

"THOSE HOLY FIELDS"



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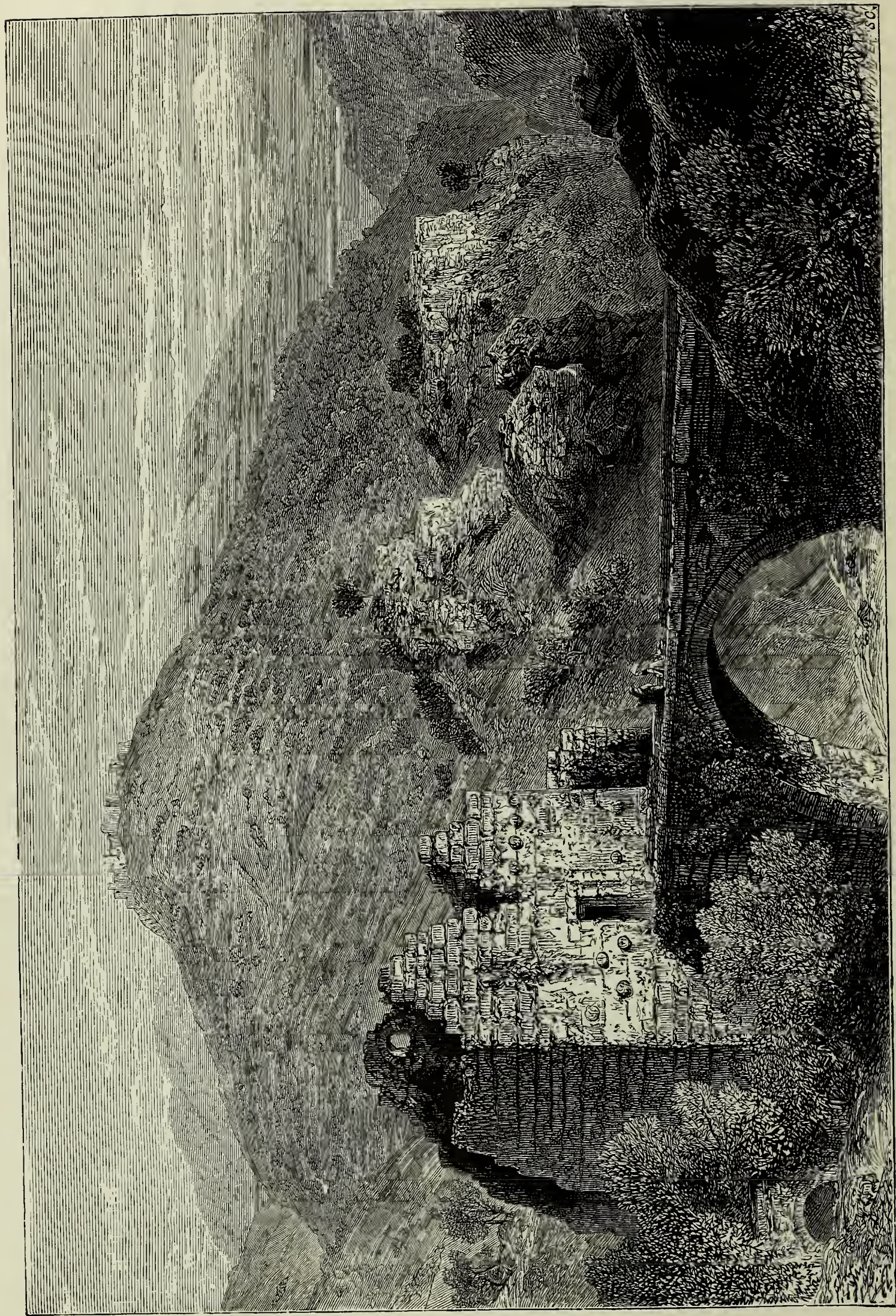


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From a Drawing by]

RANGE OF HERMON, NEAR BANIAS, OR CÆSAREA PHILIPPI, AT THE MAIN SOURCE OF THE JORDAN.

The Probable Scene of our Lord's Transfiguration.

[Mr. F. E. Blackstone.

SC.

'THOSE HOLY FIELDS'

PALESTINE

Illustrated by Pen and Pencil

BY THE

REV. SAMUEL MANNING, LL.D.

AUTHOR OF 'THE LAND OF THE PHARAOHS,' 'ITALIAN PICTURES,' 'SPANISH PICTURES,'
'SWISS PICTURES,' 'AMERICAN PICTURES,' ETC.

'Those holy fields,
Over whose acres walked those blessed feet
Which fourteen hundred years ago were nailed,
For our advantage, on the bitter cross.'

LONDON

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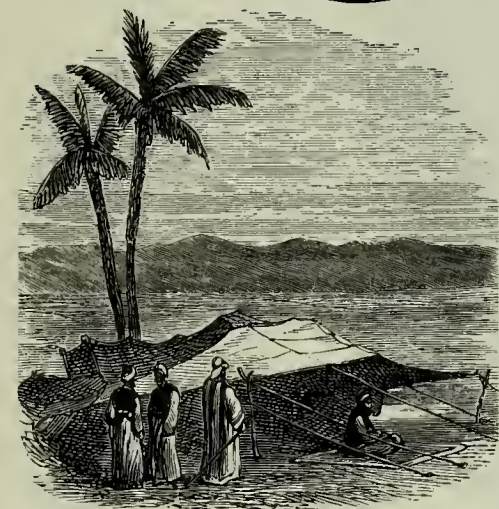
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THE journey of which a brief account is given in the following pages was undertaken in the early part of 1873. The object of the writer was to compare the *Land* and the *Book*, and by an examination of the topography of Palestine to illustrate the histories of Scripture. Had any doubt existed in his own mind as to the veracity of those histories, it must have been dispelled by the minute agreement which he traced between the indications of the narrative and the physical geography of the country. No 'fable,' however 'cunningly devised,' no myth or legend coming into existence at a later age, could have adapted itself so precisely to the topographical

