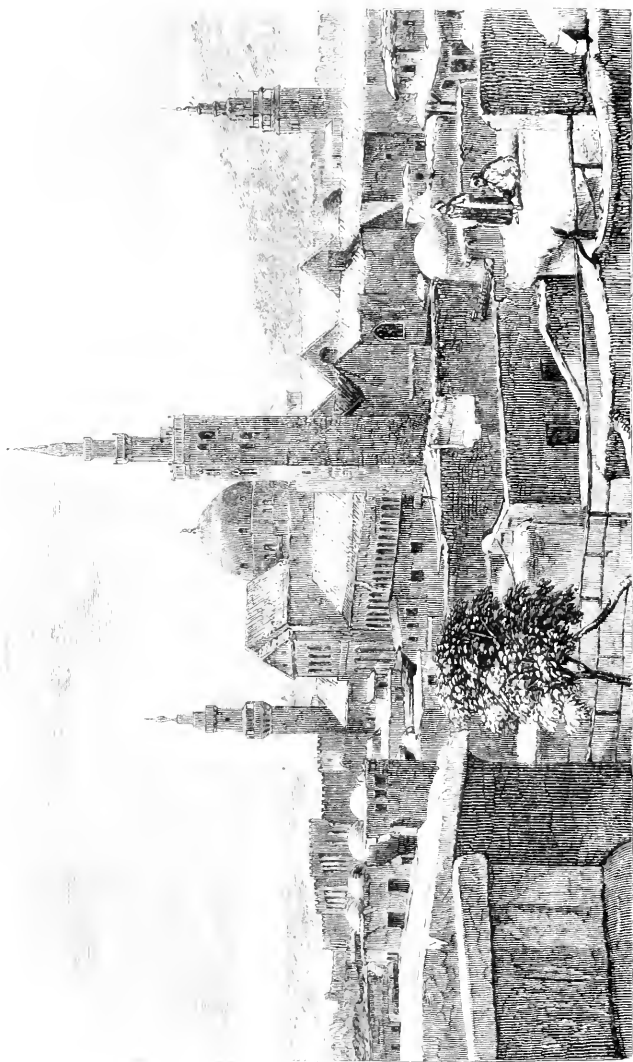


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GREAT MOSK OF THE CEREAYAINES, TAMASCA, N. P. FROM PLATE THREE

Frederic Duke Augth 3. 1867

FIVE YEARS IN DAMASCUS:

INCLUDING AN ACCOUNT

OF THE

HISTORY, TOPOGRAPHY, AND ANTIQUITIES
OF THAT CITY:

WITH

TRAVELS AND RESEARCHES IN PALMYRA, LEBANON,
AND THE HAURAN.

BY REV. J. L. PORTER, A.M., F.R.S.L.

IN TWO VOLUMES.—VOL. I.

With Maps and Illustrations.

LONDON:

JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET.

1855.

LONDON: PRINTED BY W. CLOWES AND SONS, STAMFORD STREET,
AND CHARING CROSS.

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P R E F A C E.



THE following work is not a book of travels, penned during a "summer's ramble" or a "winter's residence." It is the result of researches extending over a period of more than five years. Though I have wandered through most of Palestine, I have here confined my attention to a few provinces hitherto but little known; my object being not so much to amuse as to instruct. My professional duties not only obliged me to study the language and customs of the people of the land, but to traverse their country, and visit their towns and villages. I have thus had opportunities of minutely examining the topography and antiquities, and of acquiring information regarding ancient sites, such as are enjoyed by few travellers. My tastes also led me to improve every opportunity I possessed, and to study the ancient geography and history of Palestine combined with the best works of modern travel.

The district to which my researches have here been confined is among the most interesting in Syria. DAMASCUS has been a city from the time when Abraham left his home "between the rivers," to journey westward to the "Land

of Promise." It is thus a connecting link between the patriarchal age and modern days; and its beauty and richness have been proverbial for full four thousand years. A romantic interest will be attached to PALMYRA, the desert home of Zenobia, while history exists; and LEBANON and HERMON will not cease to be remembered with liveliest feelings so long as the Word of God continues to bless the world. BASHAN, too, has been immortalized by the song of the Psalmist; and now it possesses additional interest, as containing the only existing specimens of the ordinary dwellings of remote antiquity, and of the architecture of a race of giants that has been extinct for three thousand years.

Though a part of this district has already been traversed by others, yet a large portion of it is new ground; and none of it has hitherto been examined with that minuteness which its importance demands. Burckhardt possessed all the qualifications necessary for a successful explorer—a knowledge of the language, powers of accurate observation, and an enthusiastic love for discovery; but unfortunately he did not live to publish his own notes. Many parts of his work are thus meagre and obscure; and in not a few places there are inaccuracies which he would doubtless have corrected on subsequent revision. Ritter, in the last edition of his 'Palästina und Syrien,' has, with his accustomed research, collected all the information given by travellers and other writers; but a perusal of that learned work will best show to the reader how much new

light I have been enabled to throw on the historical geography of this portion of Syria.

The plan I have followed has been, accurately to describe the features of the country through which I travelled, and the state of the towns and villages I visited, and then to add such historical notices as ancient authorities furnish. The latter I have, with a very few exceptions, taken from the originals. I have attempted to define, and, I believe, with a near approach to accuracy, the boundaries of the ancient kingdom of Bashan, and the position and extent of the provinces into which it was subsequently divided. I have described the scenery and character of the "Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus," from their sources amid the heights of Antilebanon and Hermon to where they empty their waters into hitherto unknown lakes on the borders of the Great Desert.

While wandering through Bible lands my chief object has been to illustrate Bible truths; and the result of extensive travel, and no little research, has been to impress upon my mind the fact that the more we extend our labours in Palestine, whether as antiquarians, geographers, or politicians, the more strongly are we convinced of the literal fulfilment of prophecy, and of the minute accuracy of the topographical and statistical sketches contained in the Word of God.

The map attached to this work has been constructed by myself, almost wholly from my own observations and surveys. My sextant and compass were my constant

companions on every excursion, and were used wherever opportunity offered and circumstances required. The great changes effected by my labours on this part of the map of Syria will be obvious to every student of geography; and their accuracy can be tested by future travellers. The Jordan and its lakes were laid down from the map of Lieut. Lynch; and the western slopes of Lebanon were constructed from the best authorities. All the rest is my own. Its merits—if any it has—are mine; and for its defects I alone am responsible.

The plans and woodcuts are all original, and have, with two exceptions, been engraved from my own drawings.

I cannot conclude without recording my obligations to my kind friend and companion during many a day's travel, the Rev. Smylic Robson, who not only gave me important assistance in my labours, but carefully perused the manuscript when ready for the press. To the Rev. James Barnett I am also much indebted for the use of his notes, and of the numerous inscriptions he copied during our journey in the Haurân. To another esteemed friend and fellow-traveller, James Graham, Esq., I owe thanks for the photographs of the Great Mosk and East Gate of Damascus, and for many acts of personal kindness.

ST. HELIER, JERSEY,

September 21st, 1855.

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FIVE YEARS IN DAMASCUS,

ETC. ETC.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.—BEYROUT TO DAMASCUS.

First sight of Syria — Bay of Beyrout — Scenery — Hôtel de Belle Vue — Start for Damascus — Mode of travel — Mountain road — Scenery and geology of Lebanon — Syrian horses — Bhandûn — Route to summit of mountain — Watershed — Rock sculpture — Castle and ancient tombs — The Litâny — The Bukâ'a — Ruined temple — Site and history of Chalcis — Night quarters — Wady Harîr — Watershed of Antilibanus — Wady el-Kurn — Banditti — Ridges of Antilibanus — Plain of Sahra — Approach to Damascus.

IN this age of locomotion the romance of travel is gone, and a library of Researches, Narratives, and Memorials makes the wanderer familiar with every object of interest, and with all its associations, classic or sacred, ere his eye rests upon it. Still the first sight of the Syrian shores, and of the mountains of Israel, is not soon forgotten. There is a magic power in the living reality which neither poet's pen nor painter's pencil can ever appropriate. The descriptions of others, however graphic, and even the sketch of the artist, however faithful, only place before the mind's eye an ideal scene, which we can contemplate, it is true, with unmingled pleasure, and even with satisfaction; but when the eye wanders over plain and mountain, or the foot touches "holy ground," the superiority

of the real over the ideal is at once felt and acknowledged. Such, at least, has been my experience. Often had I pictured the beauty of Syria's landscapes and the grandeur of its ruins, and often had I thought of the holy associations that would crowd upon the mind as the eye rested on spots celebrated in history or sanctified by Holy Writ; but a single glance at the magnificent panorama of Lebanon gave rise to emotions I never before had experienced, and occasioned more real pleasure than the perusal of a host of volumes.

I was still asleep, when, on the morning of December 12th, 1849, our little steamer cast anchor in the bay of Beyrout. The stopping of the engines and the hoarse sound of the running cable speedily roused me. I hastened on deck to gaze on that "goodly mountain," and leisurely to enjoy the first view of these hallowed shores; but the bustling scene in the midst of which I emerged, and the babel of tongues that fell upon my ear, completely took me by surprise, and engaged my attention for the time. Numbers of little boats, with fantastically dressed occupants, already danced upon the swelling waves round our vessel; and scores of eager porters shouted their deep gutturals in the ears of impatient travellers, as if an excess of sound would render their unknown tongue intelligible. Hotel proprietors and servants, in bad French and worse English, set forth the superiority of their respective establishments. Experience had taught me how to get rid of the annoyance of a multitude, by committing myself into the custody of one. I therefore expressed my determination to take up my abode at the "Hôtel de Belle Vue" of Antonio Tremetsi. No sooner had I pronounced the

name than a little man, not unlike a retired sailor, bustled through the crowd, and, taking off his broad *straw*, said, with a profound bow, "Your humble servant, sir." It was Antonio himself, all smiles and politeness. We were soon transferred to his boat, and I had now time to contemplate at leisure the magnificent scenery before me.

On the south was the fine headland of Ras Beyrout, whose gardens and mulberry groves touched the black rocks against which the long waves broke into showers of diamond spray. Before us lay the town itself, washed by the waters and embowered in richest verdure. The wooded heights behind were thickly studded with picturesque villas, beside which, over a mass of underwood, rose here and there a solitary palm or stately cypress. Farther to the left the bay of St. George sweeps round for several miles in a graceful curve, until the white sand of its smooth beach is abruptly shut in by the lofty projecting cliff that forms the southern bank of the Dog river. Northward the eye followed the shore-line, with its spacious bays and bold promontories, until lost in the distance. Behind all, from north to south, far as the eye could see, stretched the noble ridge of Lebanon, its sides deeply furrowed by many a wild ravine, and its whole summit now white with snow. Scores of villages could be seen clinging to the terraced slopes, or perched on the rugged ridges; while convents, still more numerous, crowned every peak and precipice. Often since that time have I gazed on the same scene, and always with increased admiration. The "glory of Lebanon," though faded, is still worthy of its ancient fame.

We were soon established in the humble chambers of

the "Hôtel de Belle Vue," where we remained for three weeks. The house was then poor, and badly constructed for a winter residence; but if an occasional shower found its way to us through porous walls and leaky roof, or a sudden squall burst open the frail shutters of our unglazed windows, some amends were made by the balmy air we breathed and the splendid prospect we enjoyed during the long hours of sunshine; and the uniform kindness and profuse excuses of our good-natured little host made complaint impossible. During our stay we had ample opportunity of examining the few remains still existing of the ancient Beritus. An excursion to the wild ravine and interesting monuments of Nahr el-Kelb,¹ and some long rides in the gardens and pine-forest, afforded a pleasing variety. We had landed on the Syrian shores total strangers, alike unknowing and unknown; but we speedily found friends whose cheerful society and kind hospitality almost made us forget that home and country were far away. And after two months' wandering amid the bustling and exciting scenes of the great cities of Europe, we were prepared to enjoy to the full the charms of the quiet family circle.

As Beyrout did not form the field of my intended labour, I was anxious to complete my journey, and pass the mountains to Damascus. I engaged as dragoman and instructor in the Arabic language Nikôla Ameuny, who was highly recommended to me by my friend Mr. Smith. The opportune arrival of Dr. Paulding, of the Damascus Mission, made us resolve to accompany him on his return

¹ The *Nahr el-Kelb* (Dog River) is the *Lycus flumen* of the ancients. It will be fully described in the sequel.

to that city, that we might enjoy the pleasure of his society and the benefit of his experience on the road. All arrangements having been completed, we agreed to start on Thursday, the 3rd of January, 1850, and at noon we were all in the saddle. It was a new and interesting sight to us to observe our little caravan winding through the narrow cactus-lined lanes, and then emerging into the broad sandy avenues of the pine-forest. The strange garb of our native attendants and muleteers, the gay trappings of our baggage animals, adorned with innumerable little shells and bits of red, white, and green cloth, and the odd-looking tasseled bridles of our own steeds, formed a fantastic picture. From the pine-forest we descended to a lower part of the plain or promontory, where, amid dense groves of mulberries, rise up a number of tall and graceful palms. Farther to the south is an extensive tract covered with fine olive-trees. The heat here is intense during the summer months, as the sandy downs to the westward strongly reflect the sun's rays, while they almost completely check the fresh sea-breezes.

In an hour we reached the foot of the mountains, and at once commenced the ascent of a bleak and rugged slope. The soft limestone rock projected on every side in rounded masses, and large boulders with smaller fragments almost covered the scanty soil. The scenery gradually becomes more picturesque and grand as a higher elevation is gained. The caravan-road, which, however, is little better than a goat-path, runs up along the summit of a great ridge, having on the south the deep Wady Shahrûr, beautifully terraced, and clothed with the mul-

berry and the vine; and on the north Wady Hummâna, through which descends the river of Beyrout, in a swift and turbid course, to the plain. Some parts of the latter are wild in the extreme, dark frowning cliffs enclosing the torrent in a ravine so narrow that it seems like a great fissure in the mountain side. In an hour and a quarter from the plain we reached a large khan or caravanserai, with a well-built reservoir in front. Here commences the bed of red sandstone that extends from the Metn in a broad belt away southward along the slope of the mountains. This sandstone is soft and friable, and the disintegrated particles in many places cover the compact stone to a depth of several inches. It is strongly impregnated with iron, alum, and lime. It is evidently a formation of a much later period than the cretacious accumulations along the base of Lebanon; and these again are later than the limestone which constitutes the great mass of the ridge. This change in the geological features gives variety to the scenery, and greatly enhances its beauty. The regular and graceful hills, which are characteristic of the sandstone strata, are widely diffused over the district of the Metn, and, in almost every spot where the husbandman cannot pursue his labours, are covered with forests of pine. These contrast well with the bold cliffs of the white limestone, here and there clothed in the bright green of the ilex. Noble prospects now open up before the eye as every new peak is surmounted. The junction of the wild glens of Hummâna and Salîma beneath the ruin-crowned heights of Deir-el-Kulah, on the north, forms a glorious picture; while on every side villages appear clinging to the precipitous banks of wooded ravines,

or scattered among the gardens of some peak or piece of table-land.²

A short distance above the khan the road ascends an almost perpendicular cliff by an erratic zigzag route. On first examination one almost despairs of his horse being able to scale the steep, or to find footing along the shelving rocks; but the Syrian horses are accustomed to such paths, so that it seems but play for them to spring up the rugged and irregular stairs, or clamber along the narrow and slippery path, which the winter torrent has well-nigh carried away. It is somewhat startling to the inexperienced traveller, too, when he clings to the saddle as his steed assumes a vertical attitude, or passes along the precipice brink, where a single false step would hurl him hundreds of feet below. But experience teaches him to place confidence in his careful and wiry Arab, and to ride, without thought of fear, along paths where an English foxhunter would deem it madness to risk his neck.

Another hour and a half we clambered up a stony ridge, covered here and there with vineyards and fig-orchards, and then reached Khan Hussein; and twenty minutes after we arrived at the brow of a deep ravine, high up on the opposite bank of which stood the village of Bhamdûn. Here we had arranged to spend the night in the summer-house of Mr. Smith. The direct road leads from this point across the glen, but it is fearfully steep, and for a lady even dangerous. We consequently followed the

² The best account yet given of the geology of Lebanon is that by Dr. Anderson in Lynch's 'Official Report of the United States Expedition.' It is much to be regretted that his time did not allow him to notice the whole mountain range. His remarks on the southern section are very valuable.

Damascus road, on its northern side, half an hour farther, when we turned to the right, and, sweeping round the head of the ravine and along its southern bank, we reached Bhandûn in half an hour. It was now quite dark, and we had considerable difficulty in finding our habitation. The house, when found, was cheerless enough, until a fire was kindled, our travelling beds prepared, and dinner served. The villagers soon pressed in to see and welcome us. Many of them have been for years under the instructions of Mr. Smith and his associates, and are now consistent members of the Protestant Church that has been here formed in connexion with the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. Schools have also been established, and these, with the other departments of the Mission work, have greatly increased in extent and efficiency since the period of my visit.³

January 4th.—We were up long before the dawn, and I had time to glance at the surrounding country ere the servants were ready for departure. Bhandûn is situated on the southern brow of a wild ravine, which commencing, as has been stated, half an hour higher up, runs down in a direction south-west for about three miles, when it sweeps round to the southward, increasing in depth and grandeur till it joins the Wady el-Kâdy, near the spot where it is crossed by the Deir el-Kamr and Beyrout road. The view from the village is very extensive; but the bare white ridges on the west and north almost cover the noble

³ It is scarcely necessary to inform the reader that the Rev. (now Dr.) Eli Smith was the associate of Dr. Robinson during his researches in Palestine. He is also author of ‘Researches in Armenia;’ and is well known as a profound Arabic scholar.

scenery of the Metn, and render the mountain prospect bleak and uninteresting. Beyrout and its promontory are visible, and beyond lies the vast expanse of the Mediterranean. So clear is the atmosphere and so commanding the position, that I have distinctly seen the island of Cyprus with the naked eye, and have observed more than once the noble summit of Olympus towering high above the neighbouring hills. Around Bhamdûn are extensive beds of fossil shells, composed chiefly of the *Ostræa*, *Chenopus*, and *Nerinea*. The latter are found strewn in innumerable quantities over the surface of flat slabs; and, the shells being very small, they present a singular and beautiful appearance. The elevation of the village, as shown by the aneroid, is 3338 feet.

We mounted our horses at seven o'clock, and in half an hour reached the Damascus road near the Khan Ruweisât. The northern part of Wady Huminâna now opened up to our view. It resembles a vast basin; the bottom is finely cultivated in terraces, and the sides steep, and, in some places, precipices of naked rock. On the east, high above the neighbouring mountains, rises the snow-capped summit of *Jebel Kunciyâseh*. The road now leads over swelling ground, bare and destitute of features; and after passing a rocky ridge, descends to Khan Modeirej, situated in a rugged dell. This we reached at 8.45. Above the khan the road is among the worst in Lebanon. A steep slope is thickly covered with huge fragments of sharp limestone rocks, amid which the poor animals can scarcely find a level spot to plant their feet, and often sink down helpless beneath their burdens. When this is surmounted, a narrow shelving path is before them, leading along the

side of a fearful precipice overhanging the great valley. In forty minutes we gained the highest point, having an elevation of 5600 feet. The view toward the west is now very grand, the eye following the windings of the wild glen of Hummâna till it rests on the bright waters of the great sea far below. Half an hour more over bleak and uninteresting ground brought us to the water-shed where two wadys commence on opposite sides of a narrow ridge. One flows westward, cutting through the mountains considerably to the south of the road; while the other runs south-east direct to the Bukââ. The ordinary road leads down the left bank of the latter, by Khan Murâd and Mekseh, to the plain; but we took a path on the right bank, in order to visit a piece of sculpture described as lying on this route.

The eastern slopes of Libanus, from the Damascus road southwards, are altogether different in character and aspect from the western. The descent is uniform and abrupt from the summits to the plain. Few spots are capable of cultivation, and the scenery is destitute of that boldness and grandeur everywhere seen amid the ravines and peaks on the west. About half-way down the mountain side we found the object we were in search of—the figure of a lion rudely sculptured on a rock. After a rapid descent we reached the village of Kubb Eliâs, on the border of the plain, at 11·5, one hour and a half below the water-shed. Adjoining the village, on the summit of a little conical hill, stand the ruins of an old castle, said to have been erected by one of the Druze princes of Libanus; and in the side of a lofty cliff, a little to the south, are a few excavated tombs, showing that this is the site of some

ancient town or village. A fine stream flows through it, watering gardens and fields below. We rested and spread our lunch on its green banks, beside a little grove of poplars.

At one o'clock we again resumed our journey. The position of Mejdél, where we intended to spend the night, being now distinctly seen behind a little range of hills on the opposite side of the plain, we resolved, if possible, to take a straight course toward it. The caravan-road passes the village of Mekseh half an hour to the north, and runs thence toward 'Anjar; should we succeed, therefore, in our attempt to cross the plain directly, we would considerably shorten our day's march. We were soon stopped, however, in our course by canals and marshes; and it was only after a kind of steeple-chace over drains and ditches that we regained the great road, beside the bridge that crosses the first branch of the Litâny, where we arrived at 2:30. Here is a fine stream, from thirty to forty feet wide, and so deep that it cannot easily be forded, flowing lazily through the centre of a plain of surpassing richness and beauty. The highest sources of this branch are in the neighbourhood of Bââlbek; and its principal tributary is the Nahr Yahfûfeh, which descends from Antilibanus. On the left bank is a large khan, and a few minutes from it is the village of Merj. The elevation of the Bukââ at this spot I found to be 2573 feet. After an easy ride of thirty-five minutes more, through fields of great fertility, which only require proper cultivation to make them yield abundant crops, we reached the bridge over the second great branch of the Litâny. The sources of this large stream are the fountains of 'Anjar and Shemsîn, at the

base of Antilibanus, about fifty minutes distant. The waters unite near a little tell, a quarter of an hour above the bridge, and meander across the plain till they join the western branch a short distance below Merj. To gain this bridge we had kept considerably to the northward, but on crossing it we turned to the right, and in twenty-five minutes reached the end of the line of little hills behind which Mejdél lies. The Damascus road follows a straight course to the entrance of Wady Harîr, distant forty-five minutes. We skirted the end of the hills and turned to the right along their eastern base. Leaving the rest of the caravan in charge of Nikôla, Dr. Paulding and I now set off at a gallop that we might have time to visit an interesting ruin on the summit of a hill above the village. In attempting to scale the steep slope my girths gave way, and it was only by embracing my old charger I was saved from a summerset over his tail. Notwithstanding the accident, we soon reached the summit, and were agreeably surprised to find ourselves beneath the crumbling walls of a venerable temple. For the chaste simplicity and massive grandeur of its architecture, combined with the exquisite beauty of its situation, this ruin is not surpassed in Syria.

The temple, whose ruins now cover the summit of the hill and are strewn over the vineyards that clothe its sides, is evidently of an early period—considerably older than those of Bâ'albek and Palmyra, and indeed than most others now found in this country. Its extreme length may have been about eighty feet, and the breadth in proportion; but this is only an estimate. The foundations of the cell are composed of huge blocks of limestone; one I measured being twenty-four feet long and six high. These

project considerably beyond the face of the walls, but are contracted at the top by means of a bevelled moulding. The same peculiarity is found in all very ancient structures of a similar kind. The interior was ornamented with fluted semi-columns of the Ionic order, supporting a fine cornice. Between the columns were niches for statues. A portico of massive columns stood in front, with *antæ* behind. These columns are now completely prostrate; but the huge fragments are scattered around, half covered with luxuriant vines. One portion of a shaft I measured was twenty-four feet long and four feet six inches in diameter. The door leading from the portico to the cell was lofty and spacious; the jambs were massive monoliths, richly moulded. The view from the ruins is magnificent, embracing the whole plain of the Bukâ'a with the noble mountain-chains on each side—northward far as the eye can see, and southward till the hills close and form the sublime gorge of the Litâny. The plain resembles a vast lake, so smooth and flat is its surface; and the strange little artificial mounds which here and there appear might pass for islands. Often have I sat beneath the shade of this old temple, alone and in the company of friends, admiring the glorious panorama, and gazing alternately on verdant plain and rugged mountain-side—now viewing the snow-capped summit of Hermon proudly raising its head high above the Antilibanus range, and now turning to look at its rivals Sunnîn and Akkâr.⁴

But how came here this splendid monument of the genius and taste of a bygone age? Was it built to stand

⁴ This is the general name of the lofty mountain range north of the cedars.

in solitude, or was it intended to adorn the environs of some proud city, and to serve as a monument of the wealth and piety of its inhabitants? Neither on the hill itself nor along its base are there any traces of ancient structures; but if we turn our eyes to the north-east, toward the spot where, some three miles distant, the great fountain of 'Anjar bursts from beneath the mountain-side and diffuses freshness and verdure all around, we can observe numbers of blackened heaps and shapeless masses of stone strewn over the smooth plain. An examination of this place may tend to solve the mystery.

On the 19th of May 1854 I visited the fountain of 'Anjar and the ruins near it with two friends.⁵ I had previously known that these ruins marked the site of the ancient city of *Chalcis*, and had read the able article of Dr. Robinson in the 'Bibliotheca Sacra,' on the identification of its position. This Chalcis is to be distinguished from other cities of the same name. Josephus mentions it as situated under Mount Libanus;⁶ and Strabo leaves it without a doubt that it was near the Antilibanus, and south of Heliopolis.⁷ That the city stood here will not be doubted by any one who will examine authorities and visit the spot. We observed at the fountain the remains of a large reservoir intended to raise the water above its natural level; and also traces of an aqueduct running along the high ground toward the ruins. The city itself is completely prostrate: the foundations of the walls alone

⁵ Robert Ross, of Bladensburg, Esq., and Edwin Freshfield, Esq.

⁶ Ant. xiv. 7, 4, and Bel. Jud. i. 9, 2. Pliny says the territory of Chalcis is the most fertile in Syria (v. 23).

⁷ Lib. xvi.

can be traced, enclosing a rectangular space about a mile in circumference. In the interior are a few mounds covered with soil, from which some hewn stones and pieces of broken columns may be seen here and there projecting. These are the only remnants of palaces and temples. The site was well chosen, and admirably fitted for the capital of a province. In front is a plain of vast extent and great fertility, while close at hand is an abundant supply of purest water.

Of the origin of the city nothing is now known, and there are no ruins remaining that would tend to mark the age of its erection. There are no evidences of very remote antiquity. Ptolemy, the son of Mennæus, is mentioned by Strabo as ruler of an extensive district of which Chalcis was the capital. It appears to have included Heliopolis and Ituræa, with the mountain region lying between; but the proper territory of Chalcis was the rich plain of Marsyas, embracing the southern part of the Bukââ, and probably Wady et-Teim and the Merj 'Ayûn.⁶ After Syria was conquered by the Romans Ptolemy continued to hold his possessions. He was succeeded by his son Lysanias, who transferred the seat of government to Abila, now Sûk-Wady-Barada;⁹ and upon his murder by order of Mark Antony the provinces passed for a time into the hand of Zenodorus the celebrated robber.¹ The territory of Chalcis was now separated from the other districts with which it had been united under the sway of Ptolemy, but it does not distinctly appear who were its governors between the death of Zenodorus, B.C. 20, and

⁶ Strab. xvi.

⁹ Joseph. Ant. xiv. 13, 3.

¹ Id. xv. 4, 1, and 10, 1. Strab. xvi.

the time when it was given by the Emperor Claudius to Herod, son of Aristobulus and grandson of Herod the Great, A.D. 41.² It may probably have formed part of the tetrarchy of Lysanias, who is mentioned in Luke iii. 1. On the death of Herod Chalcis was bestowed upon Herod Agrippa II., who held it for four years until he was advanced to a more important province, when it reverted to Aristobulus, Herod's son.³ This is the last notice we find of it as a separate principality. It was afterwards constituted a part of the Roman province, and received the name of Flavia. It would appear that ere many years it fell into ruin, or at least dwindled away into an insignificant village, as there is no mention made of it in any of the Ecclesiastical Notices. Mohammedan writers never speak of it; and the only reference made to the site is by Abulfeda, who says that near the village of Mejdal 'Anjar are great ruins. He probably alludes to the temple.⁴

This temple doubtless owes its origin to some of the princes of the ancient city of Chalcis. It was a common practice with the members of the Herodian family to erect temples or found cities in honour of those emperors who conferred important favours upon them. Perhaps Herod Agrippa II., whose taste for architecture is well known, constructed this temple as a monument of his gratitude to Claudius for bestowing on him the little principality in which it was situated. Notwithstanding the most careful examination I was unable to find a single inscription near the ruins, and I have never seen any historical notice that would tend to throw light upon the origin of this

² Joseph. Bel. Jud. ii. 12, 1.

³ Id. vii. 7, 1.

⁴ Tabula Syriaca, ed. Reisk, p. 20.

temple. The little hill on the summit of which it stands forms part of a low broken ridge that runs along the base of Antilibanus, but is nowhere joined with it. Farther southward it forms the western boundary of Wady et-Teim, and extending in breadth toward Lebanon shuts in the Bukâ'a on the south. The elevation of this ridge nowhere exceeds 400 feet above the plain.

We will now resume our narrative.

On descending to the village we found that our party had taken possession of a house consisting of a single apartment with a stable opening into it. Both were now pretty well filled. Horses, donkeys, and baggage-mules were crowded into the latter in such numbers that they kept up a constant squabbling, and more than once during the night did the weaker animals seek shelter in our territory: we had no accommodation for them, however, for *twenty-one* human beings, with thousands of still less welcome animals, were here huddled together. Some of us were no little surprised, and even shocked, when we first observed, from the nature of the arrangements made, that the whole family, men, women, and children, were to be our companions for the night. And feelings of indignation began to arise when our servants and muleteers wrapped themselves in their *capotes*, and one after another dropped asleep at our side. Other incidents occurred which did not tend much to reconcile us to these things, but they will not bear recital. For a lady, it must be confessed, this was rather a rough introduction to Syrian life; we said nothing, however, and, only pushing our travelling beds as far as possible out of reach of strange feet, composed ourselves to rest.

January 5th.—To get up this morning did not require any great effort. We were glad when the first dawn appeared, for it was the signal for departure; and we at once rode off amid the howling of a multitude of savage dogs, that seemed prepared to resist our farther progress. It was not till Nikôla had discharged a pistol into the midst of them that we were relieved from their fierce attacks. In twenty minutes we had crossed the little plain and joined the Damascus road at the entrance of Wady Harîr. Dark threatening clouds now covered the mountain-tops, and the thunder rolled ominously in the distance, so that we had gloomy forebodings about the weather. The dread of rain, for which we were badly prepared, made us urge on our horses, and the muleteers were soon left far behind. The valley we had entered has a general direction of about south-east, winding gracefully between lofty hills. The scenery, though not bold or grand, is picturesque: the sides, rising with a uniform slope, are clothed to the summit with the dwarf oak and hawthorn, and the little side glens up which we got an occasional peep are also verdant with evergreen foliage. These thickets form an admirable cover for lurking bandits and robbers, and are generally well occupied when the country is in a disturbed state. For us there was *at that time* nothing to fear, but ere many months had passed none could venture through the glen without a strong guard. Since that period it has been the scene of many murders, and on one occasion in the autumn of 1852 a large body of regular troops were driven back from it by the fire of a few rebel Druzes.

In an hour we reached the water-shed of Antilibanus,

which is here far to the west of the central chain, and has an elevation of not more than 1000 feet above the Bukâ'a, or about 3600 feet above the sea. The whole of this western range is covered with forests of the dwarf oak, and affords excellent pasturage during the winter and spring months: in summer it is burned up by the sun's rays. It has no springs of any value, and consequently there are no villages and but few cultivated fields. Its greatest elevation may be about 4000 feet.

We now descended for ten minutes by an easy slope through a pleasant little vale to the plain called Sahl Judeich, which extends a considerable distance to the right and left, being altogether about an hour in length. It is half an hour in breadth, and has on its eastern side a high range of rugged mountains separating it from the plain of Zebdâny. The loftiest summits of this range are nearly 6000 feet high. They, as well as the mountains to the west, are wholly composed of compact limestone, nearly similar in character to that of Lebanon. In the northern part of the plain of Judeich are a few fields of grain, but the rest is entirely neglected, though the soil is good and water not wanting. Turning due south, we rode across the plain diagonally to the entrance of the wild ravine called *Wady el-Kurn*—"The Valley of the Horn." This sublime pass is an hour in length, and completely bisects the lofty mountain-range above alluded to. Throughout its whole length are cliffs of naked rocks, in some places several hundred feet high and almost perpendicular. Its sides are broken into innumerable chasms and fissures, while the jagged rocks assume strange fantastic forms far overhead. Tangled brushwood and dwarf oak, here and

there clinging to the precipices and filling the crevices, give greater wildness and grandeur to the picture. The frequent windings also present a continued variety of new views. In the bottom of the ravine is the bed of a winter torrent, whose course, as well as the narrow path beside it, is often obstructed by the huge masses of rock that have fallen from the crags above.

This pass is the favourite haunt of numerous bands of robbers, who take advantage of temporary commotions and the withdrawal of troops in time of war, to plunder passengers and caravans. The system is carried on with such a degree of openness and daring that the bandits are generally well known, but the authorities are either too weak or too indolent to punish them. They often compromise matters by appointing some local hereditary chief guardian of the road, to whom they give an allowance for the maintenance of a sufficient number of guards. When payments are made irregularly, and arrears allowed to accumulate, as often happens, the mode of obtaining redress is somewhat singular, and quite characteristic of the country. By the secret instructions of the chief, a postman is shot or a rich caravan plundered, and this is well known to be a notification that arrears must be paid up.⁵

A quarter of an hour after leaving Wady el-Kurn we reached the foot of a low hill, along the base of which the winter stream flows to the left, having been joined by another descending from a wide cultivated valley on the right. The united streams run north-east between swell-

⁵ The Druzes have for a long period been almost the only robbers who infest the wild passes of Anti-Lebanon; and these roads can only be considered safe when one of their sheikhs is the recognised guardian.

ing hills for about an hour, and then fall into the Barada at a ruined Roman bridge, in the foot of the plain of Zebdâny. These streams drain the whole region around Sahl Judeideh and the neighbouring mountains, and yet they only flow during a few months in the year, while the rains are falling or the snow is melting. Our road now led over a bleak hill, covered in some places with corn-fields, and, descending diagonally into a narrow vale, brought us in half an hour to 'Ain Meithelûn, a fine spring beside the ruins of a large khan. We were now at the base of the central chain of Antilibanus, which rose up barren and rocky before us; or perhaps it may be considered that the central chain divides into two branches about six miles south-west of this place, which then, running parallel some twenty miles toward the north-east, enclose between them a long irregular valley, in the centre of which is the beautiful plain of Zebdâny. Both these ranges are intersected by wild ravines, through which flow winter torrents eastward to the Barada. The eastern range is considerably loftier than the western, especially north of the Wady Barada.

At the fountain we entered a pass that leads through the heart of the mountain, and makes a way for the little stream to flow eastward. In three-quarters of an hour the pass opened into a fine vale, with corn-fields and vineyards along its sides. Turning more southward, we skirted the mountain-side along its right bank, and in fifteen minutes were opposite the little village of Demâs, which is situated on a bleak hill to the left. After sweeping through narrow valleys between barren conical hills for three quarters of an hour, we emerged on the great plain called es-Sahra.

Nothing could be imagined more dreary or sterile than the view that now presented itself before us. Not a village, not a tree, not a particle of verdure appeared to relieve the monotonous desolation. In front stretched the vast plain itself, of a greyish ashen hue, strewn with fragments of flint and limestone. Beyond it rose a line of white hills, destitute of features as of vegetation. The only object that attracted attention by its grandeur or beauty in this immense panorama was Hermon, which towered to the sky, far away on the south-west, a magnificent cone, covered to its base with spotless snow. Some of us were weary with the long ride, and impatient at its monotony; and the sight of this dreary waste did not tend to soothe our feelings. The leaden sky, too, shrouded the landscape in gloom, while the threatening clouds and the heavy rain-drops that already began to fall compelled us to spur on our jaded horses. The plain was crossed in an hour and a quarter, and we entered among a broad range of chalk hills, which rose on each side in conical peaks, sometimes of naked rock, but generally covered with loose white gravel. Another hour and a quarter was taken up in winding through the narrow defiles of these hills, and we then reached the summit of a ridge where Damascus, with its magnificent plain and forest gardens, burst at once upon our view. The scene in itself was almost inconceivably lovely, but now it was no little enhanced by contrast with the wilderness we had left behind. From other points the city and its environs may be seen to greater advantage; but though I have visited them all, at every season, yet the first impression remains upon my mind still. I would not recommend any traveller to approach the city

by this route; there is another equally short, and far more agreeable. It leads for an hour along the verdant banks of the Barada, then crosses the river by the bridge at Dummar, and surmounts the last ridge on the left bank. A ruined wely stands near the road, on the brow of a lofty precipice overhanging the river's bed; from beneath this ruin the finest view is obtained. Damascus, with its swelling domes and glittering minarets, is at your feet; the Barada, bursting from the wild gorge, meanders gracefully through gardens and meadows till lost in the great city; while canals branch out on every side, and carry vegetation and beauty far and wide over the plain.

The rain was now falling heavily, and, stopping but a few minutes to gaze upon the magnificent scenery, we spurred our horses down the steep slope. The village of Mezzeh, situated at the base of the hills, was soon passed, and we entered the shady lanes that wind among the orchards. In fifty minutes we were within the walls of the old city of Damascus.



Northern Side Arch, East Gate, Damascus.

CHAPTER II.

DAMASCUS.—TOPOGRAPHY AND ANTIQUITIES.

Mode of treating these topics — Scarcity of information — Ibn Asâker's history — Antiquity of Damascus — Its situation — Its plain — The Abana and Pharpar — System of irrigation — Splendid view — The streets — Costumes — Mosks — Khans — Private houses — The Harim — The house of 'Aly Aga and his tragic fate.

ANCIENT WALLS: Misrepresentations of travellers — The East Gate — Bas-reliefs — Spot where Paul was let down in a basket — St. George the Porter — Scene of Paul's conversion — Tomb of Mohammed's Muezzin — Muslem tombs — Roman gate — Mosk of Senân Pasha — The West Gate — The "Street called Straight" — Cemeteries — Greek bazaar — The castle — Gigantic plane-tree — Gates — Khaled's head-quarters — House of Naaman.

WALK THROUGH THE CITY: Churches and convents — House of Ananias

— Greek church — Russian schools — Bazaars and trades — Great khan — Nûr ed-Dîn — Slave-market.

GREAT MOSK : Triumphal arch — Head of John the Baptist — Ancient gate and inscription — Age of the building — Its history and splendour — Tombs of Saladin and Melek ed-Dhâher — Mosk of Sultan Selim.

IT is not my intention to present to the reader a journal of any walks or excursions about the ancient city of Damascus, but to record, in a condensed form, the results of observations and researches extending over a period of nearly five years. In this way repetition will be avoided, and a more systematic account given of the topography and antiquities, the history and the statistics of the city and its immediate environs. No full or satisfactory view of these topics has hitherto appeared in our language, nor, so far as I know, in any of the languages of Europe. The descriptions given by travellers have generally been meagre, and always vague, while not a few of them have been the creations of poetic imaginations. The remarks of the Chevalier d'Arvieux, contained in the second volume of his 'Mémoires,' are the most accurate I have met with, and, having been written nearly two centuries ago (A.D. 1660), they are valuable as containing a description of the city at that period, and of some buildings now destroyed. From travellers therefore I have received but little assistance. Arabic writers have given fuller details, and from some of their works in manuscript I have obtained much important and interesting information. In the first volume of Ibn 'Asâker's great History is a minute description of the city at the time it was taken by the Muslems.

No Scripture site is more surely identified than that of the ancient Damascus; and few possess a greater interest for the theologian, the historian, or the antiquary. It is unquestionably one of the oldest cities in the world, and is in many respects one of the most remarkable. It has outlived generations of cities, and has been a witness of the stirring events of full four thousand years. It has in succession formed an important part of the most powerful empires of the world. The monarchs of Nineveh, Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome, have conquered it; and it has prospered under every dynasty, and outlived them all. It was for a time the capital of the vast dominions of the Khalifs; and now the Osmanlis, its present rulers, are fast declining, and ere long it may be forced to acknowledge other masters. Damascus thus remains a connecting link between the most remote antiquity and modern times.

No city in Syria, none perhaps in Western Asia, possesses such advantages in respect to situation as Damascus. At the eastern base of Antilibanus lies a plain having an elevation of about 2200 feet above the sea. The lowest ridge of the mountain-chain, a barren line of chalky hills, runs from the foot of Hermon in a direction north-east by east, forming the north-western boundary of the plain. On its south side are two low ridges of hills called *Jebel el-Aswad* and *Jebel Manià*, and in a narrow vale between them flows the river 'Awaj, the ancient *Pharpar*. Far away to the east may be seen a little group of conical hills, called the *Tellûl*. If a line be drawn through these, north and south, till it meet the other sides, forming with them a triangle, the plain of Damascus will be circumscribed.



VIEW OF VALMASCUS FROM THE NORTH-EAST: HERLION IN THE DISTANCE

J. L. PROBERT DEL.

That portion of it, however, which alone is inhabited and in part cultivated, is bounded on the east by the three lakes into which the "rivers of Damascus" empty themselves. In form it is a rectangular triangle, its base on the south side being about twenty-eight miles long; its perpendicular on the east seventeen; and its hypotenuse, along the foot of Antilibanus, thirty-three. Its area is thus about *two hundred and thirty-six* square geographical miles. The fine stream of the Barada, the ancient *Abana*,¹ descending from the heights of Antilibanus, breaks through the lowest chain of these mountains by a wild ravine, and, entering the plain, flows due east across it, at the distance of eight miles north of its southern boundary. On the banks of the river, one mile from the mouth of the ravine, commence the buildings of Damascus. The great body of the city is on the southern bank, but there is also a large suburb on the northern. Without the Barada the city could not exist, and the plain would be a parched desert; but now aqueducts intersect every quarter, and fountains sparkle in almost every dwelling, while innumerable canals extend their ramifications over the vast plain, clothing it with verdure and beauty. Five of these canals are led off from the river, at different elevations, before it enters the plain. They are carried along the precipitous banks of the ravine, being in some places tunnelled in the solid rock. The two on the northern side water Salahîych, a large village lying along the foot of the hills, about a mile

¹ In the 'Journal of Sacred Literature' for the months of July and October, 1853, I have endeavoured to prove the identity of the "Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus," with the Barada and 'Awaj. A full topographical and statistical account of them will there be found.

from the city, and then irrigate the higher portions of the plain to the distance of nearly twenty miles. Of the three on the southern side, one is led to the populous village of Darâya, five miles distant; and the other two are employed in supplying the city, its suburbs, and gardens. The laws for the proper regulation of the water are most minute; and the system of canals, ducts, and pipes, intricate almost beyond the power of comprehension. It is greatly to be regretted that many of the aqueducts in the more remote parts of the plain are now ruinous, and the fields around consequently a parched desert. When we consider the great extent of land formerly under cultivation, the labour it must have taken to excavate the canals and construct the extensive terraces, and the amount of engineering skill requisite for the arrangement of the whole system, we cannot but estimate very highly the industry, enterprise, and talent of the ancient Damascenes.

The view that presents itself to the eye of the traveller as he surmounts the last ridge of Antilibanus, after passing the bleak and barren slopes beyond, is rich and grand almost surpassing conception. From the side of the little wely² above referred to the best prospect is obtained. The elevation is about 500 feet above the city, which is a mile and a half distant. The peculiar forms of Eastern architecture produce a pleasing effect at this distance. Graceful minarets and swelling domes, surmounted by gilded crescents, rise up in every direction from the con-

² *Wely* is the name given to those buildings so often met with in this country, erected over some Muslem saint's tomb, or some spot hallowed by tradition. That here spoken of is called *Wely es-Seiyâr*. On the summit of the hill, on its north side, the loftiest peak of this range, is another, called *Wely Nasar*. The latter is 1500 feet above the city.

fused mass of terraced roofs, while in some places their glittering tops just appear above the deep green foliage, like diamonds in the midst of emeralds. In the centre of all stands the noble pile of the great mosk, and near it may be seen the massive towers and battlemented walls of the old castle. Away on the south the eye follows the long narrow suburb of the *Medân*, at the extremity of which is the "Gate of God," where the great pilgrim caravan, on each returning year, takes leave of the city. The buildings of Damascus are almost all of snowy whiteness, and this contrasts well with the surrounding foliage. The gardens and orchards, which have been so long and so justly celebrated, encompass the city, and extend on both sides of the Barada some miles eastward. They cover an area at least twenty-five miles in circuit, and make the environs an earthly paradise. The varied tints of the foliage, and of the blossoms and fruit in their season, greatly enhance the beauty of the picture. The sombre hue of the olive and the deep green of the walnut are finely relieved by the lighter shade of the apricot, the silvery sheen of the poplar, and the purple tint of the pomegranate; while lofty cone-like cypresses appear at intervals, and a few palm-trees here and there raise up their graceful heads. The variously coloured foliage thus surrounding the bright city, and the smooth plain beyond, now bounded by naked hills, and now mingling with the sky on the far-distant horizon, and the wavy atmosphere that makes forest, plain, and mountain tremble, give a softness and an ærial beauty to the whole scene that captivates the mind of the beholder.

The moment the traveller leaves the environs and

enters the gate of Damascus the illusion is gone. To those accustomed to the capitals of Europe, with their broad streets, spacious squares, and splendid buildings, this city must appear filthy, irregular, and even half ruinous. The streets are narrow and tortuous; the houses on each side like piles of mud, stone, and timber, heaped together without order. A plain portal, or a gaudy fountain, or a mosk rich in the minute details of Saracenic architecture, is the only thing that gives any variety. On approaching the centre of the city, however, the stranger's eye is soon attracted by the gay bazaars, and by the picturesque groups that, in their gorgeous costumes, crowd them, or lounge in the open *cafés*. Every Eastern nation and tribe has there its representative; and the whole resembles a *bal costumé* more than a scene of every-day life. There is the Damascus merchant, with flowing robe and capacious embroidered turban, sitting with calm dignity in the midst of his goods. Beside him is a Turkish Effendi decked in a caricature of Frank costume, badly made and worse put on. Here is a mountain prince sweeping along in crimson jacket covered with gold embroidery; the open sleeves hang gracefully behind, hussar fashion, while underneath is seen the delicate hues of the rich silk vest. A long train of secretaries, pipe-bearers, servants, and guards follow him. Yonder is a Bedawy, spare in form and of dark visage; his piercing eye glances stealthily on all who meet him, and his step and bearing are constrained; he is dressed in a simple woollen *abeih*,³ with broad stripes of

³ The *Abcih*, or *Mashlak* as it is sometimes called, is a square-shaped cloak, generally made of goats' hair or fine wool; but sometimes of the richest silk, interwoven with gold and silver, and embroidered on the

white and brown; and a rope of camel's-hair binds on his head the gay *kefiyeh*.⁴ Away beyond him stands a Druze sheikh, arrayed in a gorgeous silk robe interwoven with threads of gold, and a carefully-folded turban of spotless white; his left hand grasps the silver hilt of his heavy scimitar, while fierce determination and undaunted courage are reflected from his proud features. Here too is a Kurdish shepherd, with shaggy sheepskin cap and stiff felt capote; and behind him marches a stately Persian, whose lofty conical head-dress, long tight robe, and flowing beard, almost make you believe that one of the monuments of Nineveh has started into life again. By the door of that *café* is a group of villanous-looking Albanians, with their voluminous kilts and faggots of weapons stuck in their belts. The strange figures that are seen mingling with the throng, enveloped from head to foot in white sheets, are women.

And the bazaars themselves are scarcely less attractive than the people that fill them. A long row of open stalls, only a few feet deep, extends along each side, and here, ranged on rude shelves, are temptingly displayed the merchant's stores. Silks, and embroidered scarfs, and golden wrought tissues of the city itself; carpets and curiously inlaid ornaments and caskets from Persia; shawls from Hind and Cashmere; weapons of every form and character, richly ornamented with gold and gems—

shoulders. It is universally worn by the Bedawin, and very generally by the inhabitants of villages bordering on the desert. Many of the desert tribes have a peculiar pattern.

⁴ The *Kefiyeh* is a handkerchief of silk and cotton interwoven, and of the most brilliant colours. It is doubled and thrown over the head, so that the long points fall down on each side of the face.

such is the varied picture on which the eye rests as one wanders amid the gay labyrinth of bazaars. To the Frank stranger everything seems new and odd; and yet he himself is the only object of wonder to the hundreds that surround him. The principal bazaars are always clean; and the sloping wooden roofs, though not very picturesque, serve to keep them cool in summer and dry in winter. The streets are cleaner and better kept than those of most Turkish cities.

Many of the mosks are fine specimens of Saracenic architecture, but they are *all* dirty, and *almost all* out of repair; and they thus appear badly to the eye of the stranger, especially so as he can, under the most favourable circumstances, only get a peep into their courts through a window or half-open door. But a different impression is left upon the mind when the attention is directed to the details of these buildings. One cannot but admire the chaste patterns of the marble mosaics on the walls, the curious interlacing of the stones over doors and windows, and the fine proportions and delicate fretwork of the tapering minarets. But it is in the magnificence of its gateways that the Saracenic architecture excels all other styles. The beautiful symmetry of the arch, the deep mouldings of the sides, and the rich sculpture of the top, far surpass in effect the noblest specimens of the Gothic in our English cathedrals. The interior courts, too, are fitted up with great elegance, and even splendour. They are covered with tessellated pavement: the large fountains are of marble, often inlaid with mother-of-pearl and porphyry; and the lower part of the walls are either cased with marble wrought in chaste patterns, or with tiles

finely glazed and ornamented with figures in brilliant colours. Where there are porticoes, the columns are mostly ancient, of granite, porphyry, marble, or limestone; and in some cases their capitals are bronze.

Many of the *khâns*, or caravanserais, are spacious and substantial buildings; but, with the exception of the gateways, they are scarcely worthy of notice in an architectural point of view. The domed roofs are supported by massive square columns of masonry, and in the centre is always a large fountain with an abundant supply of water. Along the sides below, and behind a gallery above, are numerous little gloomy chambers, where the chief merchants of the city deposit their goods. These men may be daily seen squatting on wooden platforms beside the doors of their magazines, smoking their *nargîlies*,⁵ or going through the lengthened process of sale to some grave-looking customers. A *cafegée*, or coffee-maker, is continually on the move, with his dirty copper pot and tiny cups, to supply the people with their favourite beverage. The pipe-bearers are ever washing and baking the tobacco, to replenish the bowls of *nargîlies*; and, to vary the scene a little, the sherbet-seller occasionally makes his appearance with a huge bottle strung round his neck, and brass cups jingling in his hand.

But the chief glory of Damascus is in the splendour of

⁵ The *Nargîly* is so constructed that the smoke before it is inhaled passes through water. The bowl is of brass or silver, attached to a handsome glass bottle, having a long elastic tube. These are sometimes of great beauty, and cost as much as 2000 piasters. There is another kind composed of a cocoa-nut shell, with two tubes fastened into it in the form of a V. On the top of one is the bowl, and of the other the mouthpiece.

its private houses. No contrast could be greater than that between the exterior and the interior. The irregular mud walls, and rickety-looking projecting upper chambers, give but poor promise of splendour within. The entrance is by a mean doorway into a narrow and winding passage, or sometimes a plain stable-yard. Passing this, the outer court is gained. Here is a variegated pavement of black and white stones, intermixed with pieces of marble, tastefully designed. A fountain sparkles in the midst, shaded by evergreens and flowering shrubs; and at one side is an open alcove, called a *lewan*, with a light and beautifully ornamented arch supporting the exterior wall. The floor is of marble of different colours, and a raised dais, covered with soft cushions of silk, surrounds the three sides. The chambers and halls in this court are all occupied by the master and his men-servants: here he receives his visitors, and to this alone are strangers ever admitted. Another winding passage opens from this to the inner or chief court, called the *harim*, whose door is kept by eunuchs. It is when this court is gained that the splendour of the mansion first bursts upon the view.

That the reader may have some real object before him, I will endeavour to introduce him to a *harim* which I have myself often visited, and have been enabled to examine in detail. The house is that referred to by Mr. Addison in his account of this city.⁶ It was built by 'Aly Aga, who held the high office of Secretary to the Treasury under the government of Ibrahim Pasha. He was, as Mr. Addison has stated, a man of enlightened views and great

⁶ Addison's 'Palmyra and Damascus,' vol. ii.

liberality for a Muslem. A melancholy interest is now attached to his house and history on account of his tragic end. He had long enjoyed the friendship and confidence of Ibrahîm ; but when the European powers had resolved to restore Syria to the Sultân, he was suspected of holding a treasonable correspondence with the Turkish Government. His haughty master could ill brook the treachery of friends when he was chafed by defeat in the field. Little time was taken to examine into the truth of the accusation, but, almost immediately on the discovery of some papers that seemed to imply his guilt, orders were given that Aly should be beheaded ; and among the last acts of the Egyptian viceroy in this city was to carry the sentence into execution.

The house is now the property of his daughter, who has inherited enough of her father's spirit to set light value on the absurd laws that make Muslem ladies little better than prisoners. To her kindness, and that of her husband Othman Effendi, I am indebted for many opportunities of examining one of the finest mansions in Damascus, while enjoying their hospitality. I will now proceed to introduce my reader.

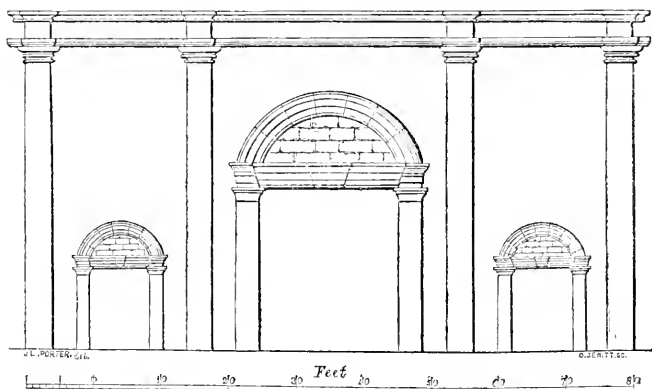
The interior court, or *harim*, is a quadrangle from fifty to sixty yards square, with a tessellated pavement of marble ; a large marble fountain stands in the centre, and several smaller ones of great beauty sparkle around, and give a delicious coolness to the air, even amid the heat of summer. Orange, lemon, and citron trees, diffuse their fragrant odours ; while gigantic flowering shrubs and rare exotics are disposed in tasteful groups, and climbing plants are trained on trellis-work overhead, affording

grateful shade and pleasing variety. All the great reception-rooms and chambers open on this court; the former are upon the first floor, and the latter above, having in front a narrow corridor closed in with glass. On the southern side is the *lewan*, or open alcove, similar in design to those found in the exterior courts, but loftier, and far more gorgeously decorated. The grand *salon* is a noble room. It is divided into two compartments by a beautiful arch richly ornamented with gilt fretwork. The floor of the first compartment is of the rarest marbles of every hue, arranged with admirable precision and pleasing variety in mathematical designs. In the centre is a fountain inlaid with mother-of-pearl and rare stones. The walls to the height of twenty feet are covered with mosaic in panels, in the centre of each of which is a slab of polished granite, porphyry, or finely-veined marble, with the exception of those in the upper tier, which are inscribed with sentences from the Koran, written in letters of gold. Several niches relieve the plainness of the walls; in their angles are slender columns of white marble with gilt capitals, and the arches above are richly sculptured in the Saracenic style. The upper part of the walls is painted in the Italian style. The ceiling is about thirty feet high, and delicately painted. The central ornaments and cornices are elaborately carved and gilt, and inlaid with innumerable little mirrors. The other and principal part of the room is raised about two feet. The walls and ceiling are similar in design to those described, except that the former are in part covered with a wainscoting, carved, gilt, and ornamented with mirrors. Around the three sides run the divans, covered with the richest purple satin, em-

broidered with gold, in chaste designs of flowers and scrolls, and having a deep gold fringe descending to the floor. Though none of the workmanship might bear minute examination, and some of those accustomed to the chaste and subdued style of decoration in Western Europe might pronounce this gaudy and even vulgar, yet all will admit that the general effect is exceedingly striking. It resembles, in fact, some scene in fairyland; and one feels, on beholding it, that the glowing descriptions in the 'Arabian Nights' were not mere pictures of the fancy. But it is only when the "bright-eyed houris" of this sunny clime assemble in such a *salon*, decked out in their gay and picturesque costumes, and blazing with gold and diamonds, and when numerous lamps of every form and colour pour a rich and variegated flood of light all round, to be reflected from polished mirrors, and countless gems, and flashing eyes, that we can fully comprehend the splendour of oriental life, and the perfect adaptation of the gorgeous decorations of the mansions to the brilliant costumes of those that inhabit them.

There are many other apartments in the court, less spacious it is true than the grand *salon*, but no less beautifully finished. The style of decoration in this mansion may be called the modern Damascene, the painting of the walls and ceiling being a recent innovation. In the more ancient houses the ceilings and wainscoted walls are covered with the richest arabesques, encompassing little panels of deep blue and delicate azure, on which are inscribed, in elegantly interlaced Arabic characters, whole verses and chapters of their law. Vast sums of money are thus expended, the ornamenting of one chamber often

costing upwards of 2000*l.* sterling. A few of the more wealthy Jewish families have also large and splendid residences, but they cannot be compared with those of the Muslems. The Hebrew writing, too, which they universally put upon the walls, is stiff and formal looking, and is infinitely inferior, in an ornamental point of view, to the graceful curves and easy flow of the Arabic.⁷



Front Elevation of East Gate, Damascus.

ANCIENT WALLS OF THE CITY.

I will now conduct my reader round the ancient city walls, noticing, as we pass along, the several objects of

⁷ The origin of this rather remarkable mode of decoration is evidently to be found in God's command to the Israelites concerning the Law: "And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates" (Deut. vi. 9). The *letter* of this command is now universally obeyed by Christians, Jews, and Muslems in this land. I have some doubts, however, that they all rest satisfied with such obedience, and overlook the *spirit*.

interest in their immediate neighbourhood. It is worthy of remark in this place that travellers have generally represented Damascus as almost wholly destitute of ancient remains. Of the accuracy of their statements we shall soon be able to form a correct opinion; and it will then be seen that there are in reality very few ancient sites in Syria where so many vestiges of ancient splendour still exist. Travellers have but a few days, often but a few hours, at their disposal for the examination of a large city: they have no guide-book, or accomplished *valet-de-place*, to direct them; and, content to derive their information from their predecessors, they take a run through the bazaars, glance at the spacious khans, and on their way back have their wonder excited, or their ardent piety deepened, by a view of the house of Ananias, of the spot where Paul was let down from the wall in a basket, and of the scene of his miraculous conversion! It is not strange, therefore, that *real* antiquities should be overlooked when no pains are taken to search for them. The ruins do not stand out here in bold relief from a desert plain as they do in Palmyra; nor do they lift their proud heads in solitary grandeur far above the crumbling ruins around them, as in Bâ'albek, Busrah, or Jerash; they are here encompassed by modern mansions, and almost lost in the labyrinth of bustling bazaars. The richly-wrought capital is often overshadowed by the Saracenic cupola, while its shaft is concealed behind piles of costly silks in the stalls below. The polished granite is covered with whitewash in the streets, and columns of marble, porphyry, and *verd-antique*, are shut up from infidel gaze in the shrines of the faithful.

We will begin our walk at the *East Gate (Bab Shurky)*. Here are the remains of a splendid Roman portal, consisting of a central and two side arches—the former being 20 feet 6 inches wide by 38 feet high, and the latter half these dimensions, with 17 feet of solid wall intervening. The accompanying elevation and sketches will convey a better idea of its original form and present state than any detailed description. The central archway is broken at the top; it and the southern side arch were walled up before the time of Ibn 'Asâker, and still remain in the same state in which he saw them 700 years ago. The side arches are both perfect, and are beautiful specimens of Roman architecture. For the annexed view of the northern side arch, opening into the "street called Straight," I am indebted to my friend James Graham, Esq., who at my request kindly took the photograph.⁸ Immediately without this side gate a large tower was erected in the early ages of Mohammedan rule, to defend the entrance, and flank the line of wall on each side. The doorway of this tower is on the south side, and thus at right angles to the gate. The appearance of the whole structure is now exceedingly picturesque, though somewhat dilapidated. The crumbling Saracenic battlements, surmounted by the tapering minaret, contrast well with the simplicity and massive grandeur of the Roman architecture.

Without the gate is a huge mound of rubbish, which for centuries has formed the deposit for the refuse of new buildings, and the *débris* of old ruins, within this quarter of the city. Recent excavations have shown that at one

⁸ See sketch at head of chapter.

time this was the site of furnaces for the manufacture of those finely glazed and richly coloured tiles and figured vessels for which Damascus was once celebrated. An extensive view of the city and surrounding plain is obtained from the summit of the mound.

About eighty paces from the gate, at the south-eastern angle of the wall, are the remains of a very ancient tower, with bevelled stones, evidently of Roman origin. Until the time of Ibrahîm Pasha's dominion in Syria it was almost perfect, but was then destroyed, and the materials used in the erection of barracks. It was remarkable as having the royal ensigns of France and England—the *fleur-de-lis* and two lions—sculptured in relief over the entrance doorway. One of the lions may be seen on a slab in the modern wall close by. I have not found any statement in history that would tend to throw light on this rather singular piece of sculpture. The crusaders never had possession of the city ; and the Muslem inhabitants would not sanction, much less erect, such figures. The tower was still perfect when the Chevalier d'Arvieux visited Damascus ; and he notices these ornaments, adding that a large slab of marble, with an inscription in Arabic, was placed between the figures. Unfortunately he did not copy the inscription.⁹

⁹ 'Mémoires du Cheval. d'Arvieux,' tom. ii. p. 445. In the old work entitled 'Les Observations de plusieurs Singularitez et Choses mémorables trouvées en Grèce, Asie, etc., par Pierre Belon du Mans,' Paris, 1553, p. 150, is the following sentence, which renders the history of this tower still more interesting and remarkable:—"Du costé de levant il y a une tour quarrée, au haut de laquelle y a une inscription en caractères Arabiques, qu'on dict y avoir esté mise depuis qu'elle fut reprise des mains des Chrestiens : car un peu plus bas l'on voit deux liz entaillez sur marbre, qui sont les armes de France ou Florence. Au costé des-

The wall here turns to the south-west, and runs in nearly a straight line for about 380 yards to a gateway now walled up, and said to be the spot where the Apostle Paul descended in a basket when escaping from the fury of the Jews. The identical window from which he was let down was shown until a few years ago! A single glance at the masonry of the gate and tower adjoining is sufficient to show that they are *wholly* of Saracenic origin, and that not even the foundations here date back to the Roman period, as they manifestly do at most other places. Ibn 'Asâker¹ informs us that this gate was called *Bab Kisân*, from a celebrated ruler, who erected it in the time of the Khalif Moawiyeh, in the first century of the Hijrah. The Muslem chief, however, must have built it on an ancient site, for the same authority states that this was one of the original gateways, and was dedicated to Saturn, a statue of which god once surmounted it. It was walled up before the time of the historian, and so it has ever since remained.

About forty yards in front of the gate is a small cupola of wood, covering a tomb, said to be that of St. George the Porter, who aided the apostle in his flight, and became a martyr to his benevolence! His memory and his sepulchre are still venerated; and the body of every Christian

quelles est un lion, qui a faict penser à plusieurs que ce fussent les armoires de France et Florence." Can it be that at the time the crusaders besieged the city they captured this strong tower, and retained it for a time in their hands? This seems to me the only way in which this singular piece of sculpture, with the Arabic inscription, can be accounted for. Belon travelled about the middle of the 16th century.

¹ History of Damascus, MS., vol. i.

who dies in the city, before it is consigned to its final resting-place, is brought to this spot, and prayers offered up for the soul of the departed.

Half a mile to the eastward are the Christian cemeteries, beside which the Damascus priesthood have, for their own convenience and advantage, within the last century, located the scene of Paul's conversion. In the days of the Crusaders, as we learn from De Vitry,² the spot where the miracle was enacted was believed to be near the village of Kaukaba, between two little hills, about six miles west of the city, on the great road to Jerusalem; and the tradition remained undisturbed for more than five centuries, for this is the place that was shown to D'Arvieux.³ This spot being too far distant for pilgrims to walk, or holy fathers to conduct them, and, besides, the whole western part of the city being inhabited by bigoted Muslims, it has been deemed advisable of late to transfer the scene to the eastward. Sceptics may smile at the absurdity of placing it on the east side of the city, while the great road to Jerusalem runs westward; but the faithful can reply, as some have done with regard to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, that the very unlikelihood of its situation forms a convincing argument in favour of its genuineness!

Continuing along the wall 250 yards farther, we observe, a short distance on the left, a white-domed tomb, and near it a lofty minaret, standing all solitary in the corner of a field. This is the tomb of *Bilâl el-Habashy*, Mohammed's

² Jac. de Vitry. Hist. Jerus., in 'Gesta Dei per Francos,' p. 1073.

³ Mémoires, tom. ii. p. 457.

muezzin; and this minaret had attached to it a mosk, which was erected in honour of him.

For nearly 400 yards farther we skirt the old wall, turning gradually westward, and then west by north, till we reach a great suburb. Here, on the right of the road, is a heap of rubbish, which almost hides the walls from view, but on surmounting it we can see their battlemented towers stretching away to the north-west, closely lined with modern houses. From the east gate to this place the walls present one uniform appearance. Two or three layers of large hewn stones form the foundations, and upon these are reared up masses of masonry of every age, from the earliest Saracenic down to the most modern Turkish. Towers, some round and others square, occur at intervals of about forty yards, but they are now almost all ruinous, with the exception of a few between Bab Shurky and Bab Kisân. A portion of a tower of superior workmanship stands nearly opposite the tomb and minaret above referred to, and from an inscription on one of its stones it appears that it was built by order of the Sultan *Nûr ed-Dîn* A.H. 564. This is good monumental evidence of the truth of Arab historians, who state that *Nûr ed-Dîn* rebuilt the walls of Damascus. This prince succeeded his father in the government of Aleppo and its dependencies A.H. 544 (A.D. 1149), and captured Damascus five years afterwards.⁴

The suburb we now enter is of great extent, stretching westward more than a mile, and southward over two. It

⁴ A sketch of the history of *Nûr ed-Dîn* is given by D'Herbelot in his 'Bibliothèque Orientale,' s. v. 'Noureddin.'

is divided, like the city, into quarters or sections, the largest of which is called the *Medân*.⁵ A wide and comparatively straight street runs down the centre of this suburb, and at its extremity is the *Bawâbet Ullah*, or "Gate of God," by which the great pilgrim caravan leaves and enters the city in state every year.

Passing through a dilapidated gateway, we enter a broad street lined with ragged-looking houses, and generally well stocked with camels and wild Bedawîn. A few hundred paces brings us to the great burying-ground called *Makberat Bab es-Saghîr*, "the Cemetery of the Little Gate," occupying a large open space on the left. Here lie the remains of some of the greatest warriors and statesmen whose names are recorded in Mohammedan history, and their tombs are held in veneration to the present day. Here sleeps in peace the warlike Moäwyeh, the successful opponent of 'Aly, the prophet's son-in-law, and the distinguished founder of the dynasty of the Omeiyades. Here too are the tombs of three of Mohammed's wives, and of Fatimeh, his granddaughter, the unfortunate child of 'Aly. And here lies Ibn 'Asâker, the great historian, to whose writings we are so largely indebted for our knowledge of the ancient topography and history of the city.⁶

Opposite to this cemetery, in the midst of a narrow and dark lane, is the ancient gate called *Bab es-Saghîr*, a fine Roman archway, opening in a wall of great strength and solidity. Within the gate, about ten paces, is another,

⁵ *Medân* means "race-course."

⁶ 'History of the Celebrated Tombs and Mausoleums in and around Damascus'—an Arabic MS., written about 100 years ago, in my possession.

in the second or interior wall; but, though it seems ancient, it is difficult to determine at what time it was constructed. The city was at one time wholly encompassed by a double wall, and, in those places where the suburbs are joined to it, remains of both walls are well preserved. On the whole eastern side, however, the exterior one has been removed, and the moat that encompassed it drained and partially filled up.

Bab es-Saghîr is now generally called *Bab esh-Shaghûr*, from the name of the quarter into which it leads. The city is here densely populated, and the streets narrow and tortuous in the extreme. The people are notorious for their turbulence and fierce fanaticism; and even yet it is scarcely safe for a Frank to pass through it unattended.

Returning from the gate to the main street, we force our way through crowds of pale citizens, and swarthy peasants with huge turbans and gaily embroidered coats. The houses on either side are wretched, and seem in the last stage of decay; while over those on the right are occasionally seen the crumbling battlements of the old wall. Presently, however, we emerge on a more inviting thoroughfare. Here is a spacious bazaar covered with a finely arched roof, and beyond it rise the swelling dome and tapering minaret of one of the most beautiful mosks in the city. It is the *Jâmi'a es-Sunanîyeh*, so called from its founder, Senân Pasha, who was civil governor of Damascus A.H. 990, and left behind him this splendid monument, with the bazaars around, as evidences of his taste and liberality.⁷ The minaret is conspicuous

⁷ A sketch of the life of Senân Pasha is given in the biographical work of Mohibby—a fine Arabic MS. in my possession. From this work

throughout the city, not only for the graecfulness of its proportions, but for the brilliancy of its colour, being completely covered with highly glazed green tiles. The interior of the mosk and court are tastefully ornamented with marble columns, inlaid fountains, and tessellated pavement.

