. 75.

† "Purchas His Pilgrimes," Part II. p. 1635.

‡ H. Brass, "P.E.F.Q.S.," 1890, p. 180.

stand ; and above this the octagonal reservoir with the southern aqueduct leading away to the rock-cut channel, through which the water rushes in a full stream to be carried on arches through the town and across the northern half of the Plain of Gennesaret. Such a town would fit the Bible story well.

There is one other desideratum which the town thus pictured supplies, but which the site at Tell Hâm seems to leave quite unsatisfied :

#### 10. *"The Mountain" behind Capernaum.*

Seeing the multitudes He went up into *the mountain* (Matt. v. 1). "He goeth up into *the mountain*, and calleth unto Him whom He Himself would" (Mark iii. 13 ; Luke vi. 12). "And when He was come down from *the mountain*—there came a leper and worshipped Him" (Matt. viii. 1). These incidents are all definitely assigned to Capernaum, and probably those narrated in Matt. xiv. 23 ; xv. 29 ; Mark vi. 46 and other passages belong to the same place. The phrase is, as given in the Revised Version, "the mountain," not "a mountain." Here, then, we have evidence of the proximity of a mountain to the town. Some definite, well-known height close by Capernaum afforded a place of quiet retreat for Jesus and His disciples. At Tell Hâm there is no such height. The long gradual stony slope leads by a wearisome journey to distant hill-tops, but there is nothing that could by any stretch of language be called "*the mountain*." If the term were used in that neighbourhood, it would be immediately met by the question "which mountain?" ; but at Khân Minyeh "the mountain" is definite and unmistakable. There it is, starting forth from the general range, and bathing its foot in the very waters of the lake. As we rowed up and down the lake, I bore this point in mind ; and, again and again it struck me how well the phrase fitted, and how impossible it was to fit it to any other place along this shore.

#### 11. *The Philological Argument.*

At this point one feels almost at a loss to know why the Tell Hâm site has been defended so ardently by some New Testament geographers. For this ardour the White Synagogue is partly responsible. I was myself taught in childhood to picture Capernaum stretched along the open and sunny shore at Tell Hâm with the marble synagogue gleaming in its midst ; and I know from experience how difficult such a picture once formed is to dislodge from the mind. But to this must no doubt be added the weight which the philological argument has carried, and to that argument we must briefly advert.

The name Tell Hûm, it has been maintained, contains within it a remnant of the name Capernaum. When Caphar Nahum, the village of Nahum, fell to ruin, the Arab changed "Caphar," the village, to "Tell," a mound of ruins; then followed the loss of the first syllable in Nahum, and so the name Tell Hûm was arrived at.

In answer to this hypothesis it is denied that such a process as dropping the first syllable can possibly take place. Prof. George Adam Smith speaks of "Hûm" as an "impossible contraction." \* Robinson † and Conder ‡ say that it is possible, but extremely unlikely. Thomson § and Wilson || argue for it and give analogies. However this may be, the fatal objection remains that there is no "tell" at the place. "Tell" does not mean merely a ruin, it means a mound, and the mound is wanting. Now the Talmuds mention a Caphar Tanhum, Tanhumim or Tchûmin, ¶ and Prof. G. A. Smith considers that Guérin was right when he pronounced the name Tell Hûm to be simply a corruption of Tanhum, the place where Rabbi Tanchum was buried. \*\* But Colonel Conder would seem to have proved thirty years ago that this Caphar Tanchum of the Talmuds was the Crusading Capernaum on the Mediterranean coast, and identical with Tantura or with Kefr Lâm not far from there. ††

Another attempt to account for the name is that which identifies Tell Hûm with "the ancient Tellum," called by Josephus Thella, being the village to which Josephus measured the breadth of Lower Galilee from Meroth on the West. ‡‡ If this derivation is accepted, it answers the question which is often (though not very reasonably) asked, "If Tell Hûm is not Capernaum, what is it?"

As to Minyeh it is supposed by many to be derived from Minim or sorcerers, a nickname which was applied to those Jews who had become Christians. In the Talmud the term Huta, sinners, is used as an equivalent for the word Minim, and the same term Huta is elsewhere defined as "sons of Caphar Nahum." From this it is inferred that Capernaum was looked upon as the head quarters of the Minim or Jewish Christians. This receives some confirmation from the fact that Isaac Chelo, who saw the ruins of Caphar Nahum in 1334, remarks incidentally, "Here formerly dwelt the Minim." §§

\* "Hist. Geog.," p. 456 fn.