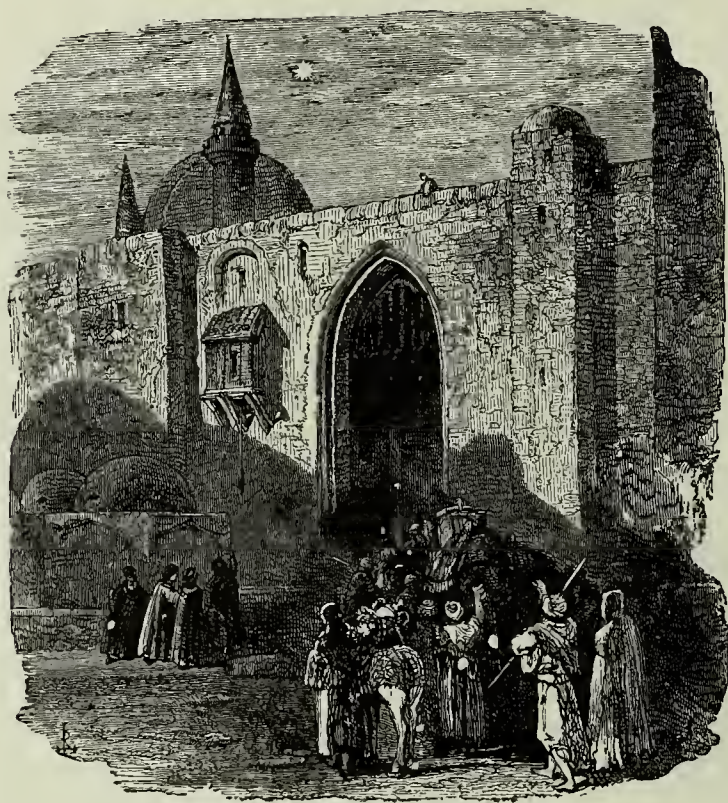


details of the scene. The main design of the present volume has been to trace these coincidences, and thus to elucidate and confirm the Biblical narrative. Whilst he has availed himself of all the help he could gain from

the writings of former travellers, he has in no case depended upon them, but endeavoured, by a personal and careful inspection of the sites, to arrive at an independent and accurate conclusion.

In the Illustrations, which form so large a part of the present volume, fidelity rather than artistic effect has been aimed at. Many of the engravings are from drawings made on the spot, but a greater number are from photographs. Those of Messrs. Bergheim and Nicodemus of Jerusalem, and Madame Bonfils of Beyrout, have been largely used for this purpose; and the writer desires to express his gratitude for the liberality with which the Committee of the Palestine Exploration Fund have placed their admirable series at his disposal.

The maps are enlarged by permission of Messrs. W. and A. Keith Johnston, from their Royal Atlas Map of Syria, which for correctness and fulness of detail is worthy of the high reputation they have long enjoyed as chartographers.



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SOUTHERN PALESTINE, OR JUDEA.

[Enlarged by permission from Keith Johnston's Map.



CHAPTER I.

JAFFA TO HEBRON.



EASTERN WATER-SELLER.

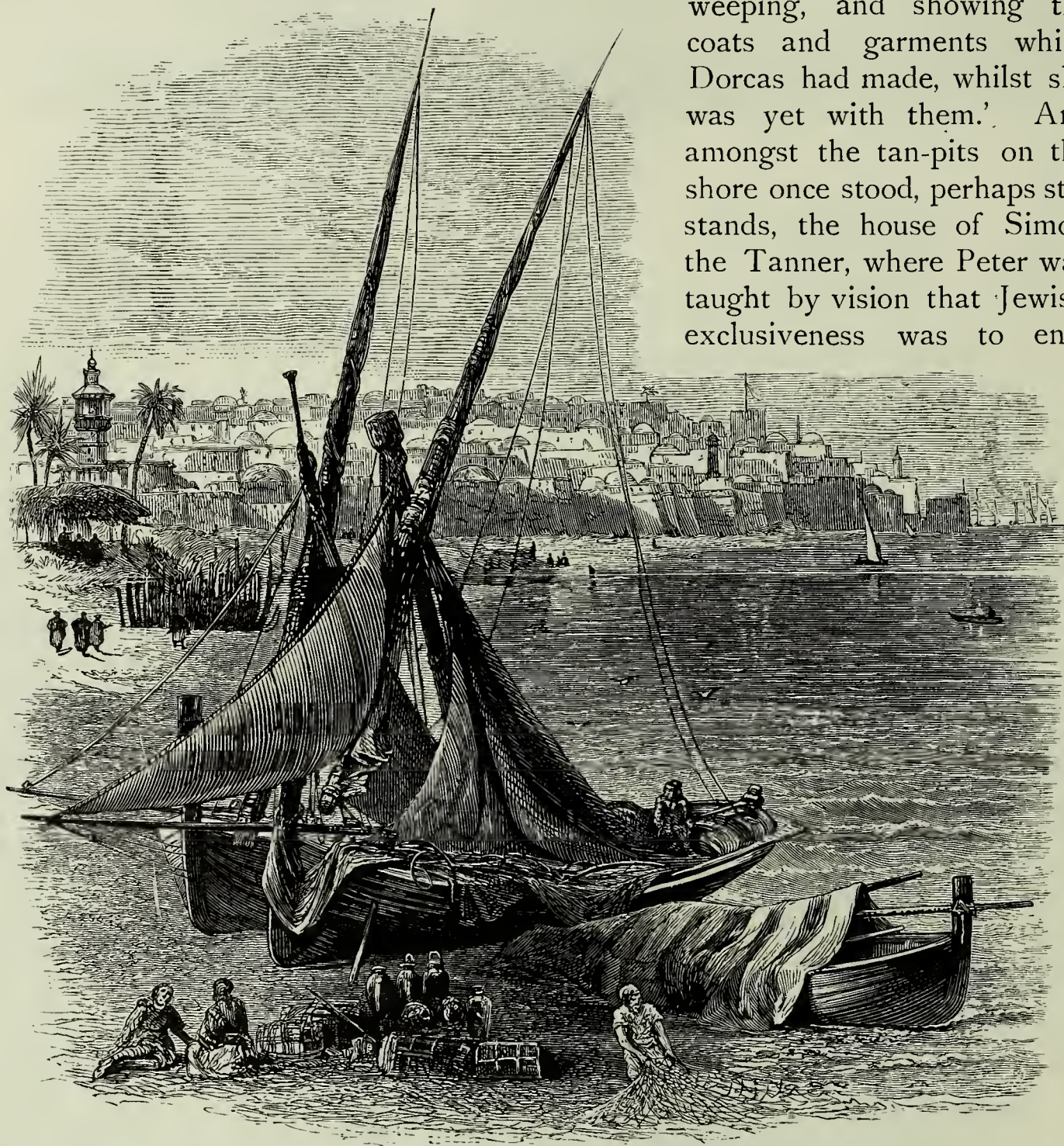
A REEF of sharp jagged rocks, over which the surf breaks fiercely, runs parallel with the shore, forming a natural breakwater. Inside the reef the water is smooth enough, but too shallow to admit anything except fishing-boats and small coasting-craft. The harbour has silted up by the sand-drift from Arabian and African deserts, so that steamers and sea-going vessels must anchor outside. Jaffa, a town of four thousand inhabitants, picturesque at a distance, as all Eastern towns are, stands on the slope of a hill and comes close down to the beach. It is encircled by a broad belt of gardens and orange groves. A rich fertile plain stretches for ten or twelve miles inland. Then a range of hills bounds the view.