Immediately adjoining this mosk is the ancient west gate of the city, called *Bab el-Jabyah*, from a village of that name which once stood without it. We learn from Ibn 'Asâker that this gate originally resembled Bab Shurky, but that the central and northern portals had been walled up before his time, and only the southern left open.⁸ From the close proximity of the houses I have been unable to ascertain how much of the primitive structure still exists; but, according to the testimony of some intelligent natives, no change has been made upon it since the time of the historian. The upper part of the present gateway is modern, and an inscription on the large stone laid across it shows that it was repaired by Nûr ed-Din. A few yards within it is another gateway, also in part modern, leading through the inner wall.

In the Roman age, and up to the period of the conquest, a noble street extended in a straight line from Bab el-Jabyah to Bab Shurky, thus completely intersecting the city. It was divided by Corinthian colonnades into three avenues, of which the central was for foot-passengers, and of the others one was used for chariots and horsemen proceeding eastward, and the second for those

it appears that he also erected the great caravanserais at Kutcifeh on the Aleppo road, S'as'a, and the Khan et-Tujâr near Mount Tabor.

⁸ History of Damascus, vol. i.

going in the opposite direction.⁹ I have been enabled to trace the remains of the colonnades at various places over nearly one-third of the length of this street. Wherever excavations are made in the line, fragments of columns are found *in situ*, at the depth, in some places, of ten feet and more below the present surface, so great has been the accumulation of rubbish during the course of ages. This street was thus a counterpart to those still seen in Palmyra and Jerash; but unfortunately the devastations of war and conquest, and the vandalism of Arab and Turkish rulers, have left only a few remnants of its former grandeur. There can scarcely be a doubt that this is the "street called Straight" referred to in the history of the Apostle Paul.¹ Its extreme length is about an English mile, and its breadth must have exceeded 100 feet.

From Bab el-Jabyah the wall runs north-by-west for 400 yards to Bab el-Hadîd. It is closely lined with modern houses, but from the upper rooms of one of them, to which I obtained access, I could see that it is here in nearly the same state as on the eastern side of the city. Parallel to it on the outside is a good street, containing some fine mosks and celebrated tombs. Here stands the Mausoleum of Abu Obeidah, the celebrated general who commanded the Muslems at the taking of Damascus, and who was the means of saving the city and its inhabitants from destruction.² Near this place also is the cemetery of

⁹ History of Damascus, vol. i.

¹ Acts ix. 11.

² Ockley's 'History of the Saracens,' pp. 137-8, Bohn's edition, 'History of Celebrated Tombs,' &c., MS.

the Sûfiyites,³ among whom are numbered some of the most celebrated names in Mohammedan literature.

Opposite Bab el-Hadîd ("The Iron Gate") is the *Seraiya* or palace, now a barrack, but still containing the official residence of the *Seraskier*, or commander-in-chief in Syria. It is a spacious quadrangle surrounded with plain buildings. In a line with it, extending westward, are three other large barracks, erected by Ibrahim Pasha.

At Bab el-Hadîd the wall is double, and there are, consequently, two gates. The foundations and sides of both seem ancient, and in the outer one may be seen some finely bevelled stones; but Ibn 'Asâker states that this gate was first opened under the rule of the Turks.⁴ It is therefore probable that it was erected by Nûr ed-Din.

Through this gate we enter a long straight bazaar called *Sûk el-Arwam*, "The Market of the Greeks." It is one of the most interesting bazaars in the city, and well worthy of a visit from every traveller, for, in addition to the

³ History of Celebrated Tombs of Damascus, MS. This name is said by some to be derived from the word *sâf*, "wool," because the members of this sect first used woollen garments exclusively. Others with more probability conjecture that it is from the Greek *Sophos*. The Sûfiyites are a kind of Derwishes, who devote themselves to contemplation and the study of the abstract mysteries of religion. They are the chief devotional writers among the Muslems.—See D'Herbelot, 'Bibliothèque Orientale,' s. v. 'Sofi.'

⁴ The *Turks* must not be confounded with the *Osmanlis*, who are generally called by that name in the present day; by the Turks, Ibn 'Asâker and Arab historians generally mean those wild and warlike tribes which issued from the plains of Tartary and shores of the Caspian Sea, and overran Syria, Persia, and India. The four dynasties of the Atabeks were all Turks. Nûr ed-Din was the second prince of the Atabekian dynasty of Irak.—D'Herbelot, s. v. 'Atrak;' and 'Tarikh el-Jenâby,' MS. in my possession.

variety of picturesque costumes continually displayed in it, the stalls will be found filled with antique armour, Damascus swords and daggers, old porcelain of quaint form and brilliant colours, weapons of every species, richly inlaid with silver, gold, and precious stones, gorgeous robes embroidered with gold, Persian carpets and shawls of Cashmere and Hind. Venerable merchants sit with all the calm dignity of hereditary princes in the midst of their wares, and are prepared to cheat and lie with saint-like meekness, especially when a Frank is observed approaching. Five times the value of each article is often demanded, and, if the traveller succeed in obtaining it for one-half of the first demand, the owner will give it up with a reluctant and resigned air, swearing that he is a loser by the bargain.

Beside this bazaar may be seen the lofty walls of the castle, rising high above the modern houses. This is a large and massive quadrangular building, situated at the north-western angle of the city. It is about 280 yards long by 200 broad, and has on each side three heavy square towers, and at each end two, besides the four at the angles. The whole is encompassed by a deep moat, which can be filled from the river. The exterior walls are in good repair, and present a rather formidable aspect, from their great height and massive flanking towers. It is not easy to determine their date, nor to say whether the Romans, the Byzantines, or the Saracens contributed most to them. The foundations are certainly not later than the Roman age, and it is probable that most of the stones of which the superstructure is now composed were hewn previous to the Mohammedan conquest. The masonry is

in general what is called *rustic*; at the north-eastern angle, however, it is different, being composed of stones of various sizes intermixed with fragments of columns. Here formerly stood the principal tower or *keep*, and against it were directed the whole forces of Timur after he had captured the city. It was long and ably defended by its heroic governor, but, being at last undermined, it fell to the ground, and the garrison was forced to surrender.

Though the exterior seems so formidable, the interior presents nothing to the eye but heaps of rubbish, covering the quadrangle, within ragged-looking walls. The castle is in fact a mere shell. A few large vaults beneath the exterior ramparts are still kept in repair, and here is now the city magazine: here also are some remnants of the ancient armoury, containing arrows and a few other weapons. So late as the time of the Chevalier d'Arvieux the interior was occupied with buildings of great beauty, encompassing a spacious court. At the farther end of this court was the great council-chamber, whose walls and ceiling were covered with the richest arabesque, and inscribed with sentences from the Koran written in letters of gold.⁵ These buildings have been all destroyed since his time, and the Janissaries who inhabited them were murdered or banished, because, from the strength of their position, they were sometimes led to defy the Turkish authorities.

In following the line of the city walls, we had reached the south-western angle of the castle; we must now pass

⁵ Mémoires, tom. ii. pp. 449-50.

round to the north-eastern angle, where the wall again commences. Two roads lead to this point, either of which the traveller may follow. The one is within the city, along the *Sûk el-Arwam*, and past the eastern and principal gate of the castle, where the best view is obtained of that building. The other is without the walls, leading by the gate of the palace, and the western portal of the castle, to the saddlers' bazaar. On leaving this bazaar a gigantic plane-tree, nearly 40 feet in circumference, may be seen on the side of the pathway. We now follow an open street, in a direction nearly east, for some 300 yards, and then turn suddenly to the right into the shoe-bazaar. Here is a large *café* deserving of a visit, as it has platforms and terraces overhanging the river, which command a good view of the northern wall of the castle and the north-eastern angle where the city wall joins it.

A few yards from the door of the *café*, and about fifty from the castle, is the gate called *Bab el-Faraj*, said to have been first opened by Nûr ed-Dîn. A triple wall defended the city on this side, and the three gates, one within the other, are still perfect; but houses and bazaars are so closely huddled together, that it is impossible to ascertain whether all the walls now exist: the outer one, which follows the right bank of the river, is still in tolerable preservation.

Proceeding eastward from hence along a narrow street, lined with good houses, we reach *Bab el-Faradîs*, "the Garden Gate." This is a fine Roman archway, leading through a wall of great thickness, and built of massive blocks of hewn stone. It is one of the ancient gates of the city, and was dedicated to the moon. About twenty

yards in front of it is another gate, called *Bab el-'Amâra*, in the outer wall: this is of Saracenic workmanship, and has a fragment of a heavy column across the top, instead of the more usual arch. About ten yards within Bab el-Faradîs is a plain but beautiful gateway, different in form from all the others, being rectangular, and having a deep moulding round the top and sides. This is probably the gate referred to by Ibn 'Asâker, as also called *Bab el-Faradîs*.⁶

The street *Bein es-Surein*⁷ extends from this place to Bab es-Salâm. In passing along it we have the outer wall a short distance on our left, close to the side of the Barada. The private houses are built so near it that it cannot be seen except by entering them. The inner walls are on the right, but are, I believe, almost completely destroyed. The river washes the foundations of the outer wall from the castle to Bab es-Salâm, and beyond it, on its left bank, is an extensive suburb, extending up a gentle slope for nearly half a mile. At this gate, however, the houses abruptly terminate, and the ancient walls still form the boundaries of the city on the whole eastern side.

Bab es-Salâm, "the gate of peace," is a Saracenic structure, erected probably in the days of Nûr ed-Dîn. It received its modern name from the fact that, when the city was invested by the Saracens, no attack was made at this place in consequence of the strength of the walls and the depth of the river. From hence to *Bab Tîma* the canal el-Akrabâny runs close to the walls, and the river meanders through delightful gardens and fragrant orchards

⁶ History of Damascus, vol. i.

⁷ That is, "Between the two walls."

a short distance beyond. During the spring and autumn months these gardens form the most delicious retreats around the city. In the evenings groups of the citizens here squat along the banks of the gently flowing river, and, as they lazily inhale the smoke of their perfumed *nargilies*, and silently gaze on the transparent waters, realise the acme of Eastern felicity. Music and dancing-girls sometimes enliven the scene; but the thorough Oriental is too listless and apathetic to derive much pleasure from these.

Bab Tûma, "Thomas' Gate," is a fine specimen of Saracenic architecture, and is in excellent preservation. Over it is an inscription with the name of the Sultan Kilawûn, and the date A.H. 634. According to Ibn 'Asâker, it received its name from a celebrated Christian leader called Thomas, who fought bravely in the defence of the city against the Saracens. A short distance from it, on the outside, once stood a large and splendid church dedicated to Saint Thomas, which was afterwards seized by the Muslims and became a mosk: there are no vestiges of it now remaining. The road leading from this gate crosses the Barada by a good bridge at the distance of about thirty yards, and then runs in a north-eastern direction across the plain, forming the great caravan route to Aleppo and Palmyra.

From Bab Tûma the wall continues eastward in a zig-zag course for some 300 yards, and then turns southward. At the angle is a well-built tower, on which is a beautiful Arabic inscription to the following effect:—
"In the name of the most merciful and gracious God. Erected in the days of our lord the Sultan el-Melek es-

Sâleh Nejm ed-Dunya w'ed-Dîn, in the year 646.”⁸ In front of this tower is a large Muslem cemetery, and beside it a collection of tombs clustered together in a white-domed building. Here lie the remains of the Sheikh Arslân, a celebrated writer and poet of the time of Nûr ed-Dîn;⁹ while close by is a fragment of a building with a Cufic inscription, which marks the spot where Khâled, called “the Sword of God,” established his head-quarters when the Saracens invested the city.¹ Some distance to the south as we approach the east gate, a large, irregular, and deserted-looking structure may be seen on the left. It is now, and has for a long period been, used as a leper-hospital, and is said to stand on the site of the house of Naaman the Syrian. Whether the tradition be well founded I will not undertake to say, but there can be no doubt that there are in several parts of the building evidences of high antiquity.

WALK THROUGH THE CITY.

We have now encompassed the ancient walls, and are therefore ready for a ramble in the interior. To save time we will enter by Bab Shurky. What a contrast do the beautiful proportions and fine masonry of the old Roman portal present to the raggedness and disorder of the street

⁸ Melek es-Sâleh was the grandson of Melek el-'Adel, brother of the renowned Saladin. He succeeded his father, Melek el-Kâmel, as ruler of Egypt and its dependencies, A.H. 635, and died twelve years afterward. With him terminated the dynasty of the Eyûbites, or family of Saladin, in Egypt.—See D'Herbelot, ‘Bibliothèque Orientale,’ s. v. ‘Saladin.’

⁹ History of the Celebrated Tombs of Damascus, &c., MS.

¹ Khâled encamped on the east of the city, and Abu Obeidah on the west.—Ockley's Hist. of Saracens.

within! The houses are mean, low, and half-ruinous, and the narrow pathway almost blocked up by the groups of old packhorses picketed round the open doors. Dogs, too, those pests of eastern cities, are everywhere prowling about, snarling over a bone, or devouring some abomination recently thrown from one of the houses. After proceeding a few paces from the gate, a neat doorway may be seen on the left opening into a fine court. This is the Armenian convent. Farther along on the same side, but at some distance from the street, and shut out from view by the intervening shops, are the Syrian church and convent, and the Greek Catholic church, with the residence of the patriarch adjoining. These are large and expensive buildings, sufficiently decked with marble pavements and gaudy paintings and silver lamps, but they display neither architectural skill in their design nor good taste in their decorations.

About 200 yards to the right of this street, up a narrow lane, is the so-called house of Ananias. It is a cave, like almost all the traditional shrines in this land, and has of late years been fitted up as a chapel by the *Terra Santa* monks. Here are shown the little window through which the angel entered, and the precise spot where Ananias stood whilst receiving the heavenly message! Beside the cave are the ruins of the ancient "Church of the Cross," mentioned by Ibn 'Asâker. Like many others in the city, it was seized by the Muslims and long used as a mosk before it fell into ruin.

Continuing along the Straight street for some 500 yards more, we have on our right the Greek church of St. Mary, a modern building erected on an ancient site. It

was here the two great Muslem leaders, Khâled and Abu 'Obeidah, met, when they had obtained access to the city, the former by treachery and the latter by treaty; and here, after a stormy scene, during which the lives of the citizens trembled in the balance, pacific counsels prevailed, and the captured city was equally divided between Muslem and Christian. The residence of the Greek patriarch of Antioch adjoins the church, attached to which also are schools supported by funds contributed by the Russian Government.

The street along which we have hitherto walked is, like a few of the other principal thoroughfares, called *es-Sultâny*, a word that has the same meaning as "Queen's highway" in England. Travellers generally call it the "Straight street," and, as it runs very nearly in the line of the ancient *via recta*, I am not inclined to quarrel with the name, though it is unknown to the natives. It extends from the east to the west gate. About the centre of this street is a fine Roman arch, whose sides have been long since buried beneath masses of rubbish, the débris of fallen grandeur. From hence westward the street is covered by a sloping roof of timber, and its sides lined with little stalls. We now stand on the border of the business part of the city, in which are long lines of bazaars teeming with the riches of the East, and spacious khans filled with the substantial fabrics of Western Europe. The whole north-western section of the city, from this point to Bab el-Jabyah on the west, and to Bab el-Faradîs on the north, is thus occupied, only intermixed here and there with noble mosks and princely mansions of the Damascus nobility. Almost every branch of in-

dustry has its own circumscribed place in the bazaars or khans, and we have thus the spice-bazaar, the tobacco-bazaar, the shoe-bazaar, the silversmiths' bazaar, and a host of others. It is interesting to wander through the different markets, and observe the various departments of trade and manufacture in full operation. Here are long rows of bearded merchants sitting in the midst of piles of silks and cotton goods, stately and motionless as the statues of the ancient deities in their temple shrines. A few steps farther and the scene is changed : hundreds of busy hands are engaged in stitching and ornamenting the neat, soft yellow slipper, or the curious gondola-shaped red overshoes. Let us now pass through this diminutive old gateway, and we enter a vast covered area, whose shattered roof, dimly seen through clouds of smoke, is supported here by massive pier and there by stately column. The din of hammer and anvil is almost deafening, and swarthy figures are seen through the gloom sitting on dirty hobs and round miniature furnaces. Heaps of the precious metals, and ornaments of various forms and chaste designs, are by their side, while diamonds, emeralds, and rubies glitter in their hands. Passing through this busy scene, we enter another bazaar, no less noisy. Here are scores of carpenters engaged in the manufacture of the ornamental clogs worn universally by the Damascus ladies. Observe how they work, all squatting. One is planing a board, holding it with his toe ! Others are carving pieces of wood, or inlaying them with silver and mother-of-pearl ; and while the hands ply the mallet and chisel, the toes do duty as a vice !

Returning to the Roman arch in the *Sultány*, we will

continue our walk. Following the street for forty or fifty paces, through files of tinsmiths and fruit-box manufacturers, we turn to the right and enter a fine bazaar called the *Bizuriyeh*, or "Seed-market." Spices, preserved fruits, and tempting confections are tastefully arranged in the open stalls on each side, reminding one that the glowing descriptions of the 'Arabian Nights' are not all imaginary. On reaching the middle of the bazaar we suddenly find ourselves in front of a noble gateway, which, as a specimen of pure Moorish architecture, is scarcely surpassed in the world. Its deeply-recessed sides are closely set with slender columns of chaste design and elaborate workmanship, while the arch over head is ornamented with those finely-carved stalactites and pendants that give such richness and ærial beauty to Saracenic gateways. Round the whole is a broad border of fretwork, with stones of different colours curiously interlaced: this is the entrance to the great khan *Assad Pasha*. The interior, though spacious and massive, falls far short of the expectations excited by the glowing description of Lamartine. The splendid dome, which recalled to the poet's mind that of St. Peter, resolves itself, when viewed by the ordinary observer, into nine rather diminutive cupolas; and the granite columns which his fancy pictured as supporting it are but square blocks of masonry, composed of alternate layers of white limestone and black basalt.² And this, we may remark, is a fair specimen of the accuracy of Lamartine's 'Pensées en Syrie.'

On reaching the end of this bazaar we have on our right

² Œuvres Complètes de M. A. de Lamartine, Paris, 1850, tom. vi. p. 67.

one of the largest and most magnificent houses in Damascus, belonging to the family of the man who built the khan just mentioned. It has seven courts, and *salons* almost without number, gorgeously ornamented with marble fountains, and tessellated pavement, and walls and ceilings covered with mosaic and arabesque. Turning to the left up a narrow street, we soon reach the great school established by Nûr ed-Dîn, a prince as highly celebrated for his justice as his warlike achievements. This building is among the finest in the city, but is unfortunately so closely surrounded by mud-walls and modern houses as to be nearly invisible from without. The tomb of its illustrious founder is on the west side of it, in the cloth-bazaar. A short distance from the school, to the west, is a fragment of an ancient building, in which, on an inverted stone, is a Greek inscription, but a portion of it is now covered by a modern wall.³

We here enter the mercers' bazaar, and pursue our course northward, as fast as we can press through the crowds of men and strings of laden mules and camels that continually throng it. Leaving the custom-house behind on the left, and the slave-market on the right, we reach at last, after many a crush and jostle, a wide bazaar branching to the right and left. Here we terminate our walk, and pause for a time to examine the most interesting

³ The following is the portion of the inscription now visible. As it is inverted, it can with difficulty be deciphered:—

Ε Π Ι Τ Ω Ν Η Φ Ι Α Ν Τ Ω Ν Ι Α Ν Ο Ν ---
 Ι Φ Ο Τ Α Μ Ι Ω Ν Τ Ο Γ Α Μ Μ Α Α Π Ο Τ Ο Υ ---
 Τ Η Σ Α Μ Α Ε Η Α Τ Ο Υ Ο Ο Δ Ο Υ ---
 Ο Ο Τ Ω Ν Τ Ο Κ Υ Ρ Ι Ο Υ ---
 Α Ι Ο ---



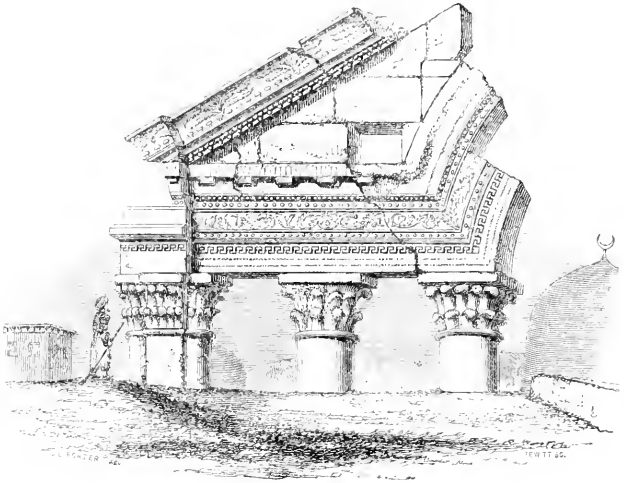
remains of antiquity in the city, and one of the finest buildings in Syria.

THE GREAT MOSK OF THE OMEIYADES.

A glance at the accompanying plan⁴ will enable the reader to perceive the point to which I have conducted him; and by occasionally consulting it he will be able to follow me while I attempt to describe this splendid edifice.

At the top of the steps which lead down to the book bazaar are four massive columns in a line, at each end of which is a square pier of masonry with a semi-column on the inner side. The shafts alone are visible from the street, as the capitals rise above the domed roof; but on ascending to the top of a neighbouring house, permission to do which can be easily obtained by the payment of a small fee, the capitals and superstructure can be closely examined. These columns supported a triumphal arch of uncommon richness and beauty: a portion of it, with the frieze and cornice, still remains. The accompanying sketch will convey some idea of its present state and former grandeur. The length of the structure is over 80 feet, and the extreme height could not have been less than 70. From this splendid arch a double colonnade

⁴ For the greater part of the measurements from which this plan has been constructed I am indebted to M. Antôn Bulâd. He obtained them from a Christian who was employed by the authorities a few years ago to repair the interior of the mosk. This man was not satisfied with the general dimensions, but he measured every pillar and every chamber in the whole fabric.



Remains of Triumphal Arch.

leads to the western gate of the great building—a distance of sixty yards. Most of these columns still remain, but many are covered by the modern walls.

The great building itself is a quadrangle 163 yards long by 108 wide, surrounded by a lofty wall of fine masonry. On the northern side of the quadrangle is an open court, with cloisters round the three sides, supported in front by arches resting on pillars of limestone, marble, and granite. Many of these columns have, within the last century, been enclosed in piers of masonry. On the south side of the court is the mosk or *hârem*, whose interior dimensions are 431 feet by 125. Its whole side-wall toward the court is supported on columns, most of them being now enclosed in piers. Two rows of columns, 22 feet high, extend the whole length of the building, and

support the triple roof. These divide the interior into nave and aisles of equal dimensions. Across the middle is a transept supported on eight massive piers of solid masonry, each 12 feet square; and a splendid dome, nearly 50 feet in diameter and above 120 in height, stands in the centre. The court is well paved with limestone, interspersed with squares of marble of various colours. Nearly the whole of the interior of the mosk has a tessellated pavement of marble, now covered with Persian and Turkey carpets. The wall of the transept, and the piers that support it, are coated with the finest marble in beautiful patterns; while on portions of the wall above, and on the interior of the dome, may be seen fragments of fine mosaic representing palm-trees and palaces. The *Minbar* or "pulpit" stands between the two southern piers that support the dome, and is covered with a canopy of green velvet richly embroidered. Between the third and fourth columns to the east of these piers is a building of great beauty. Its walls are of wood, elaborately carved, inlaid, and gilt, with pilasters at intervals; on the top is a cupola of exquisite symmetry, covered with a substance resembling tin-foil of a delicate green colour, and surmounted by a golden crescent. Underneath it is a cave in which is placed the *head of John the Baptist!* Ibn 'Asâker relates of Khâled, the great general, that after the capture of the city he visited this cathedral, and insisted on obtaining admission to the sacred cave. Having descended, he found a very small chamber with an altar on which was laid a golden casket, with an inscription in Greek to the following effect: "This casket contains the head of John the Baptist, son of Zachariah."

He restored the relic to its place, and gave orders for the cave to be carefully shut up again.⁵

Opposite this shrine, on the other side of the nave, is a neat pulpit, elevated on four slender columns, and covered with a canopy. From this spot the Muezzin on each Friday calls the faithful to prayer. Along the south side of the mosk are the *Mihrábs*, or prayer-niches; each sect of the orthodox Muslems having one for their own use.

Leaving the mosk by the southern door, called *Bab ez-Ziádeh*,⁶ we observe two colonnades running southward parallel to each other. Following the line of these through the silk-thread bazaar, we enter the silversmiths' bazaar, to the roof of which we ascend by a rather difficult staircase, and from it obtain one of the finest views of the southern side of the mosk. Here we see a long range of *round-arched* windows, which, together with the character of the masonry, seem to indicate that the whole of this wall was erected before the Mohammedan era. At the south-western angle is a section of masonry with pilasters, of a still earlier date; and on proceeding to the great windows in the end of the transept we can trace with ease and accuracy the limits of another ancient fragment. This latter is of high antiquity, and formed part of a once splendid edifice. It was left in its present position in order to preserve a spacious doorway whose sides and top are richly ornamented with sculptured scroll-work and leaves, somewhat similar in design and execution to those

⁵ History of Damascus, vol. i., MS.

⁶ This name was given to it because it was not one of the original doors of the building, but was *added* after the Muslems obtained complete possession. The word signifies "the added gate."

in the great temple at Bââlbek. On each side of this door is a smaller one of similar workmanship. The circular top of that on the east can just be seen above the roof of the bazaar; but by looking down a little opening to a chamber on the west, its fellow may be perceived entire. This magnificent portal is not in the centre of the building, and could not have been intended for a structure similar in design or extent with that now existing. Over the door is a cross, with the following inscription in good characters; but both were evidently added at a period subsequent to the date of its erection, and inscribed on a place never intended to receive them:—

+ ΗΒΑΣΙΛΙΑΚΟΥΧΕΒΑΣΙΛΙΑΙΑΝΤΩΝΤΩΝΑΙΩΝΩΝΚΑΙΗΔΕΣΠΟΤΙΑ-
 ΚΟΥΕΝΠΙΑΧΓΕΝΕΑΙ ΚΑΙ
 ΓΕΝΕΑΙ

This is the Septuagint rendering of Psalm cxlv. 13; with the addition of the **ΧΕ** to make it the more plainly applicable to Christ. It therefore reads thus: “Thy kingdom, O Christ, is an everlasting kingdom, and Thy dominion endureth throughout all generations.” What an inscription to be found in such a place! Strange that the glory of Christ, and the perpetuity of His kingdom, should thus have remained inscribed on a building over which the Crescent has towered for full twelve hundred years, and within whose hallowed precincts the feet of Christ’s people dare not tread! Is it intended to humble the Christian now; or is it intended to inspire him with new hope? Happy, indeed, would it be for this city, happy for this unfortunate land, did the people all acknowledge this glorious truth! While descending on one occasion, during the present year (1855), from this place,

a Muslem *Effendy* asked me whether I had seen the inscription, and if I could interpret it to him. I replied in the affirmative, and gave him a literal translation, at which he seemed greatly astonished.

Before the eastern gate, called *Bab Jeirûn*, is a rather curious portico. It is shut in by a solid wall at the sides and angles; but in front has six columns supporting semi-circular arches; the central arch being nearly double the span of the others. The columns, like those of the interior, are Corinthian; but while the latter are in general well-proportioned and finely executed, those are of a debased style. The mosk has three minarets. The *Mâdinet el-Arûs*, "Minaret of the bride," stands near the centre of the northern side of the court. It is the most ancient of all, having been erected by the Khâlif Walîd.⁷ The *Mâdinet Isa*, "Minaret of Jesus," stands at the south-eastern angle, and has an elevation of near 250 feet. There is a tradition given by Ibn 'Asâker that Christ, when He comes to judge the world, will first descend on this minaret; and then, entering the mosk, will gather before him Muslems, Christians, and Jews. All being assembled, the names of believers will be read from the great book of God, when both Christians and Jews will learn to their dismay that Muslems alone have their names inscribed in the "Book of Life." The *Mâdinet el-Ghur-bîyeh*, "Western minaret," is built in the Saracenic style, and is of exquisite beauty. A more ancient one that

⁷ This is perhaps one of the most ancient minarets in the world; for according to Arab historians the Khâlif Walîd was the first who erected such structures, and we know that he commenced the repair of this mosk very soon after his accession to power.

occupied its site was burned A.H. 803, and the accident was attributed to the malice of the Christians, who were in consequence obliged to contribute the necessary funds for the erection of the present one.

Such is the present state of the Mosk of the Omeiyades, and of the ancient buildings around it. The accompanying engraving, from a photograph by James Graham, Esq., conveys a good idea of the building as it now appears overtopping the neighbouring houses. (*See frontispiece.*)

The style and workmanship of three distinct eras are distinguishable in several parts of this mosk and the adjoining ruins. We have first the massive columns and noble superstructure of the triumphal arch, the portion of the wall at the south-western angle, and the splendid doorway on the southern side, as types of Grecian or Roman architecture. And we have next the exterior walls with their semicircular-arched windows, and the Greek inscription, as evidences of Christian art. And then we have lastly the dome, the minarets, the tessellated pavement, the marble fountains, and the gilded crescent towering high over all, as emblems of Muslem taste and rule. And both history and tradition concur in their testimony to the correctness of this conclusion. The Christian and Mohammedan inhabitants will universally tell you that this structure was once a heathen temple, and that it became in process of time a Christian church, and lastly a mosk. Arab writers of eminence, and of almost every age from the conquest to the present century, have furnished ample details concerning its history, antiquities, and transmutations; and they seem to take especial delight in giving glowing descriptions of its

splendour alike under heathen, Christian, and Muslem sway.

Of all those who have written on this subject, or on the city generally, none have ever equalled in minuteness or accuracy the celebrated Ibn 'Asâker. The first volume of his great work contains a full description of the city and its various public buildings; and from his ample details I have been enabled to trace many an interesting relic of former grandeur, and to discover the ruins of some noble fabrics hitherto hidden and unknown. The accompanying plan will give the reader an idea of the design, extent, and magnitude of both the ancient temple and modern mosk. Ibn 'Asâker's description corresponds exactly with it; and indeed it was from a perusal of his work I was led to explore the exterior colonnades and triumphal arches. All the columns and walls shaded *black* in the plan are ancient, and I have myself seen them; many of the other columns still exist, but, being in houses, or enclosed in modern walls, I have not been able to obtain access to them.

This historian informs us that on the eastern and western sides of the *temple* were two magnificent arches, supported on massive columns, and still existing in his day. These were connected by double colonnades with the great doors or gates of the temple area, *Bab Jeirûn* and *Bab el-Berûd*. The arch on the west, in front of the latter gate, I have already described; and that upon the east is represented as having been much more splendid. These terminated the avenues leading to the principal entrances of the great temple of Damascus. In the MS. called 'Fudâyel esh-Sham,' written by 'Aly Ibn

Mohammed el-Mâleky about A.H. 435, it is stated that this mosk was formerly a heathen temple erected by the Greeks, who worshipped the seven stars, and prayed toward the north. On its western side stands a great building supported on massive columns; and on the eastern side is a similar one connected with the palace of the princes of Damascus. Another celebrated writer, of a later age, says, "On the east side of the great temple stood a palace called *Jeirûn*, erected upon columns, as some affirm, by one of the genii under the command of Solomon; but according to others by *Ad* the son of *Uz*, the son of *Aram*, the son of *Shem*. *Ad* had two sons, *Jeirûn* and *Berîd*, and for these he erected the two castles which still bear their names. He also was the first who enlarged Damascus and set up its seven gates."⁸ In the history of *Ibn Kethîr*⁹ we read that "The great Roman pediment that stood in front of *Bab Jeirûn* was removed by order of *Shekar*, the vizier of *Melek el-'Aâdel*, A.H. 601, and the stones employed in paving the (court of the) great mosk."

At the distance of 120 yards from *Bab Jeirûn*, on the side of the street, may be seen a massive column upwards

⁸ Gen. x. 21. D'Herbelot, 'Bib. Orient.' s. v. 'Ad.' We here see how the Arab historians agree with the account given in the Holy Scriptures. And it is remarkable also to observe the coincidence between their views, as here given, and the statement of *Josephus*, who says that *Uz* the son of *Aram* founded *Damascus* (*Ant.* i. 6. 4). Can it be that the Arab historians were acquainted with his writings? or had they both access to some common authority? The Arab author above referred to is *Fakher ed-Dîn*, and the title of his work is 'Ayûn et-Touwarikh.' The author died A.H. 864.

⁹ The title of this work is 'El Badâyat w'en-Nahâyat,' and the full name of the author 'Amâd ed-Dîn Ab' el-Feda *Ismail ibn 'Amer*. He was a native of *Damascus*, where he died A.H. 774.

of five feet in diameter. This fragment I had observed shortly after my arrival in the city; but it was not till after reading Ibn 'Asâker that the idea occurred to me that this might be one of the pillars of the great Roman arch. On inquiry I learned that another of similar dimensions stood in the house on the opposite side of the street; and some time afterwards I saw another standing perfect, a few yards farther east. Their position answers in every respect to the position assigned to the triumphal arch. This splendid monument appears to have consisted of twelve noble columns in two rows supporting the arched entablature.

A colonnade of large pillars can still be traced for more than 100 yards to the northward of this eastern arch. It then turns westward at a right angle, and continues in a straight line until opposite the western arch, where it again turns southward. From thirty to forty of these still remain *in situ*, though some of them are mere fragments. Whether this vast quadrangle included some royal palace or public building, or whether the columns were intended to mark the boundaries of the great temple area, it is now impossible to determine. It is highly probable, however, that there stood here a noble fabric similar in design to the Temple of the Sun at Palmyra, with its spacious court and magnificent colonnades; and were the modern houses cleared away, the eye would perhaps rest on ruins as vast and as imposing as those which excite the admiration of the traveller in the city of the desert.

Ibn 'Asâker states that the principal entrance to the temple itself was on the south side, by a triple gateway, and that in front of it was a large area surrounded by a

double row of pillars. The author of the 'Fudâyel esh-Sham' thus writes:—"The worshippers entered this temple by a door on the south side, constructed of large sculptured stones, and having a smaller door on each side of it." This splendid portal, as we have already seen, still exists almost perfect, and portions of the colonnades exist also. Nearly twenty of the columns may be seen in the shoe-bazaar opposite Bab ez-Ziâdeh, and the whole are given in outline on the plan, as it appears they once stood.

None of these remains of former grandeur are *probably* of an earlier date than the time of the Roman dominion in this city, and *certainly* none are antecedent to the era of the Seleucidæ; but still it is highly probable that the *site* is one which, *from the earliest ages*, has been occupied by the great shrine of the Damascenes. The Greeks and Romans always revered the sacred buildings of conquered nations; and with an easy liberality they either adopted their gods or decided that they were merely foreign names for their own deities. Baal thus became Helios or Jupiter, and Ashtoreth was resolved into Juno or Venus, as fancy or favour dictated; and so from the same analogy may we infer, with some degree of plausibility, that Rimmon, the Syrians' god, would be appropriated by Greek and Roman, and the site of his temple, in which Naaman was forced to worship with his royal master, be had in reverence.

But however this may be, there can be no doubt that on this spot once stood a heathen temple of great extent and beauty, which was afterwards appropriated by the Christians, and converted into a church. Some forty years ago, when the mosk was undergoing repairs, Chris-

tian workmen were employed in it, and one of them found a Greek inscription on a large stone at Bab Jeirûn. He immediately copied it, and had it translated, but afterwards lost the original, and the stone itself was defaced. M. Antôn Bulâd, having heard of this circumstance at a subsequent period, applied for a copy of the Arabic translation, which is to the following effect:—"This Church of the Blessed John the Baptist was restored by Arcadius, the son of King Theodosius."¹ Arcadius reigned from A.D. 395 to 408, thus commencing his reign about seventy years after Christianity was established by Constantine. He therefore may have been the first who constructed the building for Christian worship, or perhaps he only refitted it in a style of greater splendour. It continued to be the cathedral church of the diocese of Damascus for about three hundred years.

It remained in the hands of the Christians until the conquest of the city by the Saracens, when, in terms of the treaty drawn up by Abu Obeidah, and sanctioned by Khâled, it was equally divided between the Christians and Muslems—the former worshipping in the western, the latter in the eastern end. Von Kremer, in his recent

¹ The reign of the Emperor Theodosius is one of the most important periods of the Later Empire. He adopted the most rigorous measures for the total extirpation of the heathen worship in every part of his dominions. In A.D. 381 he prohibited sacrifices, and forbade the inquisition into futurity. Most of the heathen temples were in his days either destroyed or changed into churches; and there can be no doubt that in that period perished some of the noblest structures of antiquity. It is very probable that the great temple in Damascus was then pillaged and partly ruined, and that his son Arcadius restored it to something like its former grandeur, and dedicated it to the service of the true God. For the history of Theodosius, see Gibbon's 'Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,' and Tillemont's 'Histoire des Empereurs,' vol. v.

work on the Topography of Damascus,² states that it was in this church that Khâled and Abu Obeidah met on the capture of the city; and that it was divided because the former had entered from the eastern side by the sword, and the latter from the western by treaty. This, however, is contrary to the statement of Ibn 'Asâker, and of Arab historians in general. Almost immediately on the accession of Walîd, the sixth Khalif of the Omeiyades, A.H. 86, he demanded of the Christians that they should sell their half of the building. They refused, and showed him that, by the words of the original treaty, their rights were guaranteed to them. After consultations with his ministers, he again summoned the Christian chiefs, and ordered them to produce their contract. They did so, and he showed them that they held many churches to which they had no title, and among others the great Church of St. Thomas, outside Bab Tûma; the Church of the Virgin, in which the treaty had been signed; the Church of the Cross, near the eastern gate; and all those in the plain without the city. "Yield up your portion of the Cathedral of St. John," demanded the Khalif, "or I will drive you from every one of these churches, and burn them to the ground." Reluctantly they were forced to comply, and the Khalif entering the church with his troops, commanded them to remove or destroy every vestige of Christian worship. Standing on the great altar,

² 'Topographie von Damascus, Im auftrage der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften, herausgegeben von A. von Kremer. Wien, 1854.' Only the first part of this work is as yet published (Jan. 1855). It contains some interesting information on this city. M. von Kremer spent some months here.

Walîd himself directed the work of despoliation. Seeing his position, one of his followers, more superstitious or more timid than the rest, thus addressed him:—"Prince of the faithful, I tremble for your safety, lest the power of that famous image beside which you stand be exerted against you." "Fear not for me," replied the proud Muslem monarch, "for the first spot on which I shall plant my battle-axe will be the head of this image." Thus saying, he lifted his weapon and dashed the idol to the ground. The Christians raised a cry of horror at the sacrilege, but their voices were drowned in the shout of the Muslems, "Ullah Hu Akbar."³

Having thus obtained possession of the whole building, Walîd spared neither expense nor labour in its decoration, and is said to have expended upon it a sum of upwards of five millions of dinars! Twelve hundred choice artisans were brought from Constantinople, marble and porphyry were imported from Alexandria, and columns valuable for their rarity or beauty were conveyed at great expense from other cities of Syria. In this warlike monarch's days Damascus was the great reservoir for the plunder of nations, and much of it was devoted to the ornamenting of this mosk, as if the consecration of the booty would atone for the sin of robbery. Columns of granite, porphyry, and verd-antique were set up in the court and sanctuary. The floor was of tessellated pavement of rarest marbles, and the lower part of the walls similarly adorned.

³ Ibn 'Asâker, vol. i. This historian universally quotes from contemporary authors, or else derives his information from authenticated tradition.

The upper walls and interior of the dome were covered with mosaic, in which were figured the sacred cities of Mecca, Medina, and Jerusalem, in the midst of groves of palm and orange trees. The numerous prayer-niches were set with diamonds and other precious stones of great size and price, while around their sculptured arches overhead were wreaths of vine-branches wrought in gold. The whole roof was of wood, carved and inlaid with gold; and from it depended six hundred lamps of pure gold, supported by chains of the same metal.⁴

Such was this splendid edifice, as described by historians of eminence who were eye-witnesses of its magnificence. Some little allowance must of course be made for the poetical imagination of the Arabs, but still there can be no doubt that their accounts are in the main correct. Indeed many remains of this splendour may still be seen by such as are so fortunate as to obtain admission to the mosk. The tessellated pavement is almost entire, the columns of granite and porphyry occupy their places, and fragments of the mosaic of the walls are visible in the transept, but the gold and precious stones have been long since removed. The lamps were taken down by the Khalif 'Amer ibn 'Abd el-'Azîz, and wisely deposited in the royal treasury, and lamps of brass substituted for them.⁵ On the capture of the city by Timûr, that ruthless destroyer left here as elsewhere fearful marks of his power,

⁴ Ibn 'Asâker, *ut sup.*—Fudâyel es-Sham, MS.

⁵ Fudâyel esh-Sham, MS. The description given by the author of this work may be ranked as next in interest and minuteness to that of Ibn 'Asâker.

and the building has never since regained its former grandeur.⁶

The only other buildings deserving of particular notice are as follows:—The tomb of the great Saladin, whose body was first buried within the castle walls, but was afterwards removed to the place, near the great mosk, which it now occupies. A fine mausoleum has been erected over his grave, but it is impossible to obtain access to it. A short distance from it, on opposite sides of the street, are the mausoleums of Melek ed-Dhâher Bibars and his son. These are fine specimens of Saracenic architecture. The interior of the former may generally be seen through the windows that open to the street. The floor is of marble, the walls are covered with mosaic, and the ceiling adorned with fine arabesque. Numerous gaudy banners and curious weapons hang round the apartment, and give a strange wild look to the whole. The building was erected, as we learn from a beautiful inscription over the doorway, by Melek es-Saïd, the son of Melek ed-Dhâher, A.H. 676. The mosk, school, and mausoleum on the opposite side, were erected by the same ruler in honour of himself! The mosk and hospital of Sultan Selîm is a splendid structure, and beautifully situated on the banks of the river west of the city. In the interior are some fine columns of red and grey granite, and one or two of porphyry. From the rising ground

⁶ See the History of Timur by Ibn Arabsha, or 'Ahmed Arabsiad, Vit. Timuri,' ed. Manger, vol. ii. p. 1, seq. Also, 'Histoire de Timur-Bec, par Cherefidin,' trad. par M. de la Croix, tom. iii. pp. 320-47.

beside this mosk may be obtained one of the most enchanting views around Damascus. Before you is a little vale covered with the richest verdure, through which the silvery stream of the ancient Abana meanders on its way to the old city. The graceful slopes on each side are densely covered with foliage of every tint, from the deep green of the walnut to the golden hue of the pomegranate. In the background rise the mountains, naked, white, and rugged, while in the centre of the range yawns the wild gorge through which the river rushes to the plain.

CHAPTER III.

HISTORY OF DAMASCUS.

1st Period: First notice in Bible — When founded, and by whom — Tradition of Abraham — David takes city — Ben-Hadad and his royal line — Rezon — Samaria besieged — Kingdom of Damascus — Elijah — Naaman — Elisha — Hazael — City taken by Jeroboam — By Tiglath-pileser. *2nd Period:* Fulfillment of prophecy — Fall of Assyrian empire — The city captured by Pharaoh-Necho, and by Nebuchadnezzar — Alexander the Great. *3rd Period:* Damascus under the Ptolemies — Growing influence of Rome — Fall of Egyptian rule in Syria — Division of empire of the Seleucidæ — Damascus again a royal city — Aretas — Fall of the Seleucidæ — The city taken by the Romans — Pompey. *4th Period:* Damascus under the Romans — Cleopatra — Antioch — Strabo's account of the city — Nicolaus the historian — Aretas and Herod — Spread of Christianity — Paul's conversion — Apollodorus the architect — The city taken by Sapor — Odenathus and Zenobia — Damascus a metropolitan city — Captured by Persians — Besieged and taken by Mohammedans. *5th Period:* Under the Arabs — Muslem dynasties — The Crusaders — Saladin — The Mamlukes — Origin and history of the Turks — Conquests of Timûr — Awful massacre — Sultan Selim conquers Syria — Turkish policy — Ibrahim Pasha — Richard Wood, Esq.

THE history of Damascus, if written with that fulness which its importance demands, would fill a volume. This is a task I do not attempt. A brief sketch of the leading events of which it was the theatre is all I aim at. Such as have wandered with me among the interesting remains of former grandeur with which this city abounds may wish perhaps to know something more of the men who erected them. To these I dedicate the following pages.

The first notice of this city in the Bible is in Gen. xiv.

15, where we read that Abraham, having overcome the kings who had pillaged Sodom and carried Lot away captive, "pursued them unto Hobah, which is on the left hand of Damascus." This city must, even in that early age, have been a place of considerable importance, since it was thus selected to mark the position of another; and we also infer from this circumstance that it continued to prosper until the time of Moses, as otherwise he would not have referred to it at all. Abraham's steward was Eliezer of Damascus,¹ and some have hence concluded that he was its founder; but just as well might we say that Hagar was the founder of the kingdom of Egypt, because she was called an Egyptian.²

The description given above of its situation will leave but little doubt upon the mind of any student of ancient history that this spot would be among the first selected for settled habitation in eastern Syria. In the tenth chapter of Genesis there is a brief history of the planting of the various nations of the world by the posterity of Noah, and we observe there that the descendants of Canaan peopled the country which was afterwards called by the name of their progenitor. It would appear, however, that these colonies settled mostly toward the south and west, occupying the whole region between the Mediterranean and the Jordan.³ North of this section, their appropriated territory was confined to a narrow strip between Lebanon and the Great Sea; and, with the single exception of Hamath, they do not appear to have had a settlement eastward of that mountain-range.

The countries peopled by the descendants of Shem are

¹ Gen. xv. 2.

² Gen. xvi. 3.

³ Gen. x. 15-19.

not so clearly defined as those possessed by their brethren. We read, however, that *Aram* was a son of Shem;⁴ and it is well known that the most common name of the province or kingdom of which Damascus was the capital was *Aram*. The region called by this name was of great extent; but the several sections of it were known by distinguishing appellations, as *Aram Damesk*,⁵ *Aram Naharayim*,⁶ *Padan Aram*,⁷ and many others.⁸ Gesenius suggests that this name was derived, not from Aram the son of Shem, but from Aram the son of Kemuel, and grandson of Nahor.⁹ This, however, is by no means probable; for in Gen. xxv. 20, Bethuel, the *uncle* of this Aram, is called Bethuel the *Aramean of Padan Aram*; and it is not very likely that the uncle would be described as dwelling in a country which took its name from his nephew. Indeed it is evident that in Abraham's time the name was applied to a very large district, for not only is it frequently mentioned in the book of Genesis, but, in the very first place where it occurs as the name of a country, another descriptive word is added to make it more definite. When Abraham commanded his servant to bring a wife for his son Isaac, we read that "The servant of Abraham arose and went to *Mesopotamia*;" or, as it is in the Hebrew, to "Aram of the two rivers." The natural conclusion from this is, that Aram was of great extent, including not only Mesopotamia, but other countries westward; and that it was therefore much too large a territory to have received its name from Aram, the grandson of Nahor.

We have no reason to question, but every reason to be-

⁴ Gen. x. 22.

⁵ 2 Sam. viii. 5.

⁶ Gen. xxiv. 10.

⁷ Gen. xxv. 20.

⁸ 2 Sam. x. 6 and 8, &c.

⁹ Gesenius, Hebrew Lexicon, s. v. אֲרָם.

lieve, the plain statement of Josephus, that Aram the son of Shem was progenitor of the Aramites, whom the Greeks call Syrians.¹ Aram and Damascus are almost everywhere closely connected in the Word of God. "Aram of Damascus" was the distinguishing title of Northern Syria. Isaiah says, "The head of Syria, or Aram, is Damascus;" and wherever this word is used alone in Scripture, it is generally intended to designate the territory of Damascus.² These facts tend to verify the statement of Josephus, that Uz, the son of Aram, was the founder of this city.³

When Aram and his descendants took possession of north-eastern Syria, Damascus would unquestionably be one of the first positions chosen for permanent habitation. The wide-spreading plain, luxuriant vegetation, and abundant waters, would not fail to attract attention in the East. Wandering tribes in search of a country and a home were drawn together by the richness and the beauty of the spot, and in those early days founded a city which has survived the lapse of full four thousand years, and even yet retains all the freshness and vigour of youth. As it is one of the oldest, it is thus one of the most remarkable cities in the world.

Josephus makes a statement regarding this city which he took from the work of the celebrated historian Nicolaus of Damascus, and which deserves to be recorded here because it appears to be corroborated by local traditions of our own times. It is as follows:—"Abram reigned at Damascus, being a foreigner, who came with an army out

¹ Ant. i. 6, 4.

² See 1 Kings x. 29; xi. 25; xv. 18; Isa. vii.; Amos i. 5. In all of which passages "Syria" is "Aram" in the original.

³ Ant. *ut sup.*

of the land above Babylon, called the land of the Chaldeans. But after a long time he got up and removed from that country also with his people, and went into the land then called the land of Canaan, but now the land of Judea, and this when his posterity were become a multitude; as to which posterity of his we relate their history in another work. Now the name of Abraham is even still famous in the country of Damascus; *and there is shown a village named from him 'THE HABITATION OF ABRAHAM.'*"⁴ It is remarkable that in the village of Burzeh, one hour north of the city, there is a sacred *wely* called by the name of the patriarch (*Masjed Ibrahim*), and held in high veneration by the Muslems. Pilgrimages are made to it at a certain season every year, and miracles are said to be there performed by the derwîshes and religious sheikhs. The tradition attached to this place is of no recent date, for Ibn 'Asâker, who wrote previous to A.H. 571, gives a long account of it, and says it was here that Abraham worshipped God when he turned back from the pursuit of the kings who had plundered Sodom and had carried away Lot. The historian, according to his usual practice, traces back the tradition through a long line of celebrated names to the time of the Prophet.⁵

The territory of Damascus was not included in the land divided by lot among the tribes of Israel.⁶ The province

⁴ Ant. i. 7, 2. The words here given are taken from Nicolaus' 'General History.' Nicolaus was almost a contemporary of Josephus. He was a friend of King Herod the Great, and of the Roman Emperor Augustus. He died about the commencement of the Christian era.

⁵ Ibn 'Asâker's 'History of Damascus,' vol. i., MS. There is also a brief notice of this place in the 'History of the Celebrated Tombs of Damascus,' a small MS. work in my possession, to which reference has already been made. The author gives the names of several writers who mention the tradition.

⁶ Josh. xx.; Joseph. Ant. v. 1, 22.

of Naphtali bordered upon it, and so also did that of the half tribe of Manasseh beyond the Jordan; but neither of these included it, in whole or in part. And even the country promised by God to the Israelities in the Book of Numbers, ch. xxxiv., does not embrace Damascus. This "Land of Promise" extends as far north as Hamath. Lebanon, the valley of Cœlesyria, and the great plain of Hums, are taken in; but Damascus, with its territory, is left out.⁷

The next mention of Damascus in the sacred volume is in the history of King David. This monarch marched to chastise the King of Zobah for some depredations made on his territories near the Euphrates, and, having subdued him, he found a new adversary in the Arameans of Damascus, who came to succour Hadadezer their ally, under their King Hadad⁸ (B.C. 1040). These also were overthrown by the monarch of Israel, who, to prevent a recurrence of the same act, placed garrisons in their kingdom. Damascus must at that period have been a powerful monarchy, or its king would not have ventured to make war on the victorious David. Josephus, on the authority of Nicolaus of Damascus, represents Hadad as a man of great power, governing an extensive kingdom. His posterity, he adds, reigned in Damascus for ten generations; and each of his successors adopted his name.⁹ The words of Scripture corroborate these statements, for in the reign of Asa, ninety years after David's time, one of the

⁷ More full particulars will be given on the subject when I attempt to define the north-eastern boundaries of the "Promised Land."

⁸ 2 Sam. viii. 3-6; Joseph. Ant. vii. 5, 2.

⁹ Ant. vii. 5, 2. Nicolaus says, "They succeeded one another in his kingdom, and in his name . . . as did the Ptolemies in Egypt."

most powerful monarchs of Damascus was called Ben-Hadad, that is, the "son of Hadad;" and the words of the passage in 1 Kings xv. 18, do not in reality militate against this view. Benhadad might be the son of Tabrimon, the son of Hezion, and yet of the seed royal. On his accession to the throne he would assume the distinctive royal title of Benhadad or Hadad, just as each successive ruler of Egypt took the name of Ptolemy.

In the days of the first Hadad, Rezon, a refugee from the court of Hadadezer, settled in Damascus with a band of followers, and there attained to great power. It would appear as if Hadad had been dethroned by him for a time, as he is said to have reigned in Damascus; but the meaning of the passage may perhaps simply be, that this man became a famous general, and that on account of his military skill he acquired great influence at court and in the direction of public affairs. Or, if we are to take the history as given by Josephus, Rezon was only a powerful chief of banditti, or sheikh of an Arab tribe, who was permitted by the King of Damascus to live in his dominions, and to plunder his enemies.¹

¹ Joseph. Ant. viii. 7, 6. There is considerable obscurity about this passage, and about the connexion of this man with Hadad the Edomite. If we suppose that Rezon really became King of Damascus, as seems to be implied in 1 Kings xi. 25, this is directly opposed to the clear statement of Josephus that Hadad and *his posterity* were the rulers there. Dr. Kitto (Pictorial Bible, 1 Kings xi. 14) shifts this difficulty by saying that it is Hadad, and not Rezon, who is referred to as reigning in Damascus; and his criticism is probably correct. Still this is equally opposed to the words of Josephus; for this Hadad was an Edomite, and different from the King of Damascus of whom the historian affirms that after his (Hadad's) death his posterity reigned in Damascus for ten generations. It also appears from Josephus that the portion of Syria over which Hadad the Edomite ruled was at Zobah (Ant. viii. 7, 6). It appears to me that the solution of the whole matter is simply this:

Scripture history is now silent as to the affairs of Damascus for a period of fifty years. During this time the royal line of Hadad occupied the throne, and established the kingdom in strength. According to the quotation of Josephus from the historian Nicolaus, above referred to, three kings of this family reigned during the interval between David and Asa. The latter monarch, being threatened by the King of Israel, sent presents to Benhadad—the fourth in descent from Hadad—and besought his assistance against his foe. The latter immediately marched against the King of Israel, and pillaged first the border cities of Dan, Jjon, and Abel, and then laid waste the whole province of Naphtali.² From this period Damascus assumed an important place among the kingdoms of Western Asia, and exercised great influence on the affairs of Israel and Judah. The jealousies and rivalries of these two monarchies generally prevented them from uniting against a common foe, and afforded besides a favourable opportunity for a powerful neighbour to tyrannize over both. The royal house of Hadad were not slow to take every advantage of these circumstances.

About thirty years after the preceding event another Benhadad, either a son or descendant of the former, collected his forces, and, summoning his allies around his standard, marched into the land of Israel, and marshalled

Rezon and Hadad the Edomite became chiefs of warlike tribes who lived within the dominions of the King of Damascus, and yielded to him a kind of allegiance. They were always willing to fight his battles, when they could at the same time revenge their own wrongs. The very same policy is pursued in this country in the present day. Powerful Arab tribes, who own a light allegiance to the Turkish government, are often employed to keep open enemies in check; and this they are ready to do if they can thereby revenge their own wrongs or secure rich booty.

² 2 Kings xv. 19, 20; Joseph. Ant. viii. 12, 4.

his vast army around the walls of Samaria. His haughty message to Ahab the king bears ample testimony to the power he was conscious of possessing; while the humble answer of Ahab but too plainly acknowledged the superiority of his foe. But God fought for Israel, and by the instrumentality of a little band of warriors destroyed the proud armies of Aram. A second time did Benhadad try his fortune in the field, but with still worse results: his army was almost annihilated, and he himself taken prisoner. The King of Israel, however, having still a slavish fear of his fallen enemy, contrary to the command of the Lord, released him. This act proved fatal to Ahab, for three years afterwards he was slain in battle by the Syrians on the hills of Gilcad.

The kingdom of Damascus was now of considerable extent. Besides its own proper territory, which embraced the whole eastern slopes of Antilibanus from Hermon to the plain of Emesa,³ it included the greater part of Bashan, and even some of Gilead, with the great valley of Cœle-syria. In addition to these, it appears that the Aramean kings of Maachah and Mesopotamia were either tributaries or close allies. Damascus, in fact, was at this time rapidly approaching its highest pitch of power, and the royal house of Benhadad its greatest renown. But at this very time Benhadad was doomed to death. He had taken advantage of the intestine troubles of Israel to plunder and lay waste their territory; and he had also despised their God. The prophet Elijah was commissioned to go from the desert of Sinai to the confines of Damascus and to anoint Hazael king instead of Benhadad. It does not

³ Compare Num. xxxiv. 9, 11, with Ezek. xlvii. 16, 17, and xlviii. 1; and Joseph. Ant. v. 1, 22.

appear from the sacred record how or where he performed this act.

During the reign of Benhadad Naaman was his greatest general, and had contrived by his valour and skill to advance the power of the kingdom.⁴ But Naaman was a leper. During the predatory incursions of his soldiers into the territory of Israel they had taken captive a little Jewish maid, who became an attendant or slave to Naaman's wife. Seeing her master's sufferings, she on one occasion expressed a wish that he were with the prophet of Israel, who she said would speedily cure his fearful malady. These words having been reported to Naaman, he obtained letters from his sovereign and proceeded to Samaria to Joram the king. Elisha, having heard the story, sent for him, and told him to wash seven times in Jordan, and his leprosy would depart. It was then Naaman uttered the well-known words, "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them and be clean?" At the earnest entreaties of his servants, however, he obeyed the prophet, and was cleansed.⁵

The Damascenes do not appear to have long entertained feelings of gratitude toward the Israelites for the cure of their general, for only a few years after this event they invaded their country; and when, through the instrumentality of Elisha, their strategic attempts to destroy the armies of Israel were rendered abortive, they sought the prophet's life. But the hand of God was interposed on behalf of his servant, and the band sent to capture him

⁴ 2 Kings v. 1.

⁵ 2 Kings v. The tradition regarding the house of Naaman has been alluded to under the Antiquities.

was led into the heart of Samaria. "And the King of Israel said unto Elisha when he saw them, My father, shall I smite them? shall I smite them? And he answered, Thou shalt not smite them. Wouldst thou smite those whom thou hast taken with thy sword and with thy bow? Set bread before them, that they may eat and drink, and go to their master."⁶ This signal display, at once of miraculous power and unusual favour, awed and propitiated for a season the powerful monarch of Damascus. But the kindness was not long remembered; and the hosts of Benhadad soon again overran Israel and besieged Samaria. God once more delivered his people by a miracle; for some strange sounds in the silence of the night created a sudden panic in the Syrian camp, and the whole army fled precipitately, leaving behind them vast stores of provisions and great wealth.⁷

A few years after this event Damascus was honoured by a visit from Elisha. Benhadad was then sick, and his sufferings not only made him overlook his old enmity to the prophet of God, but urged him to consult him as to his prospects of recovery. The man who was despatched on this errand was that Hazael whom God had commanded Elijah to anoint king over Damascus. He was at once recognised, and his guilty designs detected. The prophet foresaw and related to him the fearful acts of cruelty he would perpetrate on the people of Israel, and the desolations he would occasion in their land. The reply of Hazael was characteristic of his deep cunning—"Is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing?" Hazael returned at once to Damascus and that very night murdered his royal master.⁸ Thus terminated the dynasty of Hadad,

⁶ 2 Kings vi. 22.

⁷ Id. ch. vii.

⁸ Id. ch. viii.

after a rule of more than 160 years (from about B.C. 1050 to 890). The princes of this line were warlike, energetic, and successful; and by them Damascus was placed at the head of the kingdoms of Western Asia.

Hazael proved a powerful monarch and an able general. The territories east of the Jordan that his predecessors had won by the sword he retained; and all the attempts made to recover them, by the united strength of the kings of Israel and Judah, were ineffectual.⁹ His victorious armies carried desolation into the land of Israel, while it was rent and torn by intestine feuds. For thirty years did Hazael lay upon them an iron yoke, having almost annihilated their armies, and stripped them of every means of defence.¹ The armies of Damascus were victorious to the borders of Egypt. Gath was subdued, and Jerusalem was only saved by yielding up all its treasures to the conqueror.² After a prosperous but bloody and cruel reign of more than forty years Hazael died, leaving the kingdom to his son Benhadad, who probably, on his accession to the throne, assumed the ancient royal name (B.C. 840).

During the reign of this monarch Damascus did not retain its former ascendancy. The cities that had been taken from the feeble hands of the Israelitish kings were recaptured by Jehoash, whose warlike son, Jeroboam, followed up his successes, and in the end captured this city itself.³ After the death of Jeroboam, Damascus recovered its freedom, having taken advantage of the troubled state of Israel during an interregnum of eleven years, and the

⁹ 2 Kings viii. 28 and 29.

² Id. xii. 17.

¹ Id. xiii. 3-7.

³ Id. xiv. 28.

subsequent brief reigns of weak monarchs. Instead of being a tributary and subject province, Damascus now became a powerful ally to Israel, and recaptured the provinces that belonged to Judah on the east of the Jordan, with other portions of the ancient kingdoms of Gilead and Bashan. Rezin, the last King of Damascus, entered into an alliance with Pekah, King of Israel (about B.C. 750); and these two monarchs waged a long war against Jotham and his successor Ahaz, Kings of Judah.⁴ The latter, being unable to withstand their armies in the field, was obliged to shut himself up within the walls of his capital⁵ (B.C. 740).

But before this period the princes of Assyria had begun to encroach upon Western Asia. Pul had already plundered a portion of Northern Palestine; and Tiglath-Pileser had carried many of the people away captive. The King of Judah in his difficulties sought aid from the latter monarch, who was not slow to give it. He marched at once across the broad plains of Eastern Syria, laid waste the country, and captured the ancient city of Damascus. Its monarch fell by the sword of the conqueror; and its people were led captive to the banks of the Kir.⁶

This was the first great revolution in the affairs of Damascus, and the termination of the first epoch of its history. The high position it had held as the capital of a powerful monarch, during a period of more than three hundred years, was now lost, and for long centuries was not regained. The striking prophecy of Isaiah was thus fulfilled:—"Damascus was taken away from being a city;"

⁴ 2 Kings xv. 37.

⁵ Id. xvi. 5.

⁶ Id. ch. xvi. Joseph. Ant. ix. 12, 13.

or, as he explains the passage in another verse, "The kingdom was taken away from Damascus."⁷ Then, too, were fulfilled the words of Amos: "I will send a fire into the house of Hazael, which shall devour the palaces of Benhadad. I will break also the bar of Damascus, and cut off the inhabitants from the plain of Aven, and him that holdeth the sceptre from the house of Eden; and the people of Syria shall go into captivity unto Kir, saith the Lord."⁸

When the inhabitants of Damascus were taken captive, colonies from Assyria were planted in their room. The city now became a mere dependency of a more powerful empire, and for upwards of a thousand years cannot be said to have a separate history. It remained a province of Assyria until near the fall of that kingdom, which occurred in the year B.C. 606, when Nineveh was captured by the combined Median and Babylonian powers. During the struggles of the monarchs of the East, Pharaoh-Necho, King of Egypt, conquered Syria and Damascus.⁹ A few years afterwards, however, Nebuchadnezzar invaded the country, recaptured the provinces, and penetrated to Egypt itself, stripping the Egyptian monarch of all the fruits of his great victories. Damascus, with the other parts of Western Asia, then fell under the Babylonian administration (about B.C. 604).¹

The Assyrian colonies in Western Asia and Damascus

⁷ Isa. xvii. 1 and 3.

⁸ Amos i. 4 and 5.

⁹ Joseph. Ant. x. 5. An interesting memorial of this monarch's invasion of Syria still exists in a sculptured tablet at the mouth of the Nahr el-Kelb, near Beyrout.

¹ Jer. xlvi. 1 and 2.

seem to have been but little affected by the almost incessant wars that deluged the plains of Mesopotamia with blood. They were satisfied to be allowed to pass in peace under whatever government could assert its superiority. Damascus was thus Assyrian under the monarchs of Nineveh, and, after an interlude of Egyptian rule, became Babylonian under the Babylonian administration; and when the great Cyrus overran with his victorious armies the countries of Syria and Palestine (about B.C. 540), it submissively yielded obedience and tribute to Persia.

During the next two centuries, amid the mighty conflicts of some of the most powerful monarchs that ever appeared on the earth, it is not to be wondered at if the little principality of Damascus is scarcely noticed on the page of history. When historians had such glorious themes as the profound wisdom and far-reaching policy of Cyrus, and the vast military operations of Darius, and the extensive conquests of Xerxes, it is not to be expected that they should have wasted their powers on minute and comparatively insignificant details. During this period, however, Damascus maintained its rank as one of the chief cities of Western Asia. It appears from Josephus that it was the seat of a Satrap under the Persian monarchs;² and when Darius, the last King of Persia, made his great effort to repress the rising power, and bar the progress, of Alexander of Macedon, it was in this city he deposited his family and his treasures. The fate of Damascus, with that of the whole of Western Asia, was decided by the battle of Issus, in which the army of Darius was almost

² Ant. xi. 2, 2.

annihilated by the Macedonian king. Immediately after that battle Alexander despatched Parmenion with a division of his army to capture this city and secure the treasures of his conquered foe.³ Owing to the treachery of its governor, this was speedily accomplished; and the aged Parmenion was richly rewarded by the great booty that fell to his own share, and to that of the Thessalians whom he commanded.⁴

This was the second great revolution in the affairs of Damascus, and may be regarded as the termination of the second era of its history. The Persian dominion was overthrown by one stroke, and the city passed under the sway of another and a different race. The change of dynasty does not seem to have much affected the state of the city. It was a powerful provincial capital under the Persian, the Babylonian, and the Assyrian monarchs; and now under Grecian rule its position was not altered. Syria and Palestine were assigned by the victor to the general Laomedon, and Damascus became the seat of his government. This appointment was continued after Alexander's death, when his vast possessions were portioned out by Perdiccas.⁴ A few years afterwards (B. C. 320), however, the ambition of Ptolemy not being satisfied with the ancient kingdom of Egypt, he seized Palestine and Syria, after defeating Laomedon in a pitched battle. But he too was compelled to yield to the superior force of Antigonus, governor of Phrygia; and thus Damascus again passed into new hands (B. C. 314).⁵

³ Plutarch, Life of Alexander.

⁴ Id., Life of Alexander, and Life of Arrian.

⁵ Id., Life of Demetrius.

A series of wars now followed which are almost without a parallel in the history of the world. The brave warriors who had been trained up in the armies of the great Alexander were left without a head. All were accomplished generals, filled with the fiery ambition and fierce courage of their master, and each in consequence endeavoured to imitate his master's victorious career. There was none among them to claim by acknowledged superiority of genius, and to hold by commanding power, the supreme sway. Thus arose those rivalries and fearful struggles that for more than twenty years deluged Asia with blood. The decisive battle of Ipsus closed the career of Antigonus, and destroyed the power of his warlike son (B.C. 301);⁶ while it established the throne of Seleucus, who had assumed the title of king ten years previously. A new allotment of the empire was now made, and Damascus was assigned to Ptolemy, while Seleucus held the neighbouring provinces of northern Syria.⁷

Damascus was, up to this period, the most important city of Syria; and it alone, by singular good fortune, almost entirely escaped the ravages of war. Now, however, the new and final division of the empire of Alexander changed the face of Western Asia. Syria was divided between the dynasties of the Ptolemies and the Seleucidæ, and the territory of Damascus with Palestine became border land between these rival houses, and was made the theatre of many a bloody battle. Seleucus, desirous of exercising his influence both in the east and west, resolved to establish the seat of his government in northern Syria,

⁶ Plutarch, *Life of Demetrius*.

⁷ Rollin's *Ancient History*, xvii. 1.

and for this object founded *Antioch* on the banks of the Orontes. The splendour and wealth of this city speedily eclipsed the more ancient Damascus, and it was not till near a thousand years later that the latter regained its former superiority.