† "Later Biblical Researches," p. 354 fn.

‡ "Tent-Work," p. 293

§ "The Land and the Book," p. 354.

|| "Recovery of Jerusalem," p. 386.

¶ Smith, D. B., art. "Capernaum."

\*\* "Hist. Geog.," p. 456 fn.

†† Colonel Conder finally settles on Kefr Lam, but that village is barely two miles from Tantura, which Colonel Conder first advocated, and the name of the latter looks as though it might be akin to Tanchum. See "P.E.F.Q.S.," 1875, p. 90; 1876, p. 17.

‡‡ Schwartz, p. 70, quoted by Macgregor, p. 389 fn.

§§ Conder, "Tent-Work," p. 293; G. A. Smith, "Hist. Geog.," p. 456 fn.; Keim, "Jesus of Nazara," vol. ii., p. 371 (English translation).

Another suggested derivation is from Mineh, harbour\* ; and yet another from Arabic el-Munya, a hamlet. It is said in support of the latter that in the eleventh century a place lay here called Munjat Hischam, and that the name Hischam was afterwards dropped † ; that in the fifteenth century it was called el-Munya ; and we may add that in the seventeenth century John Sanderson, as we have seen, knew it as Almenia.

Amid this conflict of authorities a layman finds it difficult to form a judgment. All that seems clear is that the philological claim of Minyeh is no worse than that of Tell Hûm.

### 12. *The Argument from Tradition.*

I do not propose to dwell at any length upon the argument from tradition. Those who desire to study it in detail may be referred to the works of Robinson, Thomson, Sepp, Wilson, Conder, G. A. Smith, Keim, Stanley, and many other writers.‡ The upshot seems to be that, as Prof. Smith puts it, "A strong Christian tradition from the sixth century onward has fixed [the site of Capernaum] at Tell Hûm," and that "for Khân Minyeh the tradition is nearly as old." Jewish tradition, however, is in favour of Minyeh, and, as Colonel Conder says, "When these two traditions are discordant, the Christian ceases to be of much value, for it is evident that the traditions of the Jews, handed down unbroken by an indigenous population which was never driven from the country, must take precedence of the foreign ecclesiastical traditions of comparatively later times, which can so often be proved self-inconsistent, or founded on fallacy."§

The conclusion which I would draw from the whole of the evidence is, that probabilities incline strongly to el-Minyeh. Especially would I urge that when the natural features of that place are taken in combination and compared with the indications in the Gospel story no other spot upon the lake-shore suits those indications so well ; nowhere else is it so easy to reconstruct a Capernaum which answers to the home of Jesus as the New Testament describes it.

\* "Encycl. Bibl.," art. "Capernaum."

† See Professor G. A. Smith, "Hist. Geog.," p. 456 fn.

‡ For readily accessible summaries of the argument from tradition, see especially "The Encyclopædia Biblica" and Smith's "Dictionary of the Bible," articles "Capernaum"; Wilson and Warren, "Recovery of Jerusalem," p. 383 ; and Conder, "Tent-Work," pp. 292-3.

§ "Tent-Work," p. 297.

## E. THE BETHESDA QUESTION

(See ch. xxxiii.)

THE Bordeaux Pilgrim (A.D. 333) referred to in the text (p. 206) thus describes his visit to Bethesda :—

“There are at Jerusalem two great pools at the side of the Temple, that is, one on the right hand and the other on the left, which Solomon made. But more within the city are two twin pools, having five porches, which are called Bethsaida [Bethesda]. Here the sick of many years were wont to be healed.”

Now, if we suppose the Pilgrim to have entered the city by the Gate of St. Stephen, the three pools which he mentions are easily identified. The one on the right hand would be that which lies beside the Church of St. Anne, the one on the left would be that known now as Birket Israin ; and the “Twin Pools,” “more within the city,” would be the double pool beneath the Convent of the Sisters of Zion.

One point in favour of the Twin Pools being Bethesda is their antiquity. They were cut in the bottom of the Moat of the Castle of Antonia, and were in existence therefore before that moat was filled up. As stated in the text, they correspond in situation with the Pool Strouthion, mentioned by Josephus in his account of the Siege of Jerusalem, and, if that identification holds, they must have been in existence at the commencement of our era.

Another point is that the pool lends itself to the feature of the “Five Porches.” An ordinary rectangular bathing-pool would have four such cloisters or colonnades, but this one with its dividing wall of rock, five feet in breadth, might very well have five. In the lifetime of Cyril of Jerusalem (d. 386) five cloisters actually existed, four round the double pool and one down the middle.