This ancient port was famous both in legend and history. It is the site of the fabled rescue of Andromeda by Perseus, and the city

is declared by Pliny to have been standing before the Flood. The cedar-wood for building the Temple was sent hither by Hiram, king of

Tyre.¹ Here Jonah, flying 'from the presence of the Lord,' found a ship about to sail to Tarshish, 'so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it.'² Somewhere within the circuit of those grey walls, 'widows stood

weeping, and showing the coats and garments which Dorcas had made, whilst she was yet with them.' And amongst the tan-pits on the shore once stood, perhaps still stands, the house of Simon the Tanner, where Peter was taught by vision that Jewish exclusiveness was to end,



JAFFA FROM THE NORTH.

and that henceforth he should call 'nothing common or unclean.'³ It is our first view of

'Those holy fields,
Over whose acres walked those blessed feet
Which *eighteen* hundred years ago were nailed,
For our advantage, on the bitter cross.'

¹ 2 Chron. ii. 16 ; Ezra iii. 7.

² Jonah i. 3.

³ Acts ix. 36-43 ; x. 1-18.

A number of boats, manned by half-naked Arabs, howling, yelling, and fighting like demons, cluster round the steamer. In one of them, retained for the use of our party, the fight is so fierce that our dragoman leaps down into it, and lays about him right and left with his heavy *korbash*. This proving of no avail, he seizes one of the Arabs by the throat, and throws him into the sea, to sink or swim as it may happen. Order being at length restored, we take our seats in the boat, are skilfully steered through a gap in the reef, and soon find ourselves at the foot of some black slimy steps, leading to the Turkish custom-house. A crowd of wretched creatures press round us, clamouring for *backshish*. The unpaved road is ankle-deep in mud. Foul sights, and yet fouler smells, offend the senses. To most of my companions the sight was altogether new and strange. For myself, having had some previous experience of the filth and squalor of an Oriental town, I was not taken by surprise. But the disenchantment of the rest of the party, as they first set foot on the soil of Palestine, was complete. One American gentleman, who had come prepared to go into ecstasies, and had avowed his intention of falling on his knees on landing, to express his gratitude for being permitted to tread the sacred soil, looked round with a comical expression of bewilderment, and exclaimed, 'Is this the Holy Land?'

Picking our way through a tortuous labyrinth of dismal alleys, we found our tents pitched outside the town. The camping ground is a spot of rare beauty. The Mediterranean, of a clear crystalline blue, studded with white sails, rolls up upon the beach. The long coast-line of Philistia runs north and south. Groves of orange, lemon, citron, fig, and pomegranate, vineyards and gardens, the produce of which is famous throughout Syria, form a broad belt round the city. The plain of Sharon, bright with verdure and enamelled with flowers, stretches inland. The mountains of Ephraim, blue against the eastern sky, form a beautiful frame for a lovely picture. It was easy to understand how a name meaning 'the beautiful' should have been borne by the town for three thousand years.

The traditional house of Simon the Tanner furnishes, from its flat roof, a fine point of view for this charming scene. And there is reason to believe that the tradition is not far wrong. The house is 'by the sea-side;' ¹ the waves beat against the wall of its courtyard. An ancient well, fed by a perennial spring, furnishes the water needful for the tanner's trade; and tanneries of immemorial antiquity probably go back to the time of Peter's visit or even earlier. The vision here vouchsafed to the apostle gains a new appropriateness on this spot. Joppa has always been the port of Jerusalem. It is, indeed, the only port of Southern Palestine. Thence 'the ships of Tarshish' were seen coming and going. The 'isles of Chittim' (Cyprus) lie just below the horizon. It was the point at which the Jewish and Gentile world came into contact. Peter, looking out over the waters of

¹ Acts x. 6.

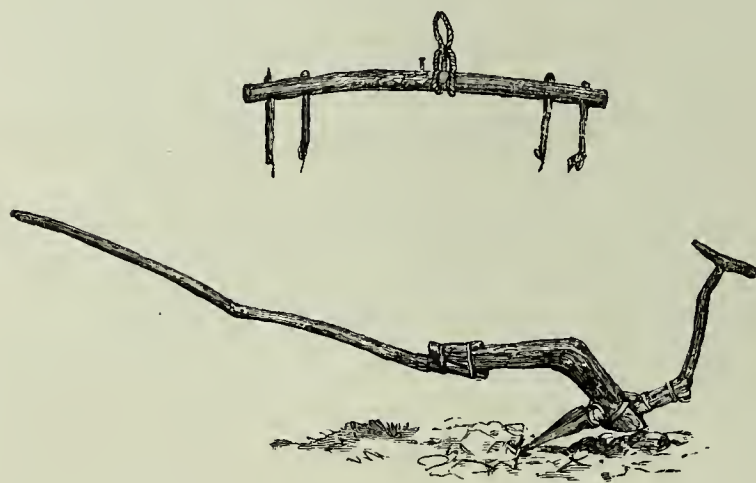
'the Great Sea' towards Greece and Rome, where the gospel was to win its greatest victories, would be at no loss to apply the lesson taught by the vision.

The history of Tabitha is fondly remembered by the people of Joppa. Tabitha or Dorcas (*i.e.* the gazelle) is partly a personal name—partly a term of endearment. An annual festival is still celebrated on the 25th of May, when the young people go out into the orange-groves around the town and spend the day, singing hymns and ballads in her honour.

In modern times Jaffa has acquired a sad notoriety from the infamous massacre of his prisoners and the alleged poisoning of his plague-stricken troops by Napoleon Bonaparte. The spot is yet pointed out where, amongst the sand-hills on the beach, four thousand Turkish and Albanian troops, who had surrendered as prisoners of war, were shot down in cold blood.

Passing out from the town we cross the PLAIN OF SHARON, the exquisite fertility and beauty of which made it to the Hebrew mind a symbol of prosperity. 'The excellency of Carmel and Sharon'¹ was proverbial. 'The earth mourneth and languisheth' when 'Sharon is like a wilderness.'² When the Most High shall again 'bring forth a seed out of Jacob, and out of Judah an inheritor of My mountains,' its first result will be that once more 'Sharon shall be a fold for flocks.'³ In the Song of Songs, 'I am the Rose of Sharon,'⁴ is the symbol to express the highest ideal of grace and beauty. As we rode across the plain, bright with the vivid green of early spring, and plucked handfuls of the innumerable flowers—cyclamens, anemones, roses, lilies, tulips, and a score of others—which gemmed the turf or grew 'unprofitably gay' amongst the corn, we could enter into the feeling of Hebrew poets and prophets as they exulted in 'the glory of Sharon.' But where were

the inhabitants? This fertile plain, which might support an immense population, is almost a solitude. Two or three wretched hamlets, mere clusters of mud huts, are the sole representatives of the numerous and thriving cities which once occupied it.⁵ Here and there was a solitary Arab breaking up the clods with a plough which remains unchanged in form from the earliest ages. These were the only signs of life we could discover. Day by



PLOUGH AND YOKE.

day we were to learn afresh the lesson now forced upon us, that the denunciations of ancient prophecy have been fulfilled to the very letter,—'the land is

¹ Isa. xxxv. 2.