Damascus and Cœlesyria remained subject to the Egyptian kings for a period of fifty-two years; after which a bloody war arose between Ptolemy Philadelphus and Antiochus Theos. Terms of peace were afterwards agreed upon, and the daughter of Ptolemy was given in marriage to Theos with the half of the revenues of Palestine and Damascus for a dowry (B.C. 249). This state of things lasted only two years, when the city, with nearly the whole of Syria, was seized by Ptolemy Euergetes, son of Philadelphus, in revenge for the repudiation and subsequent murder of his sister; but the marriage contract formed the ground of a claim preferred by the Seleucidæ to Damascus and southern Syria in after times.⁸

In the year B.C. 223 Antiochus the Great ascended the throne of the Seleucidæ, and two years afterwards made war on Ptolemy Philopater, to acquire southern Syria. After a series of conflicts, in some of which he was successful, he was defeated in a pitched battle fought on the coast of Palestine near Gaza, and thereupon made peace with the king of Egypt; renouncing all claim to these provinces (B.C. 217). On the death of Ptolemy Philopater war was again commenced, and in the year B.C. 202 Antiochus succeeded in occupying Cœlesyria

⁸ Prideaux's Connection, ii. pp. 74-76.

and Damascus. The king of Egypt being a mere child, his advisers were unable to withstand the aggressions of Antiochus, and they consequently appealed to Rome, whose growing influence now began to be felt in the East. A Roman guardian was appointed to the prince, and attempts were made to regain the provinces of Syria, but in vain. Scopas, the leader of the Egyptian forces, was defeated near Paneas, and the remains of his shattered army were obliged to withdraw from Syria. Egypt never again recovered its former possessions in this country. Judæa, stung to rebellion by the cruelty and extortions of its foreign rulers, at last rose in arms, and under the command of the warlike Judas gained and held a kind of independence. Damascus and Cœlesyria remained subject to the house of the Seleucidæ, at least nominally; but petty rulers now began to exercise and to claim supreme authority within the bounds of their own little states.

From this time till the whole country fell under the dominion of Rome the history of Syria is one continued recital of family quarrels, bloody feuds, and devastating wars. Damascus retained its importance notwithstanding the number of new cities that rose up at the command of the first kings of the family of Seleucus; and when the kingdom was rent by the intrigues of Ptolemy Physcon and the energy of the usurper Zebina, Damascus became one of the seats of government (B.C. 126). And again, in the year B.C. 112, when Antiochus Grypus agreed to divide the kingdom with his brother Cyzicenus, the latter selected this city as his residence. Henceforth Damascus and Antioch were the seats of rival factions and aspirants

after complete sovereignty. The territory of the former city embraced the whole of Cœlesyria and Phœnicia, with a large section of the country east of the Jordan.

After the deposition and death of Antiochus Cyzicenus (B.C. 95) the throne of Damascus was, in succession, occupied by Antiochus Eusebes, son of the latter (92-1), Demetrius Eucharès (91-85),⁹ and Antiochus Dionysius.¹ The last-mentioned, in the year B.C. 84, engaged in a war with Aretas king of Arabia, and fell on the field of battle in the hour of victory. The Damascenes, long troubled by the feuds and bloody quarrels of unnatural brethren, elected as their king him whom they had just conquered.² Aretas, however, wisely kept the seat of his government in his own stronghold amid the rocks of Edom; and it appears that he only kept a feeble garrison in his newly acquired territory, for Alexandra, the warlike queen of the Jews, sent an army to defend it against the attack of Ptolemy Mennæus prince of Chalcis.³ Chalcis was one of those new states that had sprung up to independence in the midst of a troubled kingdom. Its site and history have already been noticed.

About the same time that Aretas got the government of Damascus, Tigranus king of Armenia was called to fill the throne of the Seleucidæ at Antioch by a people stung to madness by the dissensions and cruelty of their hereditary princes. This kingdom he held in peace until, through Mithridates his father-in-law, he became involved in a war with Rome, and was compelled to leave Syria that he might defend his native land (B.C. 69). This

⁹ Joseph. Ant. xiii. 13, 4.

² Id. xiii. 15, 1 and 2.

¹ Id. xiii. 15, 1.

³ Id. xiii. 16, 3.

opportunity was embraced by Antiochus Asiaticus, the son of Eusebes, for preferring his own claims and assuming the sovereignty of Syria. Through his influence with the Roman general Lucullus he retained his power until the arrival of Pompey in Syria (B.C. 65), when he was deposed. With him terminated the dynasty of the Seleucidæ, after a rule of 247 years.

Lucullus, the patron of the last of the Selcucidæ, having been recalled to Rome, and Pompey appointed in his place to prosecute the war against Mithridates, the latter, on his arrival at the seat of war, immediately despatched two of his lieutenants to take possession of Syria.⁴ He afterwards detached the celebrated general Scaurus to seize Damascus, but on his arrival he found that the others who preceded him had already taken it. After a tour of inspection through the neighbouring country he returned to the city, where he was soon joined by Pompey himself (B.C. 64). Pompey remained here for a time regulating the affairs of the newly-conquered kingdom and receiving the homage of the various petty princes.⁵ Syria was now constituted a Roman province and placed under the command of Scaurus, and Damascus became the seat of government.⁶

This is the termination of the third great era in the history of Damascus. The supremacy of the Greeks was now at an end, after having existed for 268 years (B.C. 333 to B.C. 65), and the warlike Romans assumed the sway. Fortune still favoured this ancient city, and the

⁴ Joseph. Ant. xiv. 2, 3. Appian, Mithrid.

⁵ Joseph. *ut sup.*

⁶ Id. xiv. 4, 5; and Bel. Jud. i. 6, 3 and 4.

change of dynasty did not check the steady flow of its prosperity.

Seaurus continued at Damascus as governor of Syria till B.C. 59, when he was succeeded by L. Marcius Philippus,⁷ and he again was supplanted in two months by Lentulus Marcellinus. The latter during his brief term of office was principally occupied in subduing the neighbouring Arab hordes, and especially Aretas, who from his rocky fastnesses at Petra frequently invaded the Roman province.⁸

Damascus seems to have been generally the seat of the Roman governors of Syria from the conquest till the death of Julius Cæsar (B.C. 44). For many years after the conquest Syria was the theatre of bloody and devastating wars. The feuds of petty princes, the rivalries of Roman procurators, and the hostilities of the Triumviri, kept this unhappy country in a state of constant commotion. The histories of the period are all filled with these sad tales; but the condition and history of this city are seldom alluded to. A portion of its ancient territory appears to have been seized by Ptolemy Mennæus prince of Chalcis.⁹ He was succeeded by his son Lysanias, who held his patrimony until he was murdered by Mark Antony through the artifices of the notorious Cleopatra; and the kingdom of Chalcis, with Cœlesyria and Damascus, was then conferred upon the voluptuous queen (B.C. 36).¹ She enjoyed the fruits of her cruelty but a brief period, for Antony soon afterwards, being conquered by Cæsar, perished miserably by his own hand, and Cleo-

⁷ Appian, Syr. 51.

⁸ Id.

⁹ Strab. Geog. xvi. p. 518.

¹ Joseph. Ant. xv. 4, 2.

patra, to avoid the disgrace of decking a conqueror's barbarous triumph, followed his example. Thus terminated ingloriously the royal line of the Ptolemies, and the last remnant of the great empire conquered by Alexander was absorbed in the dominions of Rome (B.C. 30).

After the conquest of Syria by Augustus, Mesalla Corvinus was appointed prefect, and henceforth the seat of government was fixed at Antioch, the splendid capital of the Seleucidæ. Damascus was then the residence of a deputy, and the neighbouring districts of Chalcis and Abilene on the west, with Gaulonitis, Trachonitis, and Batanæa on the south, after having been farmed for a time by Zenodorus, were given to Herod the Great by Augustus, and were bequeathed by Herod to his son Philip (A.D. 4).² Damascus was thus almost entirely surrounded by petty states under the sway of native princes. Of the importance and splendour of the city at this period we have a glowing account from the pen of a contemporary author, who seems to have visited it. The geographer Strabo thus describes it:—"And then follows the region of Damascus so greatly celebrated. And Damascus itself is a city well worthy of high admiration, being one of the most magnificent in these climes."³ At this time also lived Nicolaus of Damascus, the celebrated historian and philosopher. He was a scion of a family distinguished alike by wealth and high literary fame. His education was received in his native city, which circumstance of itself is sufficient to prove that Damascus was not behind as a seat of learning. He early gained the

² Joseph. Ant. xv. 10, 3, and xvii. 8, 1; and Bel. Jud. i. 20.

³ Strab. Geog. xvi.

friendship of Herod, and was introduced by him to Augustus at Rome. With the emperor he soon became a favourite, and on several occasions was the means of propitiating him and securing his goodwill to Herod when grave accusations had been preferred against that prince.⁴ After Herod's death his services to Archelaus were almost as great as those he had rendered to his father.⁵ The writings of Nicolaus were very numerous; poetry, philosophy, and history appear to have been treated with equal eloquence and research. Of his numerous works only a few fragments now remain. Josephus frequently quotes from his 'General History.'

While Judæa was the theatre of almost incessant wars, arising from the jealousies of the Herodian family and the private quarrels of Jewish parties, Damascus, under the immediate government of Rome, enjoyed comparative tranquillity. On the death of the tetrarch Philip his territory was annexed to the Roman province,⁶ which then bordered on the dominions of Herod east of the Jordan, and on the kingdom of Aretas toward the Arabian desert. Herod was Aretas' son-in-law, but through his guilty passion for his brother Philip's wife he had, in the days of John the Baptist, divorced the daughter of Aretas. This act was the occasion of a war in which Herod was worsted by the Arabian king. Tiberius the emperor, hearing of the defeat of his friend, sent orders to Vitellius, then governor of Syria, to march at once against Aretas and to send him to Rome either alive or dead. The Roman prefect made preparations to obey the orders of his royal

⁴ Joseph. Ant. xvi. 10, 8 and 9.

⁵ Id. xvii. 9, 6.

⁶ Joseph. Ant. xviii. 4, 6.

master, but, when about to set out, news reached him of the emperor's death.⁷ Aretas was prepared to defend his kingdom and his life, and, finding that the Roman general had suddenly left the southern part of his province with a portion of his troops, he became himself the aggressor. From Herod he had little to fear; and marching across the plain of Gaulonitis and Ituræa, he reached and captured the city of Damascus. Tiberius died in the spring of A.D. 37, and soon after his death the hitherto unfortunate Agrippa was released from prison and presented by the new emperor Caligula with the provinces formerly held by Philip, with the addition of the Abila of Lysanias. It was two years subsequent to this, however, before he proceeded to take charge of his kingdom;⁸ and in the mean time Aretas remained in possession of Damascus.

It was during this time that the Christian religion began to be proclaimed in this city; and that Paul, while on his way to persecute the Church, was miraculously converted to the faith in Jesus. The above sketch of the political history will tend to illustrate the statements made in the New Testament in reference to this very remarkable incident in the history of the apostle and the events that followed it. Paul, after the visit of Ananias and the recovery of his sight, commenced to preach the gospel in the Jewish synagogues.⁹ But he soon left the city and went into Arabia, *most probably* that he might enter at once on his great work of *converting the heathen*. There can be little doubt that the burning zeal and fearless preaching of the apostle would soon attract the attention

⁷ Joseph. Ant. xviii. 5, 1-3. ⁸ Id. xviii. 6, 10-11. ⁹ Acts ix. 19, 20.

and excite the enmity of the people of that land. After a considerable stay he left Arabia and returned to Damascus.¹ This city was now held by the army of the Arabian king, and consequently as soon as the apostle began openly to preach there the governor under Aretas attempted to apprehend him.² The great anxiety thus manifested by the Arabian governor for Paul's capture cannot, I think, be sufficiently explained or accounted for by the hostility of the Jews merely. They may have supplied information and stimulated to greater vigilance, but I cannot believe that the friendship existing between the Arabian monarch and his officers and the Jewish people was either so cordial or so intimate as to cause the former to set watches on the city gate to apprehend a so-called apostate from the Jewish faith. May not the apostle's zeal in preaching the gospel in Arabia and in exposing the immoralities and foolish superstitions of its inhabitants have drawn attention to him as a man of dangerous character?³

¹ Gal. i. 16, 17. That the above is a legitimate deduction from this passage no critic will deny. The Apostle's words are very clear:—"When it pleased God . . . to reveal his Son unto me, *that I might preach his name among the heathen*; IMMEDIATELY I conferred not with flesh and blood, neither went up to Jerusalem, *but I went into Arabia*" . . . For what object? Surely the object is here indicated with sufficient clearness. It was to preach Christ's name among the heathen.

² 2 Cor. xi. 31.

³ Neander seems to have been the first who cleared up the obscure historical point about Aretas holding Damascus in the time of Paul. The reader may see some excellent remarks on this subject in Neander's 'Planting and Training of the Christian Church,' iii. 2. Mr. Howson, in his excellent 'Life of St. Paul,' says that there are "grave objections to this view of the occupation of Damascus by Aretas. Such a liberty, taken by a petty chieftain with the Roman power, would have been an act of great audacity; and it is difficult to believe that Vitellius would have closed the campaign if such a city was in the hands of an enemy." This seems very plausible; but if we view it in the light of history, we

During the troublous times from the appointment of Herod Agrippa till the destruction of Jerusalem the name of Damascus is scarcely found on the page of history. Situated beyond the confines of Palestine and on the borders of the desert, it was neither in the theatre of war nor in the line of communication between Judæa and Syria. It thus escaped the calamities which laid in ruins many of the cities of Palestine, and on this account afforded an asylum to Christian refugees from that land. From the earliest years of the apostolic labours there were some devoted Christians in this city, and a large and flourishing church was soon established.

see that in reality there is little depth in it. There can be no question that Aretas *made war upon and defeated* Herod, and that Herod was the known friend of Tiberius. And there can be no question that, when the governor of Syria was ordered to march against the Arabian king, the latter did not submit to Rome, but *practically* defied the emperor; and farther we know from Josephus that Vitellius, the governor, withdrew his troops, on the news of the emperor's death, before the *object* of the *campaign* was gained. If Aretas was strong enough to defeat the king of Judæa and friend of Tiberius, and bold enough to defy the emperor himself, need we wonder that he should embrace a favourable opportunity of seizing a rich border city? Or ought we to consider it as too daring an act, when he saw the empire suddenly deprived of its head and thrown into confusion; and when he saw the army of the deputy in Syria removed far from his own territory, and Damascus thus left unguarded? Mr. Howson adds, "It is more likely that Caligula, who in many ways contradicted the policy of his predecessor, who banished Herod Antipas and patronised Herod Agrippa, assigned the city of Damascus as a free gift to Aretas." But this reasoning has no weight whatever. Caligula patronised Herod Agrippa, not because he wished to contradict the policy of his predecessor, but simply because he had been one of his greatest friends. Had Caligula desired to bestow Damascus upon any one, it is probable he would have added it to the kingdom of his friend Agrippa; and it is not likely that the emperor would have made such an arrangement as would give to an independent prince, who had but lately defied the Roman power, a city wholly separated from his own territory by a large section of Agrippa's new kingdom.—See 'Life and Epistles of St. Paul,' vol. i.

While Agrippa ruled over Galilee and the provinces east of the Jordan, Damascus continued to enjoy security and peace, but on his death (A.D. 101) this city and the surrounding country were exposed to the incursions of the Arabians or Idumæans. Some years afterwards Cornelius Palma, governor of Syria under the Emperor Trajan, chastised the Idumæans, conquered the whole of the ancient kingdom of Bashan, and constituted it a Roman province, with Bostra as capital.

From this period the various cities and towns of Syria began to recruit under the security of Rome and in consequence of the blessings of peace. The Roman governors and procurators showed alike their wealth and their taste in the noble buildings they erected and the substantial roads they constructed in every part of the land. The spacious theatres and marble columns of Bostra, the beautiful palaces and sculptured hippodromes of Kenath, the noble colonnades of Gerasa and Palmyra, and the gorgeous temples of Bâ'albek, bear ample testimony in the present day to the prosperity and splendour of this land under Roman rule. Nor was Damascus inferior to any of these in the richness of its architecture and in the extent and beauty of its public buildings. It may be that some of those remains of former grandeur, which, as we have seen, are now almost wholly buried by vast masses of modern buildings, owe their beauty to the genius and taste of Apollodorus the Damascene, the most celebrated architect of his age. It was this man who was selected by Trajan to construct the great bridge across the lower Danube, the

⁴ Dion Cassius.

ruins of which may still be seen, and it was he also who designed and reared up that splendid column which yet remains at Rome,—one of the most interesting and important monuments of the classic ages.⁵ The peaceful reign of Antoninus Pius (A.D. 138-61) was one of the most fruitful periods of temples, and monuments, and architectural decorations throughout the whole of Syria, and his name may still be seen on some shattered tablet amid the mouldering ruins of almost every city in the land.

Damascus remained in undisputed possession of the Romans till A.D. 260, when the Emperor Valerian was conquered in battle, and taken prisoner by Sapor king of Persia. Syria was soon after invaded by the conqueror, and Damascus, with other cities, fell into his hands. He did not long enjoy, however, his new possessions, for Odenathus, a citizen of Palmyra, and husband of the celebrated but unfortunate Zenobia, not only stayed his progress westward, but drove him back with disgrace beyond the Euphrates. Odenathus now assumed, with the consent of the Senate, the government of the East (A.D. 264). He was succeeded by Zenobia, who proclaimed herself, in the face of Roman authority, queen of the East. The accession of Aurelian changed the face of affairs. A short campaign was sufficient to overthrow the armies of Zenobia, capture her beautiful desert home, and restore the provinces of western Asia to the Roman sceptre.

When Constantine ascended the throne of the Cæsars two great changes were effected in the empire. The seat

⁵ Dion Cassius.

of government was removed to Constantinople, and Christianity was made the established religion. The numbers of the Christian communities in the various provinces of the empire were before this time very great, and Damascus contained a large church. It had been at an early period a resort and sanctuary for the sect of the Ebionites, and for refugees from other less favoured cities of this land.⁶ When the first General Council assembled at Nice, A.D. 325, Magnus, the Metropolitan of Damascus, was present with seven of his suffragans. The episcopal cities there represented were as follows:—Heliopolis (Bâ'albek), Emesa (Hūms), Jabruda (Yabrūd), Danaba (Saidnâya), Alalis, Khomokara (Kârah), and Seleucia (M'alûla?);⁷ and it is probable that all the bishops were not present. In a somewhat later age there were fifteen dioceses reckoned under Damascus.⁸ The extent, wealth, and influence of the Christian Church in this city may in some measure be estimated by the splendour of their cathedral, which, as we have seen, was dedicated in the fourth century.

But the Roman empire was now growing old. The

⁶ Euseb. Hist. Ec. ix. 5.

⁷ These names are taken from an Arabic MS. of the 17th century in my possession. The work is entitled 'A History of the Seven General Holy Councils.' It was written in Greek by Macarius, Patriarch of Antioch,—a name well known to Arabic scholars. The work is valuable, as containing the *modern* as well as the ancient names of many sees, and thus enabling us to identify some important sites.

⁸ S. Pauli, Geograp. Sac. pp. 294-5. The names given here are as follows:—

- | | | |
|-----------------------|-------------|----------------|
| 1. Damaseus. | 6. Palmyra. | 11. Euarius. |
| 2. Laodicea Scabiosa. | 7. Arlana. | 12. Comoara. |
| 3. Heliopolis. | 8. Emesa. | 13. Abyda. |
| 4. Abyla. | 9. Danaba. | 14. Corada. |
| 5. Jabruda. | 10. Alalis. | 15. Sarracene. |

freshness and vigour of youth were gone. The hardy veterans who carried their victorious arms into almost every province of Europe and Asia, and who spread the fame of their valour over the inhabited globe, were now degenerated, and they wasted what remnants of energy they retained in bloody feuds and party quarrels. The stern dignity of the Roman citizen, the noble simplicity of the proud senator, and even the manly activity of the first emperors, were now no longer seen. The people, giving themselves up to ease and pleasure, trusted their liberty and their lives to mercenary bands; and the rulers, imitating the gorgeous display of Eastern monarchs, and revelling amid degrading vices, the necessary companions of indolence and luxury, lost the spirit that animated their ancestors, and the proud name their courage had won. That religion, too, which by its establishment as a great national institute ought to have infused the germ of new life into the declining empire, was itself growing feeble. The purity of Gospel doctrines was fast giving way to unintelligible dogmas, mixed up with silly fables; and the simplicity of Apostolic worship was superseded by a host of rites and ceremonies borrowed from the extravagances of the Heathen priesthood.

The warlike line of the Sassanidæ took advantage of this decline of power and of energy, and harassed the eastern frontiers of the empire. Mesopotamia and Persia were relinquished in the vain hope of securing a permanent peace. But Chosroes II., remembering the glory and power of his ancestors, crossed the Euphrates, and in a short campaign conquered Antioch; and, after allowing his soldiers a season of repose amid the delicious bowers of

Damascus, he continued his march throughout the land, and subdued the whole of Syria ⁹ (A.D. 611-614).

A new power was at this time rising up in an obscure corner of Arabia, destined, in the hand of an all-wise Providence, to overthrow a degenerate empire and chastise an erring Church. Before the world had time to inquire from whence they came, hosts of fierce and savage warriors swept like a whirlwind over the plains of Arabia, Syria, Egypt, and Persia.

The armies of Islam appeared before the walls of Damascus only thirteen years after Mohammed's flight from his native city. In this short period the Prophet had promulgated a new faith, established a powerful sect, and infused into them a fiery zeal without a parallel in the annals of the world. In this short period the prowess of his arms had been acknowledged by the wild hordes that roam the desert, and fearfully experienced by the more enlightened inhabitants of bordering cities: Busrah, the key to the rich province of the Haurân, had fallen, and Palmyra too had been captured and plundered. The luxurious inhabitants of Damascus offered but a feeble resistance to the impetuous Saracens, and most of them were, after a short time, eager to surrender. Never was this ancient city in greater danger of being utterly destroyed. Khâled, the fierce chief of the Muslims, stung to madness by the loss of some of his dearest companions, swore that he would put every inhabitant to the sword and raze the city to the ground. A traitor priest came to him while meditating on revenge, and basely offered to betray the

⁹ Eut. Annales.

city. The offer was eagerly embraced, and a little band of Arabs was led by a private way within the walls. These, on entering, raised their wild cry, "*Ullah Akbar,*" and threw open the east gate. Khâled with his followers rushed in, and the streets were soon deluged with the people's blood. All seemed lost! and the inhabitants, knowing full well that fearful cry, resigned themselves to death. But the ancient fortune of Damascus did not desert it now. At the very moment when Khâled was eagerly listening to the words of a traitor, the more gentle Abu Obeidah was arranging a treaty of surrender with a deputation of the principal citizens. As Khâled entered the east gate, the west was thrown open to Abu Obeidah and his followers. The two parties met near the centre of the city, opposite the church of St. Mary. After a stormy scene between the leaders, Khâled yielded, and Damascus was saved. By that treaty it was agreed that such of the Christians as chose to depart should be permitted to take with them as much of their arms and valuables as each could carry. The others might live in peace on paying the capitation tax,—which was in fact their redemption money. Seven churches were secured to them, and likewise the half of the cathedral of St. John the Baptist.

The wealth of the city was then enormous, and the amount of booty eventually obtained by its captors was very great. It is stated in the history ascribed to el-Wâkidy¹ that the Emperor Heraclius lived in this city, but

¹ It is now well known to Arabic scholars that the work ascribed to el-Wâkidy, and which has been translated by Ockley, is not genuine. It must be regarded as an historical novel, rather than a true history.

this statement is not corroborated by Greek historians. The same work also contains a pleasing narrative of the siege, and of the operations subsequent to the capture. But by far the most minute account of these whole affairs is given by Ibn 'Asâker in his great work. According to him the city was then adorned with most sumptuous buildings, and the palaces of the nobles were as remarkable for their vast extent as for their splendid decorations. Churches of great beauty were scattered over the various parts of the city, while the cathedral of St. John the Baptist is represented as being one of the wonders of the world;² and modern research bears ample testimony, as we have seen, to the truth of these glowing descriptions.

This was the fourth great epoch in the history of Damascus. After having been held by the Roman and Byzantine emperors for a period of 700 years it passed into the hands of a new dynasty and a new race, under whom it was destined to enjoy for a brief period even more than its ancient power.

Twenty-seven years after the capture of the city by the Saracens, Moäwyah, the first khâlif of the dynasty of the Omeiyades, made it the seat of his government (A.H. 41; A.D. 661), and the capital of the Mohammedan empire. Syria, Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Persia were now subject to the sway of the successor of the "Apostle of God;" and the bounds of his dominions were soon extended far beyond these countries. The armies of the khâlifs of this warlike house soon spread along the northern shores of the

It was written during the age of the Crusades. Wäkîdy *did* write a history of the conquest of Syria; but the book is not now known to exist.

² The History of Damascus, by Ibn 'Asâker, MS.

great African continent, and did not stop their impetuous progress till restrained by the waves of the Atlantic. The continent of Europe now lay invitingly before them. Their soldiers had been driven back from the walls of Constantinople, and forced to recross the Bosphorus; but they were admitted into Spain by the traitor act of one of her own proud sons (A.H. 93).³ That kingdom was soon conquered, and even the great ridge of the Pyrenees presented no barrier sufficient to check the swift and desolating progress of the Arabs. They scaled these snow-clad mountains, and saw at their feet the glorious picture of the rich plains of Languedoc. But there they were destined to receive a blow that for ever stopped their progress northward. In the East their conquests were no less brilliant: their armies crossed the Indus and entered Hindustan; and they also spread themselves over the mountains and through the fine vales of Bokhara. Thus did our ancient city become the capital of an empire reaching from the shores of the Atlantic on the west, to the lofty Himalayas and the steppes of Tartary on the far east. It ruled over some of the fairest and most fertile regions of the old world. All Europe trembled at its power, and the effeminate descendants of the old Romans felt that the throne of the Cæsars was tottering to its fall.

The Omeiyades adorned the city with many palaces and mosks of great extent and magnificence; but the greatest of their works, and that on whose splendour Arab historians most delight to dwell, was the *Jâmi'a el-Amwy*, formerly the cathedral of St. John the Baptist, which was

³ Elmacin, *Histor. Sar.* ch. xiii.

refitted and decorated at vast expense by Walîd, and still bears the name of his royal house.⁴ Unfortunately, while the khâlifs reared up their own structures and adorned their palaces and temples, they took their materials from buildings of a purer taste. Roman colonnades and stately porticoes were thus destroyed, and a few fragments only left to mark the spot where once they stood.

But the genius of Islam was never fitted for upholding national prosperity in ages of peace. The reckless profligacy and licentiousness which it sanctions and encourages must ever be productive of both moral and physical degeneracy, when the human passions have no other channel through which to flow till they are exhausted. While the Arab soldiers and their leaders had to endure the hardships of exhausting campaigns, and when the fiery passions peculiar to their race found ample outlet in the excitement of the battle-field and the horrors of the sack of fallen cities, the early martial spirit and energy were retained. But when wars raged only on the outskirts of the vast empire, those who dwelt peacefully in the metropolis soon exhibited the degenerating influences of the luxuries, and delicacies, and vices of this city; and the men who were still stimulated by active duties, and who still remembered the simplicity and valour of the early khâlifs, learned to scorn the effeminate monarchs that

⁴ This mosk is still called *Jâmi'a el-Amwy*, or *Jâmi'a Beni Omeiyah*, that is, "The mosk of the Omeiyades." One of the ancestors of this great

family was called ^{صخر} ^{بن} ^{حرب} ^{بن} ^{أمية}, which word literally means a "little slave-girl." Tabary, the historian, says the name of Moïwyah, the first of

this dynasty, was ^{صخر} ^{بن} ^{حرب} ^{بن} ^{أمية} :—"Sakhr ibn Harb ibn Omeiyah."

l lounged listlessly in the seraglio halls of Damascus. In A.H. 132 (A.D. 750) the sceptre was wrested from the feeble grasp of *Mirwan*, the last of the Omeiyades, and the fresher zeal of the children of *Abbas* revived for a time the old spirit.

Damascus was now abandoned by royalty, and Baghdad arose and became the seat of the khâlifs for 500 years. Our city, however, did not lose much of its importance by its fall. The surpassing richness of the province of which it was the acknowledged capital, and its sacredness as the starting-place of the holiest pilgrim caravan, made it not only one of the wealthiest but one of the most venerated cities in the Muslem empire.

The new dynasty of the *Abassides* ere long forgot the spirit of their faith, and, laying aside the scimitar and the lance, put on the royal robes, and gave themselves up to indolence and folly. They were soon unable to rule their disjointed empire, and an infusion of fresh blood became necessary to sustain the power of Islam. From the warlike pastoral hordes that roamed in former ages over the steppes of Tartary a tribe came forth and embraced the faith of Mohammed (A.D. 1050). The Seljûkians,⁵ for so

⁵ Arab historians agree that the Seljûkian princes derived their origin from a royal family of the *Torks* who dwelt in the country beyond the Oxus. The name is derived from one of their ancestors called *Seljûk*, who was son of *Dekak*, prime minister of the prince of a race of Tartars who inhabited the country along the shores of the Caspian. *Seljûk* incurred the displeasure of his sovereign, and was forced to fly. He carried with him a considerable amount of property, and some of his tribe attached themselves to his fortune. He settled in the territory of Samarkand, and attained great power. He had four sons, the eldest of whom died before his father, leaving two children, *Toghrul Beg* and *Jafer Beg*; and these became leaders of the nation. Having conquered the *Gaznavide* monarch, they obtained possession of the province of

tended for the possession of Syria. The local governors, who had first received their provinces as fiefs from the crown, were in these circumstances induced to assert their independence. The cruelty and extortion practised by these fierce barbarians on the numerous pilgrims that yearly visited the Holy Places, were the means of bringing other combatants into the theatre of Syrian warfare. The sad tales of hardships and oppression spread by the returning pilgrims over all the nations of Europe roused the spirit of chivalry and fanaticism, and tens of thousands embarked on a *crusade* to deliver the sepulchre of the Lord from the hands of the infidels. During the first crusade no attempt was made upon Damascus; it remained quietly in the possession of its Turkish rulers; but Antioch, Tripoli, Beyrout, and Jerusalem fell in succession before the forces of the Christian warriors. The Muslims mourned their losses and the Khâlif shed tears; but they could only mourn and weep. The Seljûk princes too had followed the universal law of Mohammedan dynasties, and had gone the round of valour, greatness, discord, licentiousness, degeneracy, and decay. Again, however, fresh blood was infused into the falling empire: the Turkish slaves of the Seljûks and Khâlifs undertook to defend the faith. Askansor, and Zenki his son, were the first leaders under the name of *Atabeks*,⁸ and the latter made himself master of northern Syria, and tried his arms successfully against the Franks. Zenki was succeeded by his son Nûr

⁸ The word *Atabek* literally means "Father of a Prince." The title was no doubt given to these warlike slaves on account of the services they rendered their masters.

ed-Dîn in the government of Aleppo and its dependencies⁹ (A.H. 544; A.D. 1149).

About the same period Louis VII., King of France, reached Antioch with fresh troops to complete the conquest of the Holy Land. After marching into Palestine, it was resolved in a general council held at Acre that the united forces should attack Damascus. The southern and eastern side of the city were then defended by walls and battlements of great height and strength, but the defences on the northern side, along which the river ran, were more open to attack; and amid the gardens and orchards that line the stream at this spot, extending up the gentle slope to the foot of the mountain-range, the army of the crusaders took their position.¹ The siege was at first prosecuted with great vigour; and the Christian knights displayed miracles of valour, but little unity of action. Contentions sprang up, and, while they wasted their time in petty quarrels, Nûr ed-Dîn and his brother the Prince of Mosul had arrived to relieve the garrison, and the crusaders made a disgraceful retreat.

A few years afterwards Nûr ed-Dîn himself captured the city, and proved one of its greatest benefactors. He repaired the ancient walls and partly rebuilt the great citadel; and he established a court of justice, which was celebrated throughout the Mohammedan empire for its strict and impartial integrity.² The valour and prowess of this prince soon extended his influence beyond the bounds of

⁹ See D'Herbelot, *Bib. Orient.* s. v. 'Atabek,' and 'Nûr ed-Din.'

¹ *Gul. Tyr. Hist.* in 'Gesta Dei per Francos,' pp. 910-12.

² D'Herbelot, *Bib. Orient.* s. v. 'Noureddin.' *Târîkh el-Jenâby*, MS., in my possession.

Syria, and the Fatimite khalif of Egypt requested his aid against the crusaders who were then invading that land. He was not slow to afford relief, and sent a general with some choice troops. This general soon became one of the most celebrated characters of the age; and there is no eastern monarch whose name is so familiar in our day throughout Europe as that of the illustrious Saladin.³ He was by birth a Kurd, but, prompted by poverty and ambition, he left his native mountains in company of his uncle, and entered the service of the ruler of Damascus. On being sent to Egypt he soon relieved the khalif of all anxiety in regard to the crusaders; but he himself became a far more formidable object of solicitude. He eventually dethroned the last of the Fatimite dynasty, and proclaimed in his stead the reigning monarch of the Abassides; but he remained the virtual ruler of Egypt.

On the death of Nûr ed-Dîn (A.H. 569) Saladin, after a vain attempt to establish the late monarch's son, Melek es-Sâleh, a boy of eleven years, on the vacant throne, assumed the reins of government, and became King of Syria. Damascus was now again the capital of a large and powerful monarchy; and its ruler proved the most formidable enemy ever encountered by the crusaders (A.H. 570, A.D. 1174). In A.H. 583 Saladin fought a pitched battle with

³ The real name of this prince was *Yûsef ibn-Aiyûb* (Joseph the Son of Job); and the dynasty he established was called the dynasty of the *Aiyûbites*. The name **صلاح الدين**—*Selâh ed-Dîn*, “the safety of religion,” might almost be rendered by the title given to our own sovereigns on the coins of the realm, “Fidei Defensor.” The best history of this prince is that written by his secretary. It is entitled ‘*Vita et Res Gestæ Sultani Saladini auctore Bohudino*.’ Lug. Bat. 1732: in Arabic and Latin.

the Franks near Tiberias, and gained a signal victory, taking prisoner the King of Jerusalem, with some of the noblest of his followers and allies. The captive monarch was treated with kindness and courtesy—strange virtues in those days of savage warfare.⁴ This victory was almost fatal to the power of the crusaders in Syria: Acre, Sidon, Beyrout, and Jerusalem itself, soon yielded to the arms of Saladin; and it was only when Richard Cœur-de-Lion arrived in Palestine that Saladin was checked in his career of victory. He was then forced to surrender Acre, Jaffa, Cæsarea, and other places on the coast to the crusaders, but he retained Jerusalem till the time of his death.⁵

Saladin died in Damascus in A.H. 589. He was at first buried in the castle, but some years afterwards his body was removed from that building to the tomb it now occupies near the north-western angle of the court of the Jâmiâ el-Amwy. The tidings of his death were received with unaffected sorrow throughout the whole of his dominions. In Damascus, where his subjects had the fairest opportunities of witnessing his justice and clemency, the people mourned as for a father and benefactor; and to this day his name is venerated by every Muslem.⁶

Saladin left a family of seventeen sons and one daughter. His three eldest sons inherited his vast possessions. To the first of these, Melek el-Afdal, he bequeathed Damascus and Coelesyria; El-Aziz Othman, the second, was made

⁴ Bohaeddin, Vit. Sal., pp. 67-71. Wilken, Geschichte der Kreutz, iii. 2, pp. 276-89.

⁵ Wilken, *ut sup.* 290-312.

⁶ Bohaeddin, Vit. Sal. pp. 275-8. Tarikh Ibn Athir, MS. Abulfeda, Annal. Mus. in Bohaeddin. D'Herbelot, Biblioth. Orient. s. v. 'Saladin.'

King of Egypt; and the third, Melek edh-Dhâher, got Aleppo and Northern Syria as his portion. Melek el-'Adel Seif ed-Dîn, the brother of Saladin, was appointed governor of the stronghold of Kerek. This prince rebelled against Melek el-Afdal, and, by the aid of the Sultan of Egypt, stripped him of all his possessions, and forced him to take refuge in the castle of Sülkhad, on the eastern border of Haurân. The conqueror or usurper held the kingdom till the time of his death in A.H. 615, and bequeathed it to his son Melek el-Muaddam.⁷ From this period till A.H. 658, Damascus remained in the hands of the house of Saladin, but the history of its rulers is devoid of interest, and cannot be particularly noticed in a brief sketch like the present. Melek el-Muaddam died A.H. 624, and was succeeded by his son Melek en-Nâsar. About twenty-five years after this time Melek en-Nâsar Selâheddin, grandson of Melek edh-Dhâher, and great-grandson of Saladin, took possession of Damascus.⁸

But during this stormy period two other dynasties were rising to power. The white slaves brought from the mountains of Georgia and from the shores of the Caspian, by the luxurious and effeminate khâlifs of Egypt, soon learned to despise and then to defy the sway of their degenerate lords. After having been for some time the real, though not the nominal rulers of Egypt, they raised Az ed-Dîn Ibek, a Turcoman, to the throne (A.H. 648). At the same time a powerful tribe from that land so

⁷ Excerpta Abulfeda, in Bohaeddin, Vita Saladin. D'Herbelot, Bib. Orient. s. v. 'Saladin.'

⁸ Biblioth. Orient. *ut sup.*

fruitful in warlike people, the steppes of Tartary, issued forth and swept like a torrent over Persia, Mesopotamia, and Syria. Baghdad was captured, el-Mustasem, the last of its khalifs, slain (A.H. 656 ; A.D. 1258), and more than a million of his subjects butchered, by the savage *Holagou*. Damascus and Aleppo were left in ashes ; but the career of the tyrant was checked by the *Mamlukes*⁹ of Egypt, who, under their skilful and impetuous leader Bibars, drove him back again beyond the Euphrates.¹ Holagou returned the following year and recaptured this city. On his death, in A.H. 663, his great empire was divided among his numerous sons. Bibars, the ruler of Egypt, who was also called Melek edh-Dhâher, entered Syria in A.H. 659, and brought the whole country under the sway of the Egyptian sceptre. This prince had murdered his predecessor, and, after the custom of those times, had received the crown as a reward for his conduct. He ruled over Egypt and Syria till his death in A.H. 675 (A.D. 1276.)²

The weakness caused by the divisions and dismemberments of Holagou's kingdom afforded an opportunity for the rise of another dynasty out of the same prolific stock of shepherd warriors—a dynasty which has risen to fame

⁹ This word signifies “a slave captured in war.” These were distinguished from those slaves of the Negro race who for ages have been used as servants.

¹ History of Egypt, by Jelal ed-Din es-Siüty, MS. p. 153. *Tarikh el-Jenâby*, MS., in my possession.

² The monarchs of this dynasty were distinguished by the name of Baherites, by the fact that they were trained to the use of arms in the village of Raudah on the sea-shore—Baherites signifying “people of the sea.” They were Turkish slaves or Mamlukes. They reigned over Egypt and Syria from A. H. 648 to 784, when they were expelled by the Circassian Mamlukes, who remained masters of Syria till they were overthrown by Timûr. D’Herbelot, *Bib. Or.* s. v. ‘Baharites.’

and power throughout the world ; which for a time upheld and advanced the declining faith of Islam ; and which even now in its wane is shaking the nations of Europe to their centre. To trace the origin and record the progress of a great people is not the design of this work ; but to illustrate the history of an ancient city is the object I aim at. For more than three centuries Damascus has been under the rule of the *Ottomans* or *Othmans* ; it may not, therefore, be considered out of place here to give a brief sketch of the rise of this dynasty.

The *Ottomans* and *Turks* are frequently confounded, but they require to be carefully distinguished in order to the proper understanding of history. The name *Turk*, according to the best Arab authors, was applied generally to all the tribes inhabiting the vast tract of country lying beyond the river Oxus, to the borders of China. The nation was divided into twenty-four great tribes, of which the *Moguls*, the *Tartars*, and the *Turcomans* were the chief. These warlike tribes became first known to the Arabs when Mutassem, the eighth khâlif of the line of the Abassidæ, bought a large number of their young men, trained them up in the exercise of arms, and finally constituted them his body-guard. Independent in spirit, skilful in arms, of undaunted courage, and adepts in intrigue, they speedily attained to the highest offices in the state ; and, ere twenty years had passed, became the virtual rulers of the Khalifite. The Seljûks were a branch of the same race ; and the Tartars who, under Holagou, the grandson of Jengis Khan, captured Baghdad, and abolished the Khalifite, were likewise a tribe of Turks.³ The

³ D'Herbelot, Biblioth. Orient. s. v. 'Atrak.' Tarikh el-Jenâby, MS.

ravages and cruelties committed by these warlike and savage tribes rendered them objects of horror and detestation to the inhabitants of every land they entered. Even to the present day the Arab, if he can safely indulge in the expression of his feelings, will invoke curses on the nation that has ruined and enslaved his country. It is a common saying that, if a Turk or Tartar should ever become master of the whole circle of the sciences, his natural barbarity would still remain inalienably attached to him. And there is some truth in this statement. Craftiness, courage, and ferocity are the undoubted characteristics of the race.

During the rule of Jengis Khan, Sulimân Shah, a noble Mogul, fled from his native land to escape the wrath of this great monarch, and wandered for a time with his flocks and herds and followers through Mesopotamia and Asia Minor. He had three sons, who, on his death, inherited his property. The two elder returned to Persia; but the youngest, *Ortoghrul*, with some 400 dependents, went to Ala ed-Dîn, the ruler of Natolia, and demanded a place in which to reside. He received a tract of country among the Armenian mountains, and there remained until his death in A.H. 687. OTHMAN, his son, was, after his father's death, declared prince of the Turkish colony. Finding his territories too small for his rapidly-increasing tribe, he advanced westward, seized many provinces of Asia Minor, and assumed the name of *Sultan* in A.H. 699. He was the first Sultan of the Ottomans or *Ottomans*, and the dynasty he established still exists in the person of 'ABD EL-MEJID, the present Sultan.⁴

⁴ A good history of the Ottomans is given in the *Tarikh el-Jenâby*. The author brings it down to within a few years of the close of the tenth

The town of Brusa in Anatolia was the place first selected for the seat of the Ottoman Sultans; and from thence they led their armies, not only through the western provinces of Asia Minor, but into Macedonia, and even to the borders of Hungary. But the victorious arms of the Ottomans were checked for a season by one of their own nation. *Tamerlane*, or *Timûr*, was descended from the same royal line of the Moguls as the celebrated Jengis Khan. He was born in A.H. 736. He first seized the vast empire of the Moguls beyond the Oxus, and then, having conquered Persia, Mesopotamia, and the greater part of Asia Minor, he turned to Syria. Aleppo, Hamah, Hŭms, and Bâ'albek fell in quick succession before him; and his victorious soldiers then encamped in the beautiful plain of the Ghûtah, before the walls of Damascus. His camp was first pitched on the western side of the city, extending from the banks of the Barada to the village of Katana. From the side of the Kubbet es-Seiyâr, on the summit of the Jebel Kasyûn, Timûr examined the position of the city and the features of the vast plain around it; and there was not perhaps in his wide dominions a scene of such exquisite beauty as then lay before him. The Mamluke prince, distrusting the strength of his arms, resolved to destroy the tyrant conqueror by assassination. He despatched a trusty messenger in the garb of a *derwish*, with two assistants, to accomplish his base design with poisoned daggers. They obtained an audience, and were permitted to approach to

century of the Hijrah. The best history of these nations hitherto published is that of *De Guignes*, 'Histoire des Huns.' Gibbon has written a graphic sketch of the Ottomans in his 'Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,' ch. lxiv.

the very side of the unconscious Timûr; but fear or a better principle restrained their hands. Once and again were they allowed to enter, until at last their mingled hesitation and importunity excited suspicions, and they were seized. The chief was slain with the dagger intended for the king, and his body burned to ashes in the presence of his two associates, who were then fearfully mutilated and despatched to carry back the news of their success to their royal master.

Timûr proposed conditions to the Damascenes: that he should be acknowledged as sovereign, and the money coined in his name. The trembling citizens, who had heard the thrilling tales of Aleppo, Hûms, and Bâ'albek, threw themselves on his mercy. A few days afterwards, however, whilst he was in the act of removing his army to a better position on the east side of the city, Faraj, the Mamluke Sultan, adopted the fatal resolution to attack him with the whole of his forces, thinking to take him by surprise. But Timûr was too experienced a general, and his veteran soldiers were too well accustomed to the chances of war, to be thus conquered. Making a hurried barrier of the camp furniture and equipage to check the first fury of the assailants, they formed their lines behind it, and then, sweeping round, charged the entangled foe on both flanks. They were unable to stand the shock, and fled in disorder back to the city, leaving thousands dead on the battle-field (A.H. 803). Faraj fled from the city in the night, with a portion of his army, and the inhabitants surrendered, merely begging for their lives. This was granted on condition that every man should pay the price set upon his head. Six of the city gates were shut up,

and at the seventh, Bab el-Faradîs, sat the conqueror to collect the redemption money from each individual as he passed by at the command of the soldiers.

The citadel, a building of great strength and extent, was still in the hands of the resident governor, and he refused to surrender. It is described in glowing terms by Sherif ed-Dîn 'Aly, the Persian historian of Timûr. He represents it as one of the most celebrated fortresses in the world. The walls were of large blocks of hewn stone, built with great regularity, and were of astonishing height and thickness. Around them ran a deep and wide moat, filled with water from the river. There was besides a large garrison, supplied with all the munitions of war. Huge stones and gigantic arrows were discharged on the assailants by engines placed upon the battlements. A species of arrow, having a hollow head of hard black pottery filled with the Greek fire, was likewise much used, and did great damage both to the persons and property of the besiegers.⁵ After almost incredible labour, and immense sacrifice of life, the besiegers succeeded in filling up a portion of the moat and undermining the walls of the keep—a massive and lofty square tower, on the north-eastern angle. It fell at last with a fearful crash, burying beneath its ruins hundreds of its brave defenders, and not a few of its persevering assailants. It was vain to attempt to hold out longer, and so the gallant governor threw open

⁵ I have seen some of these singular weapons. They are of the annexed form: the shaft was fixed in the mouth of the little vessel. Being brittle, they would break on falling, and thus scatter the fire around. They were the prototypes of the modern bombs.



the gates and delivered the keys to the conqueror. Such a noble defence might well have excited the admiration of any soldier or patriot ; but Timûr was a remorseless tyrant, incapable alike of appreciating and acknowledging patriotism. The governor was murdered in cold blood, and his gallant band of veterans, with their wives, children, and aged parents, met a worse fate, being sold into slavery. Immense treasures were found in the castle, and at once seized ; but with that strange inconsistency which is a peculiar characteristic of Mohammedanism, while private property was taken, some valuable stores laid aside for the use of the Haj pilgrimage and the people of Mecca were left untouched. Timûr, whose hands were yet reeking with the blood of his murdered victims, and his ears ringing with the cry of orphan children and widowed mothers whom his soldiers were driving to slavery, reproached the Damascenes for their want of piety in neglecting to erect monuments over the graves of two of the Prophet's wives ! And now he expended a portion of the treasures he had accumulated by pillage and murder in rearing marble mausoleums in honour of these venerated matrons.

But the fearful conclusion of the tragedy was yet to come. The wretched inhabitants who had escaped the first onset of the Tartars, and who had afterwards redeemed their lives with gold, retired to their homes again, as they believed, in peace. Timûr, filled with holy zeal, pondered what new evidence of his piety he could exhibit, and his mind, ever fertile in such expedients, soon devised a plan whereby his faith would be manifested and his revenge satiated. Summoning his generals round him, he addressed them in the following words :—“ I am in-

formed," he said, "that, in the wars of the Khalifs of the house of Omeiyah with the descendants of Mohammed, and especially with 'Aly, the rightful son and heir of the Prophet, and in which they perpetrated every act of cruelty they could invent,—that in these wars the Syrians aided them in their sacrilegious and bloody deeds. This, to me, is strange beyond conception; for how any nation could pretend to receive the doctrine of a prophet, and to have been raised by the light of his revelation from the abyss of error and infidelity, and yet become the enemy of his kindred and family to such a degree as to unite with his bitterest foes in exercising toward them every species of injustice, I cannot comprehend! Yet I entertain no doubt this day that these traditions are true; for had they been false, and had the people of this land been innocent, a judgment so fearful as that now inflicted upon them would never have emanated from the tribunal of Divine justice!" After these extraordinary words he was silent. He uttered no command, he expressed no wish. But his chiefs could interpret the will of their lord, and the consequences of his speech are thus recorded by his biographer and admirer. "On the first of the month Shabân (A.H. 803) the excited soldiers rushed upon the devoted and helpless city, and commenced a scene of wanton outrage and slaughter such as it is impossible to imagine. Houses were stripped of every valuable, and their inmates exposed to every outrage which cruelty could devise or lust suggest. Neither age nor sex was spared, but those that escaped the sword, or survived the atrocious indignities of a ruffian soldiery, were dragged from their homes and sold into slavery.

Such vast masses of treasures and valuables were collected by the army that they could not, with all their available baggage-animals, carry them away. The carnage lasted for ten days, and then it was consummated by the burning of the city. Timûr," adds his historian, "whose piety was without a parallel (!), used every effort to save the mosk of the Omeiyades, but in vain, for the roof caught the flames, and the eastern minaret fell to the ground."⁶

Never had this ancient city, during the long ages through which it stood, and the many dynasties and nations to which it had been forced to submit, so fearfully experienced the horrors of conquest as now. Its vast wealth was dissipated in a day; its stores of antique gems and gorgeous fabrics were seized by those who had neither the taste to appreciate nor the knowledge to discern their real value; its spacious palaces, with their marble halls, and inlaid fountains, and walls and ceilings of arabesque, and divans of richest silk embroidered with gold and sparkling with jewels, were all pillaged and left in ashes; its great libraries, filled with the literature patronised by the later khalifs, and cultivated by native savans—stored, too, with the carefully-preserved writings of the fathers of the Eastern Church—were almost wholly destroyed. Tradition records that of the large Christian population only

⁶ This account of the siege and capture of Damascus is taken from the work of his Persian historian Sherif ed-Din 'Aly el-Yezly, *Histoire de Timur Bec par Cherefeddin Ali*, trad. par M. De la Croix, vol. iii. pp. 320-47. There is a shorter account given in the 'Life of Timur,' by *Ibn Arabshah*—Ahmed Arabsiad, *Vit. Timuri*, ed. Mauger, vol. ii. p. 1, *seq.* See also D'Herbelot, *Biblioth. Orient. s. v.* 'Timour,' where an excellent epitome will be found.

one family escaped the desolation of the Tartars. Their descendants still exist, and I have heard from their lips the fearful tales of the sufferings of their ancestors, which have been carefully transmitted from sire to son. From the spot where I pen these lines I can look out on the towering minarets and noble dome of the mosk of the Omeiyades, and the frowning battlements of the ancient castle beneath the walls of which so many Tartars fell; and I can see away beyond them the naked slope along the mountain-side where Timûr marshalled his hosts, that the trembling citizens might have a full view of their vast numbers and proud bearing. I can see the little wely, too, on the summit of yon hill from beneath which the monarch gained his first view of the city and plain; and turning northward I can mark the locality of the old gate where his deputies sat to receive the redemption-money. There is something strangely thrilling in thus contemplating the scene of such a fearful tragedy, even after the lapse of more than four centuries; and the feeling is deepened by hearing the sad story from the lips of one whose ancestors were among the victims.

After devastating Syria with fire and sword, Timûr returned to his native land. On his arrival, prompted by caprice, perhaps by some better principle, he gave orders for the release of all the captives, of every age and sex, that had been taken in Syria. His command was strictly obeyed, and the motley crowd that had belonged to this city were brought back in safety to the plain of the Ghûtah. It must have been a heart-rending sight to behold these destitute and houseless people assembling round the blackened walls and smouldering ruins of this ancient city,

and mourning in their misery and helplessness over the wreck of fortune, the desolation of country, and the murder of kindred and friends.⁷

The city of Damascus, like the fabled phœnix, soon rose again from its ashes, and not long after the death of Timûr fell once more into the hands of the Mamluke sovereigns of Egypt. Faraj, who had deserted it in the hour of danger, returned when the storm had passed over; but in A.H. 815 he was murdered within its walls and his body thrown on a dunghill.⁸ The Mamlukes of the Borgite⁹ dynasty ruled over Syria for more than a century after this period, during which Damascus enjoyed comparative peace.

The Ottoman empire had in the mean time not only recovered from the desolating wars of Timûr, but had attained to great power in Asia Minor and eastern Europe. Constantinople had fallen before the impetuous attack of Mohammed II., A.H. 857, A.D. 1453. The last of the Byzantine monarchs fell in the van of his soldiers, in front of the breach made by Turkish cannon, and the Muslims, ere they entered his capital, had to pass over his lifeless body. The spirit of the ancient Cæsars appears to have been infused into the last of their line. The throne of the descendants of Othman was now established on the ruins of the Roman Empire. Sixty-five years afterwards Sultan Selîm invaded Syria, and, having conquered Cansou, the last of the Mamluke sovereigns in a pitched battle near Aleppo, he seized his kingdom, and

⁷ Cherifedîn, *ut sup.*

⁸ Bibliothèque Orientale, s. v. 'Faraje.'

⁹ The Borgites were Mamlukes of Circassian origin. They reigned from A. H. 648 till 923.

Syria thenceforth became a Turkish province. Sultan Selîm at this time remained upwards of three months in Damascus. From hence he went to Egypt, and after regulating the affairs of that kingdom he continued his route to the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. On his return to Damascus he conferred the government on the head of one of the principal families in the city, the Emir Jân Berdy, A.H. 923, A.D. 1519.¹

The line of policy adopted by the house of Othman for the government of Syria, from the period it fell under their sway, has been in every way worthy of their character as crafty and unscrupulous tyrants. Native chiefs were appointed to act as local governors, or provincial Pashas, and to them was given unlimited power. So long as the revenues were punctually paid into the imperial treasury, no attention was ever given to the state of the people or the mode of government. When a pashalik became vacant, the *tails* were transferred to the highest bidder. The imperial firman once issued, the central government took no pains to enforce its observance, and the candidate was left to fight his own way to possession. If rivals opposed him, as was almost universally the case in the more distant provinces, his final success depended on the strength of his arms; and if conquered in battle and driven from his territory, a liberal bribe forwarded to Stamboul was always productive of a fresh firman in favour of the conqueror. The Turkish authorities were delighted to see these bloody contentions, for the country was thus weakened, and consequently less able to resist

¹ Târikh el-Jenâby, MS. In this work there is an excellent sketch of the conquests of Sultan Selim.

their tyranny. Syria was ruled, *and is still ruled*, not by power but by intrigue. When a party or faction became dangerous from its numbers and its strength, the enmity of others was excited by the imperial emissaries, and rebellion was effectually checked by party rivalries and quarrels.

The Turks were at first too much engrossed by their efforts to extend their conquests, and to plant the Crescent, the emblem of their faith, on the Christian temples of Europe, to devote time or attention to the internal economy of their conquered provinces. Perhaps it might also be said that the Turkish mind is incapable of comprehending the great principles of political economy, and that the Turkish faith is, from its very nature, destructive of that private and social virtue, and of those moral qualities, on which national prosperity must be grounded. The destructive policy that was at first adopted, from whatever source it sprung, became absolutely essential to the maintaining of Turkish rule in after days. The energy and influence of the nation began rapidly to decline the very moment it was forced to renounce offensive warfare, and the dominion of Syria was henceforth maintained by the crafty policy of pitting against each other the rival sects and clans. A carefully-compiled and well-written history of Turkish rule in Syria would tend greatly to enlighten the eyes of European statesmen and citizens; and it would also unfold such a continued series of tyranny, extortion, and crime as is almost unparalleled in the annals of the world.

The Pashas of Damascus ruled over the greater part of Palestine, and the whole country east of the Jordan:

they had also a nominal authority over the warlike tribes of Lebanon. A single instance is sufficient to illustrate the way in which they executed the trust confided to them by the Sultan. Mohammed Pasha had nominated a local chief to the government of the southern division of Lebanon; a more powerful rival met him while on his way to take charge of his district, routed his guards, and cut off his head! Having accomplished his purpose, he wrote to inform the Pasha of what had occurred. "It is of no consequence," was the reply; "give me a hundred purses, and name what governor you please!"

The only incident worthy of record in this sketch, subsequent to the occupation of this city by the Ottomans, is its capture by Ibrahîm Pasha, the celebrated general and son of Mohammed 'Aly, and this conquest is chiefly remarkable for the effects it produced. Damascus, the *Holy City*, was, under Ibrahîm's rule, opened for the first time to the representatives of foreign powers. The British consul entered it in full costume, protected by Egyptian soldiers and a band of Janissaries. The fanatical citizens indulged their wrath and muttered their curses in private, but made no open demonstration of their hatred. The presence of European consuls, and especially the great ability, tact, and energy of her Majesty's representative, Richard Wood, Esq., have since that period effected a complete revolution in the conduct and feelings of a large majority of the population. The better informed honour and respect the sterling integrity of the British consul; while venal officials, as well as the turbulent mob, have been taught by experience to fear him. I feel confident that his removal would now be regarded by a large

majority of the inhabitants, not only of the city but of the pashalik, as one of the greatest calamities that could befall them. The influence he exerts personally, and the power so judiciously placed in his hands by his government, and sanctioned by the Porte, acts in many cases as an effectual check to the oppression and extortions of Turkish governors. The peasants, too, throughout the pashalik, find in him a kind friend and a never-failing protector against the injustice and grinding cruelty of their hereditary chiefs. The present tranquillity of Syria is in a great measure owing to the exertions and influence of Mr. Wood. But for him the Druzes who defied the government troops, and worsted them in many skirmishes in 1852, would now raise the standard of rebellion; but for him the turbulent and bloodthirsty Metâwely of Bâ'albek would fill their district with rapine and murder. I have more than once had opportunity of witnessing Mr. Wood's praiseworthy exertions on behalf of the peace and security of this land. During last summer six hundred Christians of Zahleh armed and marched to revenge an outrage committed on one of their number by a Bâ'albek *emîr*. News of the transaction was immediately conveyed to Mr. Wood, then residing in Bludân. He mounted his horse on the moment and galloped to the advancing band. After a long and noisy scene, in which he mingled threats with promises, he succeeded in constraining them to return to their homes, while he undertook to settle the dispute amicably. Had an encounter taken place at that time, the whole of Lebanon and Central Syria would have been involved in civil war.

Such is a sketch of the history of Damascus. There is

now no *city* in the world that can lay claim to such high antiquity, and there are few that can vie with it in the importance and interest of the events enacted within its walls. Twice has it been the capital of great empires, and at one time its dominion reached from the shores of the Atlantic to the banks of the Indus. It has been in succession conquered and possessed by the greatest monarchs that ever appeared on the theatre of the world, and it has formed part of the most powerful empires whose names are found on the page of history. Six different and distinct sections of the human family have already ruled over it, and its eventful history we have thus divided into six periods. During the first period of about 1450 years Damascus was independent; after that time the Babylonian and Persian monarchs held it for a second period of 417 years. It was then subdued by Alexander, and remained under Grecian rule a third period of 268 years. The Romans now seized it, and it was absorbed in their vast empire during a fourth term of 699 years. The Saracens possessed it 441 years, after which it fell into the hands of the Tartar or Turkish tribes, who still retain it; but their power is rapidly declining. The throne established by Othman is even now tottering to its fall, and the sixth period of Damascus' history is fast drawing to a close.

The most remarkable fact connected with the history of this city is, that it has not only existed but flourished under every change of dynasty and under every form of government: it may well be called the *perennial city*. Its station among the capitals of the world has been wonderfully uniform. The presence of royalty does not

appear to have greatly advanced its internal welfare, nor does their removal seem to have induced decay or even decline. It has never rivalled, in the vastness of its extent nor in the gorgeousness of its structures, a Nineveh, a Babylon, or a Rome ; but neither has it resembled them in the greatness of its fall nor in the desolation of its ruins. It has existed and prospered alike under Persian despotism, Grecian anarchy, and Roman patronage ; and it exists and prospers still, despite Turkish oppression and misrule. It is like an oasis amid the desolation of ancient Syria, for it has survived many generations of cities that have in succession risen up around it ; and while they lie in ruins, it possesses all the freshness and vigour of youth.

STATISTICS OF DAMASCUS.

The extent of that portion of the city within the circuit of the ancient walls has already been alluded to. It is of an irregular oval form, and about three miles in circumference. It is densely populated throughout, with the exception of a few gardens on the south side. On the northern side of the city proper there is, as we have seen, an extensive suburb containing some fine houses, principally inhabited by Turkish officials and foreigners in the service of Government ; but by far the largest suburb lies on the west and south of the city, stretching out into the plain for about two miles. The city, as a whole, is very irregular in form, having projections and indentations on all sides. Its length, from north to south, is about three miles, and its greatest breadth a mile and a half. At the

distance of about half a mile, on the north-west, is the large village or suburb of Salahîyeh, finely situated along the slope of the hill, and enjoying a commanding view over the vast plain. It is more than a mile in length, but is narrow, and not so closely packed with houses as Damascus.

The population of Damascus it is impossible to determine with accuracy. The Government takes a census, it is true, for the purpose of ascertaining the number of taxable males; but the venality and carelessness of the officers employed, together with the inviolability of the harîm and the privacy of Eastern life, render it far from exact or full. There was a census taken a short time previous to the awful visitation of the cholera in 1848; and it was afterwards found, on comparing the returns of the census with those of that fearful scourge, that more people had died in many houses than were returned altogether on the census-lists. The following summary has been drawn up from the last Government census, and may be considered as close an approximate to the truth as can now be obtained. The table, however, only enables us to *estimate* the true population; for, from the causes above alluded to, and the knowledge that the taxes are levied in proportion to the numbers returned, as few names as possible are placed upon the lists. It has been considered by those most competent to form a correct estimate that only *two-thirds* of the Muslem population have been returned, and that consequently fifty per cent. must be added to them. The Jews are perhaps about twenty-five per cent. below the truth; but the number of the Chris-

tians given below is correct, as I have obtained it from other and trustworthy sources.² The whole population of Damascus I consider to be about 150,000.

POPULATION OF DAMASCUS.

SECTS.	NUMBERS.	
Muslems . . . . .	. .	74,464
Druzes . . . . .	. .	500
Christians of Greek Church	5,995	. .
" Greek Catholic	6,195	. .
" Syrian	260	. .
" Syrian Catholic	350	. .
" Maronite	405	. .
" Armenian and Chaldean	405	. .
" Armenian Catholic	235	. .
" Latin	110	. .
" Protestant	70	. .
		14,005
Strangers, soldiers, slaves, and protégés . . . . .	. .	15,000
Jews . . . . .	. .	4,630
Total . . . . .	. .	108,599

The MUSLEMS of Damascus may be described generally as feeble, licentious, and fanatical. The religion they profess, *if* indeed *Islam* deserves that name, places no restraint upon their passions; and experience proves, at least so far as regards this city, that polygamy has not the effect of restraining from worse conduct. I have read with surprise an extract from Urquhart's 'Spirit of the East,' quoted by Lane³ with approbation, and introduced with the remark "that the writer has deeply studied Muslem institutions and their effects." It is as follows:—"On the subject of polygamy a European has all the advantage

² For these numbers I am principally indebted to M. Bulād, who had access to the Government registers.

³ Lane's 'Thousand and One Nights,' vol. i. pp. 233-4.

in discussion with a Turkish woman, because her feelings are decidedly on the side of her antagonists; but then she has a tremendous power of reply, in the comparison of the practical effects of the two systems, and in the widely-spread rumours of the heartlessness and the profligacy of Europe. All the convictions of our habits and laws stand in hostile array against the country where the principle of polygamy is admitted into the laws of the state; but yet, while we reproach Islamism with polygamy, Islamism may reproach us with practical polygamy, which, unsanctioned by law and reprobated by custom, adds degradation of the mind to dissoluteness of morals." What! and would Mr. Urquhart venture to affirm that the worst vices of the most degraded in Christian England would bear comparison with the abominations that are almost universally practised in Muslem cities? Virtue, as a moral principle, is unknown to either sex in this land; and the disgusting obscenities of the *harim*, as well as the unnatural vices of the other sex, could not have escaped the notice of Mr. Urquhart, had he indeed studied the habits of the people of this country, or the effects of Muslem institutions. The filthiness of the common conversation among all classes, of all ages and of both sexes, is sufficient of itself to show the deep depravity in which this unhappy land is engulfed. For the profligacy of European cities I offer not one word of excuse or apology. It is a disgrace to Christianity; but with all this, there is sufficient sense of shame still found, even in the most profligate, to make them blush at the thought of their guilt; and there is enough of high-toned morality in the vast majority of the people to make them shun the society of the dissolute, and mourn over

their fall. Here vice has spread over the nation like a flood, corrupting every dwelling, making wanton every thought and look, and polluting the very language which is the medium of social intercourse.

Muslems spend their time between indolence and indulgence, wandering with solemn step from the harîm to the bath, and from the bath to the mosk. They are emphatically a praying people, and so are they a washing people; and there is just as much religion in their ablutions as there is in their devotions. Prayer with them is a simple *performance*. They pray as they eat, or as they sleep, or as they perform their toilet. These are all matters of course, parts of the daily routine, performed with the same care and with the same solemnity. The Muslem merchant will lie and cheat, and swear and pray, and lie and cheat, and swear again; and these are all like different scenes in the same drama, quite in their places. The feelings are not in the least shocked by thus mixing up things sacred and profane; and the simple reason is, there is no sacredness in their prayers. A Muslem emîr or pasha will issue his orders for oppression and savage cruelty, and even murder; and when the Muezzin call is heard, will calmly spread his carpet, stroke his beard, and engage in the exercise of prayer with a serenity, and we may add with a solemnity, of countenance that is altogether wonderful; and when the performance is at an end he is ready to despatch the same routine of business over again.

It is said that there are in the city over 300 mosks, and many of them are of great extent and beauty, and richly endowed besides. There is also a large number of schools,

or *colleges*, as some poetical travellers would designate them. These are in general large buildings which have been founded by the piety or pride of some great man, and allowed to fall to decay and ruin by his successors. If occupied at all, it is at most by a few scores of urchins squatting on the dirty ground, and *see-sawing* over a few leaves of the Koran, while they shout its verses in unison, led by a grey-bearded sheikh who sits knitting in the corner. Small libraries of manuscripts are attached to the more important of these schools; and here some rare and valuable works may often be found, though they are guarded with such extreme care that it is difficult to obtain access to them. Few of the Muslims advance beyond the first rudiments of education, yet there are some in the city who are pretty well acquainted with their own literature, and possess a considerable knowledge of the state of science in Europe. Among the latter, the first place must be given to Mahmûd Effendi, and Sheikh Abd Ullah el Haleby. These gentlemen are both deeply versed in the mysteries of their own language; and the former, in addition to his learning, is a man of refined manners and great liberality. Private libraries of any extent or value are extremely rare, but almost every old family has a number of manuscripts that are left as heirlooms to successive generations. A military school has lately been established in the city, but it is exclusively intended for those who purpose entering the Turkish army. The pupils receive instruction in drawing and engineering from European masters.

The CHRISTIANS of Damascus are enterprising and industrious, and a considerable proportion of the trade of the

city is in their hands. They are rapidly increasing in number, wealth, and influence, and have almost entirely thrown aside that cringing and fawning demeanour which was the result of long ages of oppression. They now feel secure both in amassing and displaying their wealth; but the protection they enjoy and the security they feel are solely owing to the presence and influence of the European consuls. The English consul, Mr. Wood, has contributed more than all others to release both Christians and Jews from the indignities to which in former times they were subjected by their Muslem lords; and when, in consequence of the aggressions of Russia, the old fanatical spirit was lately roused, and Christians were met in every part of the city with curses and abuse, it was mainly through Mr. Wood's energetic remonstrances and bold measures that the Muslems were forced to suppress their fiery hatred and bigotry. Knowing these facts, it was with much surprise I read the following sentence in M. de Sauley's recent work on this country:—"Until a recent period, Christians were obliged to alight whilst crossing the gate of Damascus, but such was no longer the case in 1851; and my excellent friend, *M. de Segur-Duperron, consul of France in this city, had proudly vindicated the honour of the French name*: CONSEQUENTLY nobody seemed to mind us, and we were allowed to enter the city with all our arms." ⁴ Does M. de Sauley really mean to say that it was in consequence of M. de Segur-Duperron's proud vindication of the honour of the French name that Christians were no longer obliged to dismount when cross-

⁴ Journey round the Dead Sea and in Bible Lands, in 1850-51. By F. de Sauley. London, 1854. Vol. ii. p. 520.

ing the gate of Damascus? Very probably he does; and yet Addison, in 1835, rode through the city, just *fifteen years* before ever M. de Segur was even heard of in Damascus! And scores of travellers, French and English, have since that time followed his example with impunity, and have told the world so. But M. de Sauley appears to have come to this country in happy ignorance of everything that had been done or seen by his predecessors. He was determined to astonish the world by his *discoveries*, and by the *originality* of his remarks, and he has undoubtedly succeeded. We shall see more of him in the sequel. It seems, however, that M. de Sauley does not stand alone in his ignorance. A writer in a deservedly popular Magazine states plainly what the French *savant* had left ambiguous:—"Until a very recent date," says this profound reviewer, "all Christians were obliged to alight and cross the gate of Damascus on foot, but this humiliating regulation no longer exists, *having been abolished since 1850 by the energetic interference of M. de Segur-Duperron, the French consul!*"⁵

The Christians, as may be seen from the table given above, are divided into nine different sects. The Catholics are those who have seceded from the ancient Oriental churches, and have acknowledged the supremacy of Rome. They still retain their own forms of prayer, their own fasts and feasts, and their *married* clergy—strange concessions to be granted by the Papacy! Two patriarchs reside permanently in this city—the Greek, and the Greek Catholic. There are ten churches and nine convents. There are also

⁵ Dublin University Mag. for Sept. 1853, p. 332.

several schools, attended by large numbers of boys, but they are all elementary: the best is that of the Greek patriarch, which is supported by Russian money. There is another large school conducted under the superintendence of the *Lazaristes*, but the French language seems to be almost the only thing taught in it. Their convent also contains a school for girls: I cannot tell however what are the instructions given in it, as strangers are not permitted to visit it. The French "Sisters of Charity" have within the last few months set up an establishment in this city, in which there is a dispensary and a large female school. In none of these schools, however, is any attempt made to give instruction in arithmetic, geography, history, or indeed in any of the branches of an ordinary education, beyond reading, writing, and the elements of grammar. The education of the people is consequently miserably defective, and it is unfortunate that there is little desire manifested for improvement.