A third point is its proximity to the Sheep Gate. For, although the Sheep Gate was formerly placed at Bab el-Kattânin on the west of the Temple area, Bethesda being placed at the neighbouring Hammâm esh-Shifâ, the weight of modern authority is in favour of a position for the Sheep Gate near to the eastern extremity of the north wall of the ancient city, at a point which at present lies within the Harâm, and which would be about 150 yards to the south-east of the Twin Pools.

There is an ancient aqueduct leading to the Twin Pools, which has been traced as far as the northern wall, where it was cut through

when the ancient fosse was made. A tradition of running water seems, moreover, to be preserved in the name of one of the neighbouring streets, which the Arabs call the Street of Bubbling Water.\* Nevertheless, the assumption with which Warren started, that the pools were fed by a living spring, does not appear to be justified, for the nearest spring with which the aqueduct could have been connected is that of Bîreh, ten miles away, and no trace of it has been found in that direction, notwithstanding extensive excavations for road-making and building. It is more probable, therefore, that it merely collected rain-water from the rocks north of the city.

The three points in favour of identifying the Twin Pools with Bethesda apply with equal weight to St. Anne's Pool, except that in the case of the latter the fifth "porch" would be short and insignificant, since the two oblong reservoirs lie end to end, whereas in the case of the Twin Pools they lie side by side. The one fact which weighs heavily in favour of St. Anne's Pool is its proximity to the Sheep Gate, assuming that the modern view of the position of that gate is correct.

With respect to the view taken in the text that, supposing the account of the healing at Bethesda to be based on a real incident, that incident probably occurred at Siloam, it may be objected that Siloam is not near the Sheep Gate. But we have to bear in mind that neither "gate," as in the Revised Version, nor "market," as in the Authorised Version, is to be found in the Greek text, and that what the *προβατικὴ* was is matter of conjecture; also that the site of the Sheep Gate itself is still in dispute, and that such authorities as Robinson, Lightfoot and Conder place it at the south-east corner of Jerusalem, close to Siloam. But even supposing the Sheep Gate to have been at the north-east corner of the ancient Temple area, where most recent authorities, as explained above, place it, this does not really affect the question of the historical fact, it only affects the question what pool the Evangelist himself assigned to the miracle. He may not, as suggested in the text, have known the name of the pool, and may have invented the name Bethesda for its figurative significance. But even if he knew the incident to have occurred at Siloam he would be free, in a book confessedly allegorical, to use the poetic licence of transferring the incident, together with some topographical features of Siloam, to another pool. Supposing the five porches to be a topographical

\* Is it possible that Hosh Bezbezi (bubbling of water) is a reminiscence of the ancient name of the pool, which, as Edersheim suggests ("Jesus the Messiah," ninth edition, vol. i. p. 463), "might combine, according to a not uncommon Rabbinic practice, the Hebrew *Beth* with some Aramaised form derived from the Greek word *ζέω*, 'to boil,' or 'bubble-up' (subst. *ζέσσις*); in which case it would mean 'the House of Bubbling-up,' viz., water"?

fact, and not merely an allegorical symbol ; and supposing Bethesda (or as the Codex Sinaiticus gives it "Bethzatha") to be but a corruption of Bezetha—the new north-eastern suburb—then, one of the two double pools at the north of the Temple (that at St. Anne's or that at the Convent of Zion) is probably the pool which the Evangelist had in mind. Upon this pool of Bethesda, which was known to him in fact or by repute he grafts the story, because it supplied him with the sacrificial idea suggested by the Sheep Gate, and a symbol for the "five porches" of human sensibility. But the one central feature, the troubling of the water, belonged to the actual occurrence and to the actual place. The healing act was wrought beside the troubled waters of Siloam, but transferred to Bethesda for the sake of certain accessory features which aided the symbolism of the story.

## F. THE SITE OF HEROD'S TEMPLE

(See p. 230)

IF we are to picture to ourselves the Temple as it appeared in the time of Jesus, we must determine, first, the extent and form of the surrounding area ; and, secondly, the position of the Sanctuary within that area.