² Ibid. xxxiii. 9.

³ Ibid. lxv. 10.

⁴ Cant. ii. 1.

⁵ The name of one of these hamlets, passed soon after leaving Jaffa, reminds us that we are in the old Philistine territory—Beit Dejan=Beth Dagon, *i.e.* the house of Dagon, 1 Sam. v. 2.



ON THE COAST.

left void and desolate and without inhabitants.' ¹ Within the last few years, however, there has been an improvement in some parts of the plain, arising from the establishment of a German agricultural colony near Jaffa, of a model farm supported by a society in London, and the acquisition of a considerable



PLOUGHING IN PALESTINE.

tract of land by Messrs. Bergheim of Jerusalem. The German colonists retain, unchanged, the dress and manners of their fatherland, and it is not a little curious to meet a bevy of fair-haired, blue-eyed, red-cheeked damsels driven by

¹ Isa. vi. 11-13. Jer. iv. 7; ix. 11; xxvi. 9; xxxiii. 10; xxxiv. 22; etc., etc.

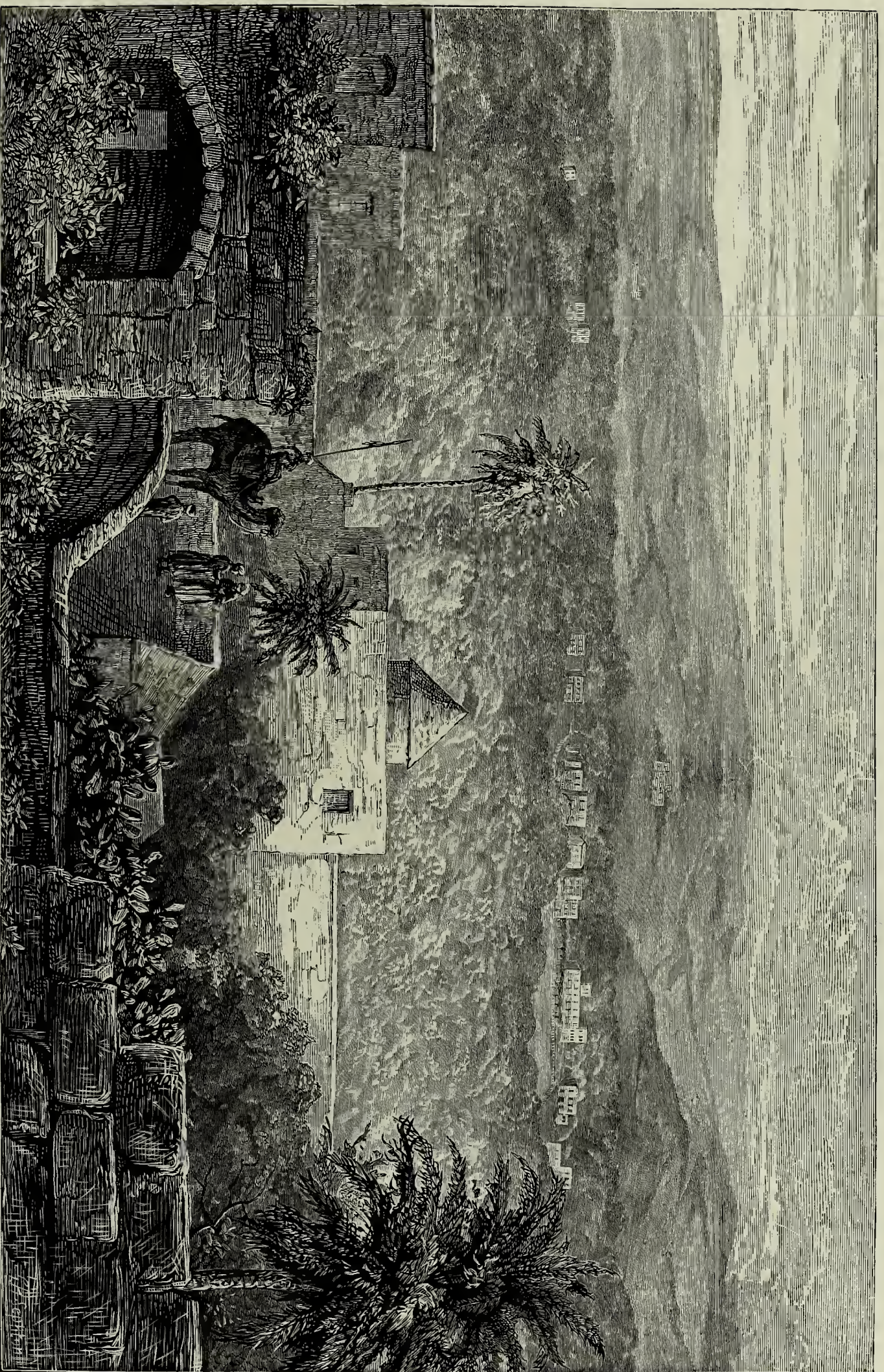
a Silesian peasant in a genuine *einspanner*, in a district made memorable by the exploits of Samson against the Philistines.

Three hours from Jaffa stands RAMLEH, which has been identified with the Ramah of the Old Testament, and the Arimathæa of the New, but without sufficient authority. Its chief object of interest is a magnificent tower,



THE TOWER OF RAMLEH.

resembling the famous Giralda of Seville, quite perfect, which rises from the ruins of an ancient khan. From the summit a superb view is gained. To the east are seen the mountains of Israel, bare and monotonous, but not without a certain impressiveness. Westward the Mediterranean stretches to the verge of the horizon. All around lies the plain of Sharon. On the slope