In the year 1853 the Protestant missionaries established a school of a higher class in this city, in which they propose to have the pupils instructed by competent masters in the various branches of a liberal education; and in order to encourage talented and deserving boys and young men to continue their studies and complete a curriculum, they have founded twenty bursaries to be awarded to such as excel in diligence and attention. They have also connected with this school an elementary school for boys, in which, in addition to reading, writing, and Arabic grammar, instructions are given in geography, arithmetic, and the English language. The first public examination of these schools was held on the 28th and 29th days of December

last, when upwards of fifty pupils were present ; and these, by their ready answers to the questions proposed, and general intelligence, gave universal satisfaction to the visitors and missionaries.

The Protestant mission was established in Damascus in 1843. In that year the Rev. John Wilson, D.D., of the Church of Scotland, and the Rev. William Graham, of the Presbyterian Church of Ireland, visited this city, and resolved that it should be the seat of the united mission to the Jews, previously projected by their Churches ;⁶ and a few months afterwards Mr. Graham and the Rev. Mr. Allen took up their residence here, and commenced their labours. In 1844 the Rev. Smylic Robson, of the Presbyterian Church of Ireland, joined the mission ; and in the same year the Church of Scotland withdrew its missionaries, the Rev. James Barnett and Dr. J. G. Paulding, of the Associate Reformed Church of the United States, came to the city, and united with Messrs. Graham and Robson ; and since that time the mission has been vigorously and successfully prosecuted, notwithstanding many difficulties and some severe trials. Though the mission was originally and properly to the Jews, yet no opportunity has ever been neglected of instructing the native Christians. Public worship is conducted in Arabic twice each Lord's-day, and in English once. In addition to the schools above referred to, a female school has been lately established, and there are at present about forty pupils in attendance, a large majority of whom are Jewesses. The mission staff is at present as follows :—Rev. Smylic Robson ; Dr. J. G.

⁶ Ample details of Dr. Wilson's and Mr. Graham's visit to Damascus will be found in the 'Lands of the Bible,' vol. ii. pp. 325-69.

Paulding, physician; Rev. J. L. Porter; Rev. J. A. Frazier; Rev. Gulien Lansing; and Miss Dales, superintendent of the female school.

The JEWS of Damascus are not numerous, but they are very influential on account of the vast wealth of some of the great families. These have been for many years the bankers of the successive pashas and great merchants. Until the interference of European powers in the internal administration of affairs in Syria, the changes of fortune and circumstances through which some of these families passed were truly wonderful, and had more of the character of an Eastern romance than of stern and fearful reality. At one time the Jew would be the actual ruler of Syria, and then in a few weeks he would be stripped of fortune, and perhaps cruelly mutilated, or even murdered. The scene is now changed. Safe under the protection of European consuls, the Jew can buy and sell and make gain.⁷ The Jews and Christians inhabit distinct quarters in the city.

Damascus is a purely mercantile city, carrying on an extensive trade with the wandering tribes of Bedawîn who pasture their flocks on the vast plains of Arabia. It is also a great entrepôt for the rich wares of Persia and India, which are brought here by caravans from Baghdad. The annual Hâj pilgrimage is also a source of great profit to the city, for this is the place of rendezvous, and is thence called "The Gate of Mecca." The holy caravan reaches the city about the middle of the month Ramadân;

⁷ Some interesting details about the Jewish families of this city, and their religion, schools, &c., may be found in the work already referred to, 'The Lands of the Bible,' vol. ii.

and from this time till its departure, on the 15th of the following month, the streets and bazaars are crowded by thousands, eager alike to buy and sell. Every pilgrim endeavours to make his journey profitable by traffic, and this is not considered in any way to interfere with the sanctity of his character or the fervour of his devotions. It is a peculiar feature of Islam that traffic and religion, cheating and praying, lying and devotion, can be blended together without the least discord. The Persian hajy brings his gorgeous carpets, fine embroidery, rich shawls, inlaid caskets, and precious stones, to barter for Damascus silks and cotton fabrics. Damascus also exports a considerable quantity of silks and dried fruits to Egypt, Constantinople, and other parts of Turkey.

CHAPTER IV.

JOURNEY TO PALMYRA.

Bedawy *Sheikh* — Dromedaries and their saddles — Gardens — The mirage — Mountain pass — Kuteifeh — Evening entertainment — Frank sorcery — Early rising — Jerûd — Sheikh Fâres and Arab cavaliers — Border warfare — Salt marsh — The *desert* — The Bedawy in the desert — Encampment of Bedawin — Patriarchal customs — A feast — Evening party in a tent — Night adventure — Excitement of desert travel — A chace — Bedawy *Hawîms* — Enemies — Preparations for battle — Singular mountain — Encounter with robbers — Arab hospitality — Cold march — Robbers — The spoils of a caravan — Illustrations of Scripture — Bedawy women — Apprehended dangers — Geological features — First view of *Tadmor* — A “charge” — Attack and capture of our party — Our prison — Alarming conversation — A comic scene — Ride to Palmyra — Description of the ruins — Historical sketch — Return — Route of Jacob — Kuryetein identified with *Hazar-enan*.

HAVING concluded a bargain with a sheikh of the great Bedawy tribe of the 'Anezy to conduct us to the ruins of “Tadmor in the wilderness,” we were prepared to start on the morning of March 31st, 1851.¹ As there are no hotels on this route, and the habitations of the Arabs are somewhat wide apart, and not always to be found when the hungry traveller might want them, we deemed it necessary to lay in a good stock of provisions. Knowing, too, by experience, that we would probably be exposed to sudden and great changes of temperature, we had piled up a goodly heap of coats, cloaks, and lehâfs,² destined for

¹ My companion during this journey was the Rev. Smylie Robson; and to him I am indebted for an accurately kept itinerary of our route, both going and returning.

² A *lehâf* is literally a coverlet; but the name is usually given to a very thick species stuffed with cotton, not unlike the German *feder-bett*.

all kinds of service, whether by night or day. A leathern water-bottle lay beside our stores, and several other articles were grouped around, the use of which a stranger might have had difficulty in ascertaining. Hour after hour passed as we wandered up and down the court, or sat upon the fountain's brink; but our chief did not appear. Our patience was exhausted, and, casting aside our travelling costume, we threw ourselves on a divan, despairing of starting till another day. The clear voice of the Muezzin from the minaret of the great mosk announced the hour of noon; and soon after 'Amer, our sheikh, entered the court. He was a man of middle stature, and seemingly of middle age. His frame was spare but wiry. There was no evidence of strength, but there was evidence of capability to endure great fatigue. His eye was quick, with more of shrewdness than fierceness in its glance. The whole expression of his countenance was mild and soft, and in this respect different from that of the generality of his race. A deep scar furrowed his cheek, and a sabre-cut had divided his left hand to the centre, rendering useless two of the fingers. On his right arm above the wrist was the deep black scar of a bullet, and two of the fingers of the right hand were broken. His dress externally was similar to that worn by all Arabs, consisting of the striped *abeih* and gay *kefiyeh*, bound with its simple rope of camels' hair. Underneath, however, he wore a silk robe of the brightest colours.

After hasty salutations we asked the cause of his delay, and whether his animals were now ready. He assumed at once an admirable look of surprise, and said, with all apparent sincerity, "Did you not tell me you would not go till to-morrow?" There was no use in quarrelling with

him, and we were the more resigned as the dark clouds, gathering on the summit of Hermon, and the distant murmur of the thunder, gave warning of approaching rain. Having fixed the time of departure at sunrise the following morning, we separated for the day.

April 1st.—Scarcely had the first rays of the morning sun tinged with gold the minaret tops and distant mountain summits, when the deep growl of our dromedaries was heard at the door, and 'Amer with his attendant was ushered into the court. To strap on our stores, and arrange our saddles, was a work of some time. The dromedary's saddle is rather curious and primitive in construction. It consists of two horns, one in front and the other behind, from a foot to a foot and a half in length, attached to sticks fitted to sit astride the animal's hump, on a cushion of straw, and the whole apparatus is fastened on in the usual way by girths. This was no inviting seat as I first saw it; but when coats and lehâfs were arranged across it, it was both easy and comfortable.

All being ready, we sent the animals to the East Gate, not wishing to endanger our limbs in riding along narrow streets, or our heads in passing under low archways. I had often heard that the first mounting of a dromedary formed a kind of era in a man's life, and I confess that, when I saw mine with open mouth, growling savagely, and struggling to free itself from the grasp of the driver, I felt a little trepidation. No sooner had I leaped into the saddle than the brute, giving a sharp lurch backwards, and a heavy one forward, and then another backwards, gained its feet and ran a few yards at a smart trot; it then wheeled about, and suddenly, by a similar but reversed series of lurches, was again upon the ground. A second

time it went through this pantomime, and was preparing for a third, when its driver seized and pinioned it by placing his foot upon its knee. 'Amer and Mr. Robson were in motion, and at some distance, when he let it free, but I was not long in reaching them. Though I had no difficulty in keeping my seat through this scene, thanks to the horns of my saddle, yet it was with no little anxiety I looked forward to a ride of nearly two hundred miles on such an animal. The pace was dreadful when it trotted; and then the sittings-down and risings-up and sudden jerks had almost dislocated my spine. In walking, however, when I became a little accustomed to the rocking motion, I found the pace easy, and even pleasant.

Turning to the left from the East Gate, we skirted the ancient city-wall, passing the reputed house of Naaman the leper, and then crossed the Barada and one of its canals by a double bridge. In a few minutes more we entered the caravan-road that leads to Aleppo and the north. The day was calm and hot for the season, and we were consequently able to realise the sweets of deep shade. The forest-gardens that encompass the old city of Damascus are the finest I have ever roamed through; and now, clothed in the delicious freshness of a spring morning, they were seen to the greatest advantage. It is not because the meandering paths are kept with taste and care, or laid down with mathematical precision, that one admires these gardens; and neither is it because the banks of the rivers are trimmed with all the precision of rug-work, or that rustic seats and rose-wreathed bowers are found in every spot where indolence or luxury would wish for them. There is more of nature and less of art here than in the wilderness pleasure-grounds of the Far West.

There are miles of shade along the brink of the lazy stream, whose course is where it has cut its own way through a rich soil, or where a way has been hewn out or built up for it by the industrious of former ages. The noble trees around stretch out their giant arms, or shoot up their stately heads, unrestrained by human care; while the luxuriant vine and purple-tinted pomegranate form a thick underwood. Hours may be spent galloping along those lanes that seem to have no end, and over which the fragrant walnut spreads its branches, affording a shade that bids defiance to even an eastern sun. On each side extend broad meadows whose verdure the thick groves of plum, apricot, and apple trees do not injure. Here the air is cool and fresh amid the hottest days of summer; and were it not that in the coolest breezes is wafted the poison of the burning fever, this might well be regarded as an earthly paradise.

We passed, on the left of our route, the large and populous villages of Harista and Dûma, and at the end of three hours emerged from the gardens and orchards. We felt the loss of the agreeable shade and cool air, but we did not regret them, owing to the extent and beauty of the prospect that now opened up to us. On our left rose abruptly the steep and naked declivities of Anti-Lebanon, deeply furrowed by the beds of winter torrents, and here and there laid open by yawning ravines. In front was the lofty hill called Jebel Timîyeh, cone-shaped, like Tabor, but completely destitute of verdure; while far away to the east and south stretched the vast plain—eastward reaching to the horizon, but on the south bounded by the blue mountains of Bashan. At four hours we had

the village of Adhr'a about half an hour distant to the north-east; at this point we turned nearly due north, and began to ascend diagonally the lower slopes of the mountain range. The view over the plain now became almost inconceivably lovely. Its beauty was enhanced, and in a great measure created, by a cause, the magic operation of which can only be fully understood by the eastern traveller. Lakes of great extent, whose shores were fringed with gigantic reeds and graceful poplars, seemed almost to cover the plain. Numerous islands studded their surface, clothed with verdant groves whose foliage quivered in the gentle breeze that rippled the surface of the water. Villages, too, occupied peninsulas, or were perched upon islands, and encompassed by their luxuriant gardens and orchards. It was altogether a picture such as I had never before gazed upon; but there was no reality in it—it was the *mirage*.

After half-an-hour's ascent the road became steep and rugged. We had reached the proper base of the range, and a difficult pass lay before us. My dromedary now became refractory. It was inclined to go every way but the right one. It would suddenly scamper off across the face of the hill at right angles to the path, endangering my neck and its own among the huge blocks of loose rock; and when I attempted to check it, down it squatted on the spot. After a series of encounters with it, its owner came behind it with his hooked stick, and then it dashed on at a terrible pace after its fellows. Already I felt so much fatigue that I began to entertain gloomy forebodings of the future; and I vowed that, if once safe through this journey, it would be the last dromedary I would ever

mount. By good management and the aid of the Ageily, who, besides the sheikh 'Amer, was our only companion, I persuaded the unruly animal to climb the hills, and sweep through the deep ravines, till we reached a ruined khan near the top of the pass. Here a few broken columns, lying within foundations of hewn stones, mark the site of some ancient building. It is now called Khan et-Tinîyeh.

At this place a broad plain opened up before us, running along the base of the hills on which we stood toward the north-east far as the eye could see. Beyond it was a parallel ridge of bleak but picturesque mountains. Descending the hill diagonally by an easy path, in a direction a little east of north, we reached the plain, and soon after rode into the large village of Kuteifeh, where we dismounted for our lunch.

We were objects of no little curiosity to some groups of men and boys who collected round our camels. My companion had retained his Frank costume, which in the eyes of the Arabs did not seem very picturesque on a dromedary's back; and there were evidently some jokes passing through the crowd of loungers at his expense. My own habiliments suited very well so long as I remained *in situ*; but when I dismounted, and the small dimensions of my nether garments became visible, laughter broke forth afresh. Notwithstanding my fatigue, which has always, it must be admitted, a considerable influence upon the temper, I felt more inclined to enjoy than resent such indignities; and I entertained some doubts whether, had I appeared in like costume in any of the villages of Old England, a similar reception would not have awaited me.

After half-an-hour's halt we remounted and rode off

eastward along the well-cultivated plain. Hitherto we had followed the ordinary caravan-road to Aleppo and the north; but at Kuteifeh we left it. It strikes across the plain north-by-west, passes the mountain range by a wild ravine, and entering another plain continues northward to Nebk and Hũms. In thirty-five minutes we reached the large village of Mu'addamiyeh. It was our original intention to proceed to Jerũd the first day, but our dromedaries had behaved so badly and travelled so slowly, that we found this impossible; we consequently determined to spend the night here. We proceeded at once to the house of the sheikh, and were welcomed by his son, he himself being absent. We were ushered with all our baggage into the reception-room, which was soon well filled with the chief men of the village, who had collected to see the strangers and drink coffee. A black slave was kept busy the whole evening roasting the coffee-beans, and pounding them in a quaintly-carved wooden mortar with a curiously-formed wooden pestle. The latter business he executed with such skill and grace that the village fathers evidently envied him, as he managed, by skilfully wielding the pestle, to beat time in a lively manner. His performance was listened to with manifest satisfaction and pleasure; and the feelings were no doubt enhanced by the anticipated results. The Arabs are such connoisseurs in coffee, that they must have it fresh roasted and pounded for each time it is served. They would never think of preparing sufficient at one time for the evening's drinking. Again and again, therefore, were we treated to this musical festival, for each round of visitors partook of the sheikh's hospitality.

It was a strange and picturesque assemblage that

gathered round us in that old chamber; and a wilder-looking scene could not be well imagined than that which met our view when the crackling branches on the hearth threw out a flame sufficient to light up their features and reveal the bright colours of their gay costumes. The white turbans, embroidered coats, dark faces, long beards, and flashing eyes appeared to advantage in the dim and fitful light. But the lively and strange conversation had still more interest for me than countenance or costume. Almost the whole topic of discussion was the Frank visitors and their country. Some of those present, who assumed a kind of authority because they had seen half-a-dozen *Ingleze* in their lives, astonished the others by wondrous stories of their prowess and knowledge. The expulsion of the great Ibrahîm Pasha by their fleets was well remembered, and the taking of Sydon and bombardment of Acre were spoken of as manifesting a greater than human power. As a crowning proof of unparalleled wisdom, one man made the following remark: "As God is great," said he, "these English can go where they please by day or night, by land or sea; for they have an instrument that shows them the way to any place."

"*Wallah!* and is it so?" said the son of the sheikh, turning to us with a look of intense curiosity.

An appeal was at once made to us in verification of the statement. I produced a small pocket compass, and, placing it near the light, let them see how it always pointed the same way. It was turned, and turned again, but still it pointed to the *Kibleh*.³ After all had tried in

³ The *Kibleh* is the temple at Mecca towards which the Muslims all turn when they pray. In consequence of its direction, it is also the usual term for the *South* in Syria.

vain to direct it to any other point, I took my knife, and placed the point of the steel near the compass, when the needle at once turned towards my hand. I moved it round, but still the needle followed. "There is no God but God!"⁴ cried our young host. "The Franks have the power of *Janns!*" exclaimed an old man by his side.

The night wore on, and we spread our beds to sleep. Others around us followed our example, and strangers gradually withdrew: it was long, however, ere sleep came. The closeness of the room, the denseness of the smoke from the brush on the hearth, which the negro ever and anon heaped on the embers, and the myriads of fleas that soon attacked us, drove sleep from our eyelids. I rose and walked out into the cool fresh air, and on my return found the negro asleep, the room deserted, save by seven or eight snorers, and the fire dead upon the hearth; so, throwing myself on my bed, I slept till the hoarse voice of 'Amer called us.

April 2nd.—The air was damp and cold this morning as we mounted our dromedaries at the gate of the village at 6:25. Early as it was, the people were all astir. The Arabs are an early-rising race; and at first thought one would imagine that in this they have one good property at least; but the truth is, there is little virtue in their early hours. Their beds are such that nothing but stern necessity would drive any man to them. They never

⁴ All sects and classes in this country are continually in the habit of using the name of God in their ordinary conversation. Swearing is universal; almost every sentence is accompanied by an oath of some kind or other. In this respect there is a striking similarity in their ordinary salutations and conversation to what we find recorded in the Scriptures. See examples of this use of the name of God in ordinary conversation, Ruth i. 17, 1 Sam. iii. 17, 2 Sam. iii. 9, 1 Kings ii. 23.

undress. To loosen the girdle a little, pull the voluminous turban or light camels'-hair rope more firmly down upon the brows, and wrap the rough goats'-hair cloak round the body, constitute their whole toilet arrangements before retiring to rest. Add to this the incessant attacks from myriads of fleas and sundry other animals, and it will be admitted that there is little self-denial in rising with the first dawn of morning.

A thick white mist now lay upon the surface of the plain, and shut in our view to the compass of a few yards. A short time after leaving the village we observed, running parallel to our path, a line of little circular mounds with well-like openings in the centre; these marked the course of one of those subterranean aqueducts so frequently met with in the plain of Damascus. Their object is to collect water from the numerous little springs beneath the surface of the soil, and to convey it to some distant spot for the irrigation of fields or the supply of villages. The frequent openings are for the purpose of affording facility in cleaning them. The aqueduct we now observed supplies the village of Jerûd with an abundance of pure water. There is another and much longer one, on the other side of the plain, near the base of the hills on the north-west; it conveys a large stream to the vicinity of the small village of 'Atny.

At 8·15 we entered the gates of Jerûd, and, passing through its straight and clean streets, which present an agreeable contrast to those of most other villages in this land, we dismounted at the house of Sheikh Fâres, the *Agâ* or governor of the district. The court-yard was filled with a motley crowd of Arabs and villanous-looking irregu-

lars, all armed to the teeth; while finely-formed horses were picketed around, and sheafs of long tufted spears stood in the corners. The whole scene was picturesque, but wild; and the piercing gaze and fierce countenances of the Arabs were somewhat calculated to call up feelings of doubt and dread in the minds of those about to trespass on their territories. But at the same time the proud step, graceful flowing robe, and gay colours of the kefiyehs could not fail to elicit admiration. It is only within the bounds of his own undisputed domain that the *Bedawiy* can be seen to advantage. In a city he is like a caged bird. His countenance is uneasy and restless, his gait constrained, and his whole mien betrays anxiety. When not engaged in business, he generally squats in some quiet corner of a khan or street, peering from beneath the ample folds of his kefiyeh at the busy crowd around him. But he is a different being when he breathes the desert air: his eye dilates, his spare wiry frame becomes erect and commanding, and his step is firm and free.

Sheikh Fâres of Jerûd⁵ is governor of a large district of country on the confines of the desert, from the borders of the Haurân to Hasya. His principal duty is to keep the Arabs in check, and prevent them from ravaging the villages and fields. He maintains a force of about a hundred and fifty horsemen always ready for immediate ser-

⁵ During the present summer (1854) this very active and energetic chief was slain in a skirmish with the Bedawîn. The latter, taking advantage of the removal of the regular troops to the seat of war, have been more daring and successful than usual in their forays. Hûms and Hamah were in a state of siege for some months, and almost all the border towns and villages have felt the power of these marauders. Sheikh Fâres had exerted himself greatly to check their incursions; and at last fell a victim to his praiseworthy zeal.

vice; while upon emergencies he can raise some four hundred well-equipped cavaliers. The Arab tribes that frequent this part of the desert are generally on friendly terms with him, but it is only because they find it is for their interest to be so. He can command most of their great summer watering-places, and, by running a day's journey into the desert, can sweep away thousands of their sheep and camels to repay the villagers or government for losses sustained, while they have little chance of sufficient reprisals. These statements explain the bustling and varied scene in his court-yard.

'Amer had expected to find some of his tribe in Jerûd, but was disappointed. Having ascertained the position of their encampment, we resumed our march after an hour and three-quarters' delay. Passing out at a gate opposite that by which we had entered, we struck across the fields, and, coming to a little fountain, filled our water-skin. After resuming our course we soon got entangled in soft heavy ground, on the borders of an extensive salt marsh. Our dromedaries, finding themselves sinking deeper and deeper at every step, became quite unmanageable. With much difficulty we got them into a hard path, and a few minutes after were on the stony desert soil skirting the western side of a salt lake that stretched away on our right like a sheet of snow. This salt marsh is from three to four miles in circumference. A small portion of it is perfectly white, while the soil of the remainder is spongy and thickly coated with a whitish saline incrustation. The inhabitants of Jerûd and some of the other villages collect the salt, and carry it to Damascus; but it is bitter, and not so good in quality as that brought from Palmyra.

The plain at this point is about six miles wide, and almost perfectly flat. It is entirely uncultivated eastward of the gardens and fields of Jerûd, chiefly owing to the want of water. In the direction of 'Atny, one hour distant north by east, there are some patches of cultivation, water being conveyed to it by the subterranean aqueduct above referred to. The mountain chain on the north-west is lofty, precipitous, and wholly destitute of verdure; that on the south-east side is considerably lower, but, like the other, bleak and barren. A break occurs in the latter ridge nearly opposite Jerûd, through which a small river called *Nahr el-Mukubrit* flows to the village of Maksûra, in the plain of Damascus. The perennial source of this stream is at the village of Rahaibeh, one hour east of Mu'ad-damîyeh.

After an hour's ride we passed between a group of little mounds, covered with dwarf thorn-bushes, which some villagers were engaged in cutting and binding together in large bundles for firewood. A few minutes after passing them we observed away on the plain to the left a single dromedary coming toward us with great speed. He was ridden by a peasant from 'Atny, who had been away looking after some goats. This was the last villager we met or saw for some days. At the end of two hours we had on our left the commencement of a mountain chain, which, running north-east by east, divides the plain. It continues, with a slight inclination to the east, to near the village of Kuryetein, and from thence takes an eastern course in an unbroken line to the great plain at Palmyra. The regular route to that city is along the valley, on the northern side of these mountains,

through Kuryetein; we, however, took the route on the southern side of the range in a narrower and less regular valley. The aspect of the country far as the eye could see was now dreary and desolate in the extreme: a few weeds and tufts of herbage occurred at intervals on the plain, but the whole intervening space was covered with fragments of flint and limestone. Not a tree, not a shrub, and not a living creature was within the range of vision. The barren soil beneath, white and glistening, the monotonous undulations of the plain and naked slopes of the mountains all around, and the deep, unclouded blue of the great vault overhead, from which the brilliant sun shone fiercely down, pouring a flood of light upon the whole—such was the unvaried panorama that presented itself to us as we marched along.

With silent footfall, and sweeping step, and ship-like motion, our dromedaries sped onward. There was no path to follow, and no barrier reared by nature or human hand to retard or turn them aside. Their course was direct and regular as if guided by a compass. Often did I scan the country around in the vain endeavour to descry some solitary wanderer, or even some animal, on this dreary waste. None could be seen. About the hour of afternoon prayers 'Amer, who had for some time ridden in silence with Mohammed the Ageily behind him, pulled off his heavy boots and Arab cloak, and thrust them into his capacious saddle-bags. Thus disencumbered he leaped lightly from the dromedary, and ran at a quick pace to an eminence a little on the right. He now looked a new man; the transformation was truly wonderful. In the city he appeared like one over whose head near sixty

summers had passed, leaving their impress on form and face. But now, in the desert, his form was erect, and his step elastic, and his eye bright, as a youth of twenty. His picturesque costume, too, added to the juvenile appearance. His brilliant silk robe of alternate stripes of red and white descended in graceful folds to the middle of his leg: it was confined at the waist by a girdle of red morocco leather, round the whole front of which were little brass tubes for cartridges. The sleeves of the robe were wide and open to the elbow, and from beneath them hung down those of his shirt, long and pennon-like, so that as he walked the points swept the ground. His silk kefiyeh was of the most brilliant colours, and had a fringe of plaited cord more than a foot in depth. His finely-formed feet and limbs were naked. Such was 'Amer as he now lightly and joyfully trod the desert soil; and such is the ordinary undress of the Bedawy sheikhs: those, however, who are of the ruling family in a tribe wear over this a short cloak of scarlet cloth, faced and trimmed with black.

When 'Amer reached the rising ground he looked carefully all over the plain and along the bordering hills, but, apparently unsatisfied, he proceeded to another eminence. My curiosity being roused by these movements, I began to exercise my vision too, and soon detected far away on the left, scattered on the mountain-sides, what appeared to be vast flocks, while farther away still I thought I could dimly discern the black tents of their masters. I at once pointed them out to the Ageily, who was now mounted on the sheikh's camel, but he made no reply, and seemed to think I was mistaken. 'Amer soon after came up,

and remarked to his attendant that he could not see them. I at once conjectured he was in search of some Arab encampment, and probably that of his own tribe. After satisfying myself on this point I directed his attention to the flocks in the distance; he could not see them, but Mohammed admitted I was correct; so, with a well-turned compliment on the sharpness of my vision, he mounted and rode straight to the encampment.

At four o'clock we were in the midst of great herds of camels, scattered over plain and mountain for many miles on every side, and soon after, overtopping an eminence, we saw before us black tents almost innumerable. We met an Arab wandering among the flocks; but he passed close to us without a salutation, and almost without a look at us. Some time after another passed near us, to whom 'Amer addressed a single question, receiving a brief answer. I gave him the usual salutation of strangers in the desert (*el-'awáfy*⁶); he started as if surprised, gave me a quick, fierce look, but deigned no reply. This seemed no very pleasant introduction to Arab life. It took me quite by surprise; it was so far different from the polite salutations of the peasantry, and from my anticipations of the boasted hospitality of the Bedawîn. I began to have some gloomy forebodings that all might not be right. I did not then know what I afterwards learned, that this is Arab etiquette—in fact, the very essence of politeness. When strange Arabs approach an encampment

⁶ *العوافي* is the plural of *عافية*, with the article prefixed. It signifies "safety or peace from God." There are many other forms of salutation, of which the most common is "Salamu aleikum" (Peace be with you); but no Christian can use this form of salutation in speaking to a Muslem.

in the desert, they wrap their cloaks carefully around them, and almost completely conceal their faces in the ample folds of their keffiyehs. No word of salutation is addressed to them, and no question asked on either side. They guide their animals in silence to any tent they choose to select, being careful, however, not to pass close to any other, as it would be considered an insult not to claim the hospitality of the first; they dismount without a word at the tent door, and from that moment become the guests and *protégés* of its owner. The reasons and wisdom of this rather singular custom become at once apparent from a consideration of the peculiarities of Arab life. Blood feuds are of frequent occurrence among desert tribes, and there are few families but are somewhere involved in them. When a stranger approaches an encampment, therefore, he knows not but that he may meet an enemy, and he consequently conceals his features till he reaches a place of safety. The duties of hospitality, too, are held so sacred, that no tribe or individual will salute or question an unknown stranger who claims it, lest they should discover in him one with whom they may have a blood feud. Once the stranger is within the precincts of a tent, his host is not only bound to supply his wants, but to defend him with his life.⁷

We dismounted at the door of a spacious tent in the centre of the encampment. No sooner had our sheikh touched the ground than he was affectionately embraced

⁷ The best account of the peculiar manners and customs of the Bedawin are to be found in the writings of Burckhardt; especially his 'Notes on the Bedouins and Wahabys,' and in his 'Travels in Arabia.' There is also much interesting information on this subject in the 'Mémoires du Chevalier d'Arvieux,' 6 vols., Paris, 1735.

by his son, a fine boy of about fifteen. This scene at once brought to my mind some incidents recorded in Scripture, and seemed, in fact, to realize the interesting narratives of patriarchal times. The youth placed his hands on his father's neck, and kissed each cheek, and then they leaned their heads for a few seconds, while embracing, on each other's shoulders. Precisely similar was the scene at the meeting of Jacob and Esau nearly four thousand years ago. "And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and *fell on his neck*, and kissed him." We were soon surrounded by a little group of wild-looking Arabs, who manifested intense curiosity at our every movement. Our luggage was placed within the tent, and comfortable seats prepared by the hands of 'Amer himself, who now cordially welcomed us to his desert home. The whole scene and circumstances were to us intensely interesting. The numerous tents grouped together on the parched desert soil, the wide-spreading flocks and herds browsing peacefully on every side, and the picturesque and primitive costumes of those who tended or wandered forth among them, pictured vividly before our minds the days when Abraham dwelt in tents, and when Jacob led his family and flocks across this same desert to the land of promise. The tents are unquestionably the same as those used in the most remote ages, for nothing could be imagined more simple than their construction. An oblong piece of black goats'-hair cloth is fastened to the ground by ropes and stakes, at each end and along one side; several poles, some seven or eight feet long, placed upon their ends, keep it at the proper elevation, and leave one side entirely open—such is the whole fabric. The Bedawîn never

call it a tent; its invariable name with them is *house of hair*.

'Amer having borrowed my knife went to a neighbouring tent, occupied by his harîm and younger children, to make ready, as we afterwards found, the feast for his guests. A lamb was speedily brought by a young man from the flock, and slain at the tent-door, and the still quivering limbs were handed over to his wife to be got ready.⁸ Meanwhile a semicircle of fierce-looking Arabs squatted in front of us as we sat in the tent-door: their whole mien and appearance were far from pleasing; their dark complexions, hollow cheeks, flashing eyes, tattered habiliments, and greasy black hair hanging in long plaits down upon breast and shoulders, made up a *tout ensemble* more picturesque than agreeable. No word was addressed to us, as they thought we did not understand their language, and for a time we did not undeceive them that we might enjoy their remarks. There was no lack of signs and gestures, and by these they endeavoured to frighten us for their own sport—one, pointing to a spear that stood beside the tent, made a quick thrust expressive of running through one of us: another raised a huge club with an iron-spiked head, while he examined and felt its knobs all over with his hand, all the time throwing very significant glances at us; several others, stretching out their necks, drew their fingers across them with looks that could not be mistaken. We laughed at their acting, and showed

⁸ Most of the manners and customs of the modern Bedawîn are analogous to those of patriarchal times; and there is none who will travel among these children of the desert but must see and feel with what faithfulness the sacred penmen represented the minutiae of oriental life. See Gen. xviii. 6-8.

them that we enjoyed the pantomime excessively. We got so familiar by signs that our entertainers began to try words, shouting at the pitch of their voices to make it more intelligible. One youth, the most ferocious-looking among the group, demanded if we were Christians; we replied, Yes, of course: he then said that his religion would count it commendable to kill us. Mr. Robson at once told him that, according to the words of the Prophet, he was wrong, for in the Korân Muslims were enjoined merely to take the *head-money* from Christians, and spare their lives. They seemed astonished that infidels should know anything of their law or sacred book, but were more astonished still that we could understand and speak their language.

The sun went down behind the western hills, and the deep shadows of evening threw a stern grandeur over the landscape. Long lines of sheep and camels streaked the plain and mountain slopes, converging to the encampment. The wind blew cold and biting as the daylight waned, and we could observe that the flocks crowded close together round the tents of their masters, as if to engender and communicate necessary warmth. A strange Bedawy, with an idiotic cast of features, now came from the neighbouring tent, carrying in his hand an instrument like a broken pickaxe. Passing through the circle of spectators, he advanced towards where we sat, and, when within a yard of us, raised his weapon and sunk it deep into the soil at our very knees. The whole thing was done with such deliberation and quickness, that we both started back as if the blow had been aimed at our head. The Arabs around laughed heartily at our

fright, but the operator took not the slightest notice, and laboured away as if frantic, till he had excavated a considerable hole. Another Arab now came up, and threw in a few of the dry prickly shrubs that grow so plentifully in the desert; and then, applying match and tinder, soon had them in a blaze. A third threw in a *cloakful* of dry camels' dung over the burning mass. The skirt of his under garment supplied the place of bellows, and fanned the heap into a brisk leaping flame. Thus they kindled the desert fire, and the half-naked Arabs gathered round it, spreading out their thin bony hands to catch the genial warmth, and then rubbing them with evident satisfaction. Ever and anon one of the circle would add fresh fuel, while others stirred up the smouldering embers with their hooked sticks or massive clubs. The night wind too, sweeping round the tent, made the flame leap and play like a thing of life, and sometimes sent showers of sparks and hot ashes into the beards of the little circle, occasioning a momentary confusion, followed by a hearty laugh.

At a signal from the other tent great bustle and activity was manifested by the group before us. All rose up, and elderly men, approaching from various quarters, saluted us respectfully. 'Amer, his son, and Mohammed appeared among them, and were soon followed by three Arabs, bearing between them a monstrous dish, nearly four feet in diameter, on which was a huge pile of rice, with the members of a sheep scattered round the sides, and a large crater-like cavity in the summit, filled with melted butter. This was placed as near us as the fire would permit, and resembled, when on the ground, a vol-

cano in miniature. We were invited to approach and commence the banquet; and several elders of the tribe, with Mohammed, after much pressing, were persuaded to sit down with us. Our host sat at a respectful distance; his son and two or three smaller children close beside him. It is Arab etiquette for the host to be served last of all.

The mode in which we ate (I say *we*, for we followed the Arabs in this respect) was as primitive as the banquet itself. Each sunk his fingers into the pile of rice, made up a portion of it into a ball, dipped it in the butter, and then swallowed it. A venerable sheikh who sat beside me, seizing one of the choicest pieces of the sheep, tore off a handful of the flesh, and presented it to me with the usual word of invitation and compliment, "*tefuddel.*"⁹ Fully sensible of the honour done me, I thanked him and ate the savoury morsel. Each one round now seemed desirous of emulating him in politeness, and we were deluged with these tit-bits till nature could hold out no longer, and we were reluctantly compelled to withdraw. Under other circumstances it might have been quite as agreeable to have used our own hands in the process of carving, especially as it was impossible to ascertain how many weeks had passed since those of our entertainers had enjoyed the luxury of a wash; but those who are in the desert, if they would not be laughed at and despised, must follow desert customs.

⁹ This word will be familiar to all who have ever visited the East. With the exception of "*bakhshish*," there is not perhaps another more universally known. It is of wide application, and is used to invite a visitor to enter a house or room, to take a seat, to partake of refreshments, &c. &c. It has no synonym in the English language.

When we had withdrawn with those who had joined us, another relay sat down; and these were followed by another, until the mountain became a valley of dry bones. It was only when all had eaten and were satisfied that 'Amer and his son approached and gathered up the fragments. Poor fellows! their fare was but scanty.

As the evening advanced the circle of our visitors enlarged. The fitful blaze but half revealed the wild figures that squatted round, and dimly showed the beautifully formed heads and soft eyes of two or three mares that gazed familiarly on the assembly, and the faint outline of the huge camels picketed in the background. We were entertained with wild tales of Arab life and warfare, of bold forays and fierce reprisals, and of the wondrous speed and endurance of matchless and priceless mares, whose unbroken genealogies and untold perfections the whole tribe were proud of. We were eagerly questioned too about our own far distant land—how many days' journey it was distant?—if there were horses, and camels, and tents, and Bedawin there? Many a muttered *wullah* passed round the circle as we explained to them our mode of travel by both land and sea. At last our host and chief, with a kindness and consideration that we scarcely expected from the hardy desert child, advised us to spread our beds and sleep. Weary and shaken with a long ride and uncomfortable seats we were glad to follow his advice, and stretch our limbs on the hard ground. Wrapping round us our heavy cloaks, we were soon enjoying pleasant slumbers.

I had slept long and soundly, when a rustling near my head, and a sharp snuffing at my face, roused me to con-

sciousness and to my elbow. Stretching out my hand, it came in contact with some hairy animal quite close to me. In the firm belief that a jackal or other beast of prey had invaded our tent, I seized my stick, which I had taken the precaution to place beside me, and dealt the intruder several heavy blows. My adversary, however, kept his ground, and on a closer examination I found I had been thrashing a water-skin. The morning showed that some prowling animal had been endeavouring, fortunately in vain, to carry off the bag containing our supply of bread.

April 3rd.—A bed on the hard, stony, desert soil tends to promote early rising; and for once at least I was thankful for it. The whole encampment, extending far away on every side, as viewed in the grey morning light, was one vast forest of camels, with a dense underwood of sheep and goats. Presently they began to waver, and the whole was soon in motion. The smaller animals assembled in groups, obedient to the call of their masters, and then followed them far away into the distance. Thus disappeared flock after flock, each knowing and following its own shepherd. Occasionally the vast masses mingled, and for a few moments united; but this caused no confusion, for “a stranger will they not follow: they know not the voice of a stranger.” The Arab maids, in their graceful flowing robes, each a model for a statuary, now went forth from their tents to milk the sheep and camels, and returned again with the foam-crowned pails upon their heads. It was a purely pastoral and truly patriarchal scene, and well repaid us for an early start.

An attempt at trade in camels between 'Amer and Mohammed detained us some time; and had it not been

for mingled threats and entreaties on our part, would probably have kept us all day. Our sheikh's dromedary had now to be coaxed from its associates, with which it had wandered over the plain, and it was 7·15 ere we were prepared to mount. Leaping into the saddle, I bade adieu to our friends, and followed our little party to the tent of the chief sheikh of the tribe, with whom 'Amer had some business to transact ere he left. A slave was sent to invite us to enter and drink coffee; but as the sheikh did not come himself, we declined. I here observed an agent of Abbas Pasha, who had come to purchase horses for the Egyptian government. In a few minutes we were again in motion along the undulating plain, in the same direction we had followed in approaching the camp on the preceding day. Lofty barren mountain-chains still shut in the view on each side: those on the right rising apparently to a broad table-land. Some distance in front the ranges converged, so as to leave only a narrow gorge between. Toward this we bent our course, in a direction nearly due east.

In an hour and a half we descended into a plain resembling a vast amphitheatre. A narrow wady leads from it through the mountains on the right. Before us, on the left, rose two isolated conical hills, called 'Abd and 'Abdeh—"The male and female slave." Northward of these, at the distance of about two hours, lies the village of Kuryetein, but the intervening mountains hid it from our view. The whole landscape was now desolate and deserted: the flinty plain and cold grey mountain-slopes did not present to the eye a single interesting feature; it was all light too, there was no shade to vary the scene or

the colour, for the sun had mounted high in the heavens, and the hills sloped easily to their rounded summits. We felt indeed that we were fairly launched on an uninhabited and inhospitable desert; and we felt too that our little party could offer but a feeble resistance to the fierce bands that frequently scour it in search of plunder. Often did our eyes sweep the panorama, and carefully did we examine every heap of stones or projecting rock, lest they might conceal the lurking bandits or swift troopers. The excitement thus kept up served to relieve the monotony of the prospect, and to counteract the sleep-inducing pace of our dromedaries.

I had been examining for some moments the singular forms of the conical peaks 'Abd and 'Abdeh, when my attention was suddenly attracted by a black line just emerging from behind the northern base of the latter. I at once directed 'Amer's attention to it, but he could not see it. The dark body, however, gradually and swiftly increased in length, and seemed to expand. Our chief eagerly inquired whether the body was composed of foot or horsemen, but the distance was so great that I could only guess from the quick motion that they were mounted. Mohammed was now called, and, leaping lightly to 'Amer's side, he pronounced them to be a party of cavaliers. With a quick movement our little caravan was conducted behind a rising ground to escape observation; but it was too late—the eagle eye of the Arab had already detected us. A horseman was seen to separate from the caravan. At first he appeared like a bird skimming over the surface of the ground; and the rapid pace at which he swept down the gentle slope would have led one to sup-

pose that it must be some winged animal approaching. The outline of the steed soon became visible, and then the form of the rider crouched close to his back; then the tufted spear projecting far in front: and ere we had surmounted the rising ground the tattered Arab reined up his noble steed within fifty yards of us. We had viewed this scene with lively interest. Never before had I seen the Arab horse on his native desert; and however exciting were the present circumstances, and however calculated to awaken suspicions of coming danger, perhaps of plunder, yet admiration was the only feeling we entertained for the moment. And when the stranger drew up, and his mare stood patient and gentle, without symptom of weariness or quickness of breathing, but with expanded nostril and proud eye, I could see at once why the Arab loves his horse. The horse is everything to him. Money he cannot use to advantage, and his simple wants are easily supplied. His few sheep or camels gather their food from a parched soil which no other lord claims. A genial clime makes rich clothing—such a costly toy to the denizens of the city and to civilized nations—of little use to him. A tattered garment will serve him for years, and the simple furniture of his tent is generally hereditary. What, therefore, would be money to him? But his noble horse will carry him swiftly over the parched desert, to the side of the devoted caravan or solitary wanderer; and when danger threatens, he will as swiftly convey him beyond its reach.

'Amer gave a brief reply to a question of the stranger, whereupon the *salâm* was mutually given; and the Arab was in a few minutes more at the head of his moving tribe.

At 10·50 we were sweeping along the plain at the southern base of 'Abd. Here we met a portion of the tribe, with the sheikh at their head. He was arrayed in his scarlet cloak, and splendidly mounted on a beautiful white mare. Friendly greetings were interchanged, and the tobacco-pouch of Mohammed considerably lightened; we then went on our journey in peace. Large droves of sheep and camels, intermixed with a number of young colts, covered the whole plain around us; while the women and children appeared here and there, perched on the top of huge camels, and surrounded with piles of cooking vessels. In a long march they often prepare the food on the camels' backs, and serve it out to their husbands, brothers, or sons. The *harîms* of the principal sheikhs presented a singular and picturesque appearance. Two long poles, ornamented with tassels innumerable and variegated drapery, are laid across the back of some favourite dromedary, which is itself adorned with shells, tassels, and fringes. A small palanquin, with curtains of scarlet cloth gaily embroidered, is placed in the centre, and in this sit the wives and children. At a distance these machines look like gigantic birds with outstretched wings floating over the surface of the ground. The females did not by any means manifest the same coyness as the village belles, but looked eagerly at us with uncovered faces, and some of them even welcomed us to their native desert.

We soon after entered a fine glen, whose sloping sides were carpeted with the wild anemone, the iris, and several other smaller flowers, while the summits were crowned, far overhead, with frowning cliffs of naked rock. After a gentle ascent and quick descent, this glen led us, in about

half an hour, into a deep wady, running at nearly right angles to our route. We observed as we entered it a single dromedary coming down the opposite side, accompanied by a man on foot. As soon as 'Amer learned that there was at least one man mounted, he prepared for action. A pair of old pistols, hitherto shut up in his saddle-bags, were hastily drawn out, fresh primed, and thrust into his belt. A huge club, his only other weapon, was handed to Mohammed. Thus equipped we cautiously approached our suspected foes. As we drew near we perceived that there were three, all well armed for Bedawîn. The man mounted in front had a long matchlock, the match of which he lit at some distance; his companion carried a short spear, and the footman a formidable club. Our chief, seeing the odds thus against him, eagerly asked whether we carried pistols, and, on being answered in the affirmative, proceeded with renewed confidence. I confess, however, that I felt rather doubtful about the propriety of risking an engagement. 'Amer's old pistols I knew could not be depended on, and, even should they chance to go off, would be just as likely to shoot himself as his opponent, for they had been loaded for more than three months. Mr. Robson and I had only one pistol between us; this, however, was double-barrelled, and I felt confident that it would not miss fire, which was more than the Bedawy could say of his gun. On we went now in full expectation of a fight. There was a short parley at a distance of some fifty yards, during which our foes examined us, calculating their chances of success in an attempt to plunder us. We took good care to exhibit our whole armament, and a sight of this apparently led them

to conclude that it might just be as safe to let us pass; and thus we separated without uttering a word.

Arabs in the desert are never afraid of large companies or moving tribes, except they are foes with whom they have a blood-feud; but they always fear stragglers. These generally leave their tribe for the sake of plunder, and as they conceal their faces it is impossible to identify them, and there is therefore no hope of restitution or retaliation. When a robber of this kind is killed in the act of robbing another, his own people disown him, and there is no blood-feud in consequence of his death. It is against such as these that travellers must be on their guard in the desert. A mere exhibition of fire-arms will generally serve to frighten them; for they well know that they are outlaws, and may be shot with impunity. Against a large party, however, it is worse than useless to make any show of resistance; these are the acknowledged guards of their tribe, and they consider it their just right to plunder all that enter their territory without permission. The best policy is to yield to them with a good grace, and under ordinary circumstances they will generally be satisfied with a liberal *bakhshish*.

From the valley we ascended by a long uniform slope to a high table-land, which stretches away in gentle undulations to the south. Unlike the arid flinty plains, it was covered with long thin grass and some few prickly shrubs; while blue and red iris, convolvulus of various colours, and a small yellow flower whose name I did not know, were thickly sprinkled over it. In front, a little to the left, rose a lofty conical peak that at once attracted our attention. The top seemed capped with a deep shadow

and the sides were also speckled with similar shadows. Closer examination showed that this singular appearance was produced by differently coloured strata of rock. The whole surrounding country, both plains and mountains, was composed of white limestone, mixed with beds and nodules of flint; but this peak was of sandstone, of lighter and darker hues, from a dull red, almost black, to a faint pink colour. This was probably caused by the presence of oxide of iron, in larger and smaller quantities, in the several strata. This mountain must form a conspicuous landmark from a great distance on the south, as it overtops most of the others around it; and the beauty and brilliancy of its colours naturally attract attention. It is called by the Arabs *Jebel el-Keháleh*. We passed it at three o'clock.

When parallel with this mountain we came suddenly to the brow of a long and steep slope, forming the head of a fine valley that stretched away eastward, far as the eye could see. Lofty mountain-ranges, with bold and rugged features, shut it in on each side; and on the distant horizon these terminated in high conical peaks, between which the vale seemed to open upon the great desert plain. The dry bed of a winter-torrent meandered through it, and from our commanding position we could trace it as it wound along like a thread of silver until lost in the far distance. The rounded pebbles of white limestone that glistened along its path contrasted well with the verdure of its banks, now carpeted with grass and rank weeds after the winter's rain; and one could almost fancy that his eye followed the tortuous course of some gently-flowing river.

When we reached the valley our patient animals seemed suddenly to feel the pangs of hunger, or perhaps they were lured by the tempting food around them; for their course became erratic, and they stretched their long slender necks from side to side, cropping the juicy weed or tuft of grass. The increasing roll of their walk, and the sharp jerk of their trot, were bad enough for our weary bones; but when we began to be treated to these interludes of plucking up in passing the luxuriant herbage, the motion became almost too much for endurance. I was indeed beginning to feel angry enough to beat my dromedary into better behaviour and more steady conduct when other matters came in for a share of my attention. In examining the country around, Mohammed's eagle-eye detected the heads of two men peeping over a white mound in the distance, and at once pronounced them robbers—rather prematurely as I thought, for I could only perceive two dark spots, which might have been stones for all I could tell. The wily 'Amer determined at any rate not to run into a trap, but, if robbers they were, to ascertain their strength and draw them from their ambush. Tapping his dromedary on the neck, he turned it aside from the centre of the valley towards the mountains on the left, and proceeded at a quick pace. We had not gone far when the heads disappeared, and presently two men were seen on the other side of the mound, running across to intercept us. There was now no doubt as to their character and intentions; there were but the two, however, and, unless armed with long guns, we cared little for them. They came up at a rapid pace as we resumed our former route—their cloaks were carefully

folded round their bodies, and their kefiyehs so drawn over the face as to leave nothing exposed but their eyes. No weapon could be seen save the knobs of their clubs just appearing over their right shoulders. 'Amer dismounted, the heavy club in his hand, and told us to be on our guard. When within some fifty yards, the strangers asked 'who we were. 'Amer replied that we were Arabs on our way to Tadmor. They then attempted to approach close to him, but he drew out one of his old pistols to show them that he knew their intentions, and as an intelligible hint that they must keep a safe distance. This had the desired effect, and as they retreated one of them loosed the folds of his cloak, thus revealing the hilt of a sword and the handle of a pistol.

We now passed over undulating ground, intersected by deep ravines, and having little conical chalk hills at short intervals. Mohammed was sent out in front to act as advance guard, and give notice of any danger that might threaten; and we were strictly enjoined not to sing, or even talk except in whispers. On we swept in utter silence—the cushioned feet of the dromedaries descending noiselessly on the light soil, and the grass tufts and weeds being cropped as usual. Our eyes scanned anxiously every nook and corner of the landscape, in the expectation of detecting some lurking bandit, and then turned again in half-disappointment to gaze on the lovely little flowers that carpeted our path, and that seemed in truth to be “born to blush unseen, and waste their sweetness on the desert air.” The scenery around was grand, but it was the grandeur of desolation; and it was unvarying too, and therefore monotonous. A joyful shout from the Ageily,

whom we could see standing on the summit of a mound a quarter of a mile in front, roused us from sober reflection, and made us quicken our pace. We had soon swept round the base of the little *tell*, and then saw away in the distance a clump of Arab tents, occupying a verdant nook at the entrance of a wild ravine. The sun was already fast sinking to the western horizon, and the hills on our left, enveloped in deep shadow, assumed a wild and gloomy aspect. We had begun to anticipate the pleasure of spending a night in the open air, without water, and without a shelter from the cold blast. It may be imagined then how the sight of these few tents cheered us, and with what pleasure we urged our weary animals toward them.

As we approached the little encampment we wrapped our cloaks around us, and concealed our features in the ample folds of our kefiyehs. We advanced directly to the largest tent, which stood a short distance from the others, and dismounting in silence spread our carpets and cloaks in the tent-door and took our places. Not a word was addressed to us, and a little circle of four or five elders, who squatted a few yards off, scarcely looked at us with ordinary curiosity as we made our simple arrangements, and claimed, uninvited, their hospitality. 'Amer and Mohammed advanced to the circle of Arabs, who rose to receive them, and gave them the ordinary salutation. They all now approached to where we sat and bade us welcome. A circle was formed as usual, but there was little conversation. There were but a few tents, and their occupants seemed poor. Their flocks were not numerous, and I saw only one horse. They had probably separated

from some larger tribe on account of family feuds. The other end of the tent, which was appropriated by the women, presented a very different aspect from the quiet and silence of our department. All was bustle and hurry there. Two women sat down to grind at the mill, while a third shook a skin of milk that was suspended to the top of the tent, to prepare butter for the evening's repast; and several others arranged the fires and brought forth the largest cooking vessels. The result of their labours was soon apparent, for ere the brief twilight had passed a large dish of *burghul*¹ was set before us, with a profusion of melted butter. The people were too poor to afford a lamb or even a kid, and they presented the best they had. Hungry as we were, we could scarcely taste this rude fare; we tried however to swallow a few mouthfuls, and the increasing darkness favoured our attempts at politeness.

April 4th.—We were up with the dawn, and in the saddle ten minutes after. We had no toilets to attend to, and the Arabs never eat breakfast. We found, however, that, early as we got up, some of the ladies were before us, as we could perceive several of them in the grey light of the morning setting out with their donkeys and waterskins to bring water from a neighbouring well. This well, we were informed, is called Basîreh, and is situated half an hour distant up the glen. There is another well of living water on the opposite side of the valley, an hour and a quarter distant, called 'Ada.

The morning was bitterly cold as we rode up a gentle

¹ *Burghul* is wheat coarsely ground or broken, with the bran in it. Boiled in water, and dressed with butter or sour milk, it is the staple food of the Arabs.

slope from the encampment, and, though we made use of all our heavy coats and covered up our feet with the lehâfs, we could scarce keep out the cutting blasts that swept over the mountains. The cry of robbers soon drew away our attention from the cold. Three men were observed attempting to intercept us as we crossed a large swell in the plain. To escape or avoid them was impossible, and so we prepared to meet and resist them. They came upon us as the others had done, but one of them carried a long matchlock. 'Amer gave the club to the Ageily, and told us to prepare for an attack. They were soon near us, but our valiant chief was on the ground to meet them. With a pistol in each hand he confronted the advancing marauders. Seeing they still approached him, I threw off my cloak and drew a pistol: Mohammed too flourished his club. When they saw us determined to resist, one of them dropped behind his companions and squatted on the ground, and the others only followed us a few paces farther. The whole scene was a pantomime—not a word was spoken on either side: each party carefully scanned the opposite, and calculated the probabilities of an encounter. The others seemed to think the chances of success were in our favour, and we were heartily glad it was so, for I verily believe that, sooner than have submitted to be stripped, with the almost certain prospect of perishing of cold afterwards, we would have disabled one or more of the bandits. It is an inconvenient habit these Arab robbers have of stripping their victims of every stitch of clothing, however rich may have been their baggage and however full their purse. During my short experience in Syria I have known more than one instance in

which even ladies have shared the fate of their lords in this respect.

At nine o'clock we were in the midst of vast herds and a large encampment. Our chief met a friend who invited us to go to his tent and eat dates. The offer was too tempting to be refused, though it led us some distance out of our route. We were ere long comfortably seated in a capacious tent, with a monster dish before us filled with delicious dates, and having in the centre a large cake of snowy butter. Such a mixture I had never before seen or heard of, but it is a common one with the Bedawîn, and we found it excellent. Before leaving Damascus we had heard that the Baghdad caravan had been plundered, and now here were we seated, partaking of the spoil, the invited guests of the robbers. The affair looked bad enough in *theory*, but then we had ridden nearly four hours without breakfast, and our entertainers thought moreover that they had a perfect right to the contents of the caravan. It was scarcely a suitable time for us to enter on a discussion of abstruse questions in moral philosophy. Trespassers are often severely punished in England, and why may not the Bedawîn borrow a leaf from the English code? The laws of the desert, it is true, are somewhat severe, and their execution summary. All goods found within the borders of a tribe are confiscated. But these laws are of great antiquity and universally known; all therefore who despise them must just bear the consequences when caught. There is another fact which tends to palliate this so-called crime. Every Arab tribe will, for a very small percentage, guarantee the safety of a caravan through its own territory. It is only when one

tribe gets the monopoly of conveyance, and refuses to others their just rights, that caravans are attacked and plundered.

After a rest of forty minutes we again resumed our journey, and the black tents and wide-spreading flocks of our friends were in due time left far behind and shut out from view by the undulations of the plain. Our course was still in the great valley, and the scenery around presented the same general features. Towards noon a voice hailed us from the opposite side of a deep ravine, along which for a time we had travelled. I knew not what questions were asked, but never before had I seen so wild and savage-looking a specimen of humanity. His whole wardrobe was composed of the tattered remnant of a blue shirt, that covered about the fourth part of his body; his head was bare, but nature had covered it with a thick crop of hair, that flowed in long straggling elf-locks over breast and shoulders; his voice was shrill and piercing, even for an Arab; and his questions were asked with the abruptness peculiar to his race, and in a tone that seemed accustomed to command. A short boar-spear was his only weapon, and on this he leaned as he shrieked his queries across the wild gorge that separated us.

Mohammed, who was still acting as avant-guard, had been for some time out of sight, and 'Amer manifested considerable anxiety about him on being told that several men were in sight in the direction from which our late friend had come. "Ya Mohammed! Ya Mohammed!" he shouted, and his voice resounded across the plain; but no Mohammed responded or appeared. We rode on

between low mounds of naked reddish earth, exercising both eyes and lungs. At last on surmounting an eminence we observed, in the far distance, black tents and moving flocks covering nearly the whole valley, while little groups of cavaliers dashed about among them in mimic warfare. And there at our feet was Mohammed calmly gazing on the exciting scene.

We were now marching close to the base of the northern line of mountains, and had the greater part of the valley, here some four or five miles wide, on our right. We could see that about four hours more would usher us into the great plain that began to open up on the east. The character and features of the country hitherto were far different from my early impressions of the road to "Tadmor in the Wilderness." Fancy had pictured a boundless plain covered with the white shifting sands, without a blade of grass or even a green weed to break the eternal monotony. I had pictured too a solitary palm-tree shading a little fountain and standing all alone in the midst of the vast expanse. But here were noble mountain-ranges, and wild ravines, and long winding vales; and the whole covered, scantily it is true, with tufts of grass, and prickly shrubs, and little flowers of brightest hue to sweeten and enliven the scene. There was no sand, and there were no palm-trees to mark the places where living waters spring. In no way did it satisfy my ideas of a desert, save in this—that there were no settled inhabitants and no traces of them.

At 1.45, as we were passing a large tent in the outskirts of an encampment, a friendly voice suddenly cried, "Ya

'Amer! Ya 'Amer! Hauwel! Hauwel!"² and in a moment more our chief was in the arms of an aged Arab, who embraced and kissed him most lovingly. Another and another came up and went through the same ceremony. It was quite impossible to resist the importunities of these hospitable men. We *must* dismount—sheep must be slain—princely banquets must be prepared in honour of the arrival of 'Amer and the illustrious strangers. Our dromedaries were seized and pulled to the ground, and we were all but dragged from their backs and transported *per force* into the interior of the tent. Long and loud did we remonstrate. We had expected to reach Palmyra in the evening, and this besides was no pleasant place for us to spend the afternoon. It was in vain, however, and so, when we could do nothing else, we quietly sat down on our carpets to await the will of our masters.

We were scarcely seated when we observed a young man bind on his sandals³ and set off at speed across the plain. In half an hour he returned bearing a lamb on his shoulders. The poor animal was soon stretched upon the ground, bleeding and in the agonies of death. Stripped of its skin with Arab despatch, the yet quivering body was handed over to the tenants of the harâm.

The whole of this scene, however inconvenient under present circumstances, was regarded by both Mr. Robson

² "O 'Amer! O 'Amer! stop, stop!" We afterwards learned that this was a portion of 'Amer's own tribe that had lately separated from the main body, to pasture their flocks in this fine vale.

³ The Bedawin never wear shoes. When their tents are pitched on gravelly soil, they wear a piece of undressed leather the size and shape of the sole, fastening it on by thongs bound over the foot and round the ankle.—See Acts xii. 8. The "shoe-latchet" of Gen. xiv. 23, was a *sandal-thong*.

and myself with deep interest. It seemed as if we had been carried back more than three thousand years in the world's history, and by some mysterious providence permitted to mingle with the people of patriarchal times. The salutations we heard around us, and those addressed to ourselves, were such as had been familiar to us from childhood in the simple stories of Abraham and the angels in the plains of Mamre,⁴ and of Jacob and Laban at Padan-Aram.⁵ Here was the aged sheikh sitting in his tent-door watching for chance wayfarers—here was the generous hospitality that would constrain us to remain until we had partaken of refreshments—here too were the wide-spreading flocks from which the lamb was brought, and the almost inconceivable expedition with which it was killed and dressed and served up with *butter and milk*.⁶ The solemn interview between Abraham and the angels in the plain of Mamre was now pictured on our minds in far more brilliant colours than it had ever been before. The whole of that graphic narrative was strikingly illustrated by what had just occurred to ourselves. “Abraham sat in the tent-door in the heat of the day; and he lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him; and when he saw them he ran to meet

⁴ Gen. xviii. 2 and 3.

⁵ Gen. xxix.

⁶ The Arab butter is made in the usual way by churning the milk. The process of churning is somewhat singular. A skin of milk is tied up to a tent-pole, and shaken by a woman until the butter separates. When *fresh*, the butter is tolerable; but when it has stood some time, the taste, and even the smell of the skin, come out pretty strong. Milk is of two kinds—fresh, called *halib*; and curdled, called *leben*. The latter is a common kind of refreshment. It is evidently the *חמאה* *hemah*, which Abraham gave the angels, and which Jael gave to Sisera (Judg. v. 25).

them from the tent-door, . . . and said, My lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant ; . . . And I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort ye your hearts ; after that ye shall pass on. . . . And Abraham ran into the herd, and fetched a calf tender and good, and gave it unto a young man ; and he hasted to dress it. And he took butter, and milk, and the calf which he had dressed, and set it before them.”⁷

Wishing to wander among the tents and take a look at the private life and social habits of the Bedawîn, I set out alone. I had not proceeded far however when I was attacked by a number of fierce dogs. Standing on the summit of a heap of stones I managed to keep them at a distance for a time ; but every moment increased the number of my assailants, and I know not what might have been the result had not two women come to my rescue. I thanked my fair allies in the best manner I could, and they in return invited me to their tents, which were close by. I did not quite understand Arab etiquette on this point, and consequently declined. I well knew that, if their lords at all resembled the Muslems of the cities, they would not wish to have their harîms visited in their absence. The invitations given me were very pressing, and the promises held forth such as no Arab could withstand—dates, leben, butter, milk, and honey, were all mentioned among the dainties to which they would treat me. But I would not be persuaded, and simply requested one of my kind friends to escort me back to my tent.

⁷ Gen. xviii. 1-8.

I have often heard it said that the Arab women are generally plain in features. I cannot by any means agree with this statement. I have now seen many of them in different places, and belonging to different tribes, and in general I have found their features regular, and even handsome. Their bodies are finely proportioned, and their carriage and walk easy and graceful. All of them have that rich, black, lustrous eye that is only seen in perfection in the East. The forehead is open and high, and the eyebrows beautifully arched. The mouth is well formed, with proudly curved lines; but this feature is universally disfigured by the custom of staining the under lip dark blue. The braided hair is almost quite covered by a black veil that hangs gracefully over the shoulders, the corner of which is frequently brought forward to cover the lower part of the face. The whole dress consists of a long, loose, blue robe of coarse calico. It is drawn closely round the throat, has wide hanging sleeves, and sweeps the ground like a train when they walk. A profusion of bracelets of gold or silver adorn the arms, and large rings and drops hang from the ears; but only a few of them wear the nose-jewel. This simple costume is admirably adapted to display the symmetry of their form and gracefulness of their movements: it causes no restraint or stiffness, but, allowing full play to nature, leaves all the beautiful proportions of the body to be fully developed. The gay votaries of fashion in the more polished nations of the West might imitate, to some extent, and with great advantage, the simple attire of these daughters of the desert.

It is true beauty only lasts here while the bloom of youth is on the cheek and health gives elasticity and ful-

ness to the frame. The noble and stately matron, to whose countenance the lines of time give even more true beauty, and to whose form the staidness of advancing age adds fresh dignity, is not found in the desert. The aged Arab women are hideously ugly, and there is a malignity in the glance of their piercing eyes, and in the general expression of their sharp features and withered faces, that reminds one of Macbeth's witches. Still this does not arise from the character of the costume; there are other and far more lamentable causes to which it must be attributed. It is the light of the intellect beaming through the countenance that makes beauty perennial in civilized lands. It is the mind, enlarged by education, refined by social intercourse, and sanctified by religion, that makes the matrons of England so truly graceful. When the roses fade upon the cheeks and the fresh fulness leaves the form, a beauty of a higher and nobler kind takes their place. Intelligence beams from the eyes, and animates each feature; benignity and love are enshrined in every smile; while the magic influence of conversation, which serves to display all the resources of a cultivated mind and all the deep feelings of a regenerated soul, gives the whole person a charm above that of earth. The light of religion does not shine upon the daughters of Ishmael. Christianity has not raised the powers of their minds to nobler or holier objects than the tending of their flocks and the care of their tents; and neither has it touched the heart to unbind the deep and tender emotions seated there. The beauty of the Arab girl is but that of the spring flower, which withers under the summer's sun, and dies when the cold blast of autumn blows upon it.

We had the sumptuous evening repast, and the bright camp-fire, and the picturesque circle that gathered round it, and the spirited tales of "hair-breadth 'scapes, and moving incidents," and successful forays; but all these could not withdraw our thoughts from Tadmor. We could not forget that that "wonder of the desert" was still before us, and only a few hours distant. We spoke of it in our own tongue, heedless of the inquiring faces around us, and wondered whether it would disappoint our bright anticipations. To prepare for an early start, we wrapped ourselves up in our abeihs, and tried to sleep. The wind blew loud, and currents, bitterly cold, came sweeping over our faces; and the old tent swayed and flapped, and sleep, though courted, refused to come. I turned on my hard couch, as a last resource, but this made matters worse. A little group had gathered round the declining fire, crouching close to the warm embers. 'Amer was there, and anxiety, as I imagined, pictured in his countenance. He talked earnestly, and in low tones, with those who sat near him—mostly old men. I could occasionally gather a few words, and these did not tend to induce that repose of mind conducive to sleep. To-morrow's journey was the subject of conversation: some difficulty was in the way—some danger seemed to threaten. The mountains were named, and the plain too was spoken of; but in what connexion I could not comprehend. My attention was roused, and I tried, but in vain, to catch the varying tones, and to follow the hasty words. Imagination, also, came into play, and fancy pictured all kinds of dangers and adventures. A gloomy impression was left upon my mind, and I had not vigour enough, weary as I was, to overcome it.

April 5th.—A gentle touch on the shoulder made me start from sleep. It was yet dark, and I was in that half-conscious state in which one often finds himself when suddenly roused from heavy slumber. I knew not where I was, or why disturbed, and no object was visible to rouse me to a sense of my whereabouts. The deep growl of a dromedary, and the voice of 'Amer calling us to mount, soon brought me from the land of dreams. A cold and cutting blast blew strongly in my face as I left the tent, and sent me back for my heavy coat; over this, when seated on my impatient animal, I threw the ample folds of an abeih, and, thus protected against the intense cold, I joined my companions. The first gray streak was stretched along the eastern horizon as we bad adieu to our hospitable entertainers.

It was 5:20 when we left the tent, and our path lay near the base of the northern mountains, to which we gradually approached. Some of the ravines that furrow the sides of these hills are deep and wild, and we found difficulty in crossing them even in the plain. At 6:25 we suddenly turned to the left up a narrow, deep, and rocky defile, that appeared to divide the mountain-chain to its centre. The mysterious conversation of the previous night now recurred to me, and, glancing down the valley to the right, I saw several small encampments in the distance. I inquired if we were not going down the valley to the desert beyond, and if that were not the easiest and best route. 'Amer replied that this was shorter; but the Ageily added that there were robbers on the other. I at once said that, if those were they in the distant tents, they had detected and were pursuing us, as some horsemen were

now coming up from them at a fast pace. 'Amer showed neither fear nor anxiety at this intelligence ; but whether his confidence arose from the nature of the defile we had now entered, or from the close proximity of his friends, or from a knowledge of the Arabs themselves, I cannot tell.

In a few minutes more we were climbing up a steep and difficult zigzag path. Lofty broken cliffs with jagged summits towered far overhead on each side, and straggling prickly shrubs, shooting out from chinks and crevices, added wildness to the scene. The way was extremely difficult for camels, and more than once did I fear that the unwieldy animals would have toppled over when scaling a steep slope, or passing along a shelving ridge. I did not feel at ease when I considered the whole matter ; I knew sufficient of the general features of the country to feel assured that an easier, if not a shorter, way to Tadmor would have been found round the eastern end of the mountain-chain ; and if so, it was no small thing that would send our sober chief over such a pass as this. The strange consultations of the previous night, too, still kept my mind uneasy. The talk about the "mountains" and the "plain" now seemed half explained, and I looked forward with some anxiety to the conclusion of our journey.