It is agreed on all hands that Antonia stood at the north-west corner of the Harâm, where the Turkish barracks now stand ; that the present north-east corner was then wanting, a valley running at that time diagonally across the space now occupied by that corner ; also, that the south-west corner is Herodian. The eastern side is in dispute, some holding that the present east wall corresponds with that of Christ's time, others that Herod's wall was much further west, and that the antiquity of the south-east corner is to be accounted for by the existence of a detached tower at that point. The facts as to the external masonry, which govern the whole question, are as follows :—

Starting from the Jews' Wailing Place northward, we find that until we reach the north-west angle of the Harâm, the whole of the west wall is encumbered with buildings to such an extent that there are only one or two points where it can be seen, but at these points the lower part of the wall is of the same character as that of the Wailing Place. Near the north-west corner, opposite to that rectangular rock upon which the Fortress of Antonia once stood,

the character of the wall is of special interest. A peep of it can be obtained by entering the old aqueduct which comes down from the Twin Pools ; and what is found is that the wall is eight feet thick, that the masonry is similar in character to that at the Wailing Place, that it projects eight or nine feet from the main line of the wall (which is what we should expect in the boundary wall of a corner castle), and that it is furnished with buttresses like those of another great work of Herod's—the walls of the Harâm of Hebron.

Turning the corner we follow the northern scarp of the same rocky platform eastward for a distance of 350 feet. There the scarp ends, and we might perhaps have expected some ancient and massive wall to form the northern boundary of the Harâm ; but nothing of the sort appears. The whole of the northern wall is recent, dating probably from the twelfth century of our era.

At the north-east corner the character of this masonry can be plainly seen, for the north wall of the Harâm forms the south wall of the Birket Israin. The stones are of medium size and irregularly built, and excavation has proved that this is so down to the rock ; there is nothing there at all like the masonry of the Wailing Place.

But directly we turn the corner and begin to go southward, we find ourselves in more ancient times. Not necessarily, however, in Herodian days. In fact, there are two reasons against supposing that this north-eastern corner was Herod's work. One is that it is not a corner at all ; that is to say, the ancient east wall does not turn the corner, but runs past it northward, as though this were part of the old city wall rather than that of the Harâm, while the mediæval north wall merely abuts upon it with a straight joint. Another fact is that the stone is of inferior quality and the masonry of a different character from that of our Wailing-Place masonry.\*

This doubtful masonry extends southward for 179 feet, almost to the Golden Gate ; then comes a Moslem cemetery, and no excavations can be made. From the Golden Gate southward the

\* "Recovery of Jerusalem," vol. i. pp. 162, 167. The stones are said to have great bulging rough surfaces within the draft of the blocks; but too much has been made of this circumstance, for, in the projecting tower which rises squarely from the sloping base at the north-east corner, the faces of the stone are dressed smooth, and at the angle of the tower these two different faces are cut *on one and the same stone* ("P.E.F." Mem. "Jerusalem Vol.," p. 128) proving that the rough and smooth masonry are of identical date. Moreover, Conder has pointed out that masonry of the same character exists "west of the Double Gate, and on the west wall south of the Prophet's Gate, where the stones have rustic bosses with great projection," and "that in the three places where the rustic work occurs a valley intersects the east, the west, and the south walls of the Sanctuary respectively. It may be suggested," he adds, "that the ground was filled in in these valleys, both inside and outside the Sanctuary, above the level of the rough masonry, at the time of the construction of the walls." ("Jerusalem Vol.," p. 243. See also Hastings, "Dict. Bib.," "Jerusalem.") Nevertheless, Conder recognises the masonry of the east wall north of the Golden Gate as of "somewhat different" character from the Herodian masonry, and attributes this part of the wall to Agrippa (41 A.D.). ("Jerusalem Vol.," p. 245.)



wall below the surface has never been seen, until you come within 161 feet of the south-east angle, Nevertheless. there is said to be some reason to suppose that this part of the wall is older than the northern part.\*

But, as we approach the south-eastern corner we unmistakably resume the Herodian story. The walls here are 74 feet in height, and contain blocks measuring from 16 to 22 feet in length. Those whose theory confines Herod's Temple Courts to a comparatively small square at the south-west corner of the Harâm, account for this masonry by supposing a detached tower there; but that supposition seems to be practically disposed of by Warren's discovery of the Ophel wall. Josephus states that this wall, which defended the Ophel and Tyropœon valley, joined the Temple wall at the south-east corner. Warren excavated the wall, and thus fixed this corner as the original south-east corner of Herod's Temple.