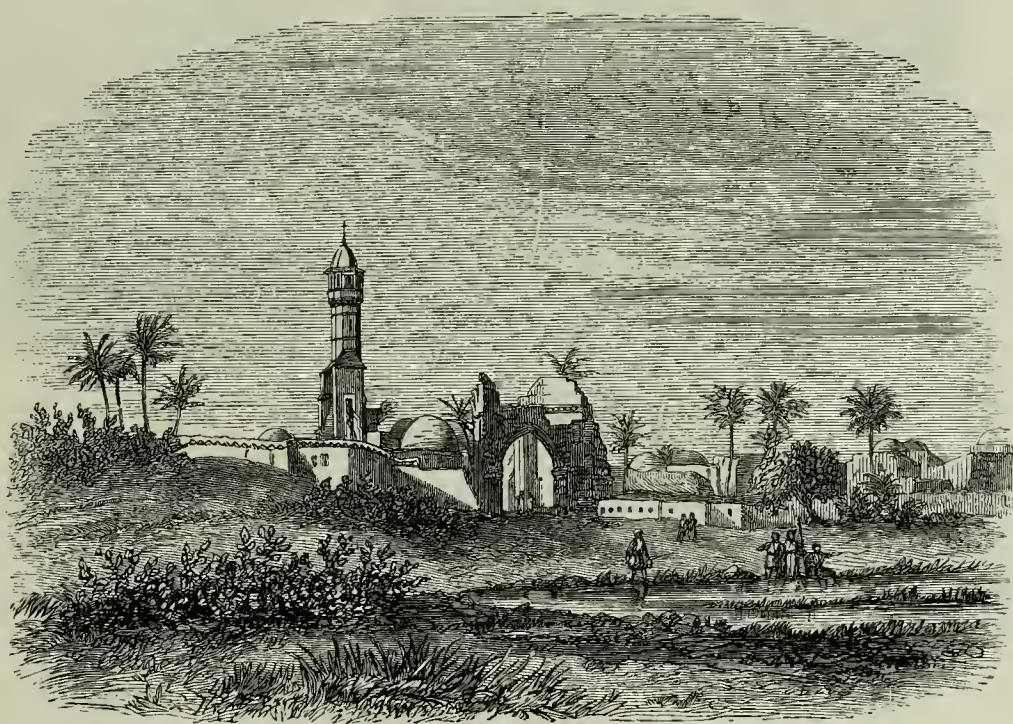


ORANGE GARDENS NEAR JAFFA, WITH THE PLAIN OF SHARON AND THE MOUNTAINS OF EPHRAIM.

of a hill about three miles distant stands a little white-walled village, conspicuous by a lofty ruined tower. It is the Lod of the Old Testament, LYDDA of the New.¹ Here Peter 'found a certain man named Æneas, which had kept his bed eight years, and was sick of the palsy. And Peter said unto him, Æneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole : arise, and make thy bed. And he arose immediately.' Here, too, he received the request of the saints at Joppa to visit them in their trouble at the death of Dorcas. As the road has remained unchanged from the earliest times, we can trace the whole route by which the sorrowing disciples came and the apostle returned with them. In hagiology, Lydda is distinguished as the birth-place of St. George, the patron saint of England. The church, the ruins of which are visible from a distance, was destroyed by Saladin, and restored by Richard Cœur de Lion.

Soon after leaving Ramleh the road begins to ascend and the country grows wilder. We are approaching the elevated plateau on which Jerusalem stands, two thousand six hundred feet above the level of the sea. Up to the time of David the whole maritime plain over which we have been riding was held by the Philistines. The defiles and passes we are now about to enter formed the marches--the debatable ground, the possession of which was contested inch by inch during successive generations. A little to the north of us stood the city of Ekron, whither the Ark of God was brought from Ashdod. We

can trace the path by which the milch-kine, yoked to the new cart on which the Ark was laid, left their calves behind them and 'went along the highway, lowing as they went, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left ; and the lords of the Philistines went after them unto the border of Beth-shemesh. And they of Beth-shemesh



LYDDA.

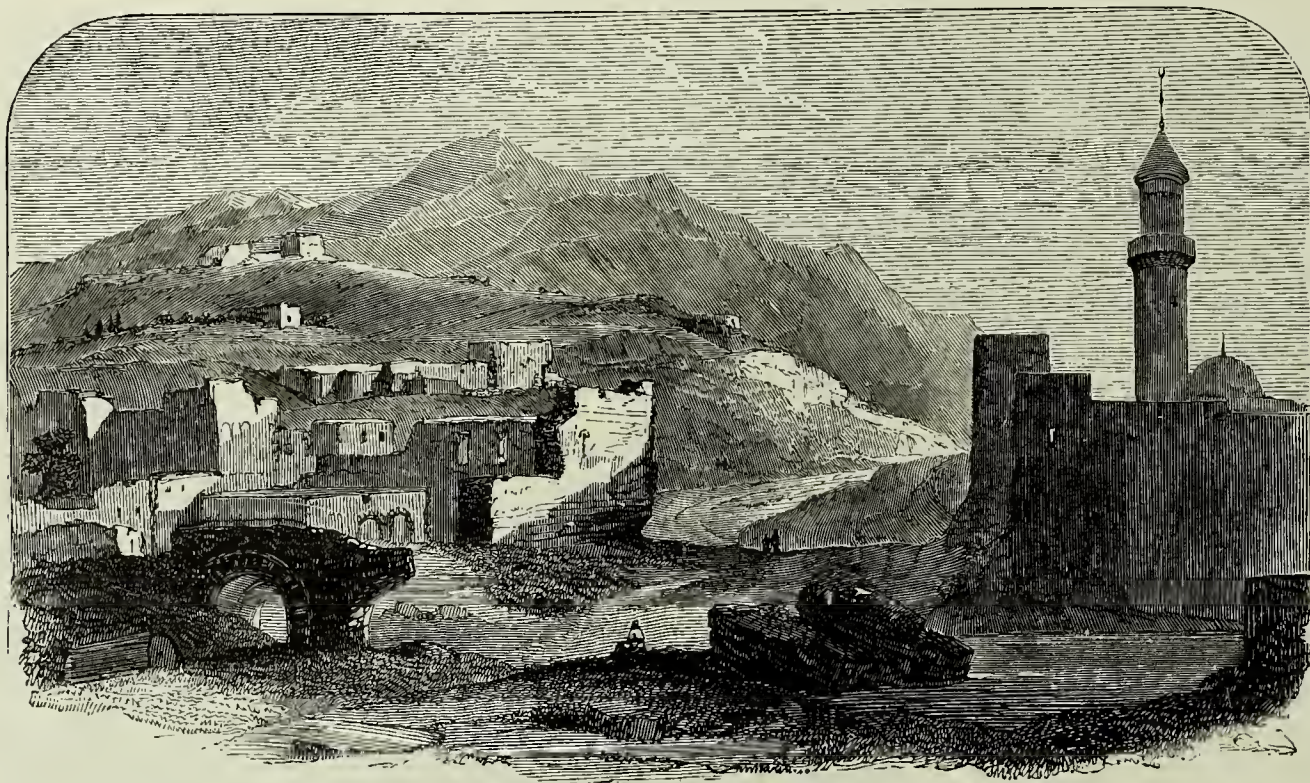
were reaping their wheat harvest in the valley : and they lifted up their eyes, and saw the Ark, and rejoiced to see it.'² The names of Ekron and Beth-shemesh are easily identified in Akir and Ain-shems. As we saw the green slopes of the hills with their fields of wheat and barley, and the labourers

¹ Chron. viii. 12. Ezra ii. 33. Neh. xi. 35: Acts ix. 32-39.

² 1 Sam. vi. 12, 13.

busy in the light of the declining sun, it was easy to realise the whole scene. Tracing the history step by step and noting how the localities exactly fell into the requirements of the narrative, it was impossible not to be struck by the precise accordance of the one with the other.