When we reached the top of the pass and the narrow summit of the ridge, a view of vast extent and considerable beauty opened up before us. At our feet was a broad plain, perfectly flat, extending away to the west far as the eye could see. Beyond it, on the north, rose a bold and lofty chain of white mountains, whose rugged sides were furrowed by wild ravines, and partially covered with oak forests. On the east, at the distance of several hours, the

two parallel chains, that on the north, and the one on whose ridge we now stood, turned at nearly right angles to their course, and converged so as to leave but a narrow pass into the desert beyond.

“Where is Tadmor?” we eagerly inquired, as we gazed on this vast panorama.

“Yonder,” said our guide; and he pointed with his hooked stick to the vista in the eastern hills.

We strained our eyes toward the spot, but it was in vain. The crumbling ruins of the city of Zenobia were still either obscured by the distance or covered by the intervening hills.

As we descended the mountains, 'Amer asked me, with apparent anxiety, if I saw any tents, or flocks, or Arabs in the plain. I examined it all, but could see none. On the far side, immediately below an oak forest, were a number of black spots resembling tents; but Mohammed pronounced them trees, and perhaps he was correct.

“Yonder hills,” said 'Amer, pointing to the opposite range, distant about twelve miles—“yonder hills are called *Jebel el-Abiad*.⁸ Among them live a fierce and warlike race of people, whom we are not able to subdue. They have guns and horses; they live in stone houses and villages, and they never wander free like us.”

“Are they cultivators of the soil, or do they merely feed flocks like the Bedawîn?” I asked.

⁸ *Jebel el-Abiad* signifies the “white mountains.” This range runs unbroken from Kuryetein along the northern side of a great valley to Tadmor. It may be regarded as a continuation of one of the side ridges of Anti-Lebanon, which, I above observed, forms the north-western boundary of the plain of Jerûd. The *Jebel el-Abiad* are mentioned in Burckhardt's Travels in Syr., App. No. VI.

“They are all shepherds, and never plant or sow,” was his reply.

This was new information to me, and I greatly doubted, and still doubt, its accuracy. There are undoubtedly a few straggling villages in the desert between northern Syria and the Euphrates; and if we are to derive our information from Berghaus' map, we might conclude that there are few districts in Western Asia more densely inhabited. I had never heard before in this country that there was any district in that region so thickly peopled as 'Amer represented. He could not have meant the Jacobites of Sūdūd, and the two or three little villages near it, for these are far to the westward, and in the plain. I do not think, however, that 'Amer would tell a deliberate falsehood; there was nothing to provoke it. It is highly probable that this district, like the *Safa*, is naturally strong and difficult of access, and that some Arab tribe has, from time immemorial, held possession of it, and there pastured their flocks and herds, secure against the depredations of the wild desert hordes. There may be also half-ruined towns and villages similar to those in the Lejâh,⁹ among which the people find shelter for their families and flocks.¹

At seven o'clock we reached the plain, and at once set out steadily toward the break in the mountains to the east. The ground was here barren and gravelly, and the

⁹ Both the Lejâh and the *Safa* will be described in the sequel.

¹ During a recent visit to the country around the town of Hūms, of which an account will be given in its proper place, I was informed that the mountain region in the direction of Jebel el-Abiad is thickly studded with ruined towns and villages of considerable antiquity. The houses were described as built of stone, like those in the Haurân; and many of them are said still to remain entire.

surface slightly undulating. In the ravines and vales among the hills on the right were considerable expanses of brushwood, intermixed with some few dwarf oaks; and in many places there appeared to be excellent pasturage. I could perceive no vestiges of former cultivation on any part of the plain or mountains; no green spot that marked the presence of stream or fountain; and no mouldering ruin or solitary cairn to show that man had ever dwelt here. All was dreary, desolate, and blasted, as if a curse hung over the land. The geological features of this whole region are wonderfully uniform, the mountain ridges being wholly composed of calcareous limestone of a soft texture, and the plains covered with fragments of this rock, intermixed with pieces of flint. The sun's rays, when they beat directly on the gravelly soil, soon destroy all vegetation, and consequently during the summer and autumn it is bare and white almost as the naked rock. There is thus a want of colour in the landscape; and as during the day there is no light and shade to *bring out* the bolder features of the mountains, and no clouds to vary the eternal blue of the bright firmament above, or to throw a temporary gloom over sections of the panorama below, the whole scene looks bare and monotonous.

The day was now bright and sultry, and the heated air danced and quivered on the surface of the ground, like ripples on a lake. Every little shrub and rock appeared as if in motion. Away in the distance the mirage exerted its magic influence, and converted the parched soil into vast expanses of water, fringed with long grass and waving reeds.² While contemplating this strange and interesting

² The name of the mirage in Arabic is *serāb* سراب, which corresponds

phenomenon, I perceived something moving as if through the water toward us; I could see, or at least I thought so, the splash occasioned by every footstep. Nearer and nearer it came, till, on reaching the shore-line, its form became more defined, and I apprised 'Amer of the approach of a swift dromedary. Great anxiety was again pictured in his features as he asked from whence it came, and whether it was alone. The old pistols were now once more in requisition, and the club was given over to Mohammed, while we were told to prepare for war.

The dromedary drew near, and a cold *salâm* was interchanged between 'Amer and the rider. Our chief evidently knew the stranger, and I heard him inquire as he passed where his tribe was. He pointed with his short spear northward across the plain, and said they were yonder at the foot of the mountains. 'Amer now turned his dromedary in that direction, and proceeded thus till the stranger was out of sight, when he again struck to the right in nearly an opposite course, taking advantage of a shallow wady to escape all possibility of observation. We could not of course fully understand these manœuvres, and our leader was not communicative. We suspected, however, that there was danger to be anticipated from the northward.

At ten o'clock we reached low white chalk hills, which extend from the base of the mountains some distance into the plain. The best and most direct route for us was manifestly to the left of these, but 'Amer struck in among them, and proceeded in a winding course through the to the Hebrew **יָסַר**. This illustrates Isa. xxxv. 7, where we may read "the mirage shall become a lake." A more remarkable manifestation of the Divine blessing bestowed on a land could not be conceived than the changing of such a plain as this into a lake.

valleys. This made it still more evident to us that he dreaded the tribe of which he had heard as being encamped to the northward; and we now saw that his object was to get to Tadmor by skirting the base of the mountains to the right, and probably crossing them into the plain eastward. As we passed along the side of one of the little hills I saw, away in the opening to the east, what appeared to be a castle crowning one of the brows of the northern mountain-ridge, and below it I could distinguish several lofty buildings on elevated positions. 'Amer stretched out his hand toward these buildings, and, looking round at us, said, "There is Tadmor." Eagerly did we fix our eyes on the longed-for spot, and try to distinguish the form and character of the ruins. Doubts and fears were in a moment dispelled from our minds. The buildings could not be more than an hour distant, and already in pleasant anticipation we were in the midst of those colonnades and porticoes, and proud memorials of the wealth and power of bygone ages. Columns, and friezes, and tottering walls, and sculptured stones, half buried in the desert sands, were before the mind's eye. We rejoiced to picture the nature of the first impressions the ruins would make upon us, and we talked of the diligence with which every moment would be employed in the examination of minute details.

In a few minutes more we were sweeping round the base of the last of the chalk hills, when a shrill cry from the rocky mountain far overhead caused us all to start.

"What means that shout?" said 'Amer to Mohammed.

"I know not," he replied, "but I suppose it is some shepherd calling to his fellows in the plain."

As we passed the tall tuft of a spear was observed, as if floating in the air, on the opposite side, and a moment after an Arab drew up his fiery steed some twenty yards from us. He addressed a hasty question to 'Amer, which I did not hear. We all at once stopped, in the full consciousness that something serious was impending. Another horseman now galloped up, and, after speaking a few words to the former, rode off at speed across the plain. His companion, without uttering a word, turned and walked away slowly after him, and we calmly and silently followed him.

“What is this?” said I to my companion; “where are we going now?”

“I fear,” he said, “that we are no longer our own masters, and that we are just going wherever that cavalier may lead us.”

We demanded of 'Amer the meaning of this scene, but he seemed either not to hear or not to heed the question, and he looked absent and dejected. Presently, however, the Ageily came close to Mr. Robson, and said, in a low voice,

“They are robbers, and will plunder you; but give me your purse, and it will be safe.”

This was no agreeable information, but still we thought Will two rob us? Can we not defy them, and hasten to Tadmor, which is now not far distant? 'Amer, however, made no display of his old pistols, and conveyed to us no word of command or encouragement. He had evidently no thought of resistance, whatever was the character or number of our enemies.

It was a time of intense anxiety to us all. The horseman had disappeared in the distance, but his companion

hovered near us. Ten minutes had scarcely passed when a cloud of dust was seen away across the plain, as if raised and borne along by the whirlwind's blast. Swiftly and steadily it approached, and our eyes were riveted upon it, while we held our breath in suspense. At last it seemed suddenly to break, when there appeared to our dismay some thirty horsemen, armed with spears and matchlocks, bearing down upon us with the swiftness of eagles. They were a wild and savage-looking group as ever it was my lot to behold. They had all thrown aside their *abeihs*, and retained no covering but the loose open shirt, which now streamed in tatters behind them, leaving their brawny legs and arms quite naked. Most of them, too, had cast off the *kefiyeh*, and their long plaited hair mingled behind with the streamers of their scanty garments. They looked more like demons than men as they clung to the bare backs of their fiery steeds, and brandished their rude weapons.

'Amer had, in the mean time, fallen behind, and dismounted from his dromedary, and my unruly animal wandered to the front, and appeared intent to meet the foe. The honour of the van was thus, unintentionally, and certainly unsought, assigned to me—or, rather, assumed by my Quixotic dromedary. Mr. Robson was close behind me, but there was no time for communication or consultation. Mohammed, I observed, had caught the stirrup of the Arab who had remained with us. In the rear of the advancing troop was a robust man, dressed in a silk robe and scarlet cloak. His bright-coloured *kefiyeh* was bound closely round his head, and his face, I soon saw, was distorted by passion or excitement. The other horsemen

separated to the right and left as they came up, and he spurred on through the passage thus opened. He rode, as I imagined, directly towards me, brandishing a spear of formidable length, and I felt that if I remained quiet I had a fair chance of being run through. With a quick motion, therefore, I cast aside my *abcih*. I scarcely know whether it was my intention to defend my life or jump off my camel; but, fortunately, neither of these acts was for the moment called for. The sight of my Frank costume seemed to act as a kind of charm, for the sheikh turned aside on seeing them. I found, when the immediate danger was over, that my right hand grasped firmly the only serviceable weapon among us.

Poor 'Amer now felt the full force of the charge, but he stood calmly in the midst of the excited group. The sheikh approached him at speed. The spear was raised, and shook from end to point with that peculiar quiver which those who have ever witnessed an Arab charge must know full well. I held my breath, and felt as if paralyzed. "They will murder him," I cried. "Let us try and save or help him, then," said my companion. But what could we do, without arms, and among so many? It would have been folly to have brought their wrath upon us by any show of resistance. As the sheikh was about to strike, a loud *la! la!* (no! no!) resounded from the whole party, and 'Amer, watching his opportunity, dexterously turned the point aside, and the next instant dragged his adversary from his horse. Now commenced a terrible struggle. None of those around, for a time, took any part. The sheikh had far the advantage in strength and youthful vigour, but 'Amer was more than

his equal in skill. They fortunately had no deadly weapons in their hands or on their persons, but they used their light hooked sticks with considerable effect. After a few minutes' fighting, the others interfered, and drew away the sheikh, still raging like a lion.

The *mêlée* was now over, and we were marched off prisoners. Several Arabs came up to us, and by signs and words showed us we had nothing to fear, that *they* were our slaves, and that they would guard us with their lives. We now thought indeed that, for the present at least, there was little danger of any attack being made upon our persons, whatever might become of the little property we had with us. We assumed an air of perfect indifference, and did not utter a word except when directly questioned.

My poor animal, which exhibited such valour in the beginning of the battle, now seemed determined not to be led captive. Every attempt made to urge it onward only caused it to squat on the ground. It would go everywhere except in the way our captors wished to take it. The sheikh himself, seeing the difficulty, came up and seized the halter, but it was of no use. 'Amer at last led his dromedary in front, and then, seeing its leader, it followed him without more trouble. This procedure, however, was the cause of another scene that might have ended fatally. Seeing 'Amer before him, the sheikh's wrath again rose, and, making a sudden bound, he seized a spear from the hand of one of his followers, and rushed upon his foe. Quick as thought, however, an Arab dashed his horse between him and his intended victim, and, with great dexterity, wrested the spear from his grasp. He was thus baffled, but not stopped in his career, and poor

'Amer soon felt the weight of the little stick wielded by a vigorous arm. Again and again were these attacks repeated, until at last 'Amer was led away under an escort.

After half-an-hour's slow march across the plain we found ourselves in the midst of vast flocks, laden camels, and gay harîms perched on the backs of swift dromedaries. The sheikh now struck his spear into the ground, and we all squatted round it: our carpets were soon brought, and our saddle-bags placed at our sides to serve as cushions. Ere long a number of camels, laden with the sheikh's vast tent, furniture, and harîm, came up, and the women and domestics soon completed the construction and furnishing of their desert home. The women's department was defined by a rude screen pendent over a huge heap of sacks, containing rice, wheat, dates, and other necessaries; while around them lay the capacious caldrons and dishes for the preparation and serving-up of the desert banquets.

A little fire was kindled beside us as we sat down, and already was the coffee prepared for presentation. From a neat case porcelain cups were carefully brought forth, and the sheikh himself presented to us the beverage, which we gladly received as an emblem and a pledge of peace. After this necessary preliminary, the council of war commenced its deliberations. Mohammed the ageily was first taken aside and examined. On his return he told us that our host was the great and powerful Mohammed, chief of the warlike tribe El-Misrâb; that all Tadmor and the desert around was his property; and, farther, that 'Amer was a dog for attempting to intrude on his domains, or to conduct Frank emîrs to that city. Our reply was simple:

we wished to trespass on no man's territory, and had only come because our sheikh had engaged to take us to Tadmor. If he could not do so we must return, and he would consequently lose his promised reward.

We were then asked from whence we came ; and when we replied From Damascus, considerable doubt seemed to be entertained on the subject. Several questions were put to us in reference to the people and the localities in the city, apparently as mere matters of course, but in reality to test the accuracy of our statements. We were also asked about the terms of our agreement with 'Amer, and many other particulars. It was evident, from these questions and the insinuations thrown out, that the sheikh was labouring under some mistake, but what it was we did not yet know.

After a lengthened examination and consultation the sheikh declared that 'Amer would not be permitted to take us to Tadmor, but that they themselves would conduct us, and send us back to Kuryetein. We inquired on what terms ; whereupon a sum was named far exceeding what we would give, and we consequently refused to agree to them. "What, then, will you do?" demanded one of those present. "Return to Damascus," was our calm reply. A grim smile passed over the countenances of the assembled elders ; and, though we sat with features as unmoved as any Turk, we could not but feel that it was much easier saying so than doing it. The face of the sheikh relaxed for a moment into a smile, as he turned eastward, and, pointing to the ruins that crowned the mountains and clung to the sides of the valley, said, "But there is Tadmor, and, *wullah*, it is beautiful!"

There, in truth, were the lonely tombs of the City of the Desert, closely clustered on peak and mountain-side; and there was the old castle, grim as a crusader baron, towering proudly over them all. We felt the full force of the chief's remark. The toil, discomfort, and danger, too, of the desert had been cheerfully encountered to gain a view of these classic ruins, and now, when almost at their side, to be forced to return without gratifying our curiosity, was indeed hard to bear. But we had already formed our resolution, and were determined to abide by it.

“Your words are true, Sheikh!” was our reply; “but here we have not a tenth of the sum you demand.”

“You can send to Damascus for money, and a few days will bring it.”

“Who will supply the messenger?” we inquired.

“I will,” he answered.

We met this proposition, like the others, with a decided negative, and told the sheikh that it would not be well either for his credit or for the comfort of our friends to send word to Damascus that we were prisoners in the tents of the Misrâb, and wanted our ransom; and we added, “Your revenue from travellers would then cease for ever.”

“You are not prisoners,” they all cried; “*Istughfer Ullah!*³ you are free to go where and when you like, only not to Tadmor.”

The tent was now ready, and our effects were laid in the place of honour, beside the pile of stores. We at once

³ “Ask pardon of God.”

accepted the invitation to enter, for the burning sun above and the heated soil below had already almost scorched us; the hardy sons of the desert, however, remained in their places round the spear of their chief. We had been alone for about an hour, when the man who had escorted 'Amer away from the presence of the sheikh entered. We asked for our leader, but he only replied to our query by clasping both hands round each ankle in succession. Some minutes after another came in, who went through a little pantomime, which was intended to convey to us the pleasing intelligence that he had just cut off 'Amer's head. He grasped his sword, drew the blade quickly across his throat, and then clapped his hands in a peculiar way, to show that the work was finished. The Arabs are frequently in the habit of communicating intelligence even to each other in this way: signs they consider more impressive than words.

We knew not well what to make of this. If true, our own position was undoubtedly very critical; if merely intended to frighten us into submission, it was a warning to be firm. The Ageily entered while we were discussing these unexpected and startling tidings. Never did I see a man so much changed in so short a time. His face was not only pale, but ghastly, and his lips were dry and parched, as if with thirst and suffering. He came to where we sat, and deliberately seated himself on our carpets: this 'Amer, his master, had never presumed to do, though often invited; and, simple though the act seemed, it showed us more than any other how much our circumstances were changed.

The afternoon was considerably advanced when the

sheikh and his party entered. We invited him to a seat beside us, but he politely refused, and took the lowest place. Coffee was again prepared, and presented, as before, by Mohammed himself. While drinking it, his youngest brother came forward, mounted on a splendid chesnut mare. A beautiful white falcon perched upon his wrist, and a dead hare lay across the front of the saddle. Hunting with the falcon is a favourite amusement of the Bedawîn. The birds are generally trained to act in concert with a dog in pursuit of the gazelle, and dart at the animal's head when in full flight, thus retarding its progress till the hound comes up and seizes the game. Hares and partridges they pursue alone.

After coffee negotiations were again opened. Mr. Robson was asked how long it was till sunset; and the sheikh politely requested to see my pistol. They thus showed us at once that they had received a full inventory of our effects. The first proposition made was substantially the same as the former; but now only one-half the sum was demanded. We again and finally refused to send to Damascus, but offered to accept of his escort to Palmyra, and back as far as Jerûd, where we would make arrangement for paying a fair remuneration. This was, of course, refused, for they well knew 'Amer's tribe was encamped near that village.

The deliberations now began to assume a new character. Each elder in succession seemed eager to try his own powers of persuasion, and would beckon one or other of us out of the tent, as if to give us friendly advice, but we uniformly listened with patience and refused with firmness. At last, after long silence, Mohammed's brother

rose, and signed to us to follow him. When at some little distance he squatted, and we followed his example. He then spoke of his brother's great power, hinted at our defenceless state, and at the impossibility of returning, even if permitted, as they would give us no camels; and, when he considered that the desired impression had been made upon our minds, he proposed that we should go to the sheikh, kiss his hand, present to him the pistol he had seen, and whatever amount of money we had with us, and he would undertake to persuade his brother to make arrangements for our return to Damascus, after visiting the ruins of Palmyra!

This we regarded as a kind of *ultimatum*, and so we resolved in reply to give him ours. After telling our kind friend that we were fully aware of his brother's power in the desert, and our own weakness, we informed him that we were just as fully aware that he often obtained large sums from English travellers for conducting them to Tadmor; and though he might now take our money and our lives too, yet this would be but a poor compensation for the total and final loss of his annual gains from the Franks; and we then concluded to this effect:—"First," we said, "we will not kiss the sheikh's hand; second, we will not give him the pistol; but, third, if he permit us to go on our way in peace, we will give him all the money we have with us; and if he do not, we will return to Damascus, or stay here, just as you please."

The sun went down behind the far distant hills of Lebanon, and the last red tinge soon disappeared from the mountain-tops around, and the shades of evening quickly deepened in the broad valley. Mohammed and two or

three of the older men went out before the tent-door, and, spreading their cloaks upon the ground, they, with all due solemnity, went through the forms of *ablution*, the dry dust of the desert supplying the place of water; and, turning their faces in the direction of the sacred Kâba, they mumbled over some words of prayer. Such is the spirit of Islam! It is never deemed necessary to the efficacy of prayer to have the mind composed or the thoughts turned heavenward. Prayer is not in the least out of place in the midst of a manifest attempt at fraud and open robbery; nay, the Arab will imbrue his hands in a brother's blood, and, while the crimson stain is yet fresh, he will lift them up in adoration of the God of peace and love! What a mockery is this! And yet I have sometimes heard the followers of the Prophet set forth in this respect as patterns to Christian men. They will pray at all times and in all places, and are never ashamed thus openly to profess their piety. True! they are not ashamed of praying publicly, or, rather, ostentatiously; and neither are Christians ashamed to eat or to wash their hands in public; and there is just as much devotion in the one act as in the other.

The evening feast was served to us first, and then to the others. An act of delicate attention was now shown us by the sheikh, which, under the circumstances, we did not expect, and which is a good example of that genuine spirit of hospitality for which the Bedawîn have always been celebrated. Observing that we had eaten little of the rice and none of the butter, he left the tent for a few minutes, and ere long a large plate of excellent pillau was set before us, with a basin of fresh camel's milk.

The evening passed away pleasantly, and our captivity was forgotten as we listened to the exciting tale, and heard for the first time the music of the Bedawîn. The sheikh produced a kind of rude guitar with only one string, and played it with a bow, as an accompaniment to his song. The music of the Arabs seems very commonplace and monotonous to those accustomed to the soul-stirring strains of Western Europe. It is a slow and gloomy chant, not unlike the wail of the Irish *keen*, deprived of its sweetness. It was, however, a pleasing interlude, and the grim warriors who squatted in a circle round the blazing fire evidently enjoyed it. As I sat in silence while the music gave forth its mournful strains, I had time and opportunity to examine the countenance and expression of each one of the assembled elders and visitors in succession. There is a great sameness in the Bedawy face—the sharp prominent features, the compressed thin lips, the scowling brows, and fierce, restless eyes, are the uniform characteristics of the race. There were but two exceptions to this in our circle, and one of them was Mohammed himself, a portly figure, with a broad and somewhat florid face. His eye was steady, and he gazed with a fixed, resolute look, altogether unlike the quick glances of the others. His mouth was large and sensual, with full but well-formed lips. The *tout ensemble* denoted the man of fiery passions and undaunted courage.

The other was a perfect counterpart to the chief, a young man of not more than twenty summers. His features were regular and even beautiful, and had all that softness of expression which is in general only found in the female face. He directed toward me, as I gazed at

him, a look of strange, dove-like sweetness, while a corresponding smile played round his finely-formed mouth. He was a kind of dandy, too, in his way. A thin moustache of glossy black curved gracefully on his lip, and the long tresses of his raven hair hung down in careful plaits on each side of his face. A robe of flame-coloured silk surmounted by a white *abeih* formed his dress. I looked long at this strange figure, and wondered whether one whose whole expression manifested an unwonted gentleness of heart could find congenial employment amid the stormy scenes of Arab life. He observed my fixed glance, and perhaps read the thoughts passing through my mind. However this may be, he soon came, and, sitting down close by our carpet, said that if we required anything he would bring it to us.

The night was far advanced when we spread our beds and wrapped our Arab cloaks around us, and lay down to sleep, and it was long ere slumber sealed my eyelids. The chiefs and older men soon withdrew, and only some half-dozen of the youngest and fiercest remained with the Ageily round the fire. The character of the conversation they kept up was not calculated to act as a soporific. Our attendant was undergoing a cross-examination respecting ourselves. All that was said I could not hear, and even all that I heard I could not understand, for my knowledge of the language was as yet only partial, and the accent of the Bedawîn is very different from that of the citizens. Still I could gather something of their meaning, and a brief extract from what I heard will enable the reader to imagine what were my feelings as I lay on the hard ground beneath that old tent.

“Do the *Khouwajât* live in Damascus?” asked one of the most ferocious-looking in the little circle.

“Yes,” replied the Ageily, “and they have houses like *sareiyas*. I was in them, and saw their families and harîms.”

“Saw their harîms! Impossible!”

“*Wullah el-'Azîm*, but it is true, for the Frank women walk about with their faces uncovered like men, and they like to be looked at too.”

“Do they know many great folk or consuls in the city, or did any one know they were coming to Tadmor?”

“Ay, the whole city followed them to the gate, and all the world knew they were coming here,” said the politic Ageily.

“Suppose they never returned, what would be the consequence?” and the fitful light, as it rose and fell, half revealed, as I imagined, glances of savage malignity; but I could not catch Mohammed's half-whispered reply.

“Where did you rest last night?” one of the Arabs again demanded.

“With the tribe beyond the hills.”

“If the *Khouwajât* should be plundered or killed, would not that tribe or 'Amer himself be considered responsible?”

“No,” replied our wily attendant, “for a hundred saw us this morning as we left, and numbers met us on the way.”

I knew not why such questions were put, and I could not think even the fiercest among this tribe would venture to offer personal violence; and yet why should such hints be thrown out? They could not but perceive that the

poor Ageily had little influence with us. He, however, evidently tried to make the best use he could of his power of speech, and showed about as much cunning and as little veracity as is usual with Arabs. On being afterwards asked how much money we had with us, he told the truth for once. The sum was not large (300 piastres), but it seemed a treasure to the poor Arab, who never sees money except when Providence sends a rich caravan in his way. He said emphatically we should never leave the camp with this sum on our persons, and I felt pretty confident that he spoke the truth.

After this drama there was a comic scene enacted ere sleep came. When all had withdrawn except the few who lay in Indian style radiating with their feet to the fire, one of the number, doubtless annoyed by a species of close companions too common in this land, suddenly jumped to his feet, and raked the smouldering embers till they emitted a tall flame. The wind blew strongly, and the blaze danced and flickered in the blast. Choosing the windward side, he drew close to the fire, and commenced the process of shaking his tormentors into the burning mass before him. While thus engaged, a gust of wind swept round the other side of the tent, and in a second he was completely enveloped in the leaping flame. Uttering a cry of pain, he bounded backwards and disappeared in the darkness.

April 6th.—As the morning dawned, the bustle in the tent and the call of the shepherds *without* roused us from sleep. It was the Sabbath morn, but there is no Sabbath in the desert. I wandered away across the plain to some distance, and there remained for a time undisturbed. On

returning, the Ageily drew us aside and earnestly advised us to yield to the demand of the sheikh; but we felt little inclined to listen to his advice, as we knew well he wished to secure his own safety at our expense. We answered him somewhat sternly that we would abide by our resolution, and that we were prepared to bear all the consequences.

“But,” added he, “if you are even permitted to leave the camp, they will send a few horsemen and rob you when beyond their territory.”

“They may as well rob us on the road as in the tent,” was our only reply.

“Then you will not see Tadmor.”

“We care not,” we replied, and entering the tent again we saluted the chief and elders, who rose to receive us, and took our places. A cloud passed over the face of Mohammed as our attendant related to him the result of the last interview. Coffee was prepared, however, and dates with butter were served for breakfast. We were then informed that we must return to Damascus, and that the sheikh would furnish an escort as far as Kuryetein, but from thence we would be obliged to find our own way. We received the intelligence with perfect composure, and expressed our acquiescence by a simple nod.

As we were talking over the new aspect of affairs, and the probability of being stripped on the way to Kuryetein, or more probably after leaving that village, 'Amer walked into the tent and quietly took his seat in the circle, without saluting any one save the sheikh's brother, who rose and embraced him. Had a spirit from the “vasty deep” made its appearance we could scarcely have been more

surprised : we were now confident that, go where we might, there was no danger of personal violence. An explanation ensued which amply accounted for the late attack and the rage of the sheikh. Some consul at Beyrout, it appeared, had sent a messenger to inform the tribe that two travellers wished to visit Palmyra, and would require an escort from them at the village of Kur-yetein. Miguel, the chief's second brother, had already gone there with horses and guards ; and when we appeared, the universal opinion was that we were the two travellers referred to, and that 'Amer had thus attempted to deprive them of their expected gain.

Still, notwithstanding this, Mohammed insisted we must return to Damascus if we did not agree to his terms : we of course refused, and our dromedaries were brought to the door of the tent. Our cloaks, coats, and saddle-bags were soon arranged, and we mounted. Just as I was moving off, the sheikh came to me and whispered, "Yonder is Tadmor ; give me that pistol and I will take you there myself." I refused, and followed 'Amer. We were soon sweeping away westward among the black tents, and spreading flocks, and little groups of beautiful Arab horses, our backs to the tempting ruins. I turned round to take a last look at them, and 'Amer, seeing regret and disappointment pictured in my face, came up and said, "Don't give them the pistol ; don't give them anything. I will myself bring you back some other time." This was but little comfort, for we felt that, if once safe within the city walls, we would not soon again commit ourselves to the tender mercies of the Bedawîn.

A shout was now heard behind us, and a messenger

came up at speed to say that the sheikh wanted to speak with us. We expected only a repetition of his demand, and made up our minds for a final refusal. We turned our dromedaries and awaited his approach. "Dismount," said he, as he came up, in the abrupt manner of an Arab chief; "we must part friends, and you must tell *Khou-wájah Hanna*⁴ that every Englishman is as safe in the desert of Tadmor as within the walls of Damascus. Put down the three hundred piastres." We were on the ground in a moment, and, squatting in a little circle, Mr. Robson drew out his purse and emptied it into the sheikh's cloak. He counted the money, and, finding about forty piastres over, handed them back; putting the rest in his pocket, he jumped to his feet and said, "Now for Tadmor."

We were accompanied by about thirty of the tribe, headed by Mohammed himself on a splendid mare, and among the rest I observed my dandy friend of the previous evening, the graceful *Mitbah*. He came up and said he was going to guide me all over the ruins. In two hours more we passed through the splendid but dilapidated gateway that opens into the court of the Temple of the Sun, and found ourselves among the modern hovels that half conceal the ruins of that once noble structure.

During Monday the 7th, and the forenoon of Tuesday, we employed every moment in the examination of this interesting site. The whole space we divided into sections, and one after another we entered upon and explored in detail. We thus lost no time, and got a satisfactory, if a hasty, view of the whole. I will now endeavour to

⁴ Mr. Hanna Misk, the active dragoman of the British consul.

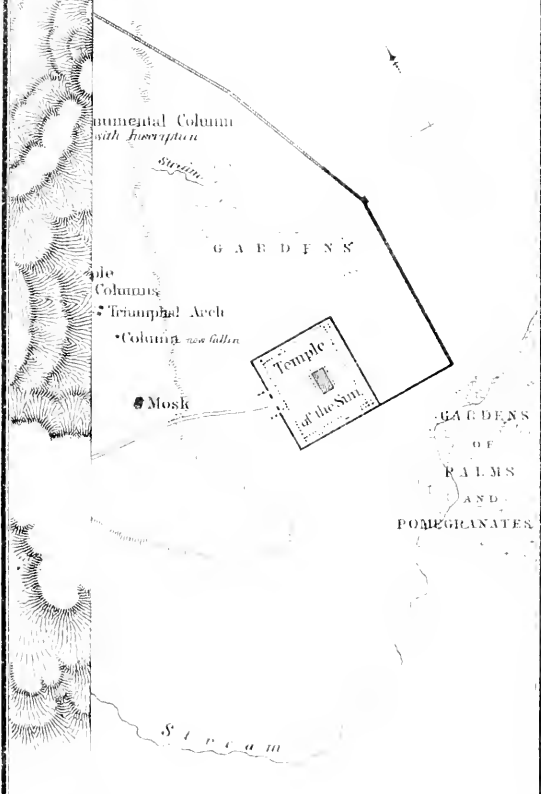
give such a sketch of the general features and distribution of the ruins, and such a description of the most beautiful and important among them, as will enable my readers to form some good idea of what still exists of the city of Zenobia. The accompanying plan is chiefly taken from the great work of Wood and Dawkins, and in reference to it I may quote their words: "Nothing less entire than at least a column standing with its capital is marked. Almost the whole ground within the walls is covered with heaps of marble (limestone); but to have distinguished such imperfect ruins would have introduced confusion to no purpose."⁵ The plates in this splendid book convey the best idea of the former magnificence and architectural grandeur of this great city. They are faithful representations of the originals; and though the traveller who is acquainted with the work may at first feel somewhat disappointed on seeing the ruins, yet a more close examination will convince him that there has been no exaggeration.

Palmyra is situated at the foot of a range of lofty limestone hills, naked and white as if covered with eternal snow. The ridge runs from about S.W. to N.E., and is, as has been said above, a continuation of that which bounds the plain of Damascus. Opposite the city is a wide opening leading into the great valley which extends westward to Kuryetein, a distance of about 50 miles. Eastward and southward is a vast desert plain reaching to the horizon. The traveller from the west generally approaches the ruins through the break in the mountains,

⁵ The Ruins of Palmyra, p. 41.

PLAN of the REMAINS OF PALMYRA.

Drawn by J. L. Porter 1855.



Scale of Feet.



and the first object that attracts his attention is the old Saracenic castle that crowns an isolated peak some distance on the left. On each side of the road he observes numbers of strange tower-like tombs—some nearly perfect and others confused heaps of ruins—built in the valley and along the slopes above. After passing most of these he surmounts an easy swell, and the whole panorama of the ruins opens up at once before him. They stretch from the base of the mountains across the valley on the left till they are terminated by the lofty walls of the magnificent Temple of the Sun directly in front. He is struck with astonishment at their vast extent, and no less so at their utter desolation. They are white as snow-wreaths, and not a tree, or shrub, or blade of grass, or solitary weed is seen among them! Heaps of massive stones, noble porticos, and long and beautiful colonnades, are intermixed with the shattered ruins of temples, and triumphal arches, and proud monuments erected in honour of the mighty dead. There is no sign of life—all is bare and desolate as a deserted cemetery.

The most remarkable feature of the whole is the vast pile of the Temple of the Sun. The lofty wall that enclosed the court is still in many places nearly perfect, and forms a strong defence to the modern village which is wholly built within it. These wretched hovels are completely hid from view, so that when seen from a little distance there is not a trace of human habitation. To the right of this, and quite beyond the ruins, are the few gardens now cultivated by the villagers, and in these a number of palm-trees still grow and flourish, as if to prove that, though fallen, this is *Palmyra* still.

It was, no doubt, the existence of a large fountain of water—that first requisite in a thirsty land—which, at a very early period, attracted man to this dreary spot, and led to the founding of a city. At the foot of the mountains on the right, after you pass through the opening, is the principal source. From a cave-like aperture, which has probably been carried some distance under the hill, issues a stream of considerable size. It is strongly impregnated with sulphur, and slightly warm as it flows forth; but after running a few hundred yards the sulphureous taste is scarcely perceptible. This fountain is considerably below the level of the city, and the water could never have been conducted, except by artificial means, within the walls of Justinian; neither is the supply sufficient for the wants of a large population. Beside this fountain I copied, from a large altar-shaped stone, an inscription to the following effect:—

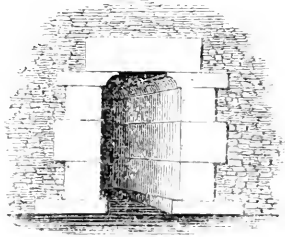
TO THE MOST SUBLIME, POWERFUL, AND PROPITIOUS JOVE, BOLANOS
THE SON OF ZENO, ETC., AT HIS OWN COST ERECTED (this altar?) IN
THE YEAR 474, AND MONTH BERETAIOS.

This inscription is only of value as containing a date, equivalent to A.D. 162, and the name of *Dios* or Jupiter—thus showing that the people had adopted the god of the Greeks. In the work of Wood and Dawkins it is said of this fountain, “We learned from an inscription close by it, upon an altar dedicated to Jupiter, that it was called *Ephca*, and that the care of it was committed to persons who held that office by election.”⁶

There are two aqueducts which formerly brought an

⁶ Ruins of Palmyra, p. 40.

abundant supply of water to the city from distant sources. One of these is now ruinous, but can be traced through the opening in the mountain-chain into the great valley on the west, across which it comes, in a south-easterly direction, apparently from some source at or among the *Jebel el-Abiad*, where, I was credibly informed, there are some good springs. This aqueduct is a splendid work; it is eight feet in height by four in breadth, and wholly constructed of finely-hewn stones, as shown in the cut. At certain regular intervals there are openings from above, with steps leading down into it, for the purpose of keeping it clean. There is a pretty general opinion among the Arabs that this aqueduct brings the water from the Barada; but it is about equally well grounded with the tradition that represents the sources of the fountains at Tyre as at Baghdad. There is strong evidence to show that it was constructed prior to the Roman conquest of the city, and indeed probably at a very early period; for there are traces of Palmyrene inscriptions upon some of the stones, but none whatever of any other language, and we know that the Greek language began to be generally used on inscriptions about the commencement of our era.⁷



The source of the second aqueduct is not known, nor was I able to see any traces of its course beyond the circuit

⁷ See *Ruins of Palmyra*, p. 40, and plate xxvii.

of the walls. It conveys a copious supply of water slightly impregnated with sulphur. The stream from it is first seen among the ruins at some distance on the north side of the great temple, and flows from thence into a few little gardens. Near the centre of the city I was conducted by our guide to a small reservoir about ten feet below the surface, in which I found excellent sweet water; but I could not ascertain from whence it came. The guide informed us that it was brought from a great distance underground, and that a Jân⁸ had constructed the channel in which it flows, at the command of the mighty Solomon!

Before we left Damascus 'Amer had told us that, a short time previous, a camel, in passing along the plain near the city, had suddenly sunk into the earth and disappeared. Its owner, who was a little in advance, on turning round could see nothing of his animal, and thought some evil spirit had wafted it away. He looked across the plain in every direction but in vain. At last, turning back, he found it standing on a heap of rubbish in a

⁸ Muslem doctors and learned men have written many volumes on the nature and origin of created intelligences. They generally admit that these are of three kinds: *Angels*, created of light; *Jân*, or *Genii*, created of fire; and *Men*, created of earth. The *Jân* are of several species; they appear to men under several forms, as dogs, cats, serpents, &c.; and can vanish at pleasure. They are believed to have the power of carrying away human beings and animals. I have seen some Muslems who profess to have held conversations with the Jân. Many connect a belief in the transmigration of souls with that of the Jân, and think the spirits of the faithful thus often revisit this world after death. Some of the Jân, too, are *Muslems!* and therefore it is not permitted to kill any of those animals whose form they are wont to assume, without first giving them due admonition to depart. For a full account of the Jân, see Lane's 'Thousand and One Nights,' vol. i. Introduction, note 21.

large and beautiful sepulchral cave. To this interesting spot we requested our kind friend Mitbah to conduct us; and we were also accompanied by the *licensed* Palmyra guide, with a long train of followers and idle Bedawîn. It is a short distance south of the fountain, and in the midst of an extensive necropolis. There are several tower-tombs around it, and large numbers of gentle elevations in the surface of the plain, each of which, no doubt, marks the position of a sepulchral cave below, similar to that into which the unfortunate camel had fallen. Near the spot we observed on the ground folding-doors of white limestone, and a fragment of a statue, much defaced, but well executed. The tomb itself was in the form of a Greek cross, hewn in the soft rock, and arched overhead. There were three tiers of receptacles for bodies in each compartment, but I saw no inscription or mark on the walls or door that would tend to indicate the age of the structure. Several fine statues and other ornaments had, we were told, been taken out of it when it was first discovered; but we could not learn what had been done with them. Those sepulchres that remain still unopened might afford a rich harvest to the antiquary, and possibly bring to light some interesting historic memorial. None of the Arabs seem to suspect their existence; if they did they would soon be pillaged.

In a large and very ancient mausoleum near this spot are two mutilated statues, with wide flowing robes, and close jackets curiously and elaborately laced and plaited over the chest. The general outlines of the figures and ample folds of the robes display much boldness and freedom,

while the ornaments and minute details of the bodices are executed with great taste and skill. In another tomb, of about the same era, are several short inscriptions in the Palmyrene character, beside the recesses for the bodies. They probably only record the names and titles of the persons there deposited, with perhaps a date. In the tombs in this cemetery I did not observe any Greek inscriptions; and from this, as well as from the character of the structures, I think it is more ancient than that in the valley, to which reference will be made hereafter.

In going from hence to the ruins we bathed in the fountain, and found it exceedingly refreshing. We were informed by Mitbah that the Arabs prefer the waters of this fountain to all others, as it keeps longer good in their skins, and they can consequently carry it to a greater distance.

We now crossed the valley, and, ascending the steep bank on the northern side, found ourselves suddenly in a wilderness of ruins. It was not without some difficulty we made our way over the confused heaps of massive stones and fallen columns. Of the multitude of sculptured stones that are crowded together in this section of the city, it is impossible to form a correct conception. It is not here as in other places of Syria, and in other lands, where the débris of ancient buildings has been employed in the erection of more modern edifices—where temples have been changed into churches, and churches again remodelled for the service of Islam; in this place each stone, and column, and fragment of richly-wrought cornice, lies where it fell from the building it adorned; and the finger

of time has in general dealt so gently, that each noble structure might almost be reared up again of its old materials.

We at last made our way to the north-western angle of the walls, which terminate some distance up the side of the hill, and here, on the gentle slope, commanding the whole panorama of the desert eastward, stood a peripteral temple. The door was surrounded by a broad border of vine-branches in festoons, intermingled with grapes, exquisitely sculptured in high relief. A Corinthian column, with a monolithic shaft, is the only one left standing in the front row of the portico. The plan of the building can still be traced; and the delicately wrought acanthi of the capitals, and rich tracery and scroll-work of the frieze, bear testimony to its former grandeur.⁹ Below it is a smaller temple, with several fragments of fluted columns still standing in their positions; and a little distance to the south-east is a magnificent mausoleum, the portico of which is nearly perfect. It consists of six columns, each a monolith, and finely proportioned. This building is nearly square, and the interior is arranged on three sides, with deep recesses for the reception of bodies. Between the recesses are semi-columns, supporting a rich cornice of garlands, sculptured in high relief. The ornamental work

⁹ In the work of Wood and Dawkins ample details will be found of this building. It was of great extent and singular form, having a portico in front of four columns, and at each side a portico consisting of twenty columns in five rows. A plan of the building may be seen in plate xlv., and the details of the architecture in the four following plates. Upon a broken architrave is a Latin inscription, copied by Wood and Dawkins. It contains the names of Diocletian, and the Cæsars Constantius and Maximianus; it must consequently have been erected subsequently to A.D. 292.

of the whole building is designed and executed with great skill and exquisite taste. Just in front of the portico the great colonnade terminated toward the north-west.¹ A few yards beyond the latter is a small temple or mausoleum, with a portico, only two columns of which now stand *in situ*, and they are much defaced by the action of the sun. In the interior is a large sarcophagus, profusely and beautifully ornamented with bas-reliefs representing grotesque figures of satyrs, and garlands of flowers.

Such is a specimen of the splendid buildings that adorned a corner of this proud city. Even now, prostrate as they are, and shattered by the hand of the ruthless destroyer, and defaced by the winter storms and summer suns of long centuries, they are beautiful. Modern architects may criticise details and talk of a debased style; but let these temples and sepulchral monuments be restored to their pristine state, and compared with those Grecian churches and palaces and halls with which these critical geniuses have adorned the cities of England; it will then be seen whether the modern or the Palmyrene style is the more debased. The ancients, it would appear, sought for effect and beauty more in the proportions and grouping of the whole than in a servile copying and measuring of minutiae age after age. Like the great masters of painting, they did not intend their works to be examined by a microscope, but to produce their grandest effect from such points of view as spectators would be *naturally* led to take up. It is, I believe, a neglect of this principle that has spoiled the greatest and most costly

¹ Plans and drawings of this sepulchre are given in Wood and Dawkins, plates xxxvi.-xlii.

building of modern times—the palace of Westminster. To see its beauty it requires the beholder to embark on the Thames in a fishing-boat, and paddle through the muddy waters in front with a powerful opera-glass in hand. View it from a distance and all the grandeur is gone. The “thousand and one” puppet knights, and microscopic heraldic emblems, and miniature niches, all vanish; and so far as the general public is concerned, and so far too as the adorning of the great metropolis is concerned, there might as well be a plain wall.

Around this section the city walls are still, in part, standing; and the gates, too, are distinguishable, though now choked up with fallen stones and rubbish. The line of the wall, as may be seen from the plan, is first north for a short distance, then it turns eastward, and continues in a zigzag course for more than a mile, after which it sweeps round to the west again, and finally joins the south-eastern angle of the Temple of the Sun.

Crossing the wall, we passed through another large cemetery, with a few tower-like tombs, now in ruins, standing here and there all solitary in the midst of the undulating plain. There are here scores of subterranean sepulchres, whose positions are marked by the swell of the vaulted roofs; and most of them, perhaps, have never yet been opened. Rich is the harvest here treasured up for some future antiquary! Leaving these behind, we ascended the steep hill-side to the old castle, so finely situated on the summit. It is surrounded by a deep moat, hewn in the solid rock. A narrow bridge once led across it to the great gateway, but it is now fallen, and we found some difficulty in scaling the scarped rock. At last, how-

ever, we succeeded, and obtained admission to the interior through a breach in the wall. Here are long corridors, spacious vaulted halls, and deep reservoirs, with almost innumerable small chambers and cells among them. The whole is in a good state of preservation, and might be defended by a few resolute men against a host of Arabs. The situation is so commanding, the access to it so difficult, and the moat so deep, that no Bedawin would attempt its capture if only a few field-pieces were well mounted and manned by the garrison. It might thus be made a station of vast importance for controlling the wandering Arab tribes. The building is evidently of comparatively recent date, but I have no data for determining the time of its erection. I could not observe any inscriptions; and had it been a work of the early Saracens, they would doubtless have left upon it some record. There is a tradition that some prince of the Druzes constructed it as a retreat in seasons of danger; and this story was told to the Aleppo merchants who were the first Europeans that visited these ruins in modern times (A.D. 1691). Portions of the city walls, as Mr. Wood remarks,² seem to be of the same date as the castle. It is probable that these defences were constructed by the Osmanlis, under their Sultan Selîm, when they first conquered this country, A.D. 1519.

The castle stands on the summit of one of the highest hills in the range, and commands a view which, for extent, barrenness, and utter desolation, is almost unparalleled in the world. On the one side is the vast expanse

² Ruins of Palmyra, p. 39.

of the desert stretching away to the horizon, level as the ocean, and without a tree or shrub to vary the monotony. On the other side are the bleak mountain-chains shutting in the long plain which opens up like a vista to the westward, revealing the pale blue summits of the far-distant Lebanon, with their crests of snow; while at your feet lie the ruins of the great city, like the bleached bones of an army of giants that had fallen and wasted upon the parched plain.

From hence we descended into the valley to examine those strange-looking mausoleums which are among the most remarkable monuments of Palmyra. One especially attracted our attention, being both externally and internally in a good state of preservation. A brief description of it may not be without interest, and will serve to convey to the reader an idea of the general plan and decorations of them all. A handsome doorway with a small pediment admits to a hall or chamber 27 feet long by 10 wide, and about 20 high. Along each side are four fluted Corinthian pilasters with tiers of recesses between them for the reception of the dead. Opposite the door is a shallow apse with a semi-column on each side supporting a plain cornice. Within this are busts in mezzorilievo with Palmyrene inscriptions. Above the apse is another, similar in character, but smaller. It is in great part filled up with a projecting slab like the side of a sarcophagus, upon which are four busts with inscriptions. On the left of the entrance is a staircase leading to the upper stories, and over it are five busts, two in one row and three in another. On each side of the door is a pilaster, and over

it a large bust. The ceiling is of slabs of stone beautifully panelled and painted—the divisions being coloured brown and the panels blue with a white star-like flower *in relief* in the centre. The middle part of the ceiling is broken away, but at the distance of two panels from the side and three from the end are large squares, each divided into four, and in each of these four is a bust *in relief* on a



Interior of Tomb.

blue ground. The ornaments are well designed and tastefully executed, and the effect of the whole is rich and even gorgeous. The colours are still clear as when the painter completed his work, and the delicate acanthi of the capitals and leaves of the flowers have been but little affected by the lapse of ages; but the fierce fanaticism of

a barbarous race has mutilated and almost destroyed the busts.³

The building has five stories, all constructed on the same plan; but the others are neither so lofty nor so highly ornamented as that described. On a tablet over the door is an inscription in Palmyrene and Greek, to which reference will be made hereafter.

On our return to the village we passed the fragments of a noble column, which a few years ago was one of the chief ornaments of the city. A French antiquary, however, of a peculiarly inquiring disposition, wishing to have a glance at the interior, made a hole in its side, and, putting in a quantity of gunpowder, razed it to the foundation! He afterwards marched off in triumph with the iron clamp that held the shaft in its place.

Our next walk was to the fine monumental column on the north side of the great temple, marked 28 on the

³ This splendid sepulchre attracted the attention of Wood and Dawkins, and they have given a plan of it with drawings. These, however, I have observed with surprise, differ from my description. For example, in plate lvii. there are *five* busts in the upper apse or recess opposite the door, and over these is a recumbent figure in *alto-relievo*; and on the ceiling in plate lv. they give only *two* busts. On seeing this I at first thought that they must have represented some other tomb, for I could not have made such mistakes, as my description was written not from memory or from short notes, but *fully, while I was sitting in the chamber itself*, and my friend Mitbah sleeping across the door to keep out a crowd of Arabs. On comparing the details, however, and especially the inscriptions, some of which I also copied, I find that the same sepulchre is referred to. One of these inscriptions I here insert as a specimen of the Palmyrene characters. I also annex a rough sketch of the interior:

בלחיתדו-ותאתגאח
מעדרוואו-לח

plan. Our object here was to verify an inscription, on the reading of which a delicate theory in biblical criticism has been grounded by some commentators. It was thought that, in this inscription, the hero to whom the monument was erected was represented as the *son of two different individuals*—one of whom was his adopted and the other his real father. This was first observed and the reasoning naturally deducible from it applied by Harmer to reconcile the genealogies of our Lord given in Matthew and Luke; and it may also be seen, as copied from him, in the commentary of Dr. Adam Clarke, under Luke, ch. iii. The whole theory, however, is grounded on a mistake in copying the inscription, which is correctly as follows:—

ΗΒΟΥΛΗΚΑΙΟΔΗΜΟΣΑΛΙΛΑΜΕΙΝΑΙΡΑΝΟΥ
 ΤΟΥΜΟΚΙΜΟΥΤΟΥΑΙΡΑΝΟΥΤΟΥΜΑΘΘΑΚΑΙ
 ΑΙΡΑΝΗΝΤΟΝΠΑΤΕΡΑΥΤΟΥΕΥΣΕΒΕΙΣΚΑΙ
 ΦΙΛΟΠΑΤΡΙΔΑΣΚΑΙΠΑΝΤΙΤΡΟΠΩ ////
 ΙΣΙΜΩΣΑΡΕΣΑΝΤΑΣΤΗΠΑΤΡΙΔΙΚΑΙ
 ΤΟΙΣΠΑΤΡΙΟΙΣΘΕΟΙΣΤΕΙΜΗΣΧΑΡΙΝ
 ΕΤΟΥΣΝΥΜΗΝΟΣΞΑΝΔΙΚΟΥ⁴

“The senate and people to Alilamus, the son of Æranus, the son of Mokimus, the son of Mattha; and Æranus his father,—noblemen and patriots, in every place equally gaining the esteem of their country and their country’s gods—the tribute of esteem. In the year 450 (A.D. 138), and month Xandicos (April).”

⁴ See Inscription No. III. in Wood and Dawkins’ ‘Ruins of Palmyra,’ and Le Brun’s ‘Voyage au Levant, en Egypte, Syrie, &c.’ pp. 347-8.

In the copies of this inscription formerly given to the public the latter part of the first line is thus written—

----- ΑΛΙΛΑΜΕΙΝΑΠΑΝΟΥ—

“Alilamus the son of *Panus* ;” and hence the supposed difficulty referred to above—*Panus* being called his father, while in the third line his father’s name is written *Æranus*. This beautiful monument is nearly sixty feet high, and was erected only eight years after Palmyra had submitted to the power of Rome.

We went from this place to view the splendid ruins of the great colonnade, and, winding among the confused heaps that now mark the sites of once sumptuous buildings, we soon reached it. There were here originally four rows of columns—or at least such was the design, as may be seen from the plan of the arch at the eastern end—thus forming a central and two side avenues, which extended through the city, a distance of about 4000 feet. Each pillar had, on its inner side, a bracket for a statue. One can well imagine what a noble vista would meet the eye of the Palmyrene as he walked along this splendid arcade—the brilliant rays of an eastern sun lighting up the temples and palaces on each side, and breaking through between the lofty columns that lined the pathway, and the sculptured forms of the greatest and best of his countrymen standing above him, as if pointing the way to glory and to fame.

When this colonnade was perfect it contained more than *one thousand five hundred columns*, and of these above *one hundred and fifty* still occupy their places. The height of the order, including base and capital, is

fifty-seven feet. The proportions of the pillars are good, though the details are not executed with the same taste as those of the great temple. It is rather remarkable that in almost every city of any importance in Syria we find traces of these splendid colonnades; in Antioch, Apamea, Damascus, and Gerasa, their remains may still be seen.

But of all the ruins of Palmyra none can be compared with those of the great Temple of the Sun, whether we consider their vast extent or their exquisite beauty. The court in which this noble structure stands is a perfect square, 740 feet on each side. The external wall consists of a projecting base, and over it a range of pilasters supporting a plain frieze and cornice—the extreme height being 70 feet. A considerable part of it still remains perfect. On the western side was a portico of ten columns surmounted by an entablature, now completely destroyed. A flight of stairs extending the whole length of the portico (138 feet) led up to the grand entrance. The great door was 32 feet 6 inches high by 15 feet 9 inches wide, and richly ornamented with sculptured wreaths of leaves and flowers. Notwithstanding its great size, each of the side architraves is a monolith. The side-doors are half of the above dimensions similarly ornamented, and the remaining intervals between the columns were filled up with tabernacles and niches for statues.

Beautiful and commanding as must have been the appearance of the exterior, it was wholly eclipsed by the scene that burst upon the beholder's eyes as he crossed the threshold. A double colonnade encircled the whole interior with the exception of the western side, where there was but one range; and each pillar had its bracket

and its statue. The back wall of the spacious cloisters thus formed had niches with shell and fan-shaped tops. Near the centre of this court stands the temple itself on a raised platform, towering high above the surrounding buildings. In form it was unique. A single row of fluted Corinthian columns, 64 feet high, with bronze capitals, encompassed the shrine and supported an unbroken cornice fully ornamented in bold relief with festoons of fruit and flowers, held up at intervals by angels. A doorway is curiously placed between two columns on the west side, and fronting this is the door of the cell, 33 feet high by 15 feet wide. The ornaments upon the latter resemble those on the door of the small temple at Bâ'albek; and like that also the soffit has a sculptured eagle with extended wings upon a starred ground. The walls have pilasters opposite the columns, and windows between them, while at each end, in addition to the pilasters, are two Ionic semi-columns. The interior has been much defaced, and the entire roof is gone. At each end is a small apse or chamber with a ceiling of a single stone, panelled and richly ornamented with sculpture. That on the north side is remarkable as having the signs of the zodiac in *mezzo-relievo* round the circumference of a circle, within which appear to have been figures of the principal deities. The whole is now nearly obliterated by the persevering fanaticism of the Muslims: it is still possible, however, to trace the outlines of several of the figures.⁵

Such was the plan and such were the dimensions of

⁵ Detailed drawings are given of these by Wood and Dawkins, 'Ruins of Palmyra,' plate six.

this magnificent building; and, *as a whole*, I scarcely think it is surpassed by any in the world. The temple of Minerva at Athens and a few of its fellows—the *chef-d'œuvres* of ancient Greece—are, undoubtedly, more beautiful in their stern simplicity and in the brilliancy of their marble columns; Bâ'albek, not less chaste in its sculpture, is more gigantic in its proportions; but the cloistered court at Palmyra, with its long lines of statues and the temple itself towering high over all, formed a picture unique and unequalled by any of these.

Travellers have generally represented the buildings of Palmyra as constructed entirely of marble, but the fact is, there is not a single marble column or stone among the whole ruins. White limestone of a fine texture from the neighbouring mountains has been universally employed, and the only other species found is Sienite granite, a few shafts of which may still be seen near the long colonnade. One of these, a single block, measures thirty feet in length and three in diameter. How it was conveyed to this spot is a mystery. To transport it from the Upper Nile to the coast of Syria was a work of no ordinary difficulty, but to convey it thence over mountains and across deserts for near two hundred miles shows an engineering skill almost equalling that of our own day.

After satisfying our curiosity with a careful though hasty survey of these wonderful ruins we followed our guide down among the gardens, where we found many traces of former structures. The gardens are surrounded with lofty mud walls, and have doors of stone taken from the crypts and tombs of other days. The poor villagers thus endeavour to keep their few dates and pomegranates

from the all-devouring Arabs; but they are not always successful. I endeavoured afterwards to trace and estimate the extent of the ancient city walls. Those now seen, and already referred to, are of the period of Justinian, who we know fortified Palmyra. They are only about three miles in circumference, but there is sufficient evidence to show that the ancient city extended far beyond them, and probably occupied a space nearly ten miles in circumference. The great temple area was in Saracenic times converted into a fortification, like so many other noble buildings in this land. The windows of the exterior wall were built up, the grand portico was razed to the ground, and a heavy tower erected in its place to defend the gate. A deep moat was also cut along the western wall. These defences, though ruinous, are still sufficient to check any sudden attack of the Bedawîn, and the inhabitants, so long as they remain behind their walls, enjoy comparative security.

The population may have amounted to some seventy or eighty families when we were there, but it is continually fluctuating, and since that time I have heard that nearly one half of its people deserted it on account of some private quarrel. The miserable mud huts were clustered round the bases of noble columns, and beautiful fragments of sculptured cornices and capitals lay in the little courtyards. The women and children crowded round us to get a good look at the *Frangi*, and some few brought coins and antique gems for sale; the money we had brought with us, however, was now in the purse of sheikh Mohammed, and we were reluctantly forced to decline making purchases, except a few coins. These people live

chiefly by trading between the Bedawîn and the inhabitants of Damascus; they also carry large quantities of salt to the latter city, which they collect on the desert plain south of the ruins. The principal sheikh *Jarullah* we saw only once, but his younger brother Fâres was almost constantly with us during our stay. We were much pleased with his kindness and attention, and almost as much annoyed with his insatiable curiosity. Everything he saw with us he admired, and everything he admired he asked for. Our saddle-bags, our beds, our coats, and our very pockets, we had to turn out that they might be inspected, and their structure or contents wondered at. A fine English knife of mine with a spring-blade he asked and begged for repeatedly, but we invariably refused to give him any of our property. At last, thinking he had something that would tempt me to part with it, he ran out, and soon came back with an old mutilated head sculptured in marble carefully wrapped up in his cloak. It had neither nose, nor ears, nor almost any other feature; and this he offered in exchange for the knife. It was of no avail however—even such a rare antique would not tempt me to part with an old friend that had served me in many a land.⁶

⁶ Descriptions of the ruins of Palmyra may be found in the following works. Le Brun, 'Voyage au Levant,' 1 vol. fol., Paris, 1714, where there are some important notes on the inscriptions copied by the English merchants from Aleppo, who were the first to visit the place in modern times. This description is a translation of a letter sent by Mr. W. Halifax, one of these merchants, to Mr. Bernard in England, and published in the Philosophical Transactions for Oct. 1695. To the original I have not had access in this city, but I presume the translation by Le Brun is correct. The 'Ruins of Palmyra,' by Wood and Dawkins, London, 1753, 1 vol. fol. This splendid work consists almost wholly of plans and

HISTORICAL SKETCH OF PALMYRA.

It may not be considered out of place here, or uninteresting to the general reader, to give a brief sketch of the history of this ancient city, among whose ruins we have just been wandering. My only object is to throw such light upon the origin and authors of the splendid buildings, the remains of which now excite our astonishment and admiration, as may enable the reader to peruse the foregoing description with more pleasure and profit.

The earliest notice of this city on record is that in 1 Kings ix. 18, where it is stated that Solomon built "Tadmor in the wilderness." There can be little doubt that the ruins which we have just described occupy the site, as they bear the name, of the city founded by the great King of Israel. Solomon was a commercial monarch. His ships navigated the seas, and his traders traversed the deserts, that the luxuries and wealth of foreign lands might be conveyed to his little kingdom. A secure route for the caravans that imported the treasures of India, Persia, and Mesopotamia was of the first importance. Tadmor is about half way between the banks of the Euphrates and the borders of Syria. Copious fountains

drawings of the ruins, which are executed with great care and fidelity. The letterpress is scarcely sufficient to explain the plates; and it seems strange that men who had the taste to appreciate the splendour of these noble ruins, and the learning to investigate their origin and detail their history, should not have given to the world a full account of them. Addison, in his 'Palmyra and Damascus,' has given an account of the ruins, with a historical sketch; and a notice may also be seen in the little volume of Irby and Mangles.

there supply the first requisite for a desert station; and, influenced no doubt by these weighty considerations, Solomon made choice of this spot for the erection of a commercial depôt and resting-place.

Its importance would naturally vary with the fluctuations of commerce; and we have no evidence that it attained to power or fame till a far later period. For nearly a thousand years history is silent about Tadmor; and Pliny appears to be the first among historians who makes reference to it. It was then a city of considerable importance, and, from the peculiarity of its position, as this author remarks, "being situated in the midst of an almost impassable desert, and on the confines of two powerful and hostile kingdoms," it had hitherto retained its independence. That its citizens were not only opulent, but skilled in architecture as early as the commencement of the Christian era, is evidenced by those beautiful tombs to which we have already alluded. On one of them is a Greek inscription to the following effect: "This enduring monument was erected by Gichos, the son of Mokimos, the son of ———, the son of Mattha, for himself, his children, and his descendants, in the year 314 (A.D. 2), and month Xandikos (April)." This is the most ancient Greek inscription hitherto discovered at Palmyra, but there are others in the Palmyrene character unquestionably much earlier.

The city retained its freedom until about A.D. 130, when it submitted to the Emperor Adrian, and came under the protection of Rome. His predecessor, Trajan, had subdued the Parthians, and captured Babylon and Ctesiphon, and the little republic was thus encompassed

by the victorious legions of the "Eternal City." Adrian was a munificent patron of Palmyra, for not only did he give it his own name, but he raised it to the rank of a Roman colony, and adorned it with many of those colonnades and temples which are so grand even in their ruin. It appears, however, that the citizens themselves were not greatly behind the Romans in refinement and love for the arts. That magnificent mausoleum which we described above was erected previous to the time of Adrian, as may be seen from the inscription still existing over the entrance-door, from which we learn that "The monument was erected by Elabelus Manæus Sochaëis Malchos, the son of Aballathos, the son of Mannæus, the son of Elabelus, for himself and his sons, in the year 414 (A.D. 102) and month Xandicos."

The precise date of the great colonnade cannot be easily determined, but it is highly probable that it and the other buildings immediately adjoining were the results of a magnificent plan for the adorning of the city by the Emperor who gave it his own name. There is evidence from the inscriptions upon it that it was constructed before A.D. 238, as this date is found underneath one of the brackets on which a statue had been erected to an illustrious citizen by the senate and people. Neither this date nor any of those found under these pedestals can be regarded as fixing the age of the colonnade itself, any more than the dates on the monuments in St. Paul's or Westminster Abbey can be adduced as proofs of the precise period in which those buildings were erected. This colonnade in fact appears to have been the appointed receptacle for monuments raised by a grateful nation in honour of its

statesmen and warriors, or erected by private citizens as a tribute of respect to friends and relatives. The brackets of the colonnades around the court of the great temple seem also to have been devoted to a like object, and there is one inscription there, with the date 490, or A.D. 178, which proves that this noble structure *could not* have been erected long subsequent to the time of Adrian, who died in A.D. 138.

From this period the influence and wealth of Palmyra rapidly increased. Though nominally subject to Rome, it had a government of its own, and was ruled by its own laws. The public affairs were directed by a senate chosen by the suffrages of the people; and most of its public monuments were erected, as the inscriptions state, by the senate and people—*Η Βουλή και ο δήμος*. As a colony, too, it was highly favoured, having been elevated to the rank of capital, one of the inscriptions designating it as *Μητροπολιτικῆς*. For nearly a century and a half did this prosperity continue; and it was at last only checked by the pride that it had generated. The pride of its rulers, which for a brief period raised it to a pitch of power it had never before aspired to, became the cause of its speedy fall and subsequent ruin.

The unfortunate Valerian, who a second time carried the Roman arms into the heart of Persia, to check the rising power of Sapor, was defeated and captured by his foe. His unworthy son suffered him to pine away in bondage, exposed to the most brutal treatment; but Odenathus, one of the citizens of Palmyra, revenged the wrongs of the fallen Emperor, and vindicated the majesty of the Roman state. Sapor being triumphant, policy con-

strained Odenathus to propitiate his friendship by rich presents when suing for the life and liberty of the captive ; but when these were indignantly refused, and the bearers of them insulted, he himself marched against the haughty Persian, took the whole province of Mesopotamia, and even defied him beneath the walls of Ctesiphon (A.D. 260). The services thus rendered to Rome were so great that Odenathus was gifted with the purple, and associated in the sovereignty with Gallienus (A.D. 264). He enjoyed his high dignity but a brief period, being murdered by his nephew, at a banquet in the city of Emesa, only three years afterwards. His reign was short but brilliant. Not only was Sapor conquered, and Valerian revenged, but Syrian rebels, and the northern barbarous hordes that now began their incursions into the territories of Rome, felt alike the force of his arms.

He bequeathed the kingdom of the East to a worthy successor—Zenobia, his widow ; and the names of Zenobia and Palmyra will always be associated while history remains. The virtue, the wisdom, and the heroic spirit of that extraordinary woman were never equalled in the annals of antiquity. She was at first nominally the regent during the minority of her son Vaballatus ; but unfortunately, ambition urged her to lay claim to supreme authority, and adopt the high-sounding title of “ Queen of the East.” By conquest she soon added Egypt to her possessions in Syria, Mesopotamia, and Asia Minor, and during a period of five years governed her kingdom with wisdom. In A.D. 270 the warlike Aurelian ascended the throne of the Cæsars, and, after subduing his enemies in the West, he turned his arms against the fated Zenobia.

Her armies were defeated in a pitched battle near Antioch, and, having retreated to Emesa and there rallied, they were again routed by the Emperor, and driven back upon their desert home. Aurelian pursued them across the parched plains, and invested Palmyra, which capitulated after a long and bloody resistance. Zenobia attempted to escape, but was captured on the banks of the Euphrates, and brought into the presence of the stern Emperor. When being led off captive, a woman's fears prevailed, for she heard the rough soldiers clamouring for her death. In a moment of weakness her best friends were betrayed, and they, including the philosopher Longinus, were put to an ignominious death. She was afterwards led to Rome, and there, loaded with jewels, and fettered with shackles of gold, she was led by a golden chain along the *Via Sacra*, in front of the chariot of the triumphant Aurelian, while all Rome crowded to the spot to see the Arabian Queen. She was worthy of a better fate. If common humanity did not prevent the Roman citizens from exulting over an honourable but fallen foe, surely the memory of her husband's victories, and of his services rendered to the state, might have saved her from the indignity of appearing before a mob in chains.⁷

Aurelian captured Palmyra in A.D. 272, and left in it a small garrison of Roman soldiers; but soon after his departure the people rose and massacred them to a man. On receiving this intelligence the Emperor returned, took

⁷ The principal sources for the history of Zenobia are the 'Trigint. Tyran.' of Treb. Pollio, and Vossiseus' 'Biography of Aurelian.' In the 'Annales' of Joan. Zonaras there are also some important facts brought to light.

the city, pillaged it, and put the inhabitants to the sword. The city was soon afterwards repaired by the orders of the conqueror, and the great Temple of the Sun redecorated; yet it never recovered its former opulence, and no public monument has been found of a date subsequent to this period, though several were erected only a few years previously.⁸

A Latin inscription, already referred to, of the reigns of Diocletian, Maximinian, and Constantius (A.D. 292-305), shows that at this period the walls of the city were rebuilt—probably they had lain in a ruinous state from the time of Aurelian.⁹ But the period of Palmyra's grandeur was now past, and we have scarcely a notice in history of its decline and fall. In the 'Notitiæ Ecclesiasticæ' we find it mentioned as the seat of a bishop in the province of which Damascus was metropolis.¹ When the followers of Mohammed swept across Syria and Arabia with their conquering armies, Tadmor fell an easy prey; yet still in the wars that occurred between the Omeiyades and Abasides it is spoken of as a large town, and strongly fortified. From a very remote age a large colony of Jews lived in this city, and towards the close of the twelfth century Benjamin of Tudela states there were still 4000 of his brethren dwelling there. A century and a half after this time Abulfeda speaks of it as a mere village; and in the present day it consists of a few miserable huts that seem

⁸ See the Greek inscriptions in Wood's 'Ruins of Palmyra,' and Le Brun's 'Voyage au Levant,' *ut sup.*

⁹ Ruins of Palmyra, p. 31.