This brings us to the south wall, and here again we find remarkable and debatable features. The south side of the Harâm is 922 feet long, and it is divided into three nearly equal sections by two gates, called the Double and Triple Gates. Now, from the Double Gate eastward, on a level with the sill of the gate, is a line of great stones of double height, but this feature is not found westward of that gate. From this fact, a different date has been assigned for this part of the wall. But it seems, after all, to be small ground for such a conjecture. The masonry is all of that vast and generous style which we find exemplified at the Wailing Place and in the undoubtedly Herodian sections of the wall; and, without some additional reason for assigning this section to a different age, one would be inclined to look for an explanation of this "master-course in some other circumstance."† And so we come to the south-west corner, about which there is no dispute, all admitting it to be Herodian.

So far as the masonry is concerned, therefore, we may say that on the whole it bears out the view that the present walls coincide with those of Herod, with the exception of the east part of the north wall and the north part of the east wall; and this accords with the view that Herod's Temple area occupied an approximate square, which may be described by drawing a line from east to west, a little north of the Golden Gate: and that Antonia, with the cloister connecting it with the Temple, projected northward from the north-west corner of that square.

As to the Temple building, or Sanctuary itself, the principal reason for placing it at the south-west corner of the Harâm is that Josephus says that the Temple enclosure was a square measuring

\* Smith's D. B., "Jerusalem," p. 1638. Conder, in "P.E.F.Q.S.," 1880, p. 93.

† P.E.F. "Jerusalem Vol.," p. 244.

400 cubits (about 600 feet) each side; \* and since the south-west corner is the only right angle in the Herodian masonry, this is the only corner in which such a square will fit. Therefore, the Temple area, it is argued, must be found by measuring about 600 feet along the south wall and the same distance along the west wall, starting in each case from the south-west angle. The facts that the Triple Gate, where the solid ground ends, is 588 feet from that corner measuring eastwards, and that Wilson's Arch is 586 feet north of the same corner, are taken as confirmatory of the theory.

Josephus, writing far away in Rome, and dependent probably upon memory, is so often astray in figures that the dimensions which he records do not form a very strong foundation for the argument. Nevertheless there is no doubt force in the contention that he generally exaggerates instead of diminishing his numbers when he is describing the glories of Israel's possessions; and here he considerably diminishes the size of the Temple Courts, if they did actually occupy the much larger space which we have assigned to them above. Such a ground-plan as that described would give a square of something like 900 feet a side, instead of 600.

Conder meets the difficulty by supposing that the figures of Josephus relate only to the Soreg, or wall of partition which divided off the consecrated ground from the Court of the Gentiles,† and it is certainly noteworthy that the central platform, with a strip fifty feet broad around it, would give approximately the required measurement. It is difficult, however, to reconcile this view with the language of Josephus unless we suppose that in the passages cited he is describing not the Temple of Herod but the Temple of Solomon.‡ And this is probably what he is doing. He appears in fact to identify the dimensions of Herod's Temple enclosure with Solomon's, although elsewhere he distinctly says that when Herod rebuilt the Temple he "encompassed a piece of land about it with a wall; which land was twice as large as that before enclosed."§ On the whole, we may conclude, I think, that when Josephus gives the dimensions of the Temple area as a stadium each side, he is giving the measurement of the ancient and sacred area; and it is confirmatory of this that on the hypothesis of the ground-plan which we arrived at on the evidence of the masonry, Herod's area, including the Court of the Gentiles, would actually be rather more than twice the size of the sacred area as given by Josephus.||

\* P.E.F. "Jerusalem Vol.," p. 97. Smith, D. B., second edition, p. 1639, "Jerusalem."

† "Tent-Work," pp. 182-186.

‡ "Ant.," xv., xi. 3, 5; xx., ix. 7; and "Wars," v., v. 2. § "Wars," i., xxi. 1.

|| Cf. Hastings, D. B., "Jerusalem," p. 598. Of course the prime objection to Wilson's theory is that the south-west corner of the Harâm really crosses the valley of the Tyropœon, and that the massive Temple buildings would therefore, on that theory, have been built upon ground which had been made up by filling in Herod's enclosing walls with rubble and earth, as already explained.

Abandoning, therefore, the theory that the Temple area, and therefore the Temple itself, occupied the south-west corner of the Harâm, a theory which rests mainly upon the doubtful measurements and the ambiguous language of Josephus, we are free to give due weight to the evidence which goes to show that the holy house itself stood over or near the Sakhra or sacred rock.