Two traditional sites are now passed—El Latron, the name of which is said to be derived from its having been the abode of the penitent thief, and Amwâs, the ancient Nicopolis, long regarded as the *EMMAUS* of the New Testament.¹ Though the identity of the latter site was for a thousand years unquestioned, and has recently been reasserted by the high authority of Dr. Robinson, it seems to me to be quite untenable. Its distance from Jerusalem is too great. The evangelist fixes it at 'threescore furlongs;'



AMWÂS, OR NICOPOLIS, THE TRADITIONAL SITE OF EMMAUS.

Amwâs is a hundred and sixty. Robinson assumes an error in the MSS., for which there is no authority; nor is it credible that the disciples should have visited Jerusalem and returned hither in the same day, as the narrative requires, making a distance of forty miles.

Just as the sun was setting we found ourselves on the summit of a hill. Below us was a tangle and labyrinth of valleys running one into another. On the opposite hill the sun was resting before he 'hasted to go down.' Our camp was pitched on the edge of a brook in the bottom of the valley, where mists and shadows were already gathering thick and heavy. It was the *VALLEY OF AJALON*, where Joshua commanded the sun to stand still. Again the topography illustrated and confirmed the narrative. Joshua,

¹ Luke xxiv. 13-35.

encamped at Gilgal in the valley of the Jordan, received intelligence that five kings of the Amorites had attacked the Gibeonites with whom he had just before made an alliance,¹ and who demanded instant succour. 'Slack not thy hand from thy servants; come up to us quickly, and save us, and help us.' Though only just before the army had required three days to reach the city,² Joshua at once ordered a forced march, which he accomplished in the course of a single night. He found the Amorites besieging Gibeon, the site of which is marked by the village of Geeb, some distance to the north-east of where we stand. Taken by surprise at this sudden and unlooked-for attack, they were 'discomfited,' 'slain with a great slaughter,' and 'chased along the way that goeth up to Beth-horon,' now Beit 'Ur el-Foka, Beth-horon the upper, on the summit of a hill looking over the plain of Sharon. Here they seem to have made a stand, but were driven down the steep rocky declivity leading to the lower Beth-horon, now Beit 'Ur et-Tahta, at the foot of the ravine. As in wild panic they were rushing down the precipitous descent, a hailstorm, perhaps accompanied by a fall of meteoric stones, added to their confusion and dismay. Slipping and falling from rock to rock, the discomfited host endeavoured to escape along the valleys below us, hotly pursued by the victorious army. The kings took refuge in a cave, the entrance to which was blocked up by the pursuers, who still pressed on after the flying foe. The sun had reached his meridian and stood over Gibeon, the pale crescent moon over Ajalon. Will the shades of evening close upon them when the victory is incomplete, giving opportunity to the Amorites to escape among the defiles which run in every direction, or to rally in the darkness? 'Then spake Joshua to the Lord . . . and he said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the Valley of Ajalon. And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies.' The victory was complete; the kings were brought out from the hiding-place and slain. 'And Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, unto the camp at Gilgal.'³

Soon after leaving the Valley of Ajalon we reach the village of Kuryet-el-enab, better known at the present day as Abu-Gosh, from the robber chief who for nearly a quarter of a century kept the Turkish power at bay, and levied blackmail on the whole district. It is identified with tolerable certainty as the ancient KIRJATH-JEARIM (*the city of forests*), though the forests from which it took its name have long since disappeared. Originally a city of the Gibeonites,⁴ it subsequently became one of the border towns marking the frontier between Judah and Benjamin. It is in consequence frequently mentioned in the mapping out and allotment of the land by Joshua.⁵ The accuracy of what has been well called 'The Doomsday Book of the Israelites' is shown

¹ Joshua ix. 3-15.² Ibid. x. 6, 7.³ Ibid. x. 8-27. See Stanley's *Sinai and Palestine*, pp. 208-212.⁴ Ibid. ix. 17.⁵ Ibid. ix. 17; xv. 9, 60; xviii. 14, 15, 28.

by the fact that these ancient records still afford invaluable aid in settling the topography of Palestine. At Kirjath-Jearim the Ark rested for twenty years



WOMEN OF THE HILL COUNTRY OF JUDÆA.

after being recovered from the hands of the Philistines and before its removal to Jerusalem by David. It was in this 'city of forests' that the royal psalmist found it in 'the fields of the wood' and brought it with songs of praise to

the place he had prepared for its reception.¹ It was very interesting to read the narrative of the bringing hither of the Ark and compare it with the surrounding scenery. 'And the men of Kirjath-Jearim came, and fetched *up* the Ark of the Lord, and brought it into the house of Abinadab *in the hill*.' The village stands on the slope of a hill trending down towards Ain-shems, the ancient Beth-shemesh. A hill rises above the town, and the ruins of an ancient church which stands on its summit may not improbably mark the site of 'the house of Abinadab.'

Shortly after leaving Abu-Gosh we descend into a broad deep valley,



WADY ES-SUMT AND KULÔNIA.

[From a Sketch by Mr. F. E. Blackstone.]

the Wady es-Sumt, enclosed by rounded hills, terraced and covered with olives to the very summit. A brook, swollen by winter rains into a torrent, brawls over a bed of pebbles brought down by it from the rocks above. It is the VALLEY OF ELAH, along which the hosts of the Amorites fled after their defeat at Beth-horon, and where the ruddy stripling from Bethlehem confronted and slew the giant of Gath.² The hills curve round, forming an amphitheatre, in which as 'the Philistines stood on a mountain on the one side, and Israel stood on a mountain on the other side, and there was a

¹ 1 Sam. vi. 21; vii. 1, 2. 1 Chron. xiii. 5. Psalm cxxxii. 6.