¹ See A Sancto Paulo Geographia Sacra, p. 294, and Notitiæ Antiquæ, p. 50.

to cling to the ruins of the Temple of the Sun. Its people, oppressed on the one hand by the wandering Bedawîn, and on the other by the Turkish government, are poor and servile; yet still their robust frames, commanding stature, and ruddy complexion bear testimony to the salubrity of the air, and to the genial effect of its medicinal springs. It is now a great halting-place for the Baghdad and Damascus caravans.

Tuesday, 8th April.—Sheikh Mohammed and his train remained in Tadmor during the whole of our visit, and only left this morning a short time before us, on receiving a promise that we would breakfast with him in his tent on our way back. Bidding adieu to Sheikh Fâres, who accompanied us to the gate of the village, we mounted our dromedaries, and turned their heads westward. The ruins were soon passed, and the Valley of Tombs left behind, and in two hours we dismounted at the tent-door of the Arab chief.

Our first business here was to draw up a contract between 'Amer and Mohammed, that they would thenceforth unite in conveying travellers to Tadmor, each retaining one-half of the gain. This document, duly signed and sealed, was committed to my care to be given with all due form to Mr. Misk. Breakfast was then served, consisting of delicious dates spread over a large copper tray, with a little pyramid of snowy butter in the centre. With the help of our own bread, we made a hearty meal, and at noon resumed our journey.

For the sake of variety 'Amer proposed to take us back to Damascus by the ordinary route, to which we readily agreed. Our road thus led up the great plain, and nothing could be imagined more dreary than the prospect around us : a delicate flower, or a few tufts of grass, or a stunted weed, occasionally sprang up through the flinty soil, but the hills on each side were bare and white, and the plain so completely deserted, that for seven long hours we rode on without seeing a single living creature. The sun went down, and the western horizon was deeply tinted with that rich golden hue which is only seen in the East. We had begun to fear the necessity of a night march, or a bivouac under the canopy of heaven, exposed to the piercing winds of the desert, when the eagle eye of the ageily descried the form of a solitary camel standing motionless upon the horizon. He uttered a cry of joy, and we swept onward with increased energy. The last streak of the brief twilight had already disappeared, and the bright stars in the dark vault over-head shone with a brilliancy that is unknown in the cloudy West. Having surmounted an easy swell in the plain, we suddenly saw before us, in a shallow wady, the lights of a little encampment. We wrapped our cloaks around us, and rode on in silence till we reached a tent-door, where we dismounted, and, entering, became the guests and protégés of its master. No water was offered to us, and none had been in the encampment for two days ; but bowls of camels'-milk were presented to each, and the evening meal soon made its appearance.

We found, on inquiry, that this was but a section of a large tribe of the Sab'a, other portions of which were

spread over the plain and neighbouring mountains. They received us with genuine Bedawy hospitality, supplying our wants with the best of what they possessed, and not troubling us with either excuse or apology.

Wednesday, 9th.—Our hard and humble couch did not prevent refreshing sleep, and at five o'clock this morning we were again in the saddle. The little encampment was soon out of sight, and the broad plain before us, desolate and dreary as ever. Ere long a tower-like building appeared on the horizon, and attracted our attention. We reached it at seven o'clock, and found to our surprise a square tower with a cross figured upon several parts of it. Beside it are some ruins, with the remains of a richly-ornamented doorway, similar to some of those in Palmyra. A few hundred yards to the north-east is a circular enclosure surrounded by an earthen dyke about ten feet high. A ruined aqueduct can be traced from it across the plain, toward the mountain-range on the south. This was evidently intended as a resting-place for caravans. It is about half-way between Kuryetein and Tadmor.

The snowy tops of Lebanon were now distinctly visible in front, and the plain through which we travelled became undulating, with little valleys like water-courses intersecting it; the herbage, too, assumed a fresher look, and flowers and weeds were more frequent. The mountain-range on the south is of an almost uniform elevation throughout, but that on the north decreases in altitude towards the west.

Dreary and desolate as this great valley seems, it is not without its associations, historic and sacred; and the whole route we were now following is one that has been noted

for long centuries. Along it Abraham travelled when journeying to the land of promise, in obedience to the command of his God; and Jacob followed in his footsteps with his wives and children, flocks and herds, men and maid servants. *His* route would necessarily be regulated by the fountains at which he could obtain the necessary supplies of water. The time occupied by the journey (ten days) proves that he could not have passed round by Northern Syria, but must have taken the shortest course to Mount Gilead, where Laban came up with him. For these reasons it is clear he must have passed the copious springs of Palmyra and Kuryetein, and thence pursued his journey through the fertile territory of Damascus. The distance from the banks of the Euphrates at Harran could not be accomplished in *less* than ten days by one encumbered as he was, and it would not require a longer time where despatch was used. Laban, however, on his swift dromedaries, could easily perform the same journey in seven days. A truer or more vivid picture of patriarchal life could not be witnessed than the march of an Arab tribe across this dreary region. But in later years, when Palmyra was in its glory, this valley was the great channel through which the wealth of India and of Eastern Asia flowed to Syria, Greece, and Western Europe. Palmyra is now in ruins, and the channel of commerce is well-nigh dry; but the time may yet come when the withering blight of Islam shall be removed from this unhappy empire, and when the desert highway shall be again one of the channels of communication between Eastern Asia and Europe.

We reached Kuryetein at three o'clock, and took up our quarters at the house of the sheikh. Here we found Miguel, the brother of Sheikh Mohammed, with a few of his followers, awaiting the arrival of the travellers from Beyrout; and here too we found a strong party of 'Amer's tribe keeping watch upon the others. We soon learned that intelligence of our capture had been speedily conveyed to 'Amer's tribe, with some vague rumours of his own death. This party had therefore been sent to intercept Miguel, and, if they found the reports of 'Amer's death true, to take blood revenge. Such is desert law, and it serves admirably to restrain the fierce passions of the Bedawin, and to prevent bloodshed. A blood-feud, when it once arises between tribes, is almost interminable. The fearful sentence of "blood for blood" hangs over the head of every individual; and whenever opportunity occurs, be it sooner or later—after a lapse of a few hours, or after the lapse of many years—the sentence is executed. The greatest care is consequently taken, whatever forays and reprisals may be made, to avoid bloodshed.

Kuryetein is situated in the plain, but a spur from the southern hills runs out towards it, at the extremity of which are copious fountains of pure water. These are the only fountains in the whole of this vast region, and they must consequently have given an importance to the locality from the earliest ages. Considerable ruins, consisting of broken columns and large hewn stones, are found among the houses and in the walls of the modern village. Mr. Wood observed here fragments of two Greek inscriptions, but he does not say whether they contained any name or

date.² I shall afterwards have occasion to refer to this place when giving my views as to the line of the northern boundary of the land of Israel. I will only remark here, that, from its position and its copious *fountains*, I have been led to suppose that it may *possibly* be the site of *Hazar-enan*, “*The village of fountains*,” on the border of Damascus northward.³

The abundant waters are used in the irrigation of the fields and gardens round the village; and the inhabitants, being warlike and courageous, and moreover within reach of the military station of Hasya, are able to defend their crops against the Bedawîn. There is a little community of Christians here, belonging to the Syrian or Jacobite Church.

Thursday, 10th.—We left Kuryetein at 5-30 this morning, and continued our journey along the great valley, which here turns to the south of west. Before we had proceeded more than a few miles we heard some shots across the plain on our right, and our chief manifested considerable anxiety. He informed us that this was one of the most dangerous parts of the whole region, being a much-frequented border-land, where predatory bands of Bedawîn are almost constantly on the watch for stray wayfarers. He urged us to be on our guard against robbers; but we had little means of defending ourselves in case of attack,

² Ruins of Palmyra, p. 34.

³ Ezek. xlvii. 17, and xlvii. 1; Num. xxxiv. 9-10. May not *Kuryetein* be the modern representative of the ancient episcopal city called by the several names *Corada*, *Caradeta*, *Carotea*, or *Karotea*, and whose bishop was styled in the acts of the Council of Chalcedon *Καροδαίων Επισκοπος*? See S. Pauli, *Geog. Sac.* p. 295, and *Not. Ant.* p. 62.

and we felt that, unless the number of our assailants was very small, we must become an easy prey.

In five hours we passed a large ruined caravanserai on the side of the road. The range of mountains, on the south side of which we had travelled in going to Palmyra, was now close on our left, rising up bleak and barren from the desolate plain. The opposite range, distant apparently about five miles, is considerably loftier, but its features are the same. At 3·40 we reached the village 'Atny, having passed several small khans now lying in ruins, and in another hour we entered the gate of Jerûd. Next morning we set out at an early hour, and reached Damascus a little after noon, glad to have escaped the dangers of the desert, and to enjoy again the comforts of civilised life.

CHAPTER V.

THE VALLEY AND FOUNTAIN OF THE BARADA. — THE
ANCIENT ABANA.

The Barada — The Salahíyeh hills — Dummar — Fine valley — Ancient aqueduct — Great fountain of Fijeh — Wady Barada — Sûk, the ancient ABILA — Roman road and aqueducts — Inscriptions — Discoveries of M. de Sauley — History of Abila — Sublime pass — Roman bridges — Plain of Zebdâny — Fountain of the Barada — Physical geography of district — The “Rivers of Damascus” identified.

I HAVE already stated that the surpassing beauty and richness of the vast plain of Damascus, and the very existence of the city itself, depend entirely on the waters of the Barada. The reader may therefore wish to accompany me as I ascend the wild and picturesque ravine through which this noble river descends from its source in the distant mountains. Along this route I have often ridden, alone and in the company of friends and strangers, by day amid unclouded splendour, and by night when the pale moon threw her silvery rays on crag and peak, and yet I have never wearied of the scene. I cannot promise my reader that he will not feel weary of my attempt to describe scenes familiar to me as the home of my youth; but I could safely assure him that, if I had him here on some balmy morning in spring, mounted on a spirited Arab, his attention would not flag till we had reached the end of our proposed journey.

In half an hour from the city we cross the great canal

Taura, and, passing through a section of the large village of Salahîyeh, emerge from the verdant gardens and dense orchards of Damascus. The road now skirts the mountain-side, which rises up on the right, bleak, white, and precipitous, while close on the left it is washed by a sea of verdure. Ascending diagonally some fifteen minutes more, we reach the spot beside a little wely, on the brow of the deep wild glen, from which is obtained the justly-celebrated view of Damascus and its magnificent plain; but another view lies before us no less remarkable, if less famed—a view which for savage grandeur and naked desolation has scarcely a parallel. The bare hills, white as snow, shoot up into conical summits, smooth as if scarped by the hand of man; beyond this is the Sahra, like a sea of molten iron; and farther still in the distance rises abruptly the great central ridge of Antilibanus, furrowed by torrents and rent to its very foundations by yawning ravines.

Descending from this spot over naked slopes of white cretaceous limestone, filled with nodules of flint and huge ammonites, we reach in half an hour the little village of Dummar, pleasantly situated on the green banks of the Barada. The *Yezîd*, the highest of the numerous canals led off from this river, washes some of the houses. The ordinary road to Bâ'albek here crosses the river, and, winding for a time along its banks, strikes over the dreary plain until it descends into the valley again near Sûk. We shall take another and more interesting course that will lead us past the great fountain of Fijeh.

Leaving the village behind, we skirt the bare white hills, and follow a narrow and slippery path along the side

of the valley. The scenery below us is now exquisitely beautiful. The vale is of considerable breadth, and verdant meadows and blooming orchards of walnut and apricot trees spread out on each side, while a fringe of lofty poplars marks the serpentine course of the stream; and the whole is shut in by groups of graceful conical hills, whose snowy whiteness sets off the deep green of the foliage. Soon, however, we leave this little paradise, and, after forty minutes' winding through desolate wadys, emerge upon the great plain of the Sahara. It is at this place less barren than where we formerly crossed it on the Beyrout road, and here and there may be seen little patches of cultivation. A dreary ride of three miles now brings us to the head of a fine valley, down which our road winds to the left, among groves of fig-trees and terraced vineyards. On the right is the precipitous mountain rising over us some three thousand feet; on the left is a long slope surmounted by a wall of naked rock; while in front is the deep valley through which the Barada rushes, concealed by the dense foliage and overshadowed by lofty cliffs. On reaching the end of this valley, which is called Wady Bessîma, we suddenly find ourselves beside a little village of the same name, built on the very brink of the foaming torrent, and surrounded by some of the wildest and most romantic scenery I have ever seen in this land. After sweeping through the narrow strip of gardens above the village, the river enters a gorge so narrow that no space is left even for a goat-path along the bank. Here, tunnelled through the side of the perpendicular cliff, is an ancient aqueduct which once brought water from the great fountain of Fîjeh,

and its dry bed now forms the only path of communication between this village and that of Ashrafiyeh, twenty minutes farther down.

Strange and wonderful are the tales that are told of this aqueduct. Tradition ascribes its construction to some daughter of a king who reigned in Palmyra, and who thus conducted the waters of Fijeh to her native city. A writer in the American 'Bibliotheca Sacra' has referred to this tradition, and has annexed to it the statement that the aqueduct has been traced for nine hours across the plain towards Palmyra, and that it is again seen near that city! This is a striking and romantic tale, but there are a few points that require proof ere we can release it from the realms of fancy. It will first be necessary to establish some connection between the aqueduct at Bessîma and that on the plain of Damascus, and this we believe has never *yet* been done. Between the spot where the one ends, or at least beyond which it cannot be traced, and the place where that on the plain begins, is a distance of some *sixteen miles*. It will further be necessary to prove that these canals are of the same character. The aqueduct in the plain is, like numerous others in the same district, *subterranean*, constructed not merely for *conveying* but for *collecting* water. I have traced this aqueduct across the plain to its termination—not at Tadmor, however, but at the ruins of a considerable town on the borders of the desert east of Damascus. The tradition above referred to is, I presume, about equally well founded with one I heard at the fountains of Solomon, near Tyre. Standing some years ago on the brink of one of these wonderful struc-

tures, I asked a venerable Arab beside me, "From whence do these waters come, O my father!" "From Baghdad, O my lord!" was the grave reply. "And who brought them here?" I again inquired. "Alexander, by the help of a *Jân*," responded the profound antiquary!

For about two miles above Bessîma the river with difficulty forces its way between lofty rocky banks, now rushing headlong against some projecting cliff on the one side, and, when driven back, turning fiercely towards the opposite. The winding of the glen affords continued variety of scene, and successive pictures of wild grandeur, as we ride along the shelving path, which is in some places hewn in the side of the cliff almost over the bed of the torrent. A lofty mountain-chain, in fact, is here cut through; it seems to have been rent by some wondrous convulsion of nature to its very foundations. The once regular strata have been tossed into countless forms. The banks tower aloft, almost perpendicularly, more than a thousand feet, while on the north side the mountain summits rise abruptly near two thousand more. No description could convey a just impression of this sublime pass. And the industry of man has added much to the beauty and picturesqueness of nature. Wherever a tree can take root, or a little terrace can be constructed for the vine, the space is occupied; and the foliage of the fragrant walnut in many places shades the rocky path, while its spreading branches touch the vine that clings to the precipice beyond it.

Passing through this valley we reach, a mile and a half above Bessîma, the little village of Fîjeh, and a few yards

beyond it the great fountain of the same name. This fountain is some seventy yards from the bed of the Barada, on the left bank, and bursts forth from a cavern underneath an old temple at the foot of a naked cliff. The mouth of the cave was formerly confined, by strong masonwork, to an opening about a yard square; but this is now ruinous. From this opening, and from pores in the earth, and fissures in the rock on each side, the water gushes out with great force and a noise like thunder, and forms, a few yards below, a torrent thirty feet wide and three feet deep, with a current so rapid, that, though on level ground, none would venture to ford it. Beside the fountain are the massive ruins of another small temple. These temples were perhaps dedicated to the guardian nymph or genius.

Here I recommend the wayfarer to rest, and spread his carpet on the huge stones on the summit of the ruin, and contemplate the grandeur of nature in the leaping and boiling torrent at his feet, and in the jagged cliffs far overhead that shut in the little valley. Shaded by the walnut and tapering poplar, he can defy even an eastern sun, while the spray from the bounding waters diffuses a delicious coolness amid the fiercest summer heats. No officious guide will intrude upon his privacy, and no sturdy bandit will demand a *bakhshish*. Some village girl in her picturesque costume may pause for a moment to look at the stranger, or to offer him a blushing apricot from the little basket she carries so gracefully upon her head; but from other visitors the traveller feels secure.

Fijeh is one of the *two* great sources of the river Barada, and contributes about *two-thirds* of the water that spreads

verdure and beauty around the ancient city of Damascus. Many have thought that this is one of the *rivers* of which Naaman spoke ; but Fîjeh is a *fountain*, and not a *river*. It is very correctly described by the celebrated geographer and historian Abulfeda. Of late years it has been frequently visited, and more frequently described, by travellers, but in none of their works have I seen an account so clear, definite, and simple, as that of the Arab historian.¹

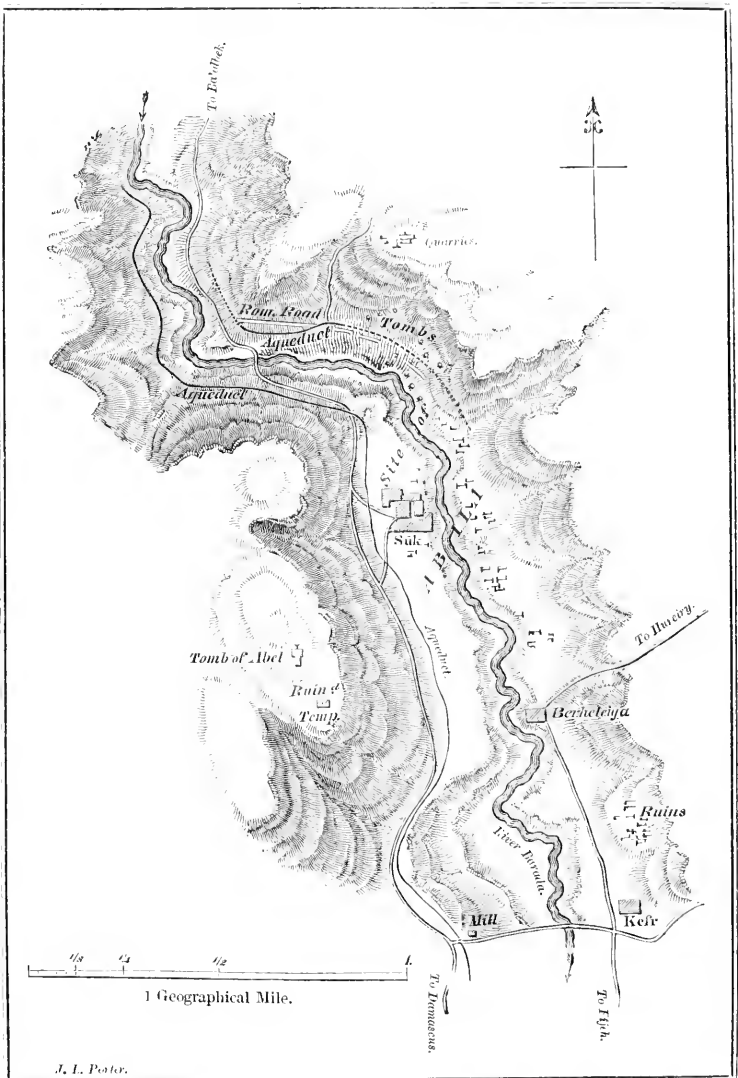
Leaving the fountain, we follow a difficult and even dangerous road along the shelving side of the mountain, high above the stream. The valley now expands, and the belt of gardens and orchards along the banks becomes considerably broader : while the hills, being less precipitous, are cultivated in terraced patches among the rocks. In half an hour from 'Ain Fîjeh we reach the little village of Deir Mukurrin, and in twenty minutes more Kefr ez-Zeit. The wady now turns north-west, and runs in a zigzag course to Sûk, distant fifty minutes, its sides sloping more gently, and affording a light soil for cultivation. On the left bank of the stream are two small villages, Kefr and Berheleiya ; and on the right are two more, Deir Kânûn and Huseinîyeh. I may here observe that the notes of Burekhardt, and of the many who have transcribed from him, on this part, are very incorrect, and have created considerable confusion in attempts to fix the precise site of the ancient *Abila*. There is no village here called Sûk, except that above referred to, and which will be described pre-

¹ Abulfed. Tab. Syr. p. 15.

sently ; and the only villages in this section of the wady are those already named. Burekhardt, who afterwards became such a close and accurate observer, seems to have penned the notes of the first part of this journey from memory. He says, for example, that he crossed the Barada *several times* between the bridge at Dummar and Judeideh (which he writes Eldjdide !). This is altogether a mistake—he *did* cross a small tributary of the Barada ; but the great and *only* road runs on the right bank of that river from the bridge at Dummar to that at Sûk.²

The situation of Sûk is very picturesque, and the scenery around it of surpassing grandeur. It stands upon a piece of level ground on the right bank of the river, embowered in the dense foliage of its gardens and orchards. Beside it rises the lofty mountain called Neby Habîl, whose sides are mostly sheer precipices of naked rock. A short distance above the village the wady makes a sharp turn to the west, thus completely shutting in the view ; and here, rising abruptly before you from the very bed of the stream, towers in stern grandeur the great central ridge of Antilibanus. In the recess formed by the bend of the river in the mountain-side may be seen the dark entrances to numerous sepulchral caves hewn in the calcareous rock—some high up in the face of the cliff, and only accessible by long flights of steps ; others lower down, and easy of access. By following the main road, which skirts the base of Neby Habîl for a few hundred yards farther up, to the point where the valley turns, we obtain the best view

² Travels in Syria, pp. 1, 2.



SECTION OF WADY BARADA, SHOWING THE SITE OF ABILA.

J. I. Peter.

of these interesting tombs; and near them we now also observe deep excavations in the projecting cliffs for the passage of a road and aqueduct. The accompanying plan will give a better idea of the general features of the scenery and disposition of the ancient remains than any description of mine.

It has now been well known for more than thirty years to every student of sacred geography that this is the site of the ancient *Abila of Lysanias*, the capital of the tetrarchy of *Abilene*. The old itineraries fix the position of that city with sufficient accuracy to identify it. It was on the great road between Heliopolis and Damascus, thirty-two miles from the former city, and eighteen from the latter.³ But still more clear and decisive evidence was brought to light when Mr. Banks, nearly forty years ago, discovered two Latin inscriptions, containing the name of the city, on the side of the excavated roadway above mentioned.⁴ Though many travellers have visited the place, yet none have as yet given such a description of the remains of antiquity and the precise position of the ruins as their importance demands. On several occasions I have had ample opportunity of examining them, and will now give a summary of the results of my investigations.

³ Reland. Palest. pp. 314 and 393.

⁴ Correct copies of these inscriptions may be seen in the 'Journal of Sacred Literature' for July, 1853; where there is also a full description of the existing ruins, accompanied with a sketch of the history of Abila. A full and satisfactory commentary on these inscriptions was given by John Hogg, Esq., F.R.S., in a paper read before the Royal Geographical Society, 25th June, 1849, a copy of which the author kindly forwarded to me at Damascus during the past year, 1854.

The ancient name *Abila* still clings to this spot. On the summit of the lofty hill Neby Habîl, above referred to, is a gigantic tomb called *Kabr Habîl—The Tomb of ABEL*.⁵ Beside it is a small building in ruins, the character of the workmanship of which, as seen in the massive foundations and finely-hewn stones and moulded cornices scattered around, shows that it must be ascribed to the Roman age. It was fourteen yards long by seventeen wide; and in front, towards the east, there was a portico, the columns of which have fallen and rolled down the mountain-side to the river far below. The position of the ruin, situated on the summit of a lofty and almost inaccessible hill, and the fact that the door is towards the east, are sufficient to prove that it was originally a temple, and not a place intended for Christian worship, as Pococke has represented it. I searched in vain for any trace of an inscription.

From this place I descended the hill on the north side to the modern bridge, which now spans the stream. Here on the right bank are remains of *two* aqueducts tunnelled in the rock, which appear to have been intended for conveying water to that portion of the city that stood on this side of the stream. One of them is still in good repair, and used for irrigating the gardens and fields above the

⁵ *Habil* is doubtless only a corruption of ^عأبيل, which corresponds to the Hebrew אביל, and signifies a "moist or grassy place." One can see at a glance how appropriate is such a name to this spot, where the rich verdure, occasioned by the abundant waters, presents such a contrast to the bleak and parched slopes around. A local tradition, often mentioned by travellers, makes this the place where Abel fell by the hand of Cain, and where his mortal remains now rest.

modern village. Crossing the bridge to the left bank, I climbed up for some minutes among huge masses of rock, which the wear of centuries has separated from the frowning cliffs above, and then reached the ancient road here hewn in the solid rock. Its breadth is 12 feet, and the total length of the cutting 450. The wall of rock on the left is in places from twenty to thirty feet high; but on the right, next the river, there are large open spaces occasioned by the inequalities of the precipice. The road terminates at the edge of an overhanging cliff, and was formerly carried along on arches or colonnades. On the north wall of the excavations are two Latin inscriptions, each occurring in two different places. The larger and more important inscription records that the "Emperor Cæsar M. Aur. Antoninus Aug. Armeniacus, and the Emperor Cæsar L. Aurel. Verus Aug. Armeniacus, restored the road broken away by the force of the river; the mountain being cut through by the agency of Julius Verus, legate of the province of Syria, at the expense of the inhabitants of *Abilene*." The date of this inscription must be about A.D. 164.⁶ Pococke also saw and copied a fragment of a Greek inscription, in which the name of "Lysanias Tetrarch of Abilene" is found.⁷

Immediately below this road, and running parallel to it, is an aqueduct, also hewn in the solid rock. Where it is tunnelled, it is about two and a half feet wide and four high; but in some places it is open above, and the cutting is not less than twelve feet deep. Through this I passed to the

⁶ See 'The City of Abila,' by John Hogg, Esq., F.R.S.

⁷ Id.

precipice at the termination of the road. Here stood in Maundrell's day some heavy columns,⁸ the fragments of which may still be seen on the bank of the river below. These were probably intended to support the roadway, as there is no space for even a small building. Beside the columns I observed the folding doors of one of the tombs, formed of stone, like some of those I had seen at Palmyra. Upon them was a short Greek inscription, merely recording the name of the founder. In passing along the shelving bank from the aqueduct I noticed a narrow road on the left, partly hewn in the solid rock, winding up a wild gorge in the mountain-side by a series of steps. I followed its course, and in a few minutes reached extensive quarries on the summit of the cliff. Returning by the same path, I followed the line of the great road and aqueduct below the tombs, and observed distinct traces of them for about a quarter of a mile farther down, now supported by strong masonry, and now tunnelled or hewn in the rock. Where these terminated the ruins of the ancient city began to appear. Fragments of columns, massive foundations, and heaps of hewn stones, are scattered along the river-side, half buried in the soil. Just opposite Sûk I discovered the foundations of a fine portico, with the steps in front, and the bases of some of the columns still in their places; but I searched in vain for any trace of bridge or viaduct over the deep bed of the stream. M. de Sauley discovered a "fine remnant of a bridge, evidently of Greek or Roman construction;" but M. de Sauley was an *inventive* genius.⁹

⁸ Maundrell's Travels, p. 134.

⁹ Journey round the Dead Sea and in the Bible Lands, vol. ii. p. 537.

On the summit of a little tell, somewhat farther down, are the ruins of a small village, comparatively modern, but constructed out of the materials of more ancient and imposing buildings. The ruins extend altogether for more than a mile along this left bank; and some distance below them, near the little village of Kefr, are the prostrate remains of a temple. The principal part of Abila appears to have stood on this side of the river.

We forded the stream with much difficulty below Sûk, and proceeded to examine the right bank and the village itself for remains of antiquity. Here, also, are broken columns, some of them of massive proportions, and fragments of sculptured cornices. On a stone in the wall of the mill, which stands on the very brink of the river, one of my companions discovered a Greek inscription, which we at once proceeded to copy. It is unfortunately very defective, but it appears to have been originally intended for a family tomb or mausoleum. The date still remains clear; it is in the year 512 (A.D. 200), and month *Dusius* (May). On another stone, found by M. de Segur, the French consul at Damascus, is likewise a Greek inscription of the Christian age, containing the name of a bishop, John, and the date 875 (A.D. 563).¹

It was with considerable surprise that I lately read the narrative of M. de Sauley's visit to this place, in which he pompously claims all the honour of having *discovered* these ruins and inscriptions, and of having identified the site of the ancient Abila! As the work of this French *savant*

¹ All these inscriptions may be found in the article above referred to in the 'Journal of Sacred Literature' for July, 1853.

has attained to considerable popularity, and has attracted much notice both in France and England, I may be allowed to call the reader's attention to a few facts connected with his pretended discoveries at this place. It is to be observed that, from the moment he enters the village of Sûk, he professes total ignorance of all previous researches, and of everything that had been written about this interesting spot before his time. It was only when he saw an old mill, constructed, as he supposes, from the ruins of an ancient temple, that he became convinced of the fact that he was on the site of an ancient city! After a little farther examination, he adds, "Ancient remains are visible everywhere in and around the village, and it would be evidently most interesting, *were it possible, to find some inscription* from which we might learn the name of the city formerly existing here. On my return to France I resolve to make some researches concerning this locality, and *have good hopes that I may succeed in determining the name.* (!!) I LITTLE THOUGHT *at the moment that the very next morning the problem would be solved.*"²

Thus writes the member of the French Institute, for the sake of heightening the dramatic effect, and exciting the attention and admiration of his readers, whom he supposes as profoundly ignorant as he himself professes to be. Next morning he sallies forth, notwithstanding the "unsatisfactory aspect of the heavens," and, urged on by antiquarian zeal, he is *almost* tempted to "risk life and limb," by crossing the river on a ladder, in search of *the hoped-*

² Journey round the Dead Sea and in Bible Lands, vol. ii. pp. 535-7.

for inscriptions. Discretion was deemed the better part of valour, however, and, leaving the more venturous abbé to pursue his researches alone, he returned to the village "rather ashamed of himself." In due time the abbé comes back enraptured with the discovery of the ruins of an "immense city," a "vast necropolis," and "splendid inscriptions among the rocks." The enthusiasm of M. de Sauley is now excited to the highest pitch, and he is "quite ready to attempt the dangerous passage of the ladder;" but, fortunately for the cause of science, there was no occasion to hazard such a valuable life. A bridge was found farther up, crossing which, he scaled the mountain-side, and there saw before him the inscriptions he had longed for. After briefly commenting upon them he concludes as follows:—"The problem of the unknown name of the ancient city happened thus to be immediately and perfectly resolved. The city was Abila. The reader may thus observe that chance greatly favoured me, by thus supplying in my need a precious document concerning the name and history of the city through the territory of which we were passing."!

It is indeed difficult to understand how one so well versed in ancient itineraries, and so deeply learned in the geography of this land, should have been so long ignorant of a fact which every schoolboy can learn from his dictionary of geography! It is strange that he, a member of the French Institute—of which honourable distinction he so often reminds his readers—should have known nothing of inscriptions the purport of which was communicated to the world in 1820 in one of the best-known periodicals of Europe, the 'Quarterly Review;' which were published

at large, with a memoir by Letronne, in the ‘Journal des Savans’ for March, 1827, and again, in the following year, in the great work of Orellius; and which have since that period been referred to and commented on by scores of travellers and literary men! All this, however, we *could* perhaps believe; and, had no other circumstance come to my knowledge, I might have rested content with giving M. de Sauley full credit for his ignorance, and should probably have regarded him as a zealous but unfortunate antiquary, whose discoveries were made some forty years too late. The public will no doubt be astonished to learn that I now accuse the learned “Member” not merely of ignorance, but of an act of *literary dishonesty unworthy of a scholar*. M. Antôn Bulâd, of this city, has informed me that before M. de Sauley left Damascus, on his way to Bâ’albek, he had given him copies of the inscriptions he professes to have discovered, and had directed his attention to the village of Sûk-wady-Barada, as the site of the ancient Abila!

Such is a specimen of the learning and researches of a man whom a recent reviewer represents as “having contributed to our geographical and historical knowledge a series of discoveries equal in importance and extent to any which human intelligence and perseverance have accomplished since Columbus passed the Atlantic Ocean, and added a new and boundless field for the exercise of human energy.”! ³

Having already published a critique on some alleged difficulties connected with the history of Abila, and the

³ Dublin University Magazine for Sept. 1853, p. 382.

mention of Abilene as a tetrarchy in the Gospel of Luke,⁴ I will here only give, in a few sentences, the leading events of its history.

About sixty years before the Christian era, Ptolemy, the son of Mennæus, was king of Chalcis, whose territory embraced the whole southern ridge of Antilibanus.⁵ Upon his death, Lysanias, his son, succeeded to the throne, and removed the seat of government to Abila, which, for that reason, and to distinguish it from other cities of the same name in Syria, was called the "Abila of Lysanias;"⁶ and the *whole kingdom* over which he ruled was called, in accordance with the common practice of the period, "The house of Lysanias."⁷ Lysanias was murdered through the artifices of Cleopatra, who drew for a time the revenues of the kingdom of Chalcis. After her death Abilene was farmed by Zenodorus the robber.⁸ The latter, wishing to augment his limited revenues, allied himself to the banditti who then inhabited the strong defiles of Trachonitis, and this territory, which is now called by Josephus "The house of Zenodorus," was, in consequence, wrested from him by Cæsar, and given to Herod the Great (B.C. 20).⁹ Herod, in his will, as Josephus informs us,¹ bequeathed the provinces of Gaulonitis, Trachonitis, and Paneas to his son Philip; but the historian makes no mention of *Abilene*, nor does he say to whom it was given, though he expressly states that only a *certain portion* of the "House of Zeno-

⁴ Journal of Sacred Literature for July, 1853.

⁵ Joseph. Ant. xiii. 6, 3; xiv. 3, 2; 7, 4; 12, 1.

⁶ "Abila cognomine Lysanii," Ptol. Geog. v. 15.

⁷ τὸν οἶκον τοῦ Λυσσανίου. Joseph. Ant. xv. 10, 1.

⁸ Strab. Geog. xvi. p. 520.

⁹ Joseph. Ant. xv. 10, 1.

¹ Id. xvii. 8, 1.

dorus" was subject to Philip.² Two things are especially deserving of notice in this latter statement, when viewed in connexion with what I have said above:—First, what Josephus formerly called the "House of Lysanias," from its *then* late ruler, he now calls the "House of Zenodorus," from its *last* governor; and, second, a *certain part* being spoken of as given to Philip, we naturally conclude that the remaining part, which we know to be the *province of Abilene*, passed into the hands of some other person, and that person, Luke informs us, was *Lysanias*; and hence we conclude that, when Josephus says, at a subsequent period,³ that the *province of Abilene* had been the *tetrarchy of Lysanias*, he must refer, not to the *first* Lysanias, who was *king of Chalcis*, but to the *second*, who, according to Luke, was *tetrarch of Abilene*. Thus the narratives of Luke and of Josephus, when carefully considered, are found to agree in the minutest point. No farther mention is made of Abilene by the ancient historians than that it was subsequently given by the Emperor Caligula to Agrippa, the grandson of Herod,⁴ and, finally, by Claudius to Herod Agrippa, the last of the Herodian family.⁵

Abila was the seat of a bishopric during the early centuries of the Christian era, and was represented at the Council of Chalcedon, A.D. 451. The latest notice I have found of its ecclesiastical rulers is that on the inscription already referred to, which is dated A.D. 563.

² Id. xvii. 11, 4.

³ This was in A.D. 44, when the Emperor Claudius bestowed these provinces upon Agrippa.—Joseph. Ant. xx. 7, 1.

⁴ Joseph. xviii. 6, 10.

⁵ Id. xx. 7, 1.

In A.D. 634 Abila was captured and plundered by the Saracens. The circumstances under which this capture was made are worthy of record here, as tending to explain the origin and meaning of its modern name. There lived at that time, in a convent here, a priest widely celebrated for sanctity and learning. An annual *fair*, having something of the character of a pilgrimage, was held at his residence at Easter. This was the great mart for the luxuries of Northern Syria, and Christians from far and near regularly assembled to honour the saint, obtain his blessing, and get gain. The pious followers of the Prophet had just completed the plunder of Damascus, and were looking round the neighbouring cities for a fair opportunity of extending the faith and obtaining additional booty, when they were informed of this great fair. Not a moment was lost: the Christian merchants were surprised by the warlike Muslem soldiers, and stripped of everything. Since that period the name of the place has been *Sûk Wady Barada*, "The *Fair* of Wady Barada."

Above the ruins of this ancient city the valley becomes narrower, and the scenery wilder. Naked precipices rise up on each side, and closely confine the foaming torrent which dashes onward, struggling with fallen rocks and projecting cliffs. The road, after crossing the bridge, follows the left bank, where a way has been cut for it, in some places along the smooth shelving bank, and in others through the soft chalky rock. In half an hour we pass, by this sublime glen, through the great central ridge of Antilibanus, and emerge on the beautiful plain of Zebdâny. On the left as we leave the defile there is a fine waterfall, and a few yards above it are the remains of two Roman

bridges, one of which spanned the Barada, and the other conveyed an ancient aqueduct across the bed of a winter stream that comes down from Wady el-Kurn, and joins the river at this point.

The plain of Zebdâny, which we now enter, is not more than half a mile wide at its southern extremity, as a line of low, naked hills projects into it from the south-west. Down this section the Barada flows in an easy current, winding among verdant meadows, as if reluctant to commence its fierce struggle with the rocks and crags below. Four miles above the pass its channel sweeps round to the west, where the plain opens up to a breadth of nearly three miles, and, following the course of the river, we soon find ourselves on the banks of a miniature lake, some 300 yards long by 50 wide. This is the source of the Barada. The head of this little lake is close to a line of lofty and rugged mountains, which shuts in the plain of Zebdâny on the west; but the whole of the water issues from the plain underneath the lake, and there is not even a winter-stream flowing into it from the heights above.

The total length of this fine plain is eight miles from north-east to south-west. It resembles a vast amphitheatre shut in by lofty mountains whose rugged and barren sides contrast well with its smooth surface and rich verdure. To determine the elevation of this plain above the sea, and the average fall of the river from its source to Damascus, I have made repeated measurements with the aneroid, and sometimes under peculiarly favourable circumstances, when the instrument could scarcely have been at all affected by a change in the state of the atmosphere, having ridden from the plain of Zebdâny to the plain of Damascus in

less than four hours, under a cloudless sky. The result of these measurements may not be uninteresting to the general reader, or without value in a geographical point of view.

The mountain-range on the *east* of the plain is the main or central ridge of Antilibanus, and has an average elevation of about 6000 feet; but one of its peaks, eight miles north-east of the fountain of the Barada, attains an altitude of 7000 feet, and is, with the exception of Hermon, the loftiest mountain in the whole range of Antilibanus. The opposite range on the west of the plain, which travellers and cartographers have hitherto universally represented as the central chain, is considerably lower, and rapidly decreases in altitude a few miles farther north. The plain itself is 3343 feet above the sea. The Barada falls only 70 feet from the fountain to the ruined Roman bridges, where it enters the first defile.⁶ Between this point and the modern bridge above Sûk it falls 251 feet; between the bridges and the village of Judeideh, on the plain of Sahra, two hours above Dummar, the fall is 563 feet; and between Judeideh and Damascus 265 feet. The whole fall, therefore, from the fountain to the city is 1149 feet; and, estimating the distance at 23 Roman miles, this gives an average fall of nearly 50 feet to the mile.

The nature of the strata of the limestone rock at the wild glen near Sûk is well worthy the attention of the geologist. There is here a vast bed of fossil organic re-

⁶ It will be observed that the elevation assigned to this plain by Russegger agrees very nearly with the results of my measurements. According to his calculation, the ruined Roman bridges are 3346 feet above the sea, being only a difference of 73 feet from my estimate.—Reisen, i. p. 757.

mains, not less than a mile in length, and in some places exceeding 100 feet in thickness. Trunks of trees, branches of every size and form, and even the delicate tracery of leaves figured upon the calcareous rock, may be seen scattered about through the valley, and piled up in the overhanging cliffs.

I have elsewhere endeavoured to identify the "Rivers of Damascus," which were preferred by the proud Syrian to all the waters of Israel;⁷ but it may not be considered out of place here to state a few of the arguments which appear to favour the conclusion that this is the ancient *Abana*. There are at present just two rivers of any note or importance in this whole district, the Barada and the 'Awaj; and the careful observer cannot resist the conclusion that these are the rivers referred to by Naaman.⁸ They are both within the boundaries of the territory of Damascus, and it is to be remembered that Naaman speaks of *rivers* and not *fountains*. This fact, I believe, is fatal to the supposition that the *fountain* of Fîjeh is one of the *rivers* of Damascus.

The only point of difficulty is to decide which is the Abana and which the Pharpar. It would doubtless seem natural that the more important stream, and that with which a citizen of Damascus would be most familiar, should be first mentioned. A Damascene of the present day would never put the 'Awaj before the Barada in speaking to a stranger. The latter is much the larger river, and some branch of it meets him in every quarter of the city, and the murmur of fountains supplied by it

⁷ Journal of Sacred Literature for July, 1853.

⁸ 2 Kings v, 12.

falls upon his ear in almost every dwelling. It alone flows through the city, the other river being at the distance of several miles. But besides, the name *Abana* is sometimes written *Amana*, and there is a mountain of the same name spoken of in Cant. iv. 8, which critics suppose takes its name from the river whose source is in it.⁹ If this be admitted, then we argue that *Amana* and *Hermon* are mentioned as distinct mountains, and that, consequently, the source of the *Abana* cannot be in the latter; but the source of the 'Awaj is in the *Hermon*, and the *Barada* rises in a mountain-range nearly a day's journey northward. Hence the 'Awaj cannot be the *Abana*, and the *Barada* and *Abana* must be identical. These arguments do not amount to absolute proof, but they render it highly probable that the noble stream which we have now followed to its source is the first of those rivers exultingly referred to by *Naaman* in comparison with the waters of *Israel*.

In the north-eastern corner of the plain of *Zebdâny*, at the foot of the mountain, is a small fountain of pure water, called 'Ain el-Funduk, "The fountain of the Caravanserai," which sends forth a little stream to join the *Barada*. Towards the close of the summer, however, its waters are almost wholly exhausted in the irrigation of the intervening fields and gardens. There is another and much larger fountain at 'Ain Hauwar, a village about three miles to the north-east. Its waters flow through a narrow but fertile valley to the village of *Zebdâny*, at the entrance of the plains; but here they are conveyed in a

⁹ Poli, *Synopsis Crit. Sac. Cant. iv. 8.* Gesenius, *Heb. Lexicon*, s. v. אַמְנָה.

thousand little channels over orchards and fields. It is these fountains, with numerous others of less note in the declivity of the mountains, that render the plain of Zebdâny one of the most beautiful and fertile spots in Syria.

CHAPTER VI.

MOUNT HERMON, AND THE SOURCES OF THE PHARPAR AND JORDAN.

Bludân — Ancient “High Place” — Mountains of Antilibanus — Inaccuracy of maps — Banditti — Fearful tale — Rasheiya and its prince — Ascent of Hermon — Interesting ruins on summit — The sources of the *Pharpar* — Descent to Hasbeiya — Source of the Nahr Hasbâny — Tell el-Kâdy, *Dan*, and the fountains of the *Jordan* — Bâniâs, *Cæsarea*, *Philippi* — Great castle of Bâniâs — The Lake *Phiata*, and Roman Road — Extent of Jebel esh-Sheikh and Jebel el-Heish — Arab robbers — Beit Jenn and the second source of the *Pharpar* — M. de Sauley’s discoveries (?) — Description of the *Pharpar* — Approach to Damascus from the west.

THE village of *Bludân*, from which I propose to set out on my next excursion to scale the summit of snow-capped Hermon, and explore the sources of the sacred streams that spring from its rugged sides, has been my summer residence for four years. Many of the pages I now present to the public have been penned amid the refreshing shade of its delicious gardens, while enjoying a short relaxation from more important labours.

Bludân is situated on the mountain-side, more than a thousand feet above the plains of Zebdâny, on the declivity of the loftiest peak of Antilibanus. Around and above it fountains gush forth, whose waters, being carefully distributed over the easy slopes, render the soil wonderfully productive. Extensive orchards of walnut, apricot, almond, and apple-trees please the eye, and enrich the industrious inhabitants with the abundance of their fruit.

Graceful poplars line the rivulets, and extensive vineyards spread along the hill-sides and cluster in the glens. The view from the village is wide and beautiful, embracing a large portion of the southern section of Antilibanus, with the range of Libanus from Sunnîn and Kunciyîseh to the lofty peak at the cedars. As you stand on some terraced roof looking down those vine-clad slopes, Zebdâny, embowered in its forest of gardens and orchards, lies at your feet, and its lovely plain of waving corn and verdant meadows stretches away beyond. Mountain-ranges, lofty, steep, and rugged, shut it in on either side, while away in the background the hoary head of Hermon towers aloft over a confused mass of black and bare mountain-tops. When seen as I have often seen it, on a calm summer eve, the last red rays of the declining sun reflected from the snow of Hermon, and tinging with golden light every peak and precipice around, it is surpassingly lovely.¹

On the morning of August 30th, 1852, I left Blûdan, accompanied by the Rev. Mr. Frazier, and Mr. Peck, an American traveller, whose lively sketches of the East have appeared in the columns of the 'New York Observer,' and have been since read with pleasure and interest on the spot where they were first written.² We descended the moun-

¹ Bludân has been selected, on account of the excellence of its water and the salubrity of its air, as the summer quarters of the Damascus Mission. Mr. Wood, her majesty's consul, also spends the summer months in this village, and others of the European residents occasionally join our little circle. The village contains about 500 inhabitants, two-thirds of whom are Christians of the Greek Church, and the rest Muslims. The elevation is, according to barometrical measurement, 4524 feet above the sea. During the hottest days of summer the thermometer seldom rises above 80° Fahr., and the nights are almost always cool and pleasant.

² A detailed account of this excursion was communicated to Dr.

tain-side diagonally by a steep and somewhat difficult path, now winding round the bosom of a deep glen, and now skirting some projecting cliff, at one time encompassed by masses of richest foliage, and at another clambering over the scarped rock. Five minutes below the village are the ruins of a large convent, with some columns and arches still standing; and fifteen minutes farther the narrow path winds among the shattered fragments of a small village, whose remote antiquity is proved by the sepulchres and sarcophagi that are seen in the rocks around. On the left, above the ruins, amid a grove of ancient oaks, is erected a rude altar, where the villagers are wont to go and *break earthen jars* in honour of some saint or demon, whom they call *Um esh-Shūkakif*, “The Mother of Fragments!” Around the altar are foundations of large stones, apparently of remote antiquity. May not this be the site of one of those “high places” where the ancient Syrians assembled to pay a strange homage to their voluptuous gods? And may not the singular and destructive rites by which the people now seek to propitiate the tutelary saint or deity be some lingering remnant of the worship of their remote ancestors?

We reached the plain in half an hour, and a pleasant ride of an hour and twenty minutes more brought us to the banks of the little lake from which the river Barada flows forth. From hence we travelled S.W. along the broken ground at the base of the rugged line of hills, and in an hour reached the village of Batrûny. Continuing in the same direction till within a short distance of the

Edward Robinson of New York, and inserted by him in the ‘*Bibliotheca Sacra*’ for January, 1854. A sketch of it by Mr. Peck also appeared in the ‘*New York Observer*.’

eastern entrance of Wady el-Kurn, we turned suddenly to the right, and, clambering up the steep mountain-side, gained the summit in another hour. Here we had a commanding view of wild Alpine scenery, with the great plain of Damascus in the distance. The mountain-range, on the top of which we now stood, extends unbroken from Wady el-Kurn to where it is intersected by the deep gorge of the river Yahfûfeh, forming the western boundary of the plains of Zebdâny and Surghâya. Its *greatest* elevation is nearly 6000 feet, but it decreases considerably toward each end, and especially the northern. From Zebdâny to Wady el-Kurn the sides rise abruptly in broken precipices with yawning ravines, and along the top is a ridge of jagged rocks, the favourite retreat of the partridge and wild boar.

I have seen no map—I believe none has hitherto been published—on which the Antilibanus range is delineated with any approach to accuracy. Berghaus places the loftiest range on the western side of the plain of Zebdâny, and continues it N. by E. in an unbroken line; but the fact is, that one hour north of Wady Yahfûfeh there are no mountains whatever in this line. A glance at the map accompanying this work will show the true direction and structure of these mountain-chains.

Descending towards the west by a path running parallel to the wild glen on our left, we reached the little plain of Judeideh close to its southern extremity, and crossing the Beyrout road turned south-west up a rugged valley, along whose sides the dwarf oak and prickly shrubs spring up among rocks and cliffs. Ascending gradually for an hour and a half, we emerged on a plateau, wild and rugged in

the extreme. On our left ran a range of hills resembling some Cyclopean wall rent and shattered to its foundations, and, sweeping round to the right in the distance before us, it joined a line of wooded heights and completely shut in the view. In front, perched upon the jagged summit of this range, stood the village of Yũntah.

In a little over half an hour, having crossed the plateau and ascended the rugged slope, we reached this strangely-situated village. It was not without some apprehension we approached it. Its inhabitants, Druzes, we knew to be covetous and bloodthirsty, and its sheikhs little better than bandit chiefs. Only two weeks previous to our visit six of these sheikhs, with a few of their retainers, went in the night to Sũk-Wady-Barada, entered a house, tore an unoffending young man from the arms of his wife, and almost hewed him to pieces in her presence, and then coolly rode away with large booty in money and jewels. Mr. Wood, the British consul, was in an adjoining room when the bloody deed was committed. Hearing the wailing of women, he ran out and found the young man dead, with a frightful gash across his face, which severed his tongue, his head almost separated from his body, and numerous other wounds in various places. The murderers afterwards, with characteristic Arab politeness, apologised to the consul for having committed the deed while he was in the village! The government, at the urgent demand of Mr. Wood, sent fifty horsemen to apprehend the murderers, but they assembled their retainers in their rocky fastness and drove them back. In attempts afterwards made the Pasha was not more successful, and for months Sheikh Daũd of Yũntah became the dread and the pest of

this whole region. At length, however, through the exertions of our consul, Sheikh Daûd was seized by the Druze chief Sheikh Saïd Jimblât, and sent in chains to Beyrout. It was then found that the wife of the murdered man had been the chief instigator of the crime, and had subsequently, in male attire, followed the fortunes of the murderer of her husband!

As Sheikh Daûd was still at large when we visited the village, we knew not what kind of reception we might meet with; yet we did not choose to go out of our way to avoid him. Our apprehensions were not lessened by a nearer view of the village itself, and of such of its people as we met on approaching it. It occupies a strong position on the summit of a rocky ridge, and might be defended by a few resolute men against a large force. The inhabitants were like their country, wild and savage-looking, and were all armed with long guns and knives. We observed a number, as we ascended the slopes, peering at us from behind precipices and from the house-tops above. None, however, either saluted us or interfered with us; and we rode on, well pleased to have escaped both insult and attention from a gang of murderers and rebels.

Descending the hill on the south, we came, in fifteen minutes, to an elevated undulating plain, with huge masses of jagged rocks cropping up here and there through the fertile soil. Turning to the south-west, we continued our course along it, passing a large circular reservoir, with a few stone sarcophagi lying beside it, now serving as drinking-troughs. We soon afterwards entered a rocky district, our path winding among huge white limestone boulders. Low mountain-ranges, scantily covered

with oak forests, shut in this plain on either side, and gave a picturesque appearance to the wild scenery.

At three miles and a half from Yüntah we reached the brow of a steep declivity, where a scene of beauty and grandeur suddenly opened up to our view, for which we were altogether unprepared. At our feet lay a fertile plain, regular as an amphitheatre, in whose centre rose a graceful little hill, its sides clad with rich vineyards, and its summit crowned with the village of Kefr Kûk. On its right runs a range of wooded hills, rent by numerous ravines; beyond it are the green slopes on which stand Rasheiya and 'Aiha; while on the left it is shut in by lofty mountains, over whose summits towers the snow-capped Hermon.

We descended the slope and crossed the plain to Kefr Kûk, where we found some remains of ancient ruins, round a large reservoir of stagnant water. From an upright stone, now forming the side of a gateway, I copied a Greek inscription, which merely informs us that the edifice, of whatever kind it was, to which this stone belonged, was constructed by a certain *Benabos* in the year 360 (A.D. 48).³

After a short delay we resumed our journey across the fine plain, which, in its form and the richness of its soil, greatly resembles that of Zebdâny; I found also on looking at the aneroid that it has exactly the same elevation. In

³ The inscription I here insert, for the gratification of the antiquarian:—

Ε Τ Ο Υ Κ Ζ Τ
 Β Ε Ν Α Β Ο Κ Ε Χ
 Χ Ω Μ Ο Υ Ε Ι Ξ Α
 Μ Ε Ν Ο Κ Ε Π Ο Η Κ Ε Ν

the village of 'Aiha, which we now saw on the declivity of the mountain to the left, are ancient remains of some importance, but I did not visit them. We rode up the vine-clad slope to Rasheiya, which we reached about 4 o'clock, and pitched our tent beneath the shade of a giant walnut, in the valley on the south side of the village.

We were soon visited by two interesting boys, grandsons of the Emîr Effendi, a scion of the princely house of Shehâb, and now governor of the district of Rasheiya. Having expressed a desire to obtain a good view of the surrounding country, they invited us to the palace, from the roof of which there is a commanding prospect. We gladly accepted their invitation, and at once set out, clambering up the steep hill through terraced vineyards. On reaching the palace it was deemed necessary we should first pay our respects to the old Emîr, and we were consequently ushered into a room where we found him seated at an open window, gazing on the magnificent alpine scenery around. He rose as we entered and invited us to a seat by his side, and, after the customary rather lengthened salutations, ordered pipes and coffee. Learning that it was our intention to ascend *Jebel esh-Sheikh*, he told us of ruins on its summit of which we had never heard before. He also assured us, in answer to our questions, that there are large numbers of bears on the mountain, which at the present season commit great ravages on the vineyards along its base. We inquired about leopards, and he said they were still found, but were not numerous. We were as much struck by the intelligence of the aged prince as by his gentle manners, dignified mien, and venerable aspect, set off by a flowing beard white as the

snow on the head of Hermon. After taking formal leave, and politely declining his pressing invitation to make the palace our home, we were accompanied by two of his sons to the summit of an ancient tower connected with the palace, called Burj er-Rash; from this tower, they said, the village takes its name. The whole country was now spread out before us like a map; and as the young emîrs kindly told us the names of the several villages in sight, we noted them down, and took their bearings. Hosts of servants and retainers had assembled in the courtyard ere we descended, to look at the strangers, and bright eyes were seen flashing through the *jalousies* of the harîm. As we wound our way through crowds of armed retainers, and prancing horses richly caparisoned, we could not but think that, were the costume slightly changed, the palace of Rasheiya would pass for an English baronial hall of five hundred years ago.

August 31.—Having procured a strong and active guide, we prepared to set out for the summit of the mountain. Some time was required to fasten on our water-jars, pack our little stock of provisions, including a basket of delicious grapes, a *bakhshîsh* from a friendly *natûr*,⁴ and arrange the necessary baggage. All being at last ready, we mounted at 6·25. After riding a few minutes down the valley, we turned to the left with our faces to the mountain-top, now beautifully pencilled on the background of a deep blue sky. Following the windings of a little vale for forty minutes, amid vineyards and groves of fig-trees, we reached a large pond of clear water at the entrance of a miniature plain. Our path led

⁴ The watch of a vineyard or other fruit-orchard.

through it, and was almost overshadowed by the dense foliage and clustering vines. In twenty minutes more we arrived at the mouth of a wild ravine. The ascent now began in good earnest. The whole way from hence to the summit was difficult and laborious. There is no regular path, but our stalwart guide led the way, now following the bed of a winter torrent, now scrambling over a shelving bank, and now zigzagging up the steep slope. The surface of the mountain is here covered in almost every part with loose fragments of white limestone, resembling the sea-beach, but different in this respect, that, instead of being rounded, they are sharp and angular. As we advanced, the stones put in motion by the leaders of the party touched others below them, and, these giving their impetus to others, the ripple spread as it advanced till the whole hill-side seemed flowing like a torrent, with a strange rustling noise, to the depths below. Those in the rear were sometimes even endangered by a larger block being set in motion. At 9·20 we reached a natural cave, having lost half an hour in waiting for stragglers, and in gazing with admiration on the country far below, as each valley and plain opened up to view. At this place, turning south-west, we skirted the mountain-side for twenty minutes, having the summit on our left, and then dismounted at a small fountain.

There being no water higher up, we determined to halt here till evening, and then proceed to the top and make arrangements for the night. Wishing, however, to see and explore as far as practicable the southern range, I mounted my horse, and, taking the guide, wandered away along the mountain-side. I soon found that the ravines

that ran at right angles to my route could not easily be passed on horseback ; so, leaving my horse with the guide to await my return, I set out alone. After crossing several deep valleys and intervening ridges, I came at last to a point where I saw, far below on the right, Wady et-Teim and Merj 'Ayûn, with the broad plain of the Hûleh below them. On my left were the elevated plains of Jedûr and Jaulân, and before me the lofty mountain-ridge running from Hermon nearly due south. The whole of this chain, which is much lower than Hermon, as seen by the eye and carefully examined by a telescope, presented the same general aspect as the mountain on which I stood—white and naked calcareous rocks, with intervening slopes of loose stones. The only signs of vegetable life are the small plants near the summit ; and these, so far as I could see, consisted of but two varieties—a dark velvety plant which, springing from a single stalk, rises to the height of about six inches, and spreads over the ground like a circular cushion ; the other, that everlasting drab-coloured prickly shrub one meets with in every part of the Syrian desert, and which appears as sapless as the stones and shingle among which it springs up.

I examined with some care the geological features of Hermon, as I had been informed that Lieut. Lynch had seen traces of granite and other primitive rock on his journey from Hasbeiyâ to Damascus. This does not appear in his published work or in the 'Official Report,' but I understood that he had made such a statement in the first sketches of the expedition given in the newspapers. In his work he says, "As we descended, the limestone rock disappeared, giving place to sandstone and trap ; and,

lower down, *serpentine* occasionally cropped out." He must here refer to the spurs which run out eastward from Hermon, and not to the mountain itself. I have passed round about three-fourths of its base, and have marked well the height to which the trap ascends; and this is pretty uniform. The whole mountain is limestone, similar in texture to that along the ridge of Libanus. The only fossils I perceived were corals near the summit. I entertain some doubts about the discovery of the *serpentine*, and I am inclined to think that he may have confounded it with the hard black or greenish trap that abounds along the eastern base.

Leaving the spot I had gained on the top of the ridge, I turned my face toward the summit of the mountain northward. An hour's smart climbing brought me to a peak, separated from a still loftier one to the north by a valley some two hundred feet deep, on the sides of which were banks of snow. Between these two peaks we afterwards pitched our tents and spent the night. I now descended a ravine to the spot where I had left my horse, and returned to the fountain.

At 4:30 I mounted again, and at 5:30 stood on the summit of Hermon. I shall not soon forget the feelings that filled my breast as I gazed on the magnificent panorama spread out before me. I could scarce realize the thought that my feet stood on that sacred mountain of which inspired penmen had written; and that the Land of Israel, God's gift to Abraham's seed, was before me. And yet it was so! Looking westward, that expanse of water, now gleaming like burnished gold beneath the rays of the sinking sun, is the "Great Sea," the border of the

“Promised Land.” On that low promontory jutting out behind those mountains stands Tyre, the ancient queen of the sea ; and those mountains are called Lebanon. That blue ridge far away to the south is Carmel, and the broad plain of Esdraelon stretches along its base, with Jezreel and Shunem, Endor and Tabor, Nain and Nazareth, on its borders. Here on the south, deeply depressed, are the still waters of the sea of Galilee, and the narrow valley running away beyond marks the course of the Jordan. The picturesque hills on the left bank of the Jordan are the hills of Gilead ; and the elevated plateau on this side of them, extending far eastward, is the “Land of Bashan.” On the north are the lofty parallel ridges of Libanus and Antilibanus, rising peak over peak far as the eye can see, and enclosing between them the rich valley of Cœlesyria. At the eastern base of Antilibanus is a broad plain covered with verdure ; and the eye can just detect a bright speck in the centre of it—that is Damascus, the oldest city in the world.

What a multitude of wondrous events does memory crowd together in this narrow space ! Through these mountains and plains roamed the patriarchs with their flocks and herds. This country was witness to the prowess of Samson, the valour of David, and the wisdom of Solomon. Here God’s ancient people were cheered by revelations of eternal truth from on high ; and they were awed and solemnized by wondrous manifestations of Divine power and love. The feet of the Son of God and Saviour of the World trod these cities and villages, while their inhabitants beheld his miracles, his sufferings, and the heavenly purity of his life. Here too was consum-

mated the glorious work of man's redemption, when Jesus died and rose again, having vanquished death and Satan, and brought life and immortality to light. Of incidents venerable for their high antiquity, of events celebrated for their display of valour and patriotism, and of acts hallowed by the loftiest manifestations of Divine power and love, this land was thus the scene.

The arrival of my companions roused me from a pleasing reverie, and, having issued the necessary orders for the arrangement of the tent, we proceeded to examine the several summits of the mountain. These are three. The loftiest is on the northern side, commanding a panoramic view of the whole Bukâ'a, with the great mountain-ranges of Libanus and Antilibanus. The next is only some two or three hundred yards south of the former, and overlooks the sources of the 'Awaj and the eastern plain. The difference in altitude between these two cannot be more than twenty feet. The third peak is about a quarter of a mile west of the latter, and is that which I had before ascended from the south. It is about a hundred feet lower than the others. On the north-west and south-east the declivity is steep and rapid from these peaks, while on the north-east and south the sides slope more gently, but yet uniformly, for upwards of 2000 feet, to lofty ridges which run out in those directions. I now took out my aneroid to complete the series of altitudes I had taken in various parts of the Antilibanus range, at this the highest and most important point. Great, however, was my disappointment when I found the needle so entangled with the thermometer that it could not retrograde sufficiently to mark the altitude. It stood fixed at a point indicating

an elevation of about 8500 feet. I resolved, in descending, to mark the point where it should begin to act again, and then estimate the remainder; but in this, too, I was disappointed, for, as I was scrambling at night down a cliff, I fell, and so damaged the instrument that I could not rely upon it.

On the second of the summits above referred to we discovered some very curious and interesting ruins. In passing over a rocky projection on our way to it from the first peak, our guide pointed out the entrance to a large artificial cavern; beside it lay a fragment of a column and a number of hewn stones. As we ascended the peak, however, we found more extensive and interesting remains. Round a rock which rises to a height of some fifteen feet are the foundations of a circular wall of stone, apparently of great antiquity. This ring is about sixty yards in diameter; and in the centre of it and of the rock is a rude excavation eight feet deep, open above. Within this enclosure, on the very brow of the mountain, on the south side, are large heaps of hewn stones, some of them bevelled, and others with a plain moulding round the edges. Among the stones we were enabled to trace the foundations of a small temple, but we could see no columns or inscriptions. A friend who afterwards visited it informed me that he had discovered on one of the stones a fragment of a Greek inscription. The style of the building was simple and severe. I thought I could recognise two distinct eras in these ruins. The stones of the temple were apparently of a later date than those of the *ring*. But who were the founders of structures so strangely situated, difficult of access, far from human habitation, and, for the

greater part of each year, deeply imbedded in impenetrable snow? What was the object for which they were erected, and what is their probable date? Some light may be thrown on this subject by a consideration of other circumstances. On three lofty peaks of Antilibanus I also found ruins of great antiquity; but none of them had the circular *ring*, which seems to be the simplest, and probably most primitive, form of sacred architecture. The Druidical rings of the British islands are well known, and one of these which I have sometimes visited on the top of Mount Greenan, near Londonderry, Ireland, is somewhat similar in structure to that on Hermon, and commands, like it, an extensive view *eastward*. We know from ancient history, and especially from the Bible, that in the early ages the summits of mountains were almost universally selected for the performance of sacred rites and the worship of the gods. Especially does this seem to have been the case in Syria; and the Israelites, upon entering the land, were expressly enjoined “utterly to destroy all the places wherein the nations which ye shall possess served their gods, *upon the high mountains, and upon the hills;*” and at a later period they were threatened with judgments because “they set them up images and groves in *every high hill*, and under every green tree; and there they burnt incense in all the high places, *as did the heathen whom the Lord carried away before them.*”⁵ When such were the feelings and practices of ancient devotees, the lofty peak of Hermon would soon be selected for the erection of an altar and the burning of a sacred fire. The glorious view there obtained of the sun’s course, from his rising in

⁵ Deut. xii. 2, 3, and 2 Kings xvii. 10, 11.

the eastern desert to his setting in the Great Sea, would designate it as a fit locality for his worship. This spot I consider, therefore, as one of the most interesting, as well as one of the most ancient sanctuaries in this land. Nor are we destitute of direct evidence in favour of this view. In two passages of Scripture the name *Baal-Hermon* is applied to this mountain.⁶ The only reason which can be assigned for this is that Baal was there worshipped, and that a sanctuary of his was there erected. Hieronimus, in the 'Onomasticon,' makes the following statement, which leaves the matter without a shadow of doubt: "Diciturque esse *in vertice ejus* (sc. *Ærmon*) *insigne templum*, quod ab Ethnicis cultui habetur e regione Paneadis et Libani."⁷ It can scarcely be called in question that the temple here referred to is that whose ruins we have described. Its situation, *on the summit—in vertice*—is sufficiently explicit.

As we stood amid these ruins, in the very spot, in the centre of that ring, where of yore the sacred fire burned, and looked westward over mountain and hill, and far away beyond, along that line of burnished gold which gleamed and sparkled on the surface of the water, to the bright orb whose departing splendour illumined sea and sky, we could scarcely wonder that men, unenlightened by inspiration, should have adored such an object. The setting sun presented strange and beautiful phenomena from this point of view. A stratum of purple-coloured haze ran round the whole horizon, which was clearly defined as the circle round a ship in the midst of the ocean. As the sun

⁶ Judg. iii. 3, and 1 Chron. v. 23.

⁷ Onomasticon Urbium et Loc. Sac. Scrip., ed. Boufr., p. 10.

dipped into this he seemed at once to be converted into a series of rings, arranged in the form of a double cone; in a little time the upper cone disappeared, and the under one remained like a huge top balanced on the horizon; and this afterwards gradually became flatter, and spread out, until at last it suddenly disappeared. And while we gazed at this picture in the west, that behind us on the east was not less striking or beautiful. The shadow of the mountain fell on the plain like a great pyramid—larger and larger it grew, until its apex touched the horizon. And it did not stop here; it raised its summit aloft, distinctly figured on the sky as it had been on the earth, and at last, as the sun touched the water, it stood before us as a vast aërial pyramid, with its broad base on the earth and its top in the heavens.

When it became dark we set fire to the dry prickly shrubs that almost cover the mountain-top, and in a short time the whole summit was one sheet of flame. This was the signal to our friends in Bludân of our safe arrival. As we left our splendid *Baal-fire* to go to our tent, the moon rose, and we were thus permitted to witness another magnificent scene as each peak and precipice was in succession tinged with her silvery light.

September 1st.—The first dawn of the morning revealed us shivering on the loftiest peak of Hermon. The thermometer, which stood at 52° at sunset in the tent, was 41° when we rose; and on the summit the cold was still more intense, for a sharp biting wind was blowing there.

My principal object now was to examine and sketch the great outlines of the Antilibanus range, which lay before me like an embossed mass, and to mark the upper

sources of the river 'Awaj on the eastern slopes of Hermon. Ample details of my observations having already appeared in the pages of the 'Bibliotheca Sacra,'⁸ I will not weary my reader with any recapitulation here; but will only point out a few of the principal features.

A sentence or two in the 'Narrative of the United States Expedition' had formerly struck me as inaccurate, and now I determined to test them. They are as follows: "From the summit (of Hermon) the country below, which had seemed so mountainous to the upward view, appeared an immense rolling plain. Far to the north-west, at the verge of the seeming plain, were the red sands, a dazzling line of gold separating the luxuriant green of the plain from the light azure of the far-stretching sea. Upon that line of sand, like clustering dots upon a chart, were the cities of Tyre, Sidon, and Beirût. . . . Another plain stretched from the opposite side, south to the Hauran and to the east, until it was lost in the great desert." Statements like these may be pardoned, on the plea of poetical licence, in such works as the 'Crescent and the Cross;' but in a professedly scientific work, undertaken for the advancement of knowledge, they are altogether inexcusable. The "*seeming plain*" is a pure fiction, as the ridge of Lebanon on the *north-west* is at least 6000 feet high. The red sands, that "dazzling line of gold" which separated the luxuriant green (!) of the plain from the light azure of the sea, existed only in the imagination of the writer. The *naked white* summits of Lebanon completely shut in the view on the north-west; and if Lieut. Lynch saw Beyrout, he must have possessed a power of

⁸ Bibliotheca Sacra for Jan. 1854, pp. 51, *seq.*

clairvoyance that enabled him to *look through* some twenty miles of mountain. *Southward* and *eastward* there is a plain, but it is bounded in some places and intersected in others by several ridges of hills. On the east may be seen the blue outline of the *Tellûl* or *Jebel 'Agâr*; on the south-east the parallel ranges of *Jebel el-Aswad* and *Jebel Mâniâ* run across the plain; while on the south, *Jebel Haurân* shuts in the view.