The points in favour of that view are, briefly stated, as follows :

(1) Josephus says that the Temple stood "upon the topmost plateau." (2) If placed there, the levels of the Courts, as recorded in the Mishna as well as by Josephus, agree with the actual rock-levels, as ascertained by observation.\* (3) The tenacity with which Oriental tradition clings to sacred sites makes it likely that the Sakhra, which is always regarded as the central sacred point of the Harâm, is the original centre of holiness. These points are elaborated in the works already referred to, and, taken in conjunction with other minor points there given, carry conviction to most minds that the Temple stood at this central part of the Harâm.

But now, if the Temple stood at or near the Sakhra, what was the Sakhra itself? Was it, as Conder supposes, the stone of foundation within the Holy of Holies? Or, was it the rock upon which stood the altar of burnt-offering facing the holy place?

The former view seems to be clearly negatived by known facts. A tradition was current, it is true, among the Jews, at the beginning of our era, that the place of the lost ark was taken by a stone called "the foundation stone"; but this was supposed to be identical with the stone which Jacob "set up" for a pillar at Bethel, and must therefore have been a detached block of moderate size.† The term, moreover, used in the Talmud to describe the stone of foundation proves that it was not a rock but a moveable stone.‡ Yet, again, the size of the Sakhra negatives the theory; for, the Holy of Holies measured twenty cubits each way and could not have contained the Sakhra, which measures about two and a half times that area. Finally, if the Holy of Holies stood here, the altar must have stood so far to the east that there would have been no room for the Courts.

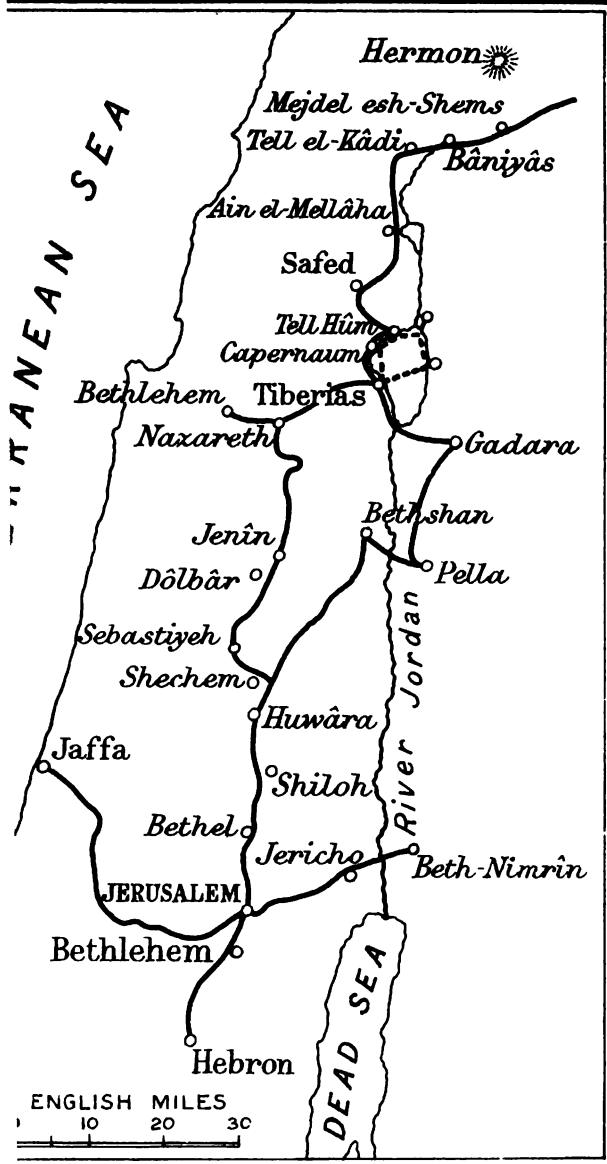
On the other hand, if the Sakhra be regarded as the unhewn rock upon which the altar of burnt offering stood, then a channel observed in the rock, and a hollow which exists beneath it, are accounted for. The channel would be designed to carry off the blood, and the hollow beneath is probably a cistern connected with the general system of conduits.

\* "Tent-Work," sixth edition, p. 288.

† Smith, D. B., second edition, "Jerusalem," p. 1643.

‡ "Encycl. Bibl.," "Temple," col. 4928. It is worth noting that the sacrificial rock on Mount Gerizim has a cave beneath it similar to the cave beneath the Sakhra (Tristram, "Land of Israel," p. 174.)

# OLD TESTAMENT ROUTE MAP



Stanford's Geog. Estab<sup>t</sup>, London.



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