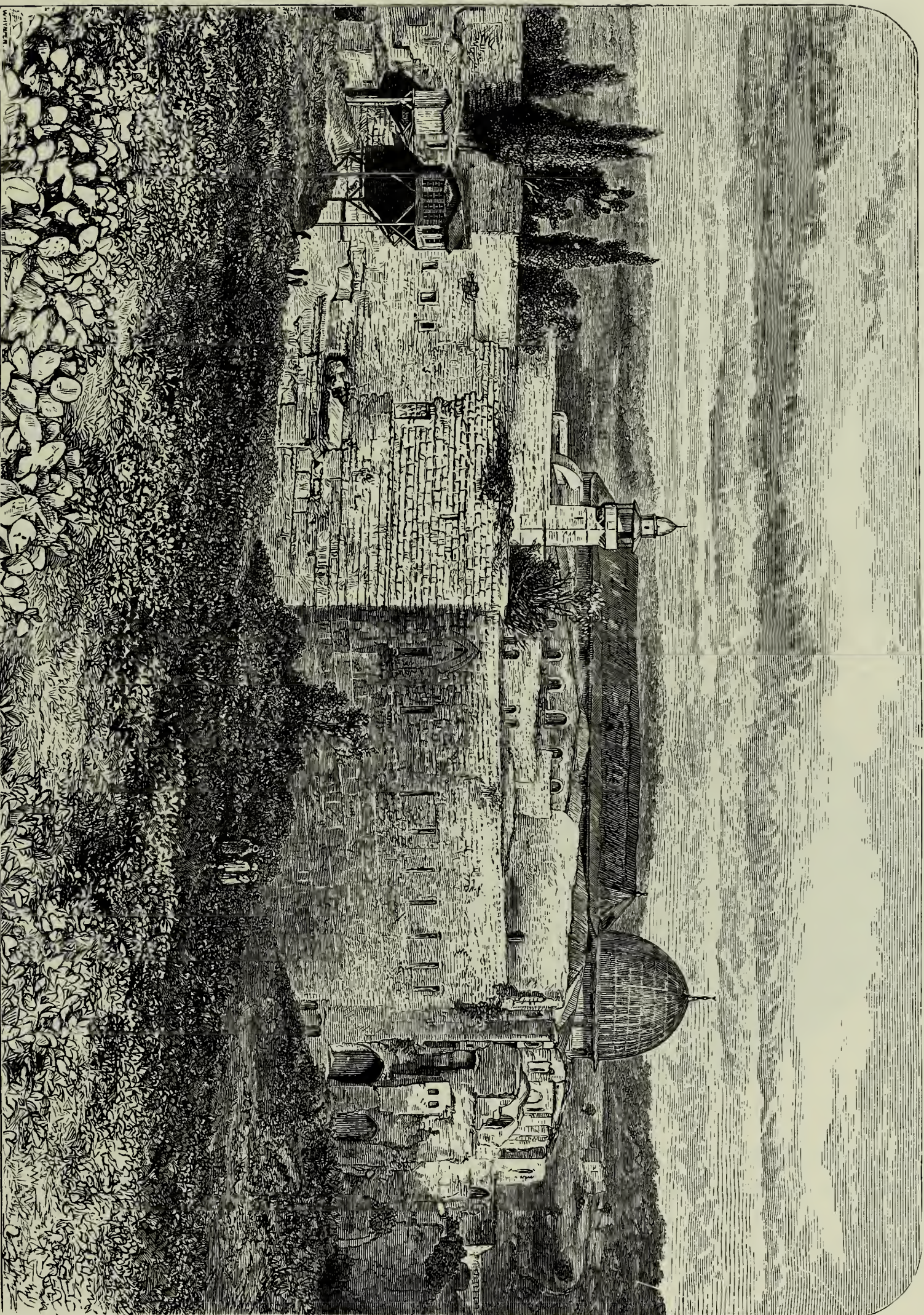
² 1 Sam. xvii.

valley between them,' the hostile armies would be able to watch the combat between their chosen champions. Bethlehem is only about ten miles distant, and the young shepherd-boy, who 'rose up early in the morning, and left the sheep with a keeper,' could easily reach the spot in time to see 'the battle set in array,' and hear the defiant challenge of the Philistine. Shocoh is represented by the village of Shuweikeh; Azekah is probably the modern Tell Zakariya; and Gath lies at no great distance on the way down to Ekron. David returning to Bethlehem by the main road, would pass through or near Jerusalem, at that time in the hands of the Jebusites: hence the statement which has caused some perplexity to commentators, that 'he took the head of the Philistine and brought it' thither.

Leaving the Valley of Elah on the way to Jerusalem the eye is arrested by a white-walled village standing on the slope of the hill, a little way off the road, but visible from it. Travellers going thither from Jerusalem must turn aside as 'they draw nigh unto it;' others 'who would go farther,' continue along the road, leaving it on the right. It is now called Kulon or Kulônia, and at least a probable conjecture regards it as EMMAUS.¹ Though there is no direct evidence of the fact, yet it fulfils all the requirements of the narrative, which, as we have seen, the traditional site fails to do. We know from Josephus that there was an Emmaus in this neighbourhood, and that a Roman garrison was stationed there. The modern name of Kulônia may not improbably represent the *Colonia*, or Roman settlement. Assuming the identification to be correct, we now, for the first time, find ourselves in the actual footsteps of Him whose 'name is above every name.' Tender, sacred, sublime, as are all the associations of the Holy Land, they must yield to thoughts of Him who was David's son and yet his Lord; who was of the seed of Abraham, and yet could say, 'Before Abraham was, I am.'

About seven miles, 'sixty furlongs,' from Kulônia we reach the summit of a broad plateau. Turning a corner of the road, a huge Russian monastery and church, with several smaller buildings, all new, crude and raw in colour, obstruct the view in front. On the right is a ravine, beyond which a series of barren wind-swept hills stretch to the horizon. Just behind the monastery is a Turkish barrack, and then a line of dim grey venerable walls. There is nothing imposing or impressive in the sight, and yet every traveller halts; even the most frivolous are awed into silence. Not a few gaze with tears upon the scene. It is JERUSALEM! The moment when its sombre turreted walls, minarets, and domes break for the first time upon the eye is one never to be forgotten. The dream, the hope of a lifetime has been fulfilled. The one thought, 'Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem,' swallows up every other. I was not surprised; I was not disappointed. The outward features of the landscape were scarcely seen. The present was lost sight of and forgotten in the memories of the past. This

¹ Luke xxiv. 13-35.



SOUTHERN WALL OF TEMPLE AREA.

From a Photograph by Mr. Berghem, Junr.

was the city of the Lord of Hosts! Here He chose to dwell between the cherubim! Here my Lord was crucified!

It was not our plan to make any stay in Jerusalem at present. We should return in a few days. I contented myself, therefore, with entering at the Jaffa gate, and clattering for a few hundred feet along the stony street. Then, retracing my steps, I rode round a portion of the southern wall and descended into the Valley of Hinnom, to rejoin my companions.

Passing the Pool of Gihon, and leaving the Hill of Evil Counsel on our left, an extensive view opens before us. The eye ranges over a vast expanse of rocky hills, covered with a sparse vegetation. Several fortified and castellated convents—Greek, Latin, Copt and Armenian—remind us that Christianity is but encamped as a foreigner in the land which gave it birth, suggest too the wild and lawless character of the people where the monks have to live as garrisons holding fortresses in an enemy's country. Several villages, each with a name which recalls events of Biblical history, come into view. One of these, conspicuous from its size and position, is Bethlehem, which we hope to visit on our return from Hebron.

An hour and a quarter after leaving Jerusalem, we approach a square whitewashed building surmounted by a dome. Except for its greater size, it differs in no respect from the ordinary tombs of Moslem saints, so numerous throughout Egypt and Syria. It is the birth-place of Benjamin, and the TOMB OF RACHEL. The present edifice is modern, but the identity of the site is undoubted, being clearly marked out by the inspired narrative, 'And they journeyed from Beth-el; and there was but a little way to come to Ephrath: and Rachel travailed, and she had hard labour. . . . And it came to pass, as her soul was in departing (for she died), that she called his name Ben-oni (*i.e.*, the son of my sorrow): but his father called him Benjamin (*i.e.*, the son of my right hand). And Rachel died, and was buried in the way to Ephrath, which is Bethlehem. And Jacob set a pillar upon her grave: that is the pillar of Rachel's grave unto this day.'¹ How deeply and permanently this event, with all its details, was impressed on the



TOMB OF RACHEL.