On the north-west and north the view is bounded by the lofty ridge of *Libanus*, along whose base lies the great plain of the *Bukââ*. On the south of the latter is a line of low hills, which, projecting to the north-east for some ten miles to the village of *Mejdel 'Anjar*, separates the lower section of the plain from a narrow valley that may be regarded as a continuation of *Wady et-Teim*. On the east side of this valley is the chain of *Antilibanus*, consisting of several distinct ridges. The most westerly ridge runs from *Rasheiya* toward *Yüntah*, a little south of which it branches: the left branch forming the boundary of the *Bukââ*, and the right joining the *Zebdâny* range at *Wady el-Kurn*. On the eastern side of this range is the broken valley along which our route lay from *Yüntah* to *Rasheiya*; and on the right of the latter is the central and main ridge. The latter is irregular and of great breadth near the base of *Hermon*, extending from *'Aiha* eastward to the desert plain of *Sahra*. Its course is north-east, by *Demâs* and *Sûk-wady-Barada*, towards the lofty peak at *Bludân*.

I afterwards proceeded to the middle peak, on which stand the ruins described above, as from it alone the south-eastern slopes of the mountain are visible.

A lofty spur runs out from Hermon eastward toward Damascus, and on its southern side is a deep ravine, called by my guide Wady Barbar. Near its extremity, where it opens into the plain, is the village Kūlāt Jendal, with some ruins. South of this village is a lofty peak, the termination of another spur that projects from the mountain; and south of this again is a valley, wider, deeper, and longer than the former, which seems to open Hermon to its centre. From the spot on which I stood there is an unbroken descent of full six thousand feet to the bosom of this valley, and there, beneath the brow of the giant mountain, are a number of small fountains whose waters unite beside the village of 'Arny, half an hour below, forming a large stream, which, flowing past Rîneh, Khirbeh, and Bkâsem, enters the plain and winds across it to Sâsâ. This is the north and principal branch of the river 'Awaj, the ancient PHARPAR. Its general course from 'Arny to the plain is due east, and from thence to Sâsâ south-by-east.

The exact elevation of Hermon has never yet been ascertained, and it has been estimated, according to the fancy of travellers and *savans*, from 8000 to 15,000 feet. If the appearance of the snow upon the summit be taken as any guide, I would say that Jebel Sunnîn and Jebel esh-Sheikh must be nearly of the same height. I have been able to observe them both, week after week, for the greater part of four summers, in connexion with the peak at the Cedars, as the three are visible from Bludân; and, judging from the gradual melting of the snow, the last mountain is evidently the loftiest, and Jebel esh-Sheikh ranks *second*. This mode of calculation is no doubt liable

to error, from the different *positions* of the mountains and the *direction* from which they are viewed; but for these I have made allowance. As seen from Bludân, the snow disappears from Sunnîn towards the close of summer; but from Hermon and the mountain at the Cedars very rarely. In 1853 no snow could be seen on any of these mountains. This, however, was regarded by all who knew anything of them as a very remarkable occurrence.⁹

My companions being now ready to start, I mounted and rode off with them at 9.45. We descended the western declivity by a steep and dangerous path, and in an hour and a quarter reached a small fountain called 'Ain el-Lauz. From thence, in thirty-five minutes more, we arrived at a deep wady, which runs from Rasheiya along the base of Hermon. Crossing it, we ascended a range of low but very picturesque hills, and, having reached the summit, we had before us a beautiful valley shut in by wooded heights on each side, and running down in front to Wady et-Teim. The little village of Shâit, with some ancient ruins, lies in its bosom, embowered in the rich foliage of giant walnuts. As we passed through the gardens below the village, the grapes hung in festoons

⁹ Russegger gives the following elevations; but on what data he estimates the height of the two peaks of Hermon I do not know:—

	Paris feet.
Highest summit of Jebel esh-Sheikh	9500
Highest point (Kuppe) of Ajlûn	6000
Highest point of the Jaulân	5000
Plateau of the Haurân, in the centre	2500
Valley of Hasbeiya (Wady et-Teim ?)	1800
The top of Jebel esh-Sheikh visible from Tiberias (?)	8500
The highest point of Jebel ed-Druse	6000

—See Ritter, 'Palästina und Syrien,' ii. 160-1.

from the branches of the trees that overshadowed our path, and the fences on each side were almost covered with the tempting fruit. In another hour we passed through Kufeir, and fifty minutes afterwards entered Mîmis, both of these being situated in rich valleys similar in character and scenery to that of Shâit. An hour more found us beside the palace of the Emîrs of Hasbeiya.

This village, with its beautiful gardens and terraced vine and olive yards, has been often visited and described, and I will not add a word to the full details that may elsewhere be found.¹

September 2nd.—We left Hasbeiya at 8·5, and descended the ravine to Wady et-Teim in order to see the sources of the most important tributary to the Upper Jordan. This fine fountain is in the midst of a large pool a short distance to the right of the mouth of the ravine. A stream flows from it down the wady, southward; and our route led us for a time along its right bank. The valley is here rich and picturesque. The sides slope gently upwards from the dense foliage that almost conceals the turbid river, and are carefully cultivated. In an hour and a half from Hasbeiya we passed Sûk el-Khan, a large deserted caravanserai where a weekly fair is held, which is largely attended by the population of the neighbouring villages. Fifteen minutes afterwards we crossed the river by a substantial bridge of a single arch and ascended the slope on the left bank. On gaining an eminence we

¹ One of the fullest accounts of Hasbeiya and its population is given in Wilson's 'Lands of the Bible,' vol. ii. pp. 181-9. See also particular notices of the Nahr Hasbany and its fountain in the 'Bibliotheca Sacra,' Feb. 1846.

observed the small villages of Kufeir Hamâm and Kufeir Shûbeh; and some distance south, on the side of a well-wooded hill, Rasheiyat el-Fûkhâr. Descending hence into a picturesque vale, in which is the bed of a winter torrent fringed with oleander and overshadowed by the sparse foliage of a grove of ancient olives, we passed at 10·15 the small village of Khûreibeh. We soon after crossed another valley still more beautiful than the preceding, and on its northern bank, some twenty minutes on our right, we saw Mârieh. The road now ascended to and traversed an elevated plateau, thinly covered with the oak and some other trees, and having a rich soil and luxuriant vegetation. The sun's rays poured down upon us like a torrent of liquid fire, while swarms of large flies collected around us and stung our horses almost to madness. I was glad to gallop away in front and take refuge for a few minutes under the shade of a spreading oak until the baggage came up. But the broad plain of the Hûleh soon opened up before us, with the lake in the distance and the heights of Hunîn on the west. Hunîn itself was visible with its crumbling ramparts; and below it on the north we could see the white threshing-floors of Ibel—the ancient *Abel-Beth-Maachah*.

At 12·20 we entered the Hûleh, and forty minutes afterwards were sitting beneath a noble oak-tree beside the fountains of the ancient *Dan*—now Tell el-Kâdy. We spent some two hours wandering among the luxuriant herbage, rank weeds, and dense coppice that almost conceal this interesting site. An Arab encampment was spread around the gushing fountains, and hundreds of sheep, oxen, and camels were scattered over the rich plain.

The *tell* itself is cup-shaped; hollow in the centre, and encompassed by a circular rim, such as might be formed by the crumbling ruins of a massive wall. It is in part artificial and in part natural. It appears to have been at one time the crater of a volcano, and when selected as the site of a city the natural rim was scarped, and probably a wall built along its summit. In several places I saw what appeared to be the foundations of a wall. On the north and north-west sides of the tell are heaps of stones scattered over the plain, which appear to have been at one time used in buildings. The whole place is now so overgrown with rank vegetation that it is difficult to ascertain what traces may remain of the ancient city.

Within the circular rim is a fine fountain shaded by some noble oak and terebinth trees. The stream from it flows out on the south side, turning several mills in its course. But on the west side of the tell is the great fountain, bursting forth apparently from underneath it. The abundant waters form a large pond, from which they flow southward a rapid river. This is the principal source of the *Jordan*.

This whole region has, within the last few years, been carefully examined by different scientific men and geographers of eminence; and the results of their investigations Ritter has, with his usual industry and accuracy, collected in his 'Erdkunde.'² The latest researches have been those of De Sauley, Lieut. Van de Velde, and Dr. Robinson. The remarks and theories of the former are of little value, but I doubt not M. Van de Velde will delineate the geographical features with equal accuracy and artistic

² Palästina und Syrien, ii. 177, *seq.*

skill, and Dr. Robinson will display his well-known deep sagacity and profound learning in the elucidation of its topographical and political history. These topics do not fall properly within my province, and even if they did I would leave them in abler hands.

There is one great city, however, which occupies a conspicuous place in the early history of the Israelites, whose site has hitherto escaped the notice of travellers and geographers. I refer to HAZOR, the capital city of Jabin, one of the most powerful of the Canaanitish kings.³ A comparison of the various references made to it in the Bible and Josephus⁴ shows that it must have stood *in* or *very near* the plain of the Hûleh. In May 1850 I made a journey down the ridge of Libanus to the Merj 'Ayûn, and southward to Tiberias. My route lay along the west side of the Hûleh; and there I observed a low line of hills extending from the rising ground at the foot of the Merj 'Ayûn for some two or three miles into the plain. At the southern extremity of these hills there are fountains, and here I observed some huts, with, apparently, *heaps of loose stones* on the slope above them. I inquired the name of the place from some Arabs whom I met, and was told it was *Hasûr*. The huts were distant, so far as I can remember, about a mile east of our road. I noted the name at the time, but did not think of its importance, and it was not till nearly three years afterwards that, on examining my old notes, I observed the name, and it immediately struck me that this might be the site of the long-lost Hazor. I have since directed the attention of several individuals to the place, but am not aware that it

³ Josh. xi. 1, 10-13.

⁴ Joseph. Ant. v. 5, 1.

has as yet been explored. M. de Sauley professes to have discovered Hazor, and, so far as I can understand his topography, he places it *at or near the spot* I have indicated above. His description of the ruins, however, leaves one in considerable doubt whether they are ruins at all.⁵

From Tell el-Kâdy an hour's ride across the plain, and up the easy slopes of the eastern hills through fine forests of oak, brought us to Bâniâs, the *Cæsarea Philippi* of the New Testament. Our steps were first directed to the celebrated fountain where once stood the temple built by Herod.⁶ We afterwards wandered for hours among the extensive ruins of this ancient city, where hewn stones and massive foundations and fragments of granite columns testify alike to its former strength and grandeur. The place, unlike most of those in Palestine, is not less remarkable for the natural beauty of its situation than for its classic and sacred associations. Here are towering mountain, and wooded vale, and battlemented height, and gushing fountain, and crumbling ruins, and wide-spreading plain, all finely blended in one glorious picture. But as I stood and gazed I could not but feel that a far deeper and holier interest is attached to this spot than the attractions of natural scenery or historic and classic associations can ever confer. Its soil was trodden by the feet of the SON OF GOD. Beneath the shadow of that frowning precipice, and along the banks of that clear stream, our Lord

⁵ Journey round Dead Sea, &c., ii. pp. 470, *seq.* This place is well worthy of the attention of future travellers. There are several circumstances which lead me to believe that the city of Hazor must have stood *in the plain*; and the site here suggested would I believe agree in every point with the statements of the ancient writers.

⁶ Joseph. Ant. xv. 10, 3.

and his disciples often wandered ; within those crumbling walls the lips of the Saviour unfolded Gospel Truth to men whose dust now mingles with its kindred earth ; and, perhaps, on some one of those mountain-peaks above, Peter, James, and John obtained a glimpse of heaven's glory in the Transfiguration.

As we sat in our tent previous to retiring to rest an armed retainer of the sheikh was announced on business. Being introduced, he said the country was in a state of rebellion, the Arabs were close to the village, and robbers of all kinds infested the neighbourhood : his master, therefore, would not be answerable for the safety of our persons or our property unless we engaged a regular watch for the night. I replied at once that our persons we were prepared and able to protect, and that, as our property was *within* the village, and as the sheikh, according to his own admission, had power to protect it by placing guards, I would hold him responsible for anything that might be stolen ; but I would neither employ nor pay a guard. We got no reply, and nothing was stolen.

September 3rd.—We rose by daybreak, and, having engaged a guide to conduct us to Beit Jenn, we mounted our horses at 4.50. Our first point was the castle ; and so, leaving our muleteers and servants to follow by the ordinary road, we struck up the hill, and after an hour's hard climbing were within its walls. Its great strength, vast extent, beautiful masonry, and splendid situation, far surpassed my expectations. The antiquary here sees much to wonder at, and the lover of nature much to admire. The stones of the exterior walls are almost all *bevelled*, and in many cases the central part is hewn

smooth after the Jewish or Phœnician style; especially is this the case in the semicircular flanking towers. The castle completely covers the summit of the steep hill, and is in form oblong, swelling out considerably at both the east and west ends. At each end is a keep or citadel, capable of separate defence; that on the east being much the strongest. In several parts of the building we found huge tanks or reservoirs, which even at this season contained a good supply of water. The peculiarity of the position, and the admirable arrangement of the defences, must have rendered it impregnable before the invention of gunpowder. This castle must evidently be of remote antiquity; but I have not been able to find any notice of it in history before the time of the crusades;⁷ and I sought in vain for ancient inscriptions among its ruins.⁸

We left this interesting ruin at 7.15, and followed the path along the summit of the ridge that connects the castle with the mountains on the east. We now ascended the hill through groves of oaks, having on each side of us wild and picturesque ravines, and in an hour and a half reached the summit. A large and well-cultivated valley was here spread out before us, encompassed by wooded heights. It is called Merj el-Yafûry, from a wely of the same name near its southern extremity; its length is about three miles, and its breadth one and a half. Along its southern

⁷ See Wilken, *Geschich. der Kreutz*, vii. 328; Abulfed. *Tab. Syr.*, ed. Koehler, p. 96.

⁸ As Bânias and its castle were visited by Dr. Robinson during his recent journey in this land, I do not here think it necessary to say anything of their history or antiquities. Notices of them may be found in Burekhardt, '*Travels in Syria*,' pp. 40, *seq.*; De Sauley, '*Journey round Dead Sea*,' &c., vol. ii. pp. 487-96; Wilson's '*Lands of the Bible*,' vol. ii. pp. 174-81; and Ritter, '*Palästina und Syrien*,' vol. ii. 195-207.

extremity, near the singular little lake called Birket er-Ram, the ancient *Phiala*, runs the Roman road, extending from Bâniâs across the mountain-range to Kuneiterah, and thence by Sâsâ to Damascus. Traces of it may still be seen in many places.

Descending into the valley, we skirted the mountain-range on its north-western side, and then ascending surmounted the rising ground on the north at 9·25. From this spot we saw the village of Mejdél esh-Shems, about fifteen minutes on our left. We had here a fine view of the mountain scenery, and remained a few minutes to examine its features. The lofty ridge which extends southward from the great peak of Hermon terminates at this place by an abrupt descent of some 4000 feet. A deep valley, that runs from Mejdél to the Hûleh, on the north side of the castle and town of Bâniâs, sweeps round the southern base of this declivity, and cuts it off from the lower and broader ridge to the south. The latter ridge is picturesque, but wants the grand features of Hermon. It slopes gently up from the eastern plains, and has a more rapid descent to the deep basin of the Hûleh. It is almost completely covered with forests of oak. The rock east of Bâniâs is in general basalt mingled with sandstone impregnated with iron, and the heights around Mejdél and towards the eastern plain are wholly basalt, but the lofty ridge of Hermon northward is altogether limestone.

We now crossed a valley, down which flows to the eastern plain a winter stream from the fountain at Mejdél and the mountains above, and, ascending a rugged hillside, reached 'Ain et-Tîn at 9·45. The whole country here is wild and desolate, but a rich soil is always found

between the boulders and projecting cliffs of basalt, which would amply repay careful cultivation. The country was said to be unsafe owing to the hostile attitude assumed by the Druzes in opposition to the proposed conscription. Both at Hasbeiya and Bâniâs attempts had been made to dissuade us from taking this route; and our guide, though well known in the district, seemed much alarmed. All the people we met were armed, and we observed that the husbandman carried his gun slung across his shoulders while engaged in the ordinary labours of the field. The appearance of the people was far from prepossessing or pleasing; and never hitherto, not even in the deserts of Palmyra, when enjoying the comforts of a Bedawy prison, had I seen such savage-looking men. We were, however, a strong party and well armed; and we knew that Arabs would be chary of attacking Franks under such circumstances. Our numbers and strength were still further augmented by two armed cavaliers whom we found awaiting our arrival at Ain et-Tîn. They had joined our party at Bâniâs, but pursued their route thus far while we were engaged in examining the castle. Not deeming it safe, however, to go farther without us, they stopped at the fountain till we came up.

We now ascended the ridge, and, having traversed a rocky plateau on its summit, descended into a little fertile plain called Merj el-Hather, from a village of the same name on its eastern side. The plain is encompassed by low wooded heights, except on the west, from which rises abruptly the great ridge of Jebel esh-Sheikh. The forests of oak which clothe the mountain-sides are fast falling beneath the axe of the charcoal manufacturer.

I made particular inquiries in several places about the names given to the great mountain-chain we were now traversing, and the result was, that, while each little section or district is distinguished by an appellation of its own, taken from some village or fountain, yet the great chain has *two general names*—*Jebel esh-Sheikh*, and *Jebel el-Heish*. The former is applied to that section which extends from a line joining Kătăna and Rasheiya on the north, to one joining Bâniâs and Kunciterah on the south, which would thus run along the Roman road. The section south of the Roman road is called by the latter name. I stated above that from the summit of Hermon a lofty ridge runs southward, and terminates abruptly at Mejdél; at Hather a spur strikes out from it, at first eastward, but afterwards turning south: it forms the western boundary of the Merj el-Yafûry.

We now struck through the fields directly across the plain, leaving the ordinary road on our right. We had commenced the gentle ascent on the north-east, when a wild-looking Druze, black as Erebus, darted out from among the oak-trees, and hastily demanded of our guide whether the muleteers in the rear belonged to us. He answered hesitatingly, and tried to evade the question; but I declared at once that they did. He then said that, if they had not been in our employment, they never would have left the plain alive. On demanding the cause of such strange words, he said that I was at liberty to walk over his fields and eat his maize, but that if another did it the earth would drink his blood. I replied we were strangers, and did not know the road; and that, if we had injured anything, or our muleteers had taken anything, we

would pay for it. He said, "You are Englishmen, and I am your slave; my fields are yours, and you have a right to all." And in a moment he was out of sight again. It is no unusual thing in this land for muleteers and others who are in the employment of travellers to commit depredations on the fields and orchards of the villages they may pass through, knowing they are safe under the protection of their masters.

We soon reached a rocky plateau covered with large boulders of basalt, among which sprung up the ilex and prickly shrubs; and this, the guide informed us, was the most dangerous part of the road, where travellers were often plundered and stripped by wandering parties of Arabs. On this very spot, some two years ago, a party of Englishmen, with a lady in company, were attacked and robbed, and, according to the usual Arab custom, stripped of every article of dress, and thus left to pursue their journey to Damascus as they best could. No such romantic adventure awaited us, and we went on our way in peace.

On this plateau a road branches to the left, leading to 'Army and the summit of Hermon. At 11:30 we reached the brow of a wide and deep valley, and, having descended its southern bank by a winding path, we turned to the right into a wild ravine, through which winds the bed of a winter torrent. Following its course eastward for twenty minutes, we came at twelve o'clock to a place where it falls into another ravine; and here, at the point of junction, stands the little village of Beit Jenn. A fine stream comes down the wady, and flows through the centre of the village: its source, I was informed, is one hour west, a few points north, at the foot of Jebel esh-Sheikh; and it

is separated from the fountain at 'Army by a lofty and rugged ridge. This is the second great source of the river 'Awaj, the ancient PHARPAR.

The sides of this wady are lofty precipices of naked rock, white and broken; and these contrast well with the rich foliage of the poplars, walnuts, and apricots that line the banks of the torrent. Above the houses of the village the cliffs are honeycombed with excavated tombs; but with the exception of a few hewn stones in the walls of the little gardens, I saw no other traces of antiquity.

Leaving Beit Jenn at 1·10, we followed the course of the stream down the ravine, which resembles a great fissure in the mountain-side. In fifteen minutes we reached 'Ain Beit Jenn, a large fountain boiling up on the right bank of the wady. Its waters about equal those that descend from the village, with which they immediately mingle. In fifteen minutes more we emerged upon the plain. From hence the river runs in a deep channel to Sâsâ, distant eight miles east-by-south, and there it joins the stream from 'Army. I dismounted at the mouth of the ravine, that I might take such bearings as would fix its position with accuracy upon the map, and that I might examine more minutely the features of this section of the plain. At this season it looked bleak and blasted, and only in the narrow bed through which the river flows was there any appearance of verdure. Irby and Mangles, and likewise Mr. Thomson, traversed the district early in the year, ere the summer's sun had yet dried up the winter's rains; and hence they describe it as well watered by the numerous tributaries that fall into the river Beit Jenn. Had

they returned a few months later, they would have found the soil parched and all the tributaries dried up.

My companions were now far in front, and so I mounted my horse and galloped after them, along a good road close to the foot of the mountain. At 2·30 I reached the side of a little fertile plain, covered with fields of waving corn, intermixed with patches of green meadow. It extended up among the hills on the left in a triangular form, and on the right ran down to the banks of the river 'Arny. A quarter of an hour afterwards I saw on my left the village of Hîny, built on the western slope of a tell that rises up near the head of the plain. In ten minutes more I had passed this plain; and I observed, a few yards on the left of the road, a canal conducted round the brow of a low spur that here shoots out from the mountains. It brings the water from the river 'Arny, and this accounts for the verdure and fertility of the fields I had just crossed. Following the same course, I reached the large Druze village of Kefr Hauwar at 3·25.

We had thus travelled in the same route which Burekhardt pursued forty-two years before, from Mejd el sh-Shems to this village. One of his statements, however, requires correction. He says "that at *three hours and a half* from the point where the Wady Beit el-Djanne (Beit Jenn) terminates in the plain, is the village Kefrhaur."⁹ I rode from the one to the other in less than an *hour and a half*, and the real distance is six geographical miles. He also says that Sîsâ lay one hour and a half to the right of Kefr Hauwar, which would make it less than half the distance

⁹ Travels in Syria, p. 46.

of Wady Beit Jenn. The truth is, however, that the distance between these two villages is four and a half miles.

M. de Sauley also followed the same road on his journey from Bâniâs to Damascus, March 6th and 7th, 1851; and at this village made one of his *most wonderful discoveries!* His description of the important ruins he here found is so graphic, and the arguments by which he identifies (?) the site so characteristic of the work and of the man, that I shall trouble the reader with a few extracts, with comments. Upon Zimmermann's map he had seen the name of 'Nimrod's Tomb' connected with Kēfr Hauwar; and he enjoys, in anticipation, the discovery of some venerable relic of that mighty hunter! Great, however, was his disappointment when a peasant pointed out to him *Kabr Nimrūd* (Nimrod's Tomb), consisting of *two stones thrown at random in the middle of a field!* But, as he says himself, for this bitter archæological disappointment the presiding genius of antiquarians owed him some compensation, which was soon bestowed. On entering the village his attention is attracted by the fragment of an ancient building, and on approaching it he can scarcely suppress his enthusiasm when he finds that he has unexpectedly discovered a pedestal four feet high, with the base of a column, two feet six inches in diameter, resting upon it! And his companion, the abbé, is no less successful in his explorations, for he discovers a few words of a defective Greek inscription on some loose stone. Ruins such as these must have been intended for ornamenting some great and noted city! Thus, *very naturally*, reasons the French *savant*; and he at once determines to identify it. A long array of names and distances, taken from the 'Itinerary' of

Antonine and the 'Pentinger Tables,' is now paraded before the reader's eye; and no less than four pages are filled with arguments proving that all previous attempts to identify the great Roman highways in this region are quite wrong. M. de Sauley in a moment makes an entirely new arrangement. The whole face of the country is changed, and the distances in the Tables are increased or diminished *ad libitum* to suit his plan. In Antonine's 'Itinerary,' *Aere* is the first station from Damascus, and *Neve* the second: this learned writer consequently announces his opinion that Kefr Hauwar must take the place of *Aere*. It is true *Aere* is represented as from thirty-two to thirty-four miles from Damascus, while Kefr Hauwar is confessedly a little over twenty (the true distance is nineteen), and it is difficult to arrange any sites for *Neve* and *Capitolias*; yet still a single stroke of his magic pen is sufficient to set aside such trifles as these, and he thus sums up his arguments:—"If the reader will reflect on the importance of a locality containing such a temple as that the remains of which are still standing in Kafr-Haouer (!), and especially on the evident analogy between the names of *Aere* and *Haouer* (!!), I hope he will agree with me as to the propriety of identifying *Aere* with *Kafr-Haouer*." ¹

If M. de Sauley had condescended to lay aside for a few minutes the ponderous tomes of his *Ancient Itineraries and Tables*, and to take up Ritter's '*Palästina und Syrien*,' he would have seen at a glance that the site of *Aere* had been unquestionably identified by an *inscription* years ago;² and

¹ Journey, &c., vol. ii. pp. 504-12.

² *Paläst. und Syr.*, ii. 814.

a little inquiry and examination might have shown him that its distance from Damascus corresponds exactly with the numbers in the Itineraries.³ A little observation also might have convinced M. de Sauley that no Roman road had ever run along the route he had followed; and a little reading of modern travels would have shown him that traces of the ancient road still exist in many places between Bâniâs and Kunciterah, and between the latter place and Damascus.

Having thus satisfactorily disposed of Kefr Hauwar and the Itinerary of Antonine, he turns next to the Pentinger Tables, and, finding a place called *Ad Ammontem*, between Bâniâs and Damascus, twenty-eight miles from each, he proceeds to identify it. The arguments he makes use of for this purpose are probably the most extraordinary specimens of reasoning in the whole compass of literature. I will here give the substance of them as literary curiosities.

About a thousand yards from Kefr Hauwar, on a rising ground, is situated the small village Beitimah (Beitîma). Along the foot of the declivity flows a river which is named, in Zimmermann's map, *Moiedeb-Herane*; and this river is spanned by an ancient bridge. Such are M. de Sauley's premises. And now for his syllogisms.

“In earlier days,” writes the utilitarian *savant*, “bridges were constructed merely to afford a passage to public roads; consequently, over the bridge situated between Kafr-Haouar and Beitimah an ancient public (or high) road formerly passed.” This then quite agrees with the

³ The line of this Roman road will be described in the sequel, when speaking of the kingdom of Bashan.

ancient road in the Pentinger Tables! But, again, the name *Ad Ammontem* is equivalent to *Ad-Montem*, and *ad-montem* signifies “on a height.” Now Beitimah is on a height, and therefore this ancient place exactly suits the Roman station under consideration! And, lastly, to conclude the demonstration, there is the river, the *Moiedeb-Herane*; and the eagle eye of the learned antiquarian at once detects the “skeleton” of the Latin word *Ammontem* in this strange-looking name—*Moiedeb, Ammontem*. There can be no doubt as to their identity! The proof is now complete and conclusive, and he has no hesitation in identifying *Ad Ammontem* with Beitimah!⁴

The analysis of the singular name of this river, *Moiedeb-Herane*, might well puzzle any lexicographer; I believe, however, that I have found a key to it. The name of this river is *Nahr 'Army* (“the river 'Army”), so called from the village near its source. But the general name known among the peasantry is *Moiet 'Army* (“the *water* of 'Army”); and M. de Sauley well remarks that “nothing, unfortunately, is more common than examples of names having been mutilated by travellers who were not familiar with the sounds of the Arab tongue.” Some traveller, who was about as deeply learned in Arabic as M. de Sauley himself, has heard this name, and, on committing it to writing at the time, or possibly in transcribing it afterwards, metamorphosed it into *Moiedeb-Herane*.

The more I read of M. de Sauley's work, the more am I inclined to think that its author is a clever literary *wag*—a kind of geographical Miguel Cervantes, in fact—whose

⁴ Journey round the Dead Sea, &c., vol. ii. pp. 512-13.

sole object has been to turn into ridicule the vast erudition and profound research that some have thought proper to expend in attempts to defend and maintain silly theories, absurd traditions, and insignificant minutiae, connected with the topography of this land.

Leaving my companions to enjoy the cool shade in the gardens of Kēfr Hauwar, where the tent was already pitched, I wandered away to the summit of a little tell, on which stands the *tower* mentioned by Burekhardt. It is nothing, however, but a small modern house, and may probably have been intended originally for a Druze place of worship. The view from it is very extensive, and I took several important bearings and observations. Toward the Haurân the country is one uniform plain, slightly undulating, with isolated conical hills rising at intervals. Some of these are cup-shaped, and evidently craters of extinct volcanoes. The Nahr 'Army runs in a deep channel on the north-east side of Kēfr Hauwar, distant nearly half a mile; and from hence it follows a winding course to Sāsá, passing only one village on its way: the name of this village I did not learn, but it is probably Beit Sâbir. It is strange that Burekhardt does not mention this river, though he passed it between Kēfr Hauwar and Beitîma.⁵ From this point I was able to take in at one glance the whole section of the plain through which the 'Awaj winds from the moment its two branches leave the mountain defiles till they unite their waters at Sāsá, and from thence till the river passes at Kesweh, between the parallel ridges of Jebel el-Aswad and Jebel Mâniâ. Though it cannot

⁵ Travels in Syria, p. 64.

for a moment be compared with the magnificent plain watered by its sister the Barada, yet it contains not less than sixty square miles of cultivated land, whose fertility is solely owing to the river, and it supports a population of nearly 10,000 souls. I formerly entertained the opinion that the 'Awaj was but a small and insignificant stream, but now I see that it is unquestionably the *second* river of Damascus. I have since examined the 'Awaj at many points of its long course, from its fountains on the side of Hermon to the lake in the distant plain; and I have besides visited and examined *all* the other streams and fountains in this region; and I now feel persuaded that, if Naaman meant *two rivers*, and not *two fountains*, when he uttered the well-known words, "Are not Abana and Pharpar, *rivers* of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?" the *Barada* and '*Awaj* must be these two.

The province in which the fountains of the 'Awaj are situated is called *Aklîm el-Bellân* — the "district of Bellân." It comprises the whole eastern slopes of Jebel esh-Sheikh, and a section of the plain at its base extending nearly to Sâsâ. It contains twelve villages, with a mixed population of Muslems, Druzes, and Christians. Originally it formed part of the territory of the ancient Maacathites.⁶ Under the Romans it appears first to have constituted part of the kingdom of Chalcis, but was afterwards annexed to the tetrarchy of Abilene, of which Lysanias was governor.⁷ The whole valley of the river from *Aklîm el-Bellân* to the lake is called *Wady el-'Ajam*.⁸ Sâsâ, the first village

⁶ 1 Chron. xix. 6.

⁷ Joseph. Ant. xv. 10, 1 and 3; also compare id. xix. 5, 1, with Luke iii. 1.

⁸ The meaning of this word is "The vale of the Persians."

in this district, was formerly a large fortified caravanserai—one of a regular series erected at intervals on the great caravan-road from Damascus to Egypt. It was built by Senân Pasha about A.H. 990,⁹ but is now in a great measure ruinous and deserted. The 'Awaj runs from Sâsâ for about six miles in a north-easterly direction, having on its right bank an undulating plain thickly strewn with large boulders and broken fragments of basalt; and on its left a level tract, where the limestone takes the place of the volcanic rock. The features of the whole district are forbidding and monotonous. The river afterwards turns nearly due east, and runs in a tortuous and very deep channel to the village of Kesweh, some five miles lower down. On the north bank the low range of Jebel el-Aswad here commences, leaving a fertile plain about a quarter of a mile wide along the side of the river.¹

September 4th.—We left Kefr Hauwar at 4:30, crossed the river 'Army twelve minutes afterwards, and rode up the north bank to the half-ruined village of Beitîma. We now passed over an undulating plain, having the base of Jebel esh-Sheikh about an hour on our left. At 5:40 we crossed a deep wady with a very small stream which flows down from the wild ravine at Kulât Jendal. At seven o'clock we entered the large village of Katâna. Westward of this place the plain runs far up into the mountains, between the northern spur of Jebel esh-Sheikh and the low hills that bound the Sahara on the

⁹ Târikh el-Mohibby, MS., s. v. 'Senân Pasha.'

¹ These notices of the river are made from observations taken at a subsequent period. The lower section of the 'Awaj, with the lake into which its surplus waters flow, will be considered in a subsequent part of this work.

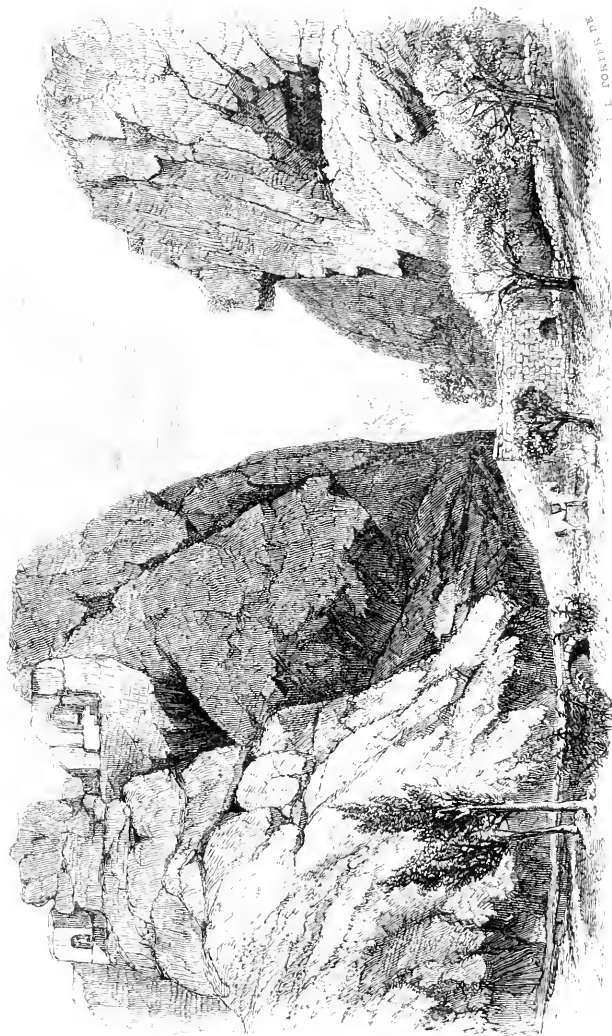
south-west. Around Katāna are fine gardens and fertile fields, abundantly watered by a stream whose source is a quarter of an hour to the west. On the map attached to Burekhardt's Travels in Syria a river is laid down, having its source high up in Hermon, and flowing past Katāna to the lake eastward of Damascus; and all subsequent cartographers have copied it, some with additions and alterations, to increase the effect. This river is purely imaginary. The stream from Katāna is completely exhausted before it runs three miles from its fountain.

We left Katāna at 7·15, and followed the ordinary road to Damascus. Here is a desert plain, which only requires water to make it a paradise. At nine o'clock we passed the large village of Muaddamîych, five minutes on our right, and soon after entered among extensive vineyards. A large canal from the 'Awaj is conducted along the plain to this place, and, turning down half a mile to the east, it meets another from the Barada, and thus the Abana and Pharpar mingle their waters near the ancient city of Damascus. No contrast could be greater than that between the section of the plain which is irrigated and that not irrigated—the former, rich and fertile, covered with luxuriant vines, now bending under the weight of the clustering bunches, and farther to the right clothed with dense groves of olives and mulberries, encircling the great village of Darâya; the latter a bare desert, burned up by a scorching sun, without a particle of verdure to relieve the eye. On the left of the road, at the distance of about half a mile, is the base of the low range of hills called Kalabât el-Mezzeh, whose sides slope gently upwards, white as snow, and naked as a rock.

In half an hour more we were within the gardens of Damascus, pursuing our journey amid the most delicious groves, sheltered from the sun's rays by the dense foliage of the fragrant walnut, and having our ears regaled with the murmuring of waters and the voice of birds.

At 10·25 we passed through the village of Kefr Sûsah, and at 10·45 entered the gate of the city. The whole of this day's journey was accomplished at a fast pace; and careful estimates, subsequently made when constructing the map, showed that we had ridden altogether nearly twenty geographical miles, allowing for the winding of the road—namely, *seven* from Kefr Hauwar to Katăna, and nearly *thirteen* from thence to Damascus. Burekhardt's account of the distances of this section of his route must consequently be inaccurate. From Kefr Hauwar to Katăna he makes *four hours and a half*, while from the latter village to the city he makes only *four hours*.²

² Travels in Syria, pp. 46-7.



PASS OF 'AIN SÁEEE—THE ENTRANCE TO HELDON

L. FORSTER

CHAPTER VII.

HELBON.

Tradition of Abraham — Grand defile of M'araba — Menin and its excavated temples — The vale and vineyards of *Helbon* — Sublime pass of 'Ain es-Sâheb — The site of *Helbon* identified — Greek inscriptions — Ride over Anti-Lebanon.

HAVING remained in Damascus for two days, we set out for Blûdan on the morning of Tuesday, the 7th of September, intending to visit on our way the excavated temples of Menîn and the site of the ancient *Helbon*. As these interesting places have never hitherto been described by any writer, I will give a brief sketch of the result of our researches.

We left the city by Bâb Tûma, and, after winding for thirty-five minutes among the gardens, emerged on an open and naked plain, and reached Burzeh in twenty minutes more. This village I previously referred to as celebrated on account of the sanctuary of Abraham which it contains, where the patriarch is said to have offered thanks to God on turning back from the pursuit of the kings who had pillaged Sodom and carried away Lot.¹ Burzeh is finely situated at the entrance of a wild ravine which completely intersects Jebel Kasyûn, the lowest ridge of Antilibanus, opening a passage for the united streams

¹ Gen. ch. xiv. See above, in History of Damascus.

from the valleys of Helbôn and Menîn to flow into the plain of Damascus. It is encompassed by luxuriant gardens, and extensive vineyards spread along the base of the mountains towards Salahîyeh. The little building covering the sanctuary presents nothing worthy of notice. In the precipitous rock behind it is said to be a deep fissure or cave, but this is carefully concealed.

Passing to the left of the village, we rode up the glen. At first the sides have an easy slope, though rugged and broken, but they soon assume a wilder and grander aspect, the grey limestone rocks being piled up in huge masses, like a Cyclopean ruin, and leaving, in some places, a tortuous bed, only a few feet wide, through which rushes the foaming torrent. In the narrowest parts the road is in the rocky channel of the river, and it is not without some danger that one makes the passage, especially in the early spring. In a little over half an hour we emerged in an open country, with swelling white hills, intersected by fertile and well-wooded valleys. Following the course of the river, among orchards and groves of the fragrant walnut, we reached the village of Mâraba in ten minutes. It is built on the declivity of a ridge of flint that here intersects the cretaceous limestone strata. The houses have a picturesque appearance as they are seen perched on the side of the rock over the dense foliage of the valley beneath. Below this village the valleys of Helbôn and Menîn unite, the former coming down from the north-west, dividing the several ridges in its course, the latter falling into it from the north,—not so wild or so grand, but more picturesque.

We struck up the latter valley, following the windings

of the stream for the sake of the refreshing shade, and leaving the ordinary road a little distance on the right. Our ride here was delightful : a gentle breeze blew among the trees, cooled by the waters that leaped and foamed in their rocky bed at our feet. The rays of the sun beat fiercely upon the white and parched hills around, but here, beneath the spreading branches of the walnut and the tapering poplars, we could defy them. In forty minutes from M'araba we reached the village of Tell, situated, as the name implies, on the summit of a gentle eminence, and evidently occupying a site of remote antiquity. Large stones and some fragments of columns may be seen in the modern houses and court-yards, while the rocks around are honeycombed with excavated tombs.

Passing on, we still followed the left bank of the valley, which now increases in depth and beauty. After some time we crossed the stream by a rude bridge, and ascended high up the slope on the right bank. The scenery is here very striking. The valley runs in a tortuous course, like a river of verdure, while its banks rise up, naked, smooth, and almost white as snow, and are here and there surmounted, far overhead, by frowning cliffs, like old baronial castles in ruins. After some ten minutes more we again descended to the bed of the river, and soon found ourselves in a gloomy defile, with lofty precipices of rock on each side, and the narrow path which has been hewn out for the road wet with the spray and foam of the mad river. This pass led us into a valley or basin, like a vast amphitheatre, with vine-clad glens radiating from it on all sides, and lofty ridges of naked rock dividing them. In the centre of the basin is a low hill, on which stands the vil-

lage of Menîn. We rode through it, and dismounted at the fountain on the other side. It bursts forth at the foot of a lofty precipice, and the stream from it sweeps round the southern side of the tell, fringed by lofty poplars, and its banks lined with luxuriant orchards. In the cliff overhead are numerous dark openings to excavated sepulchral caves; but in the brow of a cliff on the north side of the village are the most important and interesting remains of antiquity. As we ascended the steep slope from the vale, our attention was first arrested by massive hewn stones lying on each side of our path: one of these measured twelve feet in length, and had a plain moulding along one side, as if intended for the upright of a door. On gaining the top we found its fellow standing erect, and soon saw that it had been hewn out of the cliff, to which the lower part of it was still attached. Behind this, but facing the west, is a small temple 24 feet long, 17 wide, and about 22 high, with a vaulted roof wholly excavated in the solid rock. At the eastern end is a rude recess about four feet deep, and extending nearly the breadth of the chamber. The doorway is now much broken, but the remains of a small portico are still there, with the columns, steps, and balustrades all hewn out of the rock. On the north side of this is another excavated chamber, somewhat smaller, but having the same general features. The doorway is nearly perfect, and has a border two feet wide, richly ornamented with sculptured wreaths and flowers, and over it a cornice of still greater beauty. It shows both taste and skill in the design and execution.

In front of these chambers, at the distance of about fifty feet, stood a fine building facing the south. The founda-

tions alone now remain entire: these were in part hewn out of the rock, and the walls thus formed are chiselled to represent masonwork. In front was a portico of four columns three feet five inches in diameter. A noble staircase, with balustrades, all hewn out of the solid rock, led to this structure. Numerous buildings seem to have stood upon the sides of this hill, but they are now mere masses of confused and shapeless ruins. Ascending to the summit of the cliff overhead, I found some foundations, and a large excavated cistern coated internally with fine cement.

The object for which these expensive and lasting monuments were constructed cannot now be conclusively established, unless some inscription should be hereafter discovered among the ruins. They do not in any respect resemble the tombs that are found so plentifully scattered over this land and among these mountains. They are larger and loftier, and want the recesses for the reception of bodies which are universally found in sepulchral caves. In all probability they were a group of temples dedicated to the tutelary deities of the town that stood below.

Leaving Menîn, we turned westward, and rode through extensive vineyards and fig-orchards, which cover the whole vales and swelling hills between this place and Wady Helbôn. Some distance on our right rose one of the ridges of Antilibanus, naked and precipitous. In fifty minutes' smart walking we reached the valley of Helbôn, which is here called Wady Dercij, from a small village of that name situated on its right bank. The scenery of the valley at the place we entered it is wild and grand. A large basin is formed by the surrounding hills, and is shut in on all sides by steep slopes and towering precipices.

The bottom is filled with the most luxuriant vineyards, mixed with the pomegranate; and to the terraced sides the fig-trees cling. On descending we found, close on our right, a wall of naked rock several hundred feet high, and in its centre a huge fissure only a few feet wide, dividing it to its foundations. Through it rushes a fine stream, and a narrow roadway has been hewn in the side of the cliff above it. This is the entrance to the upper wady of Helbôn. Near the summit of the cliff, on the right side of the pass, are two sarcophagi with small niches, having fragments of statues over them, all hewn in the rock. On the side of one of these, to which I ascended with some difficulty at a later period, is a Greek inscription, simple and chaste as epitaphs ought to be, but affording no clue to the age of the monument or the station of its occupant.²

About a hundred yards farther west is another similar monument; and some distance beyond it is a fine Doric façade, consisting of two semi-columns supporting a plain pediment, with a bust in the centre. Between the columns is a shallow recess, with a sarcophagus. These are all hewn out in the side of the cliff, and were originally accessible by long flights of stairs.

The stream, after winding through the basin, enters a wild gorge, in which it flows across the plain of Sahra. This singular ravine varies from twenty to forty yards in width, and the rocky precipices that shut it in have an elevation of from fifty to a hundred feet. It is filled with trees, poplars and walnuts, wherever space can be found

² The inscription is as follows:—ΛΥCΙΜΑΧΟΥ ΑΔΡΟΥ ΜΝΗΜΕΙΟΝ—
“The memorial of Lysimachus the son of Adrus.”

to plant them, and during the summer months, when the water is low, it affords a pleasant and cool path, which I have often followed on my way from Bludân to the city.

This section of the Sahra is the property of Helbôn. It is more undulating than that farther to the west, and the little valleys are all filled with luxuriant fig-orchards, whose fruit is the most delicate I have tasted in Syria. Along the slopes on the north are fine vineyards extending for miles.

Following the excavated road through the wild pass, we entered the upper valley of Helbôn. The pass is only a few yards in length, and on reaching the inner side we find a sublime gorge with overhanging cliffs, and a little fountain of purest water bubbling up at their base. An aqueduct has been hewn out for it along the side of the precipice, and a bridge in the very centre of the pass carries it to the other side, where it drives a mill, and then flows off to water the vineyards and orchards below. The fountain is called 'Ain es-Sâheb. A short distance above it the glen expands, and is filled with vineyards, and verdant with the foliage of the fig and pomegranate: the steep sides are terraced wherever the industrious peasants can find a footing.

Winding along the left bank for half an hour, we skirt a projecting ridge, and a picture of wild grandeur and picturesque beauty opens up before us, for which even the fine scenery below has not prepared us. At our feet is a little vale filled with dense masses of the richest foliage; the mountain-sides rise up from it, here and there terraced for the vine, but in general steep, naked, and uniform, as if scarped by the hand of man; while near two

thousand feet above are frowning cliffs of bare white rock, shattered by convulsions of nature, and wrought into yawning caverns and fantastic designs by the action of the elements during long centuries: and there, in a little recess, are the white minaret and terraced roofs of the ancient HELBON, just appearing over the tops of the fruit-trees that encompass it. As we approach along the tortuous lanes, under the shade of the spreading fig-trees and tall poplars, we observe heaps of massive hewn stones piled up in the terraces and garden-walls around, mingled with broken shafts and fragments of richly-moulded friezes and sculptured cornices. On entering the village a small modern portico erected over the fountain attracts our attention. It is supported by beautiful spiral columns with Corinthian capitals. Beneath it is a massive stone, now serving as a water-trough, on the side of which is a fragment of a Greek inscription in very large and well-formed characters. During a former visit, in company of Messrs. Robson and Barnett of Damascus, I succeeded in copying it, after much opposition on the part of the villagers, who refused to permit us to remove the accumulations of rubbish beside the stone. It is as follows:—

ΕΠΙΒΑΣΙΛΕΟΣ ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ ΜΑΡΚΟ

The remaining part was probably on another stone, and the whole appears to have been placed over some doorway or portico.

In the gardens beside the village are the foundations of a large structure, the ruins of which are strewn around on every side. Two fragments of inscriptions are found on broken stones near it, and many others exist in several

parts of the village. All of them, however, are either so short, or have been so much mutilated, that no valuable information can now be obtained from them. Many of the houses of the village are constructed of old materials, while heaps of hewn stones are piled up in the gardens and orchards below, affording unquestionable evidence that here stood in former ages a town of some extent and considerable architectural beauty.

The name at once suggests that passage in Ezekiel where the prophet, describing the glory and luxuries of Tyre, and of the nations and cities that traded in her rich marts, says, "Damascus was thy merchant in the multitude of the wares of thy making, for the multitude of all riches; *in the wine of HELBON* and white wool." The force of the description consists in this, that in the markets of Tyre every kingdom and city found ample demand *for its own staple produce of manufactures*. Damascus has been long famed for its rich brocades, chaste ornaments of precious metal, and finely-tempered arms. It was thus the merchant of Tyre in the multitude of wares and of all riches. But Damascus has for ages been the great depôt for the wool of the vast flocks that roam over the Arabian plains, and consequently this city traded in wool in the marts of Tyre. The *wine of Helbon* was another staple commodity supplied by the Damascenes. Is it not natural to suppose that *it* also was produced in the neighbourhood of the city? In some of the versions, such as the Syriac and Vulgate, the word *Helbon* is translated as descriptive of the quality of the wine, "fat" or "rich;" but in the Septuagint, and by modern critics almost without exception, it is regarded as a proper name. The Greek is Xελζων .

It has been generally thought hitherto that the modern city of Aleppo, called *Haleb* by the Arabs, is the place referred to by the Prophet. Ptolemy mentions a Chalybon, *Χαλυβων*, among the cities of Syria;³ and Strabo says the kings of Persia, from their love of luxuries, drank *οἶνον εκ Συριας τον Χαλυβωνιον*, “Chalybonian wine of Syria.”⁴ But if we even should admit that the modern Haleb is the Chalybon of Strabo and Ptolemy, there are strong reasons against our identifying it with the *Helbon* of Scripture. The *words*, it will be observed, are not the same; but the great objection lies in the relative situation of the two places. Why should not the people of Chalybon themselves carry their own wine to Tyre? Tyre, in those days, was much more easy of access to Aleppo than Damascus; and if strange merchants had engaged in the conveyance of the wine of Chalybon, we should expect them to be some maritime people, such as those of Sidon or Arvad.

These things render the identification of Helbon and Aleppo highly improbable; and there is, besides, no evidence that the grapes of Aleppo are such as would make wine of a fine quality. Here, however, in the territory of Damascus, is a site, manifestly of high antiquity, whose name is still *identical* with that mentioned by Ezekiel. The Arabic *حلبون* corresponds precisely to the Hebrew *הלבון*; and the territory of Helbôn is celebrated in the present day for producing the finest grapes in the country. The inhabitants are now exclusively Muslems, and consequently the manufacture of wine is not carried on by them, but the grapes of the district are held in the greatest

³ Ptol. Geog. v. 16.

⁴ Strab. Geog. xv. p. 505.

esteem by the vintners of Damascus. At the convents of Mâlûla, farther to the north-east, along the same slopes, some of the most delicious wine in Syria is still made, and I have been informed that the grapes are generally brought from the vale of Helbôn. In the whole of this wild and beautiful valley, and throughout the wide district subject to the modern village, *the vine is now the staple produce*, and there is ample evidence that it was at one time far more extensively cultivated. With such evidences in its favour I have little hesitation in stating that we have here the *Helbon* of Ezekiel, whose wine was, some twenty-five centuries ago, conveyed by the merchants of Damascus to the marts of Tyre: and if this be admitted, it affords an additional proof of how scrupulously exact and how admirably consistent the sacred writers were in all their statements, even the most minute. It is highly probable that, if some time and labour were expended in a close examination of the existing ruins, and perhaps also in the uncovering of some that may have been buried beneath the surface, inscriptions would be found giving the ancient name, and affording some clue to its history.⁵

⁵ The following fragments of inscriptions I also copied from stones at this place:—

1. ΛΥC A C M A M B O I O Y

This is well inscribed in large characters on a stone in the large ruin above referred to. The next appears to contain the same name. It is now on the side-post of a gate:—

2. C M A M B O Γ A I E Θ Η Κ Ε Ν

The next is also on a gateway, and much defaced. It is written on two faces of the large stone:—

3. υ ι ω ν φ ι λ ι π π	C φ I
O Y	Π Ο Σ Ε Κ Τ
	ω ν c i Δ C
	N A N E Θ

Leaving this interesting spot, which I have since visited more than thirty times, we continued our course up the wild and beautiful glen, winding along the banks of silvery streams, beneath the cool shade of spreading walnuts and apricot-trees. In half an hour we reached the upper fountain, which gushes out from a cleft at the foot of a cliff that rises overhead, almost a sheer precipice, nearly two thousand feet. The savage grandeur of the scenery around this little fountain is beyond description. A turn in the valley shuts out all view of the verdure below, and the naked mountain-sides rise up bare and steep to the toppling cliffs, and the cliffs themselves seem to touch the clouds, while the valley is filled with shattered fragments of rock, as if nature had been engaged in some fearful work of destruction.

The road from hence becomes dreary and monotonous; only a few solitary walnuts appear at intervals, as if they had wandered from their places; even the vineyards soon disappear from the naked slopes, and all is barren and desolate, save where the sparse foliage of the *sumak* fills up little nooks and corners among the rocks. Yet even here are interesting remains of the taste and the wealth of Syria's inhabitants in long-past ages. Over the summit of a projecting rounded peak on the mountain-side are scattered the ruins of a fine temple. The style of the building was massive, simple, and severe, somewhat resembling that at Mejdél 'Anjar, near the ruins of Chalcis.

An easy ride of two hours from the upper fountain over barren mountains brought us to the deep wady Hureiry, or Nejâs, as this section of it is called. It runs to the south-west, revealing, as through a vista, the snow-capped

peak of Hermon. In thirty-five minutes more we stand on the brow of the great central ridge of Antilibanus, commanding a view which for extent and beauty is scarcely surpassed by any in this region. The vine-clad slopes of Bludân are at our feet, extending to the luxuriant orchards and verdant plain of Zebdâny; beyond them is a range of dark, frowning mountains, over which are seen graceful wooded hills, with deep vales winding down to the great plain of the Bukââ; while beyond all, the noble chain of Libanus, with its wavy summit, is spread out before us, from the lofty snow-crowned peaks of Akkâr to the abrupt descent into the wild ravine of the Litâny; and on the left the view is shut in by Hermon. Often have I gazed on this glorious panorama, at all hours, from the earliest dawn till the last streak of twilight had disappeared from the western horizon, and always with fresh admiration.

Half an hour more down the steep declivity brought us to Bludân.

On a previous occasion I had taken another and much longer route from the valley of Helbôn to this place. After passing the upper fountain we turned to the left, and, crossing the ridge that separates this valley from that of the Barada, descended to the little village of *Ifry*, about an hour up the mountain-side from the great fountain of Fîjeh. Here, in the midst of wild and barren mountains, we found remains of antiquity which show that in the palmy days of Syria no spot, however remote, was unoccupied. The following fragment of an inscription we there copied, but, owing to the want of light in the old mosk in which it is found, combined with the wear of centuries, it is not without inaccuracies. It is here in-

served as containing a date (?) and the ancient name of the place.

//////// ΠΙΣΟΥΖΚ

ΡΟΤΟΜΙΑΣΕΠΙΤΗΝΑΨΧΗΝΛΥΙΟΥ
 <ΟΥΛΦΙΕΙΑΡΩΝ⁶

From hence we traversed the mountains to the village of Hurciry, situated in the lower part of the Wady Hurciry, and about one hour distant from Sûk. In it are ruins of considerable extent, and a long Greek inscription may be seen on a stone over the fountain, but it is now so much defaced as to be illegible. From this place I crossed the main ridge of Antilibanus diagonally to Bludân in two hours, passing on my way a singular building of remote antiquity, perched on one of the loftiest summits. This I take to be the site of an ancient high place.

⁶ I am not quite satisfied whether this number ΖΚ, 27, be intended for the *year* or the day of the month. The last word ought evidently to be Αφεισρων—of the people of *Apheros*. In this we can see the name *Ifry*.



Kurdish Shepherd.

CHAPTER VIII.

EASTERN SLOPES OF ANTILIBANUS, AND PLAIN OF DAMASCUS.

Roman road — Beautiful view of the Ghûtah — Convent of Saidnâya — Miraculous image of the Virgin — Ancient tombs and ruins — Saidnâya the ancient *Danaba* — Ravine and sepulchral caves of Jubb 'Adin — M'alûla — Wild pass and excavated tombs — Topography of the eastern slopes of Antilibanus — The Syriac language spoken — Yabrûd, the ancient *Jabruda*, and its ruins — Night march to Kuteifeh — Dangers of travel — Fine temple at Maksûra — Ruined town discovered — Probably the ancient *Telser*.

ON the 19th of October, 1852, I set out in company with the Rev. S. Robson and the Rev. J. Barnett to visit the ancient villages of Saidnâya, M'alûla, and Yabrûd. As the country through which we proposed to travel is little known, we determined to examine its topography and antiquities as closely as time would permit. Having only three days to spare for the survey of a wide district, we dispensed with tents and equipage, taking light *whîfs*

to serve the place of both beds and coverlets ; we were thus enabled to traverse with speed and ease the wide plateaus and mountain-ranges, and to diverge from the more frequented roads whenever inclination might prompt us, or any object of interest attract our attention.

Leaving the city by Bab Tûma, we followed the same route as on a previous tour to Burzeh, which we reached at 7·10 A.M. ; and, passing through the lower part of the village, we crossed the stream that comes down the wild ravine from Helbôn. A few minutes after we commenced to ascend diagonally the range of hills that here bounds the plain, by an ancient road deeply excavated in the chalky rock. The ascent soon became steep, difficult, and even dangerous. The old road zigzags up the ledges of naked rock in a regular series of staircases ; but these are now so much worn and polished by the traffic and travel of long centuries, that it was with difficulty our horses could keep their feet. Here and there, too, huge masses of limestone had become detached from the cliffs above, and, rolling down, entirely blocked up the narrow way. This road must unquestionably be of Roman origin, and is one of those useful monuments with which that enterprising people filled every land that became subject to their sway. All the cities and all the more important villages in this country were at one time connected by well-constructed roads. Over the broad plains, along the shelving mountain-sides, and through the wildest glens, traces of them may still be seen ; thus proving that no work, however great, and no obstacle, however imposing, could check the industry or baffle the engineering skill of this wonderful people. What a contrast do the present rulers

of Syria present to the ancient Romans! There is no spirit of enterprise or of patriotism in the Turkish nation. Everything seems to be on the "road to ruin." The large caravanserais along the great lines of traffic, that were built at vast expense, and furnished with many requisites for the safety and even comfort of travellers, are now, without a single exception, fast falling to ruin; even the very mosks, which the piety of their forefathers reared up and adorned, are neglected, and no attempt is ever made to repair them. As to roads, I need say nothing about them; *there is not a public road in Syria.*

At 7.50 we reached the top of the pass, where we turned round to gaze on the magnificent plain. The richest part of the Ghûtah was now spread out before us, and exhibited in the best light for revealing the matchless beauty of the picture. A thousand little streams, meandering through luxuriant orchards, verdant meadows, and wide-spreading plain, reflected the bright beams of the morning sun; and the city itself lay in the midst like a string of pearls carelessly thrown on a mantle of green velvet. On the west, too, was another picture scarcely less pleasing. The valley of Menîn, filled with dense foliage, runs across the white plain, encompassing the village of Tell, and shooting out numerous branches among the snow-white hills on each side.

As we rode down the easy slope into the plain of Sahra, a little troop of gazelles crossed our path: putting spurs to my horse, I dashed into the midst of them; but the ground being very rocky, I was soon obliged to give up the chace.

We now passed diagonally across the eastern section of

the Sahra, whose surface is here undulating, and to some considerable extent cultivated. On the right it becomes still more uneven, and spurs from the ranges on each side project far into the plain, and even in places interlace. In a little over an hour we reached the foot of the lofty hills that bound it on the north, and in twenty minutes more had gained the summit by a winding path. From this spot we had a commanding view of nearly the whole Sahra, and I was able to take some important observations.

In descending from this place we passed round the head of a fine vale filled with vineyards, extending down on the left to the picturesque basin in which Menîn is situated; and then, crossing a little ridge, we entered the fertile plain of Saidnâya. This plain is perfectly level, and its soil is almost equal to that of the Ghûtah. There is no water for irrigation; but as it has a considerable elevation, more rain falls upon it during winter, and the heat of summer is not so excessive. On our right we now saw the little Christian village of Maarra, nearly half an hour distant on the south side of the plain, with the bare summit of Jebel Tinîyeh rising up beyond it. On our left, on the mountain-side, was Telfîta. We passed the plain diagonally, our course from Burzeh to this spot having been nearly due north; and, on surmounting a spur from the mountains on the left, we suddenly came in sight of the convent and village of Saidnâya—the former occupying the summit of a precipitous ledge of rock in the midst of a wide and rugged valley; and the houses of the latter scattered along its base and clinging to its sides. On the spot where we stood is a cubical structure of massive hewn stones, like the pedestal of a great column or colossal

statue. The journey from Damascus to the convent-gate occupied four hours and twelve minutes.

The position and aspect of this building more nearly resemble those of a feudal castle of the middle ages than a peaceful retreat of piety and virtue. The lofty massive walls stand on the summit of a scarped rock; and the only mode of access is by a winding staircase hewn out in its side, which leads to a narrow door plated with iron and studded with large nails. This opens upon a narrow passage or hall, from which corridors branch off to each side. Passing this hall, we advanced through an open archway to the little area in front of the church, a large building, but not of great antiquity. In front is a portico of four short columns supporting arches instead of a pediment. The door is small and perfectly plain; over it are three figures wretchedly painted, the central one of which is supposed to represent the Virgin, and has upon it the blasphemous title *والدة الله*.¹ On her right hand is Michael the Archangel, and on her left Gabriel. The interior is divided into nave and aisles by ranges of short columns which support the roof. The whole of the walls, pillars, and wooden altar-screen are adorned, or rather disfigured, by paintings; most of which would about equal in point of merit and execution the first attempts of an ill-conditioned schoolboy with a charred stick upon a white wall; while a few are so disgustingly obscene that one feels relieved that the artist has been unable to portray with any good degree of distinctness the creations of his prurient fancy.

¹ "The Mother of God."

Our attention was especially invited to one picture, which seemed to be regarded as a masterpiece by the attendant priest and the worthy abbess. It is a universal favourite with all the residents and visitors, and is therefore placed in full view beside the entrance-door. So close and frequent have been the examinations of this rare work of art, that it is now much injured by contact with rough fingers, and it has been deemed prudent, in order to preserve a design of such originality and power, to obtain a duplicate and hang it above it. This painting represents the Day of Judgment. Christ is seated upon a throne, with the twelve apostles, six on each side. Below, on the right, is the doorway to heaven, with Peter standing beside it grasping the massive keys; opposite this door, on the left, is pictured some horrible but indescribable creature, which has not the likeness of anything, at least on earth, whose capacious mouth forms the entrance to hell. Between these is a great balance with an angel on one side and Satan on the other. Considerable caution, however, appears to have been thought necessary in dealing with the latter personage under any circumstances, as two angels are holding him down by long iron hooks. The place and modes of punishment are likewise graphically delineated. In one place are seen numerous little devils, fearful in form and terrible in countenance, mounted on the backs of *spirits* (!) and belabouring them with heavy sticks; while in another place is a long range of women exposed to the attacks of huge serpents, which gnaw such members as were most guilty. More minute details I cannot give; they are too disgusting to be even thought of; and yet, be it remembered, this is a holy sanctuary, in

which the purest females of the Greek church shut themselves up lest they should be contaminated by contact with a sinful world. I have visited most of the principal picture galleries in Europe, and I have seen many paintings that did not manifest a very pure taste or a very high standard of moral feeling; but it has never been my lot to see such disgusting obscenity as that exhibited on the convent-walls of Saidnâya.

But the great attraction of the convent of Saidnâya is the "Lady Chapel," where the wonderful and wonder-working *image-picture* of the blessed Virgin is enshrined as tutelary goddess. Having expressed a desire to pay it a visit, we were, after some ceremony, and after being obliged to take off hats and boots, admitted to the holy sanctuary. It is beautifully and richly ornamented—the floor being of tessellated pavement of marble, and the lower parts of the wall of the same material inlaid with mother-of-pearl. Higher up are rows of chased silver lamps and pictures of saints innumerable. On the eastern side of the chamber is a silver door, some eighteen inches square, opening into a little recess, where the portrait of the Virgin, painted by Luke the Evangelist, is now preserved in a silver casket! It is, of course, death to touch it, or even to look at it. The attendant priest assured us that one-half of the *portrait* is stone and the other half flesh, and that the miracles wrought by it are without number! Saidnâya is consequently the holiest shrine of the Virgin connected with the Greek church in Syria. It is not merely regarded with deepest veneration by the poor and illiterate, but the whole clergy, from the patriarch to the humblest priest, with the whole laity, unite in paying

homage to this strange and holy image. The sick and afflicted flock to it from every part of the surrounding country ; and many are the cures chronicled each returning summer. The salubrity of the mountain air, and the bracing exercise on the mountain-side, often revive the enervated Damascene who retires to this convent from the heat and filth of the city ; and his recovery is piously ascribed to the miraculous intervention of this *picture*.

And such is a fair specimen of the religion, the morality, and the superstitions of the Greek Church in this land. None but a people sunk almost to the lowest depths of moral degradation would tolerate the disgraceful pictures that cover the walls of this convent ; and none but a people who had either forgotten or discarded the process of reflection and of reason would credit for a moment the absurd and contradictory tales and legends related of the goddess that is there worshipped. With such manifestations before our eyes, it is vain to plead, in this Church's favour, the purity of primitive worship and the orthodoxy of primitive creeds. It is in vain to bring forward mouldy decretals and worm-eaten homilies and canons, and insist that from *these* we must judge the Greek Church. The Greek Church must be judged, like all others, by comparing her *present* rites and forms of worship, and the morality that is *now* practically inculcated within her pale, with the infallible standard of God's Word. It may be that, like a long-neglected garden, we can still discern some lovely flower drooping beneath the shade of the rank weeds and luxuriant brambles ; and we can still trace some straight path untrodden and grass-grown now ; but every semblance of order has long since disappeared, and

the wild desolation of nature has overspread it. The Greek Church in Syria is a fit emblem of Syria itself. The shattered remains of its former glory may still in places be seen; and the theological antiquary may perhaps be able to trace, amidst heaps of rubbish, the form and proportions of some once noble structure. He will often be retarded in his labours by the wretched fabrics of modern days, which crowd around and almost conceal the ruins of the ancient building, like the mud hovels of the Arab round the beautiful columns of the Temple of the Sun in Palmyra. And even when every effort has been used, and all his patience, and industry, and antiquarian lore exhausted, none but the practised eye will be able to follow his details.

In the convent of Saidnâya are forty nuns and an abbess; the latter receives her appointment from the patriarch, and is subject directly to his authority. She cannot be distinguished in dress or appearance from the others, and seems as illiterate and ignorant as any of them. The dress of the nuns is a long robe of coarse blue calico, with wide *sherwâl* of the same material; on the head is a large black veil, which can be so arranged, at the pleasure of the wearer, as to envelop the whole person. It is similar in all respects, except in colour, to the veils worn by the village women.

This convent is of high antiquity, and local tradition ascribes its erection to the emperor Justinian. When visited by Sir John Maundeville, in the beginning of the fourteenth century, it presented the same appearance as it does at the present day, and was then famous as now for the wonder-working image of the Virgin it con-

tained.² Maundrell went to it from Damascus during his celebrated journey in the year 1697. He repeats the tradition that it was founded by Justinian, and relates the strange legend, still in current circulation, about the incarnate picture of the Virgin.³ He, like Maundeville, bears testimony to the excellence of the wine made here; and it ought to be remembered that this is in the district of the ancient *Helbón*, to which I have already referred.

In an Arabic manuscript in my possession, entitled 'A History of the Seven Holy General Councils,' written near the beginning of the seventeenth century, by Macarius, who was first bishop of Aleppo and afterwards patriarch of Antioch, are given the names of the ancient episcopal cities; and attached to most of them are their *modern appellations*, which a careful investigator could then, no doubt, easily obtain from the old documents in the various convents and churches. In this book I have found the name of Saidnâya recorded as one of the episcopal cities under Damascus, its ancient name being *Danaba*. The first mention of this place is found in Ptolemy,⁴ who ranks it under the cities in the territory of Palmyra. The name also occurs in the 'Notitiæ Ecclesiasticæ' as the seat of a bishop, subject to the metropolitan of Damascus.⁵ Nothing more, however, is known of its history.

In and around the village and convent are many evidences of the place having been inhabited by men of wealth and taste from a very early age. In the rugged

² Travels of Sir J. Maundeville, London, 1727, p. 149. This writer remarks that Saidnâya was in his days famous for its vines.

³ Maundrell's Journey, Oxford, 1707, pp. 130-33.

⁴ Ptol. Geog. v. 15.

⁵ See S. Paulo, Geog. Sac. p. 295, and note; also Not. Ant. p. 62.

cliffs along the mountain-side above it are numerous sepulchral caves hewn in the solid rock, some of which are spacious and a few tastefully ornamented. From one on the east side of the rock on which the convent stands Maundrell copied three short Greek epitaphs from the ends of sarcophagi. One of these contains the date 510, corresponding to A.D. 198. There still stands in the village, a few yards below the convent, a square tower of fine masonry, which cannot be of a much later date than the tomb where Maundrell found the inscriptions. It stands on a platform composed of three tiers of massive hewn stones arranged so as to form steps all round. It is a perfect square, twenty-nine and a half feet on each side, and twenty-six feet high. The interior is vaulted, the arches springing from massive square piers at the angles, in one of which is a narrow winding staircase leading to the top. The door is on the south, and is ornamented with a plain moulding round the sides and a pediment: a deep moulding also runs round the top of the building. The ruins of several other simple but massive structures are strewn along the mountain-side and in the valley below.

From the terraced roof of the convent we had a commanding view of the mountain-ranges and wide plains eastward. The plain of Sайдnâya is a little over two miles wide and about eight in length; the ridge that bounds it on the south-east runs in an unbroken line from the village of Menîn to the parallel of Jebel Tinîych. It attains its greatest altitude nearly opposite the convent, and gradually decreases as it advances eastward. The plain of Sайдnâya being elevated some hundreds of feet

above the Sahra, this range looks low from this side when compared with its appearance as seen from the south. The slopes on this side are gentle, and, to a great extent, cultivated; but those opposite are steep and completely barren, and are surmounted by a lofty wall of naked rock. Our attention was here drawn to a ruin on the summit of Jebel Tinîych, which, a priest informed us, had been a convent, but which I suppose to be one of those *high places* erected by the ancient Syrians. Above the village and convent rises a lofty and rugged mountain to a height of about 5000 feet. It is called Jebel Mar Shurabîn, "The Mountain of St. Cherubim," from a ruined convent on the summit. On the sides of this hill are numerous little chapels, now almost all in ruins, dedicated to the most celebrated saints of the Greek Church. A list of them is given by Maundrell, which I had neither time nor inclination to verify. These, I presume, are the convents with which Berghaus has so profusely adorned this portion of his fine map of Syria. It is scarcely necessary to say that not one of them occupies its true position; and indeed the whole of this region is, in this and all the other maps I have ever seen, a mere fancy sketch.

We left the convent at 1·10, having thus spent about two hours in our investigations and surveys. On a subsequent occasion I had still longer time and better opportunity for examining every object of interest and noting the features of the surrounding country, and I have here inserted the results of the whole. Riding down the steep slope, we soon reached the side of the plain, and then turning our horses eastward skirted the base of the mountain among luxuriant vineyards and fig-orchards. The moun-

tain on our left soon began to decrease in altitude, and at four miles from the village it was only a broad swell: from this point the plain, consequently, greatly increases in breadth, extending to the base of another precipitous mountain-ridge nearly two miles to the north-west. It does not however retain its fertility, but is stony and barren.

At 2.50 we had the little village of Akaubar a short distance on our right; and three-quarters of an hour afterwards, having despaired of finding either shade or water, we dismounted, and, sitting down on the parched soil, proceeded to satisfy the cravings of hunger. Ten hours of constant and vigorous exercise had considerably whetted our appetites, and we did ample justice to the viands our servants had brought from the city, notwithstanding the absence of chairs and tables, and exposure to the scorching rays of an eastern sun.

Opposite the place where we now squatted a little group of conical hills rises up in the centre of the plain, and on the brow of one of them stands a white cupola which is seen from afar, called Wely Hâbes. The village of Ta-wâny was only about twenty-five minutes distant, but, as it stands bleak and desolate-looking on the parched plain, without a tree, or green shrub, or patch of verdure to relieve the painful whiteness, it presented no attraction to lead us away from our path or bring us into contact with swarms of bloodthirsty fleas.

We mounted again at 4.10, and proceeded in a course that led us nearer to the mountain-range on our left. We here met vast droves of sheep led by wild-looking shepherds from the distant mountains of Kurdistan. The

costume of these men is very singular. A conical felt cap like that of the Persians is their uniform head-dress, and a square-shaped coat of the same material almost completely envelops them, the opening in front merely serving to display the ends of a pair of formidable pistols and the hilt of a heavy scimitar. Two little patches are roughly stitched to the coat, into which is inserted a large club, their universal weapon in minor quarrels.⁶ Their sheep and goats are small and shaggy, some of the latter having spiral horns of enormous length. Neither the shepherds nor their flocks can easily be distinguished at any considerable distance from the dull white plains over which they roam, on their way from their far distant homes to the market at Damascus.

In an hour we turned up a wild gorge that here opens the mountain-chain to its centre. A small stream forces its way through it, and a road was in former days hewn out along the side of the perpendicular cliff, but now it is almost completely blocked up by the huge masses of rock that in the course of ages have tumbled down from the toppling precipices overhead. At the best the ravine never averaged more than from fifteen to twenty feet in width, but at present it is in places so narrow that loaded mules cannot go through it; while the walls of rock on each side rise up to the height of several hundred feet. After winding for ten minutes through this sublime pass we came to a basin-like cavity in which is situated a small village, the towering cliffs overhanging it on the south side being literally honeycombed with sepulchral caves. My companions thought we had reached Málûla,

⁶ See sketch at head of chapter.

and inquired the way to the convent of St. George, but we were no little astonished to find that both Mâlûla and its convent were still a good hour distant, and that the name of the village we had thus by chance entered was Jubb 'Adîn. We would fain have lingered among these curious tombs to observe their structure and search for some inscription that might record the name of the place or the date of these singular monuments; but the sun had already sunk from view behind the lofty summits of Antilibanus, and, having wandered from the regular path, we did not wish to be benighted amid the wild glens through which we had yet to wend our weary way.

We turned nearly due east, and ascending the steep side of the basin soon reached the summit, from which we could look down into another, similar in character to the preceding, but larger. Through this a road passes from Damascus to Yabrûd, which, during the summer months, is the route taken by the Tartar post to Aleppo and Constantinople, in consequence of the Arabs infesting the ordinary caravan-road. Having crossed this ravine, we came to the brow of another, still larger and wilder than the former. The lofty ridge of rock on the right is here severed in two places, leaving a narrow ridge between the deep gashes. On the summit of this ridge stands the little convent of St. George, and along the base of the cliff on its southern side clusters the village of Mâlûla.

The brief twilight was fast waning as we knocked at the gate of the convent: it was soon thrown open, however, and we met with a hearty reception from the worthy old superior, with whom we had been previously acquainted. Some of his friends from the city were with

him on a visit, and among others the agent of the patriarch Maximus, a shrewd and clever monk. The superior is a Damascene of good family, and though he has taken the vow of perpetual poverty he is possessed of a considerable amount of property in the city. It is said that the patriarch keeps him here to prevent his relatives exercising such an influence over him as might lead him to alienate his fortune from the church. After pipes and coffee had been served, and nearly an hour passed in interesting conversation, our servant came to inform us that an apartment had been prepared for our exclusive use, and that dinner was laid. Our worthy host begged us to lay aside ceremony, and, rising, ushered us to our chamber, where all had been got ready with true Eastern despatch. He now urgently pressed us to permit him to send us a bottle of the wine for which his convent has been long celebrated, and which our servants had assured him we would not drink; but we politely declined, greatly to his astonishment.

October 20th.—I have already stated that the ledge of rock on which the convent of St. George stands is separated from the chain, of which it appears to have at one time formed a part, by two deep chasms like huge fissures, one on each side. It is much lower than the adjoining peaks, and retreats considerably from their line, thus leaving in front toward the south a large open space, now filled up with the houses and gardens of the village. The convent is built on a platform of rock near the brow of the ledge from which there is a sheer precipice of some 200 feet to the houses below. Beyond the ravines the cliffs rise to more than four times that altitude, sloping upwards

at an angle of about thirty-five degrees from the wide basin on the north, but presenting bold and rugged perpendicular faces to the south. The ravine on the east side is the grandest and altogether the most remarkable. Descending from the convent during a subsequent visit, I entered it near a little fountain that gushes out from the base of the mountain behind. At first the walls of rock on each side are low, but they gradually increase until they attain an altitude of some 200 feet or more. The chasm is often not more than three feet wide, and seldom exceeds seven. The sides are jagged and irregular, but the one is an exact impression of the other, thus showing that in former times the cliffs were united, but by some fearful shock were rent to their foundations and a path opened up. Near the centre of the pass a huge mass of rock has become detached from the upper part and has fallen to within a few feet of the bottom, where it became wedged between the opposite walls and still remains, threatening to crush every successive wanderer that passes beneath it. While winding through the dark defile I could scarce refrain from a shudder when I looked upward at the gradually narrowing opening overhead with its projecting angles and toppling summits. Toward the southern extremity the chasm expands, but enormous blocks of rock have tumbled down, and almost fill up the cavity. On emerging, a scene of rare grandeur and beauty suddenly opens up in front. Close on the left is the convent of St. Thecla perched on the side of the rock and almost wholly constructed in a spacious cave or fissure. On the right is the village, its terraced houses clinging to the steep declivity, while beyond it rises a towering cliff,

whose sides, as well as those of the cliffs and precipices all round, are thickly dotted with the dark openings to sepulchral caves. In the centre is a sweet vale clothed with the rich foliage of the walnut and mulberry, among which broken columns and crumbling ruins may here and there be seen, now half concealed by the little terraces and garden walls.

After a hasty walk round the hill on which the convent is built we proceeded to examine the spacious sepulchral caves which completely fill its sides. So close are these tombs to each other, that in later ages doors of communication were opened between them, and large dwellings thus formed. In one of them we found a wine-press in full operation, and in the same establishment was also a *dibs* manufactory. *Dibs* is the name of a rich syrup made by boiling the juice of the grape. We did not succeed in discovering any inscription among the tombs or ruins. We now resolved to scale the lofty cliff on the east, that we might from thence gain a good view of this section of Antilibanus. The summit did not appear more than seven or eight minutes' distant, yet it was not till after more than half an hour's hard climbing up the naked and slippery rock that we reached it. Our toil was well repaid, however, by the splendid view we were able to command, and by the distinct conception we were able to form of the general features of the several mountain-ranges. We had now reached the loftiest of those gigantic terraces which form the eastern slopes of Antilibanus, and the upper terrace we found to be the broadest of all. From the spot on which we stood on its eastern brow to the foot of the mountains on the north-west, we estimated at about two

hours; but I afterwards found from careful observations that the true distance is nearly nine miles. The great range here alluded to is the central chain of Antilibanus, which runs along the eastern side of the plain of Zebdâny, and continues in an unbroken line (north-east by compass) till it sinks down into the plain of Hums. The plateau at its base resembles a plain as seen from a distance; and it is comparatively level, though here and there intersected by deep valleys and watercourses, with low lines of swelling hills between them. The soil is light and stony, but not barren. The rains and snows of winter constitute its only supplies of moisture, and it is consequently parched by the summer's sun. Some portions of it are cultivated by the inhabitants of the two villages that are situated in it, and the numerous others along its borders.

We now stood upon the *second* mountain-chain, which forms the supporting wall of this upper terrace. The summits of this ridge are but little elevated above the level of the terrace itself. This correspondence in elevation does not appear at first sight, as immediately behind the brow of the ridge the action of the water forcing its way through the yawning chasms into the plain below has, in the course of long ages, worn out a series of basin-like cavities; and in traversing these the traveller seems to be at one time passing through the deep defiles, and at another clambering over the intervening ridges, of a lofty mountain-chain. It is only when a commanding position is gained, and the eye can take in the whole panorama, that the *general* features are perceived, and the peculiarity of their construction becomes apparent. The several ridges which constitute these eastern slopes then seem like the crests of so many

broad waves, graceful in form and gentle in slope as seen to the leeward, but bold and frowning as we meet them surmounted by their toppling cliffs.

This *second* ridge commences at the upper fountain of Helbôn, passes behind Saidnâya, and then continues its course to Jubb 'Adîn, M'alûla, and Yabrûd. At the latter place it branches, the principal branch turning to the northward and joining the main chain.

The *third* general ridge begins at Menîn, and runs from thence, as before stated, to a point in the parallel of Jebel Tinîyeh, where it sinks down into the plain of Kuteifeh. Here, however, it is connected by broken ground and low hills with another mountain-chain, which commences some distance to the north-west, and has been already referred to as extending eastward along the side of the great plain or valley to Kuryctein and Palmyra. This ridge forms the supporting wall of the second terrace, in which is the plain of Saidnâya.

The *fourth* general ridge is the Salahîyeh range, which divides the Sahra from the plain of Damascus. It commences at the foot of Hermon, near Kâtâna, and runs thence along the plain of Damascus to Jebel Tinîyeh, where it separates into two branches, enclosing a little vale through which I afterwards passed in going from Kuteifeh to Maksûra. The branches are both intersected by the river Mukubrit, and beyond it they extend eastward in serrated lines along the border of the desert to Palmyra.

The several ridges are not parallel: they open out like a fan, having the noble peak of Hermon for their centre. I have been particular in describing the features of this great mountain-range of Antilibanus, because it has hitherto

been a *terra incognita* to cartographers. A glance at the map accompanying this work will be sufficient to show what a transformation the face of the country has undergone even since Berghaus's map was published; and no later author, so far as I know, has attempted any improvements. There are but few places here sufficiently interesting to invite the attention of the antiquarian or the ordinary traveller, and the district has consequently been avoided by the one and overlooked by the other. Many travellers journey yearly to Palmyra, and yet no good description has hitherto been given to the public of the great route between Damascus and that interesting city. It is hoped therefore that the present sketches may serve to fill up a blank in the geography of this land.⁷

Having completed our observations, we descended by the same way we came up, and found a sumptuous breakfast spread for us in the old convent. Our morning's walk had prepared us for doing ample justice to it.

Mâlûla is manifestly a site of remote antiquity, but I have been unable to discover any clue to its ancient name or history. I made such search for inscriptions as my time admitted of, but in vain. I have examined the ancient geographical works and Itineraries with no better success; and even in the 'Notitiæ Ecclesiasticæ' I have discovered no name whose analogy might lead to identification. A

⁷ Ritter has collected within the compass of a few pages the substance of all the information we possess of the eastern slopes of Antilibanus; and a perusal of that section of his great work will satisfy the reader that his remark is just when he thus writes: "Aber auch diese Angaben lassen noch Vieles zu wünschen in dieser bis heute *Terra incognita* gebliebenen Landschaft am Ostabhange des Anti-Libanon die auch schon Berghaus auf seiner Kartenzeichnung mit Recht als sehr zweifelhaft dargestellt hatte."—Palästina und Syrien, iv. 259-68.

tradition of the monks is that it was formerly called Laodicea, but its position does not accord with that of any of the cities of that name mentioned by ancient writers. It is somewhat remarkable that the inhabitants of Málûla still use the Syriac language, though they are also acquainted with Arabic. A few rites peculiar to the ancient Jacobites are likewise observed here in marriage ceremonies by both Mohammedans and Christians, though the latter now belong to the Greek and Greek Catholic Churches. The only other places where the Syriac is spoken in Syria are the two neighbouring villages of 'Ain et-Tineh and Bũkhâ. The former is a little over a mile and a half south of Málûla, and the latter about three miles north-east.

We bade adieu to our worthy host and mounted our horses at ten o'clock. Our route lay up the north side of the basin to the great plateau, which we reached in half an hour. In another half-hour we passed the small village of Bũkhâ, lying in a little bleak valley on our right. This valley crosses the road, and cuts deeply into the plateau for miles on the left. Near its extremity I saw on a rising ground, during a subsequent visit, the village of 'Asâl el-Werd, about five miles distant. A few minutes afterwards we reached the brow of a considerable declivity, leading down into a lower and more fertile part of the plateau; and from thence, away in front of us, through a break in the ridge, we saw the white houses and blooming gardens and orchards of Yabrûd. Our route lay along the base of the Málûlu range, which, owing to the lower level of this section of the plateau, seems to have a considerable elevation. An hour and a half smart riding brought us to the little village of Ras el-'Ain, situated at

the entrance of the sublime gorge which here intersects the ridge, opening up a way to Yabrûd. Among the modern hovels we observed some few broken shafts and large hewn stones, which were probably once used in enclosing the fine fountain that here springs up. Turning to the right, and winding for a few minutes among luxuriant vineyards, we entered the ravine, whose sides are naked rocky precipices, pierced, like those of Jubb 'Adin and Mâlûla, with numerous sepulchral caves. Five minutes from Ras el-'Ain we reached another large and beautiful fountain gushing out from the foot of the cliff on our left. In the verdant meadow along the banks of the stream that flows from it we picketed our horses, while we ourselves sat down in the cool shade beside the crystal waters to enjoy a few minutes' repose and eat our noonday meal. A friendly *natûr* brought us some fine-looking bunches of grapes, but we found them still sour and unpalatable, notwithstanding their tempting appearance. We were told that it would take another month to ripen them, as both air and soil are cold.

We left this beautiful spot at 1.25, and continued our course through the ravine, which is not narrow or barren like those in this range we had previously visited, but of considerable width, and densely filled with the luxuriant foliage of the orchards that line the banks of the stream. As we advanced, the view in front became more interesting and picturesque. The conical summit of a snow-white hill appeared over the trees, while a little to the left the terraced roofs of Yabrûd could be seen through every opening. We entered this fine and populous village at 1.48.

As we passed along the streets I observed on every side remains of ancient buildings of considerable extent and beauty. Among these was a square tower, almost similar in form and character to that at Saidnâya. But the principal object of interest is the church, a large building of high antiquity, whose walls are constructed of massive stones, well hewn and jointed, the layers near the foundation having in some places the peculiar Phœnician *bevel*. It is probable that the building was first constructed for a temple, and afterwards, when Christianity became the religion of the empire, it was dedicated to the service of the true God; and it appears that ever since it has remained in the hands of the Christians, so that it may thus be one of the most ancient ecclesiastical structures in this part of Syria.

The name *Yabrûd* at once suggests the *Jabruda* of Ptolemy, mentioned in connection with Laodicea ad Libanum.⁸ It became an episcopal city at a very early period, as its bishop, Genadius, was present at the Council of Nice, and it was subsequently represented at the Council of Chalcedon.⁹ Nothing more is known of it, but that it remains to the present day the seat of a bishop. Its situation is pleasant and salubrious. The opening in the mountains to the west affords a passage for the fresh and healthful breezes which blow during the hottest days of summer, while the broad undulating plain to the east leaves the site free and cheerful. Though the sun's rays beat with great power on the white gravelly soil and chalky mountains, yet the temperature in the shade is

Ptolem. Geog. v. 15.

⁹ S. Paulo, Geog. Sac. p. 294.

generally very low. As we rode through the streets we were objects of curiosity to crowds of men, women, and boys, who came flocking round us. There was no insolence or antipathy manifested by any of them: on the contrary, all seemed anxious we should remain there for the night. The inhabitants are robust and healthy, and there is a freshness and elasticity in their looks and movements which are the sure indications of pure air and perfect freedom from the dread influence of miasma. It would appear, in fact, as if the only disease known among them were ophthalmia, which is no doubt occasioned by the dazzling whiteness of the chalk hills and flinty plains around.

We left Yabrûd at 2·10, and after half an hour's easy ride up a gentle slope reached the summit of a low ridge which strikes out from the hills on the right, and runs diagonally across the plain to Nebk. From this point we looked down into a fine fertile vale which only requires water to make it a paradise, and on the slopes beyond it saw the little village of Kÿstÿl. In half an hour more we had passed the plain, and were standing in the shade of the large khan in the centre of this village. Beside us was the great caravan-road from Damascus to Aleppo, and we could trace it along the level plain till it wound in among the white tells that almost concealed Nebk from our view. A few hundred yards below us, on the side of the road, is a large pond of pure water supplied by a subterranean aqueduct coming in from the west. It is similar in structure to those already referred to in the plain of Jerûd, and is about a mile in length.

The name *Kÿstÿl* suggests the Latin *Castellum*; and it is highly probable that a Roman castle once occupied this

site, serving to protect the caravans, and to afford shelter and food perhaps to passing travellers on this great road. This place is mentioned by Abulfeda as giving the name to a division or section of the country.¹

At 3·15 we again mounted and set out at a quick pace along the great caravan-road, which here runs in a direction south-west toward Hermon, whose snow-crowned summit soon came in sight. This is a bleak and dreary district. There are no trees, there is no verdure, there is nothing to attract the eye or excite the attention. The blasted gravelly soil covers the undulating plain on every side, and the mountains rise up beyond, naked and desolate; while over all is the unvarying blue sky, and the scorching sun pouring down a torrent of fierce rays on the luckless traveller. We spurred on our horses, passing in quick succession the little cisterns which in former days were constructed to supply the wants of the thirsty voyager, but are now, like everything else in this land, in a state of ruin. The road, however, has defied both time and the Turks; and notwithstanding the wear of the one and the neglect of the other, is still proverbially good—that is, *good* for a Syrian road. The plain is level and the soil firm, and it is consequently impossible that it could be bad.

About an hour after leaving Kūstūl we saw the little village of Kaldûn high up on the mountains on our left, and in an hour and three-quarters more we entered a narrow defile, which completely intersects the mountain-chain. The winter stream from Mâlûla, after a course of a little over three miles across the plain, by 'Ain et-Tîneh,

¹ Tab. Syr. p. 27.

here enters the mountains and forces its way through a wild ravine to the plain of Kuteifeh. The road winds along its bank ; and in one place, where the bed is narrow, a broad way has been hewn in the solid rock along the side of the cliff above. At the entrance of the pass is a large ruined khan.

The sun had set, and the brief twilight was fast waning ; but the moon shone brightly, and the rugged rocks and toppling cliffs far overhead assumed a thousand fantastic shapes, as the silvery light fell upon projecting portions, and enveloped the intervals in deepest gloom. It seemed as if the wild glen had suddenly become tenanted by all the Jâns and Efrîts of the Muslem world. The hoarse call of the partridge and the plaintive cry of the jackal occasionally broke in upon the dead silence of nature. This defile is not always safe, even by day, and at night none but large caravans would venture to pass it. We had been warned at Yabrûd of our danger in setting out at so late an hour, but we felt here, as we had often done under similar circumstances, that the very dreariness of the place was our greatest source of security. In forty minutes we emerged on the open plain, and thirty-five minutes afterwards entered the village of Kuteifeh. It was not without some difficulty we got accommodation for ourselves and our horses ; but we at last succeeded in finding a large court-yard and an empty room. Our servants soon prepared dinner, and in the mean time we entered into conversation with our host—an old man, with a long silvery beard and voluminous turban. After a hearty meal we spread out our *lehûfs*, and were soon asleep.

October 21st.—We were up again ere the first dawn

of morning had tinged the eastern hills, and had commenced negotiations for a guide to Maksûra. When we first introduced the subject, many a fear was expressed for our safety, and many a doubt suggested whether the Arabs would permit us to pass, at least so comfortably clad as we now were. We were assured a strong guard of villagers would be absolutely necessary; but after much talking we persuaded the son of our host to accompany us alone, at moderate wages. Before starting, however, I wished to obtain some bearings, and clambered up to the roof of the house; but on my object being known, I was invited by our new guide to the top of the minaret of the mosk. Considerably surprised at such an invitation from a Muslem, I readily accompanied him; and we met the Muezzin descending, after having summoned the faithful to morning prayer. The sun had not risen, and the features of the extensive panorama had not yet become distinctly developed, so that I had a few minutes to examine the great *khan* to which this mosk belongs. It is a large quadrangular building of excellent masonry, containing several spacious courts, with numerous apartments for the merchants and their wares, and ample accommodation for their horses. It was erected by the celebrated Senân Pasha A.H. 988; but since his time it has been totally neglected, and is now fast falling to ruin.

From the spot on which I now stood I had a fine view of the great plain I had formerly traversed on my way to Tadmor. The gardens of Jerûd and 'Atny were visible; more to the east, and much nearer, was Muaddamîyeh, and a little to the right, beyond it, the guide pointed out the gardens of Ruhaibeh, at the entrance of a broad valley in

the low mountain-range. Westward I looked over the plains of Kuteifeh and Saidnâya to the rugged summit of Jebel Shurabîn, and on the south-west Tinîyeh reared up its rounded head, bare and barren, while a little to the right of it was the abrupt termination of the Menîn range.

At 7·20 we mounted our horses and rode off across the plain due south. On reaching the foot of the hills we struck up a shallow winding valley, and at 8·3 gained the summit of the first ridge. Here I first observed the division in this range of hills referred to above. Turning to the left, we followed a narrow path down a barren wady to the side of a little dreary plain. Large flocks of sheep and goats were scattered over the white hills: one is astonished that they can pick up sufficient herbage on these blasted slopes to supply the wants of nature. The shepherds, hale and strong young men, were all armed with long muskets and pistols; and our guide assured us that forays are often made among them by the Bedawîn of the great desert. After skirting the southern side of the little plain, we came at nine o'clock to the base of a line of lofty barren hills running at right angles to our path, and we here turned to the right down a wild glen in a direction nearly due south. A few minutes afterwards we passed a small brackish fountain, of which our guide drank greedily, though to us the water tasted nauseous and bitter. The scenery increased in grandeur as we advanced. The rocks on each side of the ravine rose up in broken and jagged masses, and the smooth summits of the mountains were intermixed with towering cliffs.

About half an hour below the fountain, on surmounting

a rugged eminence, the plain of Damascus suddenly opened up before us, extending westward to the base of Hermon, confined on the south-west by the low ranges of Jebel el-Aswad and Jebel Mâniâ, but towards the south stretching out again to the Jebel Haurân; while on the east it is shut in by the graceful group of the Tellûl. As viewed from this point, it appears as if almost completely surrounded by mountains. Our guide appeared to feel considerable anxiety as we approached the plain; he seized his musket with a firmer grasp, examined the lock, and "girded up his raiment," as if preparing for action. Many an exciting tale, too, did he relate of the encounters of his people with the Bedawîn, of his own "hair-breadth 'scapes," and of the danger he now encountered in acting as our guide. As we rode along, therefore, we kept a sharp look-out for wandering bandits. We ourselves knew that we had reached the borders of civilization, if we had not already passed them, and that, if any roving party of Bedawîn should appear, we ran a fair chance of being plundered. As we surmounted the last ridge, we looked anxiously over the broad expanse of plain now lying before us, but we sought in vain for the black tent, or the wide-spreading flocks, or the roving cavaliers. The ploughman was there with his oxen, and the village shepherd with his few goats, and the peasant with his hoe, all peacefully labouring. Our guide was pleased, and we felt disappointed—perhaps agreeably. Maksûra was now before us, and the road straight; we consequently paid off our guide, who returned in peace, while we cantered forward to the village. The plain is here fertile and perfectly level. On our left, as we advanced in a direction about south-east, the hills on

the left receded towards an opening in their line opposite Maksûra. Through this opening a small stream, called Nahr el-Mükûbrit, descends from Ruhaibeh to the plain. At 10·20 we reached the banks of the stream and the gate of Maksûra.

Our attention had for some time been attracted by a large and heavy building rising high above the flat roofs of the houses, and which, from its situation, on the top of a gentle eminence, forms a conspicuous object. On entering the gate we proceeded to it at once through the narrow and tortuous streets, and, on reaching it, were no little surprised at the size, beauty, and completeness of the structure. It is a Corinthian temple, perhaps unique in design. At each end is a handsome pediment supported on semi-columns, in the centre of which is a spacious arched doorway ornamented with pilasters and deep mouldings. The cornice and frieze of the pediment are carried round the whole building and supported by pilasters. The exterior doors admit to small vestibules, and these open by arched doorways into the cell, which is nearly square; its walls are ornamented with pilasters supporting a richly-wrought cornice. The roof has fallen, but the walls are nearly perfect, and are fine specimens of Roman masonry.

It will be seen that there was a clear passage through this temple from east to west, all the doors being exactly in a line. On the eastern front, near the north-eastern angle, is a Greek inscription in large characters inscribed on the smooth wall, without tablet or any other mark; so that one is almost inclined to suspect that it was put on at a later date. The inscription is as follows:—

ΥΠΕΡΩΤΗΡΙΑΚΤΩΝΚΥΡΙΩΝ
 ΗΜΩΝΑΥΤΟΚΡΑΤΟΡΩΝΚΑΙ
 ΑΡΩΝΜΑΡΚΩΝΙΟΥΛΙΩΝ
 //////////////////////////////////ΑΦΙΕΡΩ
 ΘΗΚΑΙΣΥΝΕΤΕΛΕΣΘΗΝΑΟΣΑΕΙΧΑ
 ΛΑΣΕΠΙΤΩΝΠΕΡΙΛ////ΑΡΚΟΝΑΥΡΗΛΙ
 ΟΝΑΝΕΟΝΓΑΩΡΟΥΚΑΙΓΑ////ΡΟΝΟΛ(?)ΣΙΜ(?)
 ΘΟΥΒΟΥ////////ΛΕΥΤΟΥΕΙΡΟΤΑΜΙΩΝ
 ΕΚΤΩΝΤΟΥ
 ΘΕΟΥΕΤΟΥΣ
 ΖΝΦ ΥΠΕΡΒΕΡΕ
 ΤΑΙΟΥ ΙΕ

The temple was thus erected in the year of the Seleucidæ 557, which corresponds with A.D. 246, during the reign of the *two Philips*. The word Φιλιππων has been designedly erased by his successors, no doubt to mark their abhorrence of the foul arts by which he had accomplished the ruin of his much-loved predecessor.¹ This date is of some importance, as tending to establish the fact that it

¹ Mr. Hogg, in his notes on 'Greek Inscriptions from Syria and the Hauran,' read before the Royal Society of Literature, suggests another cause for the erasure of the name of Philip in this inscription. He thus writes: "It has been a subject of great controversy whether or not the elder Philip had embraced Christianity. The affirmative would seem to be the fact from Jerome and Eusebius. And if the letters *ψι*-----*δι* have originally been cut where Mr. Porter marks an *erasure on purpose*, this circumstance would appear in some degree confirmatory of it; for the temple, at *first* dedicated to Jupiter, might possibly have been *afterwards* converted into a Christian church, when Philip himself became a Christian." I scarcely think however that, even though Philip had become a Christian, he would have ventured during his short reign to change a temple of Jupiter into a church. Mr. Hogg's suggestion as to the erased letters is no doubt correct. They are as follows:—

Φιλιππων υψιστῶ δμ -----

was the era of the *Seleucidæ*, and not that of *Alexander*, which was in former times almost universally used in Syria. Philip was a native of Syria, and erected there some important monuments, the ruins of which, as we shall hereafter see, still exist.

During the year 1854 I sent a copy of this inscription, with some others, from the Haurân, to John Hogg, Esq., Hon. Sec. to the Royal Society; and in reply he informed me that it had been copied so long ago as 1821 by the Count di Vidua, and published both by him, and afterwards by Böckh in the ‘*Corpus Græc. Inscript.*,’ vol. iii. p. 238. Mr. Hogg suggests that the name of the place is *Aichala*, *Αἰχάλα*. The name of the village is at present written *Dumair* in the government registers; but it is better known to the Arabs as *Maksûra*.

Ascending to the top of the temple by a staircase in the south-eastern angle, I obtained a fine view over the vast plain from the Tellûl to Hermon. My attention was directed by several of the villagers, who sat by my side, to three large castle-like buildings several hours distant south-by-east, and I was informed that they are of great strength and beauty, containing some white sculptured stones of great value. They called them the *Diûra*, or “convents.” They are situated on the desert plain between the lakes and the Tellûl.

When we were about to mount our horses and return to Damascus, the sheikh, seeing the interest we appeared to take in the examination of this fine ruin, informed us that half an hour east of the village the remains of a great city lie upon the plain; and though we had a long journey still before us, we resolved to visit them. Accompanied by the

sheikh on his fine mare, and several of his people on foot, we set out at a rapid pace. After leaving the village we noticed along the sides of the road several sarcophagi, and many sepulchral caves excavated in the chalky rock of the plain. We also passed three subterranean aqueducts, which still bring down copious streams from the mountains on the left. The third aqueduct has a strongly-built reservoir, and immediately below this, about two miles distant from Maksûra, commence the ruins of the town. Heaps of hewn stones lie strewn over the plain, mixed with broken shafts and moulded cornices. On the eastern side of them are the foundations of a large and strong fortress, nearly square, and about three hundred yards in the side. There were two gates, one on the north and the other on the south, flanked by heavy towers of excellent masonry. At the angles there are likewise massive towers. In the interior of this fortress some large and beautiful buildings once stood, but the whole is now so completely ruined, that we could form no conception of their character. I galloped from ruin to ruin during my short stay, in the hope of discovering some inscription, but in vain. I have little doubt, however, but that a careful survey would be attended with better success. We were informed that in the mountain-side, a short distance beyond the ruins, is a *divan*, or "theatre," and another copious fountain of water. We had no time left to visit them, and were reluctantly compelled to turn away from these singular ruins.

There can be no doubt that this town is of Roman origin, and there is no evidence that it has been inhabited since the time of the Saracenic conquest. It was a strong border city, intended to keep the Arabs in check, and

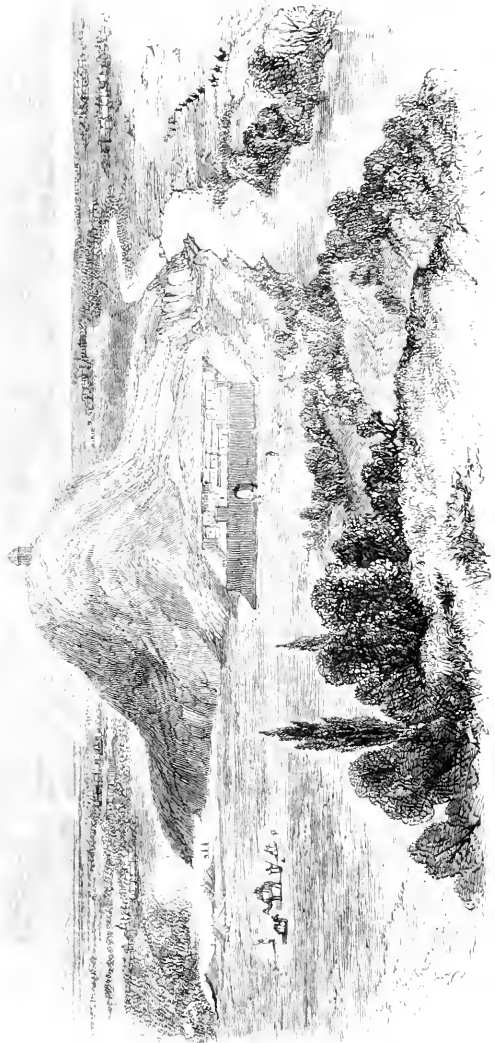
probably those other large buildings away to the southward constituted part of a line of fortresses erected along the borders of the desert. I have not been able to discover any reference to this place in any author, Greek, Latin, or Arab. In the Antonine Tables there is a route given as follows:—

<i>Geroda</i>	M.P.		
<i>Telsee</i>	„	16	
Damasco	„	24	
Aere	„	32	&c.

Now Geroda might *possibly* be identified with the modern *Jerûd*, a large and flourishing village on the great caravan-route to Palmyra. From Jerûd to Maksûra is about sixteen Roman miles, if we allow for the curves in passing through the valley of the Mûkûbrit, and from hence to Damascus is *twenty-four* miles. I merely suggest this correspondence in distances, and in the names *Geroda* and *Jerûd*, to call the attention of others to the subject, who may have more time and better opportunities than I have for the prosecution of such investigations.

We now galloped back to Maksûra along the banks of an ancient canal, which formerly conveyed a supply of water to the town, whose ruins we had left behind. The sheikh pressed us to remain with him during the night, and, on our refusing, said we would not surely leave the village without partaking of his hospitality, and thus honouring him in some way. This we could not well refuse after the kindness he had already shown us; we consequently remained for a short time and partook of a hearty lunch. Mounting our horses at 3·10, we started for Damascus. On leaving the village we met a small party of Arabs on their beautiful mares; they were the chiefs of a tribe of

the Anezy now encamped beside the lakes, and had come here to negotiate for wheat and barley. As we rode through the gardens we observed large hewn stones scattered about, as if the buildings of the villages had at one time extended thus far. Crossing the dry bed of the canal, we struck across the level plain in a straight course for Damascus, whose forest gardens we saw in the distance. The plain has a fertile soil, but is here altogether uncultivated, and the rank vegetation by which it is covered in spring is principally devoured by the vast flocks of the Bedawîn. In two hours and a half we reached the fine village of 'Adhrâ, whose fields and gardens are abundantly watered by the great canal Taura, one of the streams from the Barada. Here we passed through a large encampment of Arabs. The sun had already gone down, and darkness soon set in; but we had a good road and a bright moon. It was past 9 o'clock when we knocked at Bab Tûma, and later still ere we reached our own houses; there, however, the fatigues of the journey were soon forgotten amid the comforts of home.



TELL ES-SALHIYEH

CHAPTER IX.

THE PLAIN AND LAKES OF DAMASCUS.

Druze war — Fine scenery of the plain — “Harrân of the Columns” — Mouth of the *Abana* — The character and extent of the *South* and *East* lakes — A battle-field — Singular ruins — Adventure in the marshes — Tell es-Salahiyeh, an Assyrian mound — The lake Hijaneh and mouth of the *Pharpar* — The Sâfâ.

DURING the summer of 1852 the Druzes of the Haurân had refused to contribute their number of conscripts to the regular army; and the *seraskier*, or commander-in-chief in Syria, was ordered to march against them with all his available forces. During our previous journey his army was in the field; but having been worsted in several severe skirmishes, he withdrew his troops ere the winter set in, leaving only strong outposts to guard the plain of Damascus against any forays of the rebels. While the hostilities continued, travelling in the eastern and southern divisions of the plain was not safe; now, however, the campaign having terminated, an excursion might be made with comparative safety. The *lakes* I had never as yet visited, and the lower parts of the Barada and 'Awaj remained still unexplored. I had often projected an excursion into this *terra incognita*, but more important labours had hitherto prevented me from carrying out my plans. A short interval of leisure now occurring, and opportunity offering, I got up a strong party, secured an intelligent guide, and made all necessary arrangements for an excursion.

November 17th.—Our party assembled this morning at an early hour. It consisted, in addition to Messrs. Robson and Barnett, who were my companions on the last journey, of the Rev. G. Lansing, and M. Antôn Bulâd, the learned Greek monk, whose name has been before referred to in this work. We had also two servants and a guide, all well mounted. We left the East Gate at 7·57. The air was fresh and frosty, and the wind blew keenly in our faces as we rode along the banks of the Akrabâny, one of the canals from the Barada. Ere long the rising sun dissolved the hoar-frost that covered the grass and foliage, and lighted up the distant hills, so that they appeared like gigantic gilded domes rising over the forests of the plain. A cloud rested on the summit of Hermon, and the deep sound of thunder was heard in the distance; we therefore feared some approaching change. As the day advanced, however, every cloud disappeared, and every hill and mountain round the whole horizon stood forth in bold relief from the clear blue sky. It was a glorious day! But why speak of the weather in the East? Amid the clouds and gloom of Old England, and the mists of Scotland, and the showers of the Emerald Isle, the weather may form a topic of conversation; and a glorious November day would there indeed be a *rara avis*. But in Syria, where for six long months the deep azure of the heavens is scarcely ever shaded by a passing cloud, why speak here of a glorious day? However, it *was* glorious, even for Syria. The atmosphere was transparent as crystal; a passing shower had dispelled the quivering haze that looms over the plain during the summer heats; and the magic influence of the mirage did not convert the parched

soil into placid lakes with "verdant isles among;" Nature, in fact, appeared as it existed.

We followed the ordinary eastern road for some distance, and then, turning to the right, passed between the villages of Meliha and Balât, skirting the side of the latter, in which we observed some fragments of columns and large sarcophagi. A ride of eighteen minutes more among orchards and fruitful fields brought us to Zibdîn; and at 8.50 we reached 'Ain Hâlûsh, a large fountain sending forth a fine stream, and watering, as I afterwards learned, five large villages with their territories. It is by far the most copious fountain in the whole plain. Our road now lay along the left bank of the stream for ten minutes, when we crossed it by a substantial bridge of one arch, and seven minutes afterwards entered Nôleh. Here I stopped for a time to make observations, and ascertain the names of the several villages in sight. The people we found sullen, and unwilling to give any information whatever.

The orchards and forest-gardens of Damascus extend to this place, and we had hitherto ridden beneath the shade of the walnut, the apricot, or the olive; but there was now before us an open plain, perfectly level, extending far away to the east and south. The villages that thickly stud its surface have each its little grove of fruit-trees and tapering poplars, but the intervals are without a tree or shrub. After passing Nôleh we still found the plain well cultivated for some distance; but then large patches of waste land began to appear, and they became more frequent and extensive as we advanced. On our left, at the distance of two miles and a half, was the river Barada

meandering across the flat expanse in a course nearly due east. Numerous villages stand along its banks, and the plain near it has a richer and fresher aspect at this season, owing to the abundant supply of water for irrigation, which is led off by ancient canals. After a fast ride of three hours forty-three minutes from the city, we entered the large village of Harrân el-'Awamîd—the whole distance being fourteen geographical miles.

Harrân el-'Awamîd, “Harrân of the Columns,” receives this appellation from three noble Ionic columns which stand in the centre of the village. There is now no building connected with them, nor are the traces of any visible. They stand upon pedestals six feet high, and the total height to the top of the capital is about forty feet; the shafts measure eleven feet six inches in circumference. The stone is a black basalt, very hard but porous. In the streets and lanes of the village I observed large numbers of broken shafts and hewn stones, showing that some important structures once stood in this place.

From the terraced roofs of the houses that cluster round the pillars I got an extensive and clear view of this section of the plain; and here, again, my attention was called to the three ruined buildings called the *Diûra*, which I had first seen on my visit to Maksûra. One of them especially seemed large and lofty, and the villagers spoke in glowing terms of their extent, and the beauty of some of the white stones on the walls. All, however, refused to accompany us when we proposed a visit to them, and assured us that a hundred horsemen dare not attempt the journey. We heard this with sorrow; but we still hoped for more cheering intelligence in some other villages. A short distance

east of Harrân we distinctly saw extensive marshes filled with forests of gigantic reeds, intermixed with considerable spaces of clear water. Their border runs southward, as I afterwards ascertained, about five miles; and then, sweeping round to the eastward for some five more, turns toward the north. This is a portion of the *Bahret el-Kibliyeh*, or "South Lake."

We left Harrân at 11·40, and rode straight toward the village of 'Ataibeh, in a direction nearly north-east, the border of the marshes being close on our right the whole way. In twenty-five minutes we forded the principal channel of the Barada, a little above the spot where it flows into a large expanse of clear water in the midst of the marsh. The river was here some thirty feet wide, by about four in depth in the centre; but the current was sluggish. Two points of some importance were now established; namely, *first*, that the *Barada continues to flow during the whole summer* into the lake. The present season had been unusually dry, no rain having fallen since April, except a slight shower, which could not affect the river, and there having been little snow during the previous winter; and yet, notwithstanding these unfavourable circumstances, here was still a deep and wide stream. *Second*, we now also had ocular demonstration *that the waters in the lake do not dry up during the summer*. There is not, it is true, a large expanse of clear water, and the lofty reeds conceal a great part of what does exist; yet still there is some clear water, and there are marshes of vast extent.

In half an hour more we forded the second branch of the Barada, not much inferior in size to the first, and, like it, flowing into a section of clear water, which almost en-

compasses the large village of 'Ataibch. After a short stay in this village we remounted, and proceeded eastward to examine the extent and boundaries of the lakes. Our course now lay nearly south-east along the border of the South Lake, which has here the same features we observed opposite Harrân. In half an hour we reached a deep and wide canal, which almost seems as if it had been the work of man, though it is, in reality, only a natural wady. Through this in winter and spring the surplus waters of the South Lake flow northward into another. We rode on at a smart pace for another quarter of an hour over undulating and elevated ground, and then ascended a little tell covered with graves, called *Tell Maktel Mûsa*—the “Tell where Moses was slain”—the section of the lake to the south of it being also called *Bahret Maktel Mûsa*. We could hear of no tradition attached to the spot; but the situation corresponds to the place called *Merj Râhet* by Abulfeda, where, he says, a battle was fought (A.H. 64) between the Yemenîyeh and Kaisîyeh, in which Merwân, the chief of the former party, gained a signal victory. The field of battle he describes as in the Ghûtah of Damascus, toward the east. The position, the ancient tombs, and the name of this little mound, all tend to suggest that this may be the spot referred to by the historian.¹ This was one of the fiercest battles that took place between the rival factions of the Muslims in the early days of Islam. Merwân was the khâlîf elect of the house of Omeiyah, and the Yemenîyeh, with Hassan at their head, embraced his cause; while Abdullah, his rival, was powerfully aided by

¹ Tab. Syr. pp. 16-17.

the famous *Dehak*, the son of *Kais*, whose party was called the *Kaisîyeh*. This battle sealed the fate of Abdullah, for Dehak himself, and eighty of the nobles of Syria, were slain; and Merwân was established on the throne of the *khâlifs*.²

From this mound I was able to define with considerable accuracy the form and extent of the South Lake. From numerous observations made at this and other places along its borders I found that its extreme length is about six miles and a half, its breadth five and a half, and its total circumference nearly twenty miles. Tall reeds grow in every part of it, and serve very clearly to define its boundaries even from a distance. The ground on its northern and north-eastern sides has an average elevation above the level of the water of nearly thirty feet, but it undulates, and in some places rises to double that height. The whole of this ground, with the plain on the east side, is sparsely covered with the tamarisk, which grows to the height of from six to eight feet, branching out so as often to cover a space ten or twelve feet in diameter.

We now turned northward and rode across the rolling plain among groves of tamarisk to survey the other lake, called *Bahret esh-Shürkîyeh*, the "East Lake." In ten minutes we passed over another little tell covered with Arab graves. The sons of the desert rest here in solitude after a life of wandering, the daring marauder and the brave warrior side by side in the silent tomb. We rode over their graves in peace, for death had paralysed the strong arm and removed from earth the fierce spirit. In

² Ockley's History of the Saracens, pp. 434-36.

fifteen minutes more we were standing on a rising ground on the side of the East Lake, now presenting a vast expanse of waving canes, with little clear spots of water here and there. From careful observations I afterwards estimated the extent of this lake as follows:—total length eight miles and a half, extreme breadth about four miles, and circumference twenty miles. Its borders are less clearly defined than those of the other, owing to the marshes extending for some distance along the banks of the streams that fall into it. The distance between these two lakes averages more than a mile, and the elevation of the ground is such that they can never unite except by means of the wady above referred to.

From this point I had a pretty clear view of the *Diûra* through a small telescope. They are large and apparently strong buildings, now half ruinous, standing in the midst of the great plain beyond the lakes. The distance of the nearest, that on the north, I estimated at about two hours (the guide said *four*); the southern one is six or seven miles distant from the northern, and the central one lies eastward near the base of the little group of hills called the Tellûl. The distance of Dŭkwch, the highest conical peak of the Tellûl, I afterwards estimated, from several bearings taken at different points, to be about sixteen miles from 'Ataibeh. Neither in the plain nor hills beyond the lake could I see any other ruins either ancient or modern, and there are no settled inhabitants in the whole region. 'Ataibeh and Harrân are border villages, and between the latter and Maksûra the country is waste on both sides of the East Lake. Abulfeda, in speaking of the lake of Damascus, says it is on the east side of the Ghûtah, a little

to the north, and "there are there thickets of canes, and likewise *places of defence against the enemy, which are celebrated.*"³ The *Diûra* are probably the fortresses or strongholds to which the historian alludes, and which in former ages formed part of a regular line of defences against the incursions of the restless Bedawîn.

After a careful examination of the whole district around us, we rode along the side of the marshes for some distance in a north-western direction, and then turned into them by a winding path through the thicket of reeds. In about fifteen minutes we reached a low mound called *Tell el-Khanzîr*, the "Hill of the Swine," at the side of which is some very deep water. Leaving my horse at this spot, I followed the guide we had brought from the village in among the dense reeds, through which we had difficulty in forcing our way. They are here from twelve to fifteen feet high, and some of them over twenty. I was anxious to see the wild swine, but, though we found places where they had been recently wallowing, and could even hear them as they forced their way through the thicket in the distance, I was not so fortunate as to get sight of any. As we crouched down in a favourable spot waiting for their approach, and listening to their hoarse growl, the guide told me in whispers that during the previous year he had missed the path and lost his way near this spot, and was three days and three nights among the marshes ere he could get out. I can well believe it, for nothing save the blue sky can be seen from within, and, if once the track is lost, the wanderer at once gets entangled among the

³ Tab. Syr. pp. 156, 7.

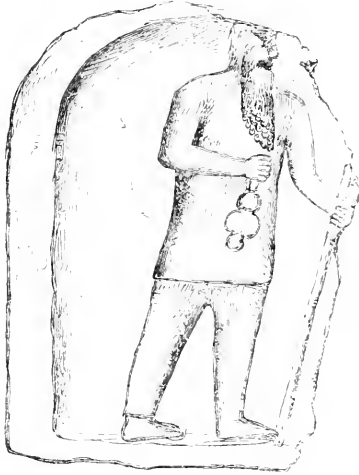
marshes; and, even should he know something of the right direction, he is compelled to turn and wind about to avoid the deep pools and impassable morasses. On hearing this, I at once proposed to return to my companions, as I had no wish for an adventure in such a locality, even with the prospect of enjoying the society of a few wild boars. We got back in safety, and, mounting our horses, set out for 'Ataibeh, which we reached as the sun was going down behind the lofty Hermon.

We had now solved the mystery of the lakes into which the waters of the ancient *Abana* flow, and had made observations which will henceforth effect a complete transformation in the maps of this region. Instead of one lake, which has hitherto been so neatly delineated by cartographers, with rivers concentrating to it from all quarters of the neighbouring mountain-ranges, there are, in reality, two lakes of considerable extent, and the Barada, forming a kind of delta with its branches, pours into them the only supply of water they receive from the mountains. The East Lake receives its chief supplies from the South Lake, through the narrow wady above referred to; but there is likewise a small branch of the Barada that crosses the plain above 'Ataibeh, and flows directly into it; and the surplus waters of the great canal Taura, augmented by the fountain of Kuseir, flow down past 'Adhrà and enter it from the north-west. During the winter it also receives on the north the small stream Nahr el-Mükübrit, whose source is at Rahaibeh on the plain of Jerûd.

The Barada flows in a winding course due eastward across the beautiful plain. Its banks are closely lined with groves of fruit-trees and long ranges of poplars as far as

the *Tell es-Salahiyeh*, about eight and a half miles from the city. The scenery along it is everywhere rich, and in some places exceedingly picturesque. The long branches of the willow and the giant arms of the walnut often meet across the gently-flowing river, which is thus shrouded in gloom, and forcibly reminds one of those quiet nooks so often met with on the trout-streams of Old England. The *Tell es-Salahiyeh* is one of the most interesting remnants of antiquity in the whole plain. It is an artificial mound of an oval form, about 300 yards in diameter and about 100 feet in height. The whole surface is covered with loose earth, composed mainly of brickdust and fragments of broken pottery. On the southern side, next the bank of the river, a portion of the mound has been cut away, and here may be seen the regular layers of sun-burnt brick of which the whole appears to have been constructed. From the present form of the mound it seems that there was originally a large platform built, from twenty to thirty feet high, and then in the centre of this stood a lofty conical structure, which during the course of long centuries has gradually crumbled down to its present form. On the western side of the mound, beside the little village, I found, on my first visit to this place, a limestone slab, about five feet long by three wide, containing a bas-relief representing an Assyrian priest. The workmanship is rude and the stone has been defaced; but still it was sufficiently plain to show the costume and attitude of the figure. I sketched it at the time, intending on some future occasion either to obtain a cast or the stone itself; but, unfortunately, it has since disappeared, and I have been unable to discover what has been done

with it. I here insert my sketch of this singular monument, and also of the mound itself.⁴



Our servants, who had remained behind in the village, had in the mean time arranged our quarters for the night in the house of the sheikh, and here we found a sumptuous dinner laid out. M. Bulâd produced an ample store of Damascus delicacies, with a bottle of excellent wine. The vigorous exercise of the day had prepared us for doing justice to even less inviting dainties than those now before us. A number of the villagers had gathered in, and were squatting in close order round the walls, watching our every movement and wondering at the facility with which we introduced the little spears (forks) into our mouths, and thinking, no doubt, what fools the *Françîs*

⁴ See a sketch of Tell es-Salahiyeh facing page 373.

are to endanger their faces with such weapons, while they have fingers, and might use them like other men. The whole of our proceedings were manifestly a mystery to all the spectators, and many a nudge did they give each other as some new feat was performed with the knife and fork ; but their wonder found no expression save in an occasionally muttered *wullah!*

While thus occupied in these necessary duties, we at the same time opened negotiations about our proposed journey to the Diûra. Our Damascus guide, we soon found, was strongly opposed to our proceeding farther east. If fear of danger was the reason, he ought undoubtedly to have been the last to decline, for in the variety and number of his weapons he resembled a portable armoury. We tried our own powers of persuasion, holding forth strong inducements, in the shape of a liberal *bakhshîsh*, to any five men who would accompany us. It was all in vain. Druzes, Arabs, robbers of all kinds and sects, were now, they said, prowling along the borders of the desert, awaiting a favourable opportunity to plunder and run. Our friend the monk was as eager as any of us, but the people were obstinate, and utterly refused to go. In fact it is well known that these border villages which have the lakes and marshes as a defence against incursions of the Bedawîn are almost constantly at war with them, and they are consequently afraid to venture beyond the bounds of their own territories. We were thus compelled to give up our intention of visiting these distant ruins for the present, and to confine our investigations to the lakes.

During the course of the evening we were informed that a party of regular cavalry had arrived in the village, and

were attempting by force to get possession of the courtyard where our horses were picketed, and, in fact, of the whole house we now occupied. We sent one of our servants with a peremptory order for the soldiers to go elsewhere, and to inform them that Englishmen had for the time hired the house, and would prevent the Pasha himself from entering it. A word from us was of more weight with the unruly soldiers than all the remonstrances and efforts of the poor villagers, and we were left in undisturbed possession. Our host was delighted at this deliverance, and assured us that our presence had saved him from imposition, and perhaps from personal abuse. So it is in this unhappy land, where there is no justice and no equity. Franks are now hailed as protectors wherever they go, and are cordially welcomed to almost every house, because it is known they have some sense of justice, and intend to pay for what they get; but government officials are shunned and feared as if they had the plague. In fact, Turkish officers, from the pashas to the lowest grade of police, are looked on as so many robbers. The people would much rather remain idle than work for the government; for when they are compelled to labour, their animals are always abused, and they themselves beaten if they complain; and they either get no pay at all, or receive a miserable pittance, about one-fourth of what they could gain elsewhere.

November 18th.—We returned this morning to the village of Harrân, which we reached at 8·35, and continued our journey to Kefrein, fifteen minutes farther. Here we turned a little to the left towards Judeideh. I left my companions to follow the direct road, and, putting spurs to

my horse, followed as closely as possible the indented border of the marshes, so as to note particularly the amount of water still found here, and the extent of the lake. I found water at every point, but generally concealed beneath the rank grass and forests of reeds. The numbers of wild-fowl were almost beyond conception. They rose up in clouds before me as I advanced, and, sweeping round for a few minutes, settled down again at a little distance. Geese, ducks, storks, herons, and water-fowl of endless variety, appeared on every side. At 9:30 we reached Judeidch, or Judeidet el-Khâs, as it is called, to distinguish it from other villages of the same name. Here we stopped a few minutes to take bearings, and fix accurately not merely the position of the village, but the southern border of the South Lake, which sweeps round from this place first south-by-east and then east.

As we left the village our road led us up a gentle swell in the plain, which extends eastward as far as we could see. It is considerably higher than the village, and thus prevents the extension of the lake and marshes southward. The soil on this swell is exceedingly rich, though now in a great measure uncultivated. The tamarisk grows upon it luxuriantly, and likewise large quantities of the plant called *Kily*, *قلي*, or *Ashnân*, *اشنان*, by the Arabs—the *Salsosa fruticosa*—whose ashes are largely used in the manufacture of soap. The rock here, and in the whole southern section of the plain, is basalt, and occasionally crops up over the soil in broken masses or in small conical mounds, some of which are cup-shaped. The basalt formation extends over the whole province of the Haurân, and eastward into the desert as far as we could see.

In 53 minutes we reached Hîjâneh, which lies south-by-west from the last village. Beside it is a large rocky mound covered with ancient ruins. To the summit of this we immediately proceeded, taking with us an intelligent native to tell us the names of the several places in view. This tell commands an extensive prospect over the whole surrounding country. On the north and north-east is seen the Ghûtah, with its evergreen forests, and the Merj, teeming with villages; then the flat surface of the lakes covered with waving forests of canes, and the undulating ground beyond rising up with a gentle slope to the foot of the Tellûl range. It is somewhat singular that the three border villages, Maksûra, 'Ataibeh, and Hîjâneh, are in a line: and eastward of this line there is no settled inhabitant. The range of hills so often referred to, called Tellûl, is about fifteen miles in length, and runs nearly north and south, the conical peak Dûkweh being near the centre, and distant from Hîjâneh eighteen miles. Both on the north and south of these hills the plain extends to the horizon. From the southern extremity of the Tellûl to the Jebel Haurân there is an unbounded plain: only one solitary blue peak, rising up in the far distance (S. 62° E.), breaks the uniformity; and this peak, our intelligent guide informed me, is in the centre of the *Săfă*. On the south a rolling plain extends to the base of the Jebel Haurân, on the northern extremity of which a lofty tell was clearly seen; and on visiting that region some months afterwards, I recognised it as Tell Mââz, near the ruins of Bathanyeh, the ancient *Batanœa*. The villages of Hît and Hiyât were pointed out near it, and appeared like black specks on the mountain-side. On the south-west lay the Lejâh, some

ten miles distant; and in the midst of it rose a conical peak, which I afterwards identified as Tell Amâra. More to the west the view is shut in by the heights of Mâniâ. The villages of Adilîyeh and Hurjilleh are visible between this range and Jebel el-Aswad.

The Lake Hîjâneh (*Bahret Hîjâneh*) lies on the south and south-east of Tell Hîjâneh. It is upwards of five miles long, by about four and a half in breadth. It was entirely dry at the time of our visit; but the forests of waving reeds and the dark colour of the soil distinctly marked the boundaries of the water during the winter and spring seasons. One of my companions had before visited this spot in the month of June, and found then a large expanse of water. We were informed that it very rarely dries up completely, but remains a marsh during the entire summer and autumn. The river 'Awaj enters this lake at its north-western angle, about twenty minutes below where we stood. I could clearly trace its winding course over the undulating plain, from the spot where it passes out from between the ranges of Mâniâ and Aswad. Its bed was quite dry nearly to that point. A winter torrent called the Liwa, whose source is in the Jebel Haurân, also falls into this lake at its southern extremity; but it only flows while the snow is melting in the mountains, or heavy rain falling. This torrent will be afterwards more fully described.

About half an hour south of Tell Hîjâneh is a little mound covered with ancient ruins, called *Kasrein*, "the two Castles;" and beyond the lake is another much larger mound, also crowned with ruins, which are said to resemble the Diûra. It is called Mastâbeh. There are like-

wise some scattered ruins on a rising ground in the centre of the lake. We did not visit any of them—the more distant ones through fear of the Arabs, whose flocks we saw far away on the plain, and those near us we did not consider sufficiently important. I still hope, on some future occasion, to explore this unknown region, and to go as far as the Tellûl, from which a wide prospect might no doubt be obtained toward the east. The whole of this vast tract is now without a settled inhabitant. The desert tribes roam freely over it. In the autumn it is parched and barren, but in spring there is excellent pasturage.

I had now completed my survey of the eastern part of the plain of Damascus, and of the whole border-land from Palmyra to the northern boundary of the ancient kingdom of *Bashan*. From observations made during my several excursions, that section of the map accompanying this work which embraces this region, has been *exclusively* constructed. Whatever opinion may be formed as to the importance of my researches, there can be no question that the geographical information I now present to the public is new. In Burckhardt's 'Travels in Syria' there are a few brief notes on the topography of this region, but they are both vague and incorrect. It is there stated that at the end of the Ghûtah or Merj of Damascus begins the Jebel Haurân, the northern part of which is called the *Săfă*;⁵ and, I presume, from this information Berghaus has delineated the *Săfă* upon his map, but this is altogether incorrect. From the termination of the plain of Damascus to the commencement of the Jebel Haurân extends a fine

⁵ Travels in Syria, Appendix, No. VI.

level plain about twenty miles in length. I have carefully examined it both from the tell at Hijâneh and from the northern spurs of Jebel Haurân, and I have also travelled along it; and I can therefore confidently affirm that the Săfă is not located there. The guide whom we employed at Hijâneh informed us that he had on several occasions accompanied the Arabs to the Săfă; and on being asked where it was situated, he pointed to the blue peak away on the horizon, and said that that peak was in the midst of it. This peak is a journey of *a day and a half* from Hijâneh, and at least *twelve hours* north-east of Jebel Haurân. He stated besides that the Săfă is like the Lejah, only more difficult of access. There are no hills around it, but a wall of jagged rocks, the passes through which are only known to those who inhabit it. There are no springs in it, and the small quantity of rain that falls during the winter is not sufficient to provide a store for summer use. In the plain, a short distance from its eastern border, are fountains much frequented by the Arabs. There are some small tribes of Arabs who constantly inhabit this wild region, pasturing their flocks among its defiles, and cultivating a few patches of soil. All these particulars were confirmed by subsequent inquiries made during my visit to the Haurân. During last summer, too, I had an opportunity of conversing with the great Bedawy sheikh, Mohammed ed-Dhûhy, whose powerful tribes roam through these regions. He had come to consult Dr. Paulding about a severe wound which had deprived him of the use of his right arm. After some talk about other districts, I inquired about the Săfă. "Ya Beg!" he exclaimed. "Wullah! It is an accursed place, and its people are an

accursed people. They steal and plunder, and there is little hope of reprisals, for they live among rocks that no Bedawy can penetrate. Three years ago, Ya Beg! I went with my people to revenge many acts of aggression and bloodshed, but they would not come out to the plain; and when we attempted to go in to them, they shot us and speared us among the defiles, where we were helpless. My two brothers and my uncle were killed at my side, and eighty of my people shared their fate. I, too, did not escape: a spear pierced my shoulder, and a gun-shot broke my arm; and now look at this!" And he held up his right hand, withered and powerless. The doctor informed me that this was one of the most remarkable cases he had ever known. Very soon after receiving the wound the arm became quite insensible to pain, and dried up until nothing appeared to remain but skin and bone. In this way it continued for a year, when suddenly severe shooting pains began to affect it, and, strange to say, the blood commenced to circulate, and the flesh to fill up gradually but slowly from the shoulder downward. Two years had now passed, and the process of revivification was still going on, having got as far as the back of the hand. The doctor informed the delighted sheikh that his hand would soon be restored again; and he gave him a stimulating lotion, after trying some galvanic shocks, to assist nature in its singular work.

Returning to the village of Hîjâneh we took a hasty lunch in the house of our guide, and, mounting our horses, set out for the city. Our road led for some time westward, bringing us close to the bed of the 'Awaj, and then turned to the north-west, running parallel to it. The plain is

here very rich, and in some places cultivated. On our left, along the wady, were thick groves of the tamarisk. In an hour and twenty-five minutes we reached the large village of Ghuzlanîyeh, watered by a canal from the 'Awaj, which, being spread over the surrounding fields and gardens, rendered them fresh and verdant even at this season. In half an hour more we reached Karahta, where I observed some ancient remains. Skirting the side of a low tell, we now turned to the left, and, having crossed a fertile and well-cultivated plain, we ascended the lofty Tell Abu Yazîd, or, as it is generally called by the peasants, Abu Zîd. From hence we had a fine view of this section of the plain, and of the valley of the 'Awaj east of Jebel el-Aswad. Below us, half an hour distant, near the bank of the river, is the little village of Nejha, standing like a ruined fortress on the summit of a rocky mound. Verdant meadows stretch along each side of the stream for some distance below it, and there presented a gay and animated appearance. A few battalions of regular soldiers, and some troops of irregular cavalry, were here encamped to check the incursions of the rebel Druzes. Little parties were seen scattered round the white tents engaged in the exciting exercise of the *jerûl*, and displaying by their sudden and graceful evolutions, not less the matchless speed, docility, and training of the noble animals they rode, than their own dexterity in managing them. But the steady discipline of the regular soldiers, and the skilful evolutions of the Kurdish light horse, were not always sufficient to resist the impetuous attacks and fierce determination of the warlike Druzes. Once and again were villages plundered, and to the very gates of the city the

daring rebels sometimes penetrated. Often have I heard the booming of the cannon and the dropping fire of the musketry during the stillness of the night, when every other sound was hushed; and there was something solemn in the thought that each deep sound was perhaps the death-knell of a human being. This is past now, and the Turkish armies are engaged in more honourable warfare. Still, except a new line of policy is adopted in the government of Syria, fresh rebellions may be with confidence anticipated.

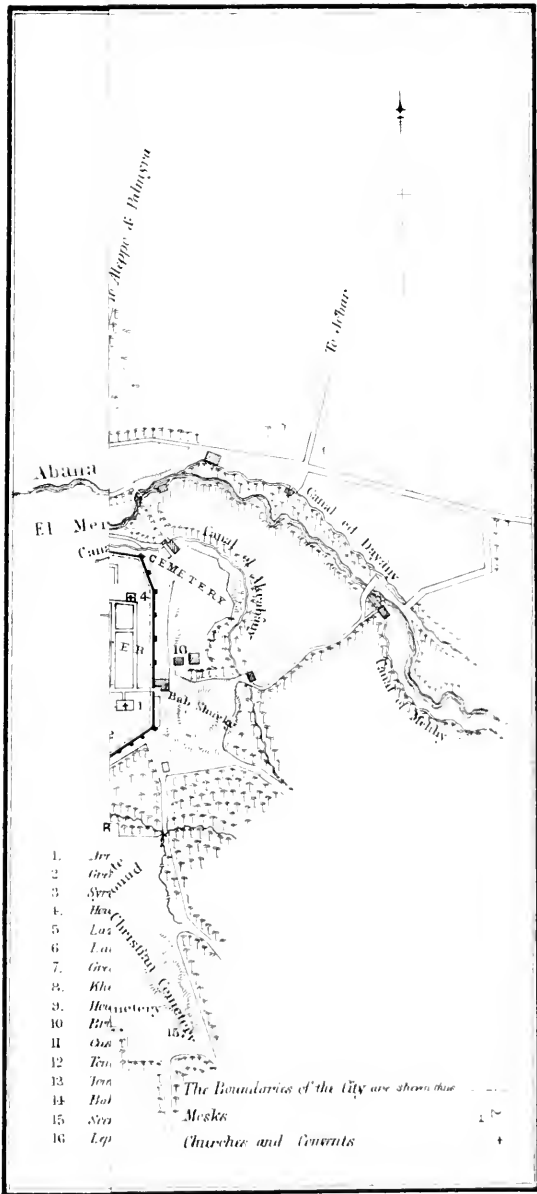
On the summit of this tell is a wely, sacred to the memory of Abu Yazîd el-Bistâny, which now forms a place of pilgrimage for many people of the surrounding country. The whole summit appears to have been at one time fortified; a deep moat encompasses it, within which are large quantities of hewn stones.

Leaving the tell, we struck across the fields in a straight course toward the city, fording in our way several deep and wide canals. These canals are singular in their structure, and, as they constitute part of a regular system, by which the whole outskirts of the plain of Damascus were once thoroughly irrigated, it may not be out of place here to describe their construction. The waters of the Barada, it has already been seen, are led off in numerous canals and ducts, and spread over the surface of the soil in the fields and gardens. And here, where this process of irrigation is going on, other canals have been tunnelled underneath the surface, to collect the superfluous water that percolates through the soil, or boils up from numerous little fountains and springs below. A stream is thus collected, and led off to a lower level, and then employed like the other canals.

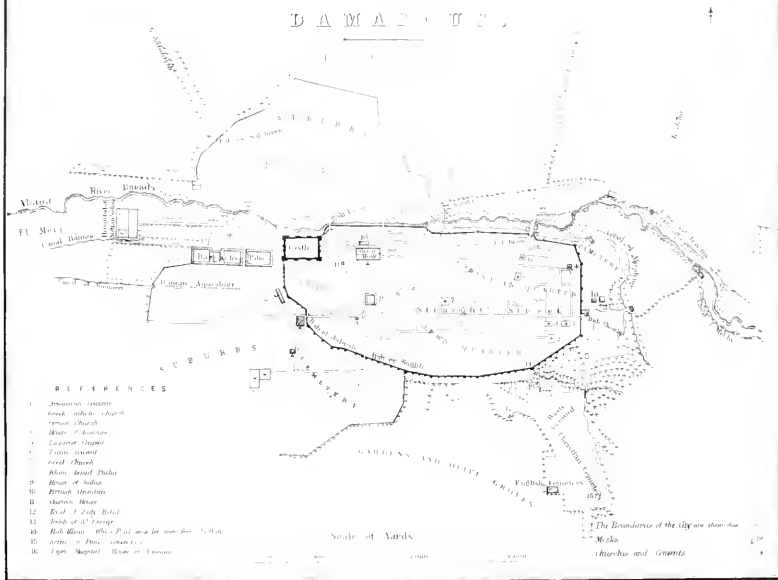
In former days these extended over the whole plain to the lakes, thus irrigating the fields and gardens in every section of it. Some of these subterranean aqueducts are now in admirable preservation, and contain large streams. The amount of labour and capital that was thus expended on the cultivation of the plain of Damascus is incalculable, and the modern inhabitants are living on the industry of their ancestors.

In one hour and twenty-five minutes we reached 'Akrāba, and in three-quarters of an hour more entered the East Gate of Damascus.

END OF VOL. I.



DAMASCUS



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