¹ Gen. xxxv. 16-20.

mind of the bereaved patriarch, may be gathered from the fact, that on his death-bed he recalled all the circumstances: 'As for me, when I came from Padan, Rachel died by me in the land of Canaan in the way, when yet there was but a little way to come unto Ephrath: and I buried her there in the way of Ephrath.'¹ It has been said that the roads in the East never vary, but continue to follow precisely the same course age after age. It will be noticed that, in both accounts of the death of Rachel, stress is laid upon the fact that she died and was buried 'in the way.' The tomb of Rachel still stands on the roadside.

An hour beyond Rachel's tomb brings us to a fertile, but desolate and unpeopled valley, in which stands a large old castellated khan, near which are three remarkable cisterns of great size, constructed with solid masonry, the joints of which have the peculiar bevel which is regarded as characteristic of old Jewish or Phœnician work. Their dimensions are as follows:

			Length. Feet.	Depth. Feet.	Breadth. Feet.
Upper Pool	..	..	380	25	230
Middle Pool	..	..	423	39	230
Lower Pool	..	..	582	50	175

They are fed by three perennial springs, which gush from the rock into a cavern lined with masonry in the hill above the khan, access to which is gained by a narrow doorway, and are conducted by a subterranean conduit into the upper pool. In the valley, below the lower pool, on the way to Bethlehem and Jerusalem, are traces of ancient gardens and orchards. Fruit trees are growing wild; the hills on either side are terraced; and there are indications of fountains, waterfalls, and arbours having been constructed amongst the rocks. The name by which they are known, SOLOMON'S POOLS, leads the mind to the passage in Ecclesiastes: 'I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards: I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kinds of fruits: I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees.'² Though we have no positive proof that these are relics of 'the glory of Solomon,' the probability is strong in favour of their being so.

About four hours and a half south of Solomon's Pools stands a city which contests with Damascus the distinction of being the oldest in the world; and which, in historical interest, may almost vie with Jerusalem itself—HEBRON. It has been said that the road thither is unique, as being absolutely the worst in the world. It would, however, be more correct to say that for the greater part of the distance there is no road at all. A track, indistinctly marked, crosses hill and valley, over smooth sheets of slippery rock, winding in and out amongst piles of stones, or leading into treacherous quagmires. Here and there traces of Roman pavement may be detected, or a mass of limestone rock has been cut through. In all other respects the rugged mountain-sides remain

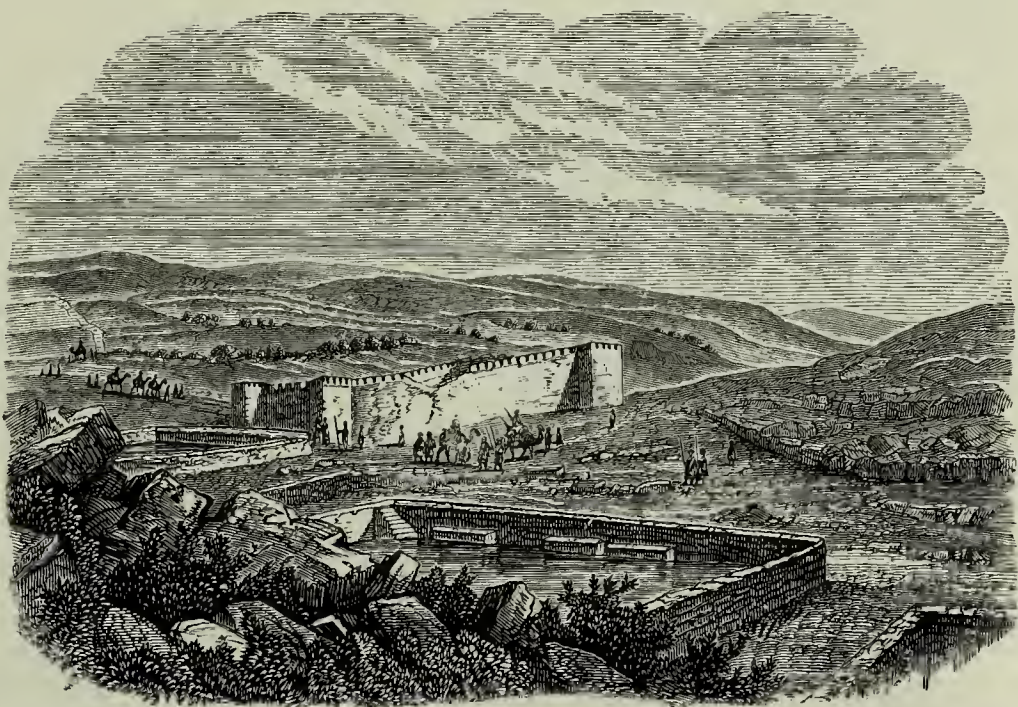
¹ Gen. xlviii. 7.

² Eccles. ii. 4-6.

unchanged. The scenery is monotonous and depressing. A succession of bare, rounded hills, absolutely treeless, and apparently hopelessly barren, stretch to the horizon in every direction. There is nothing to break the solitude, save now and then a string of camels on their way between Hebron and Jerusalem. Not a house, or sign of human habitation, is visible.

The prevailing grey tone of the landscape, save where a strip of brilliant green in the valleys marks the line of a watercourse, adds to the monotony. And yet this district, now so lonely and desolate, must at some period have been both populous and prosperous. Ruins of ancient villages are to be seen on every hand; and the lines of stones, which now add to the sterile aspect of the hill-sides, prove on examination to be the remains of artificial terraces, by means of which the steepest slopes and the scantiest soil were once brought under cultivation.¹

Shortly before reaching Hebron the road passes along a valley, the sides of which are covered



SOLOMON'S POOLS.

with figs, olives, pomegranates, peaches, and apricots. But the extent and luxuriance of the vineyards form its most striking feature. It is the VALLEY OF ESHCOL, where the spies 'cut down a branch with one cluster of grapes, and they bare it between two upon a staff; and they brought of the pomegranates, and of the figs.'² The fruit of Eshcol is to this day famous throughout Southern Palestine for its size and flavour; and as we looked around on the expanse of orchards and olive groves and vineyards, it was easy to understand the favourable report of the spies: 'We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it.' We are in the territory of Judah, and as we observed the size of the vine-stubs, and the abundance of their produce, the prophetic blessing of Jacob could not be forgotten, 'Binding his foal unto the vine, and

¹ The soil which looks so utterly and hopelessly barren is not so in reality. To an English eye the attempt to cultivate these hill-sides would appear almost madness. But the result of my inquiries was that, under proper tillage, the soil is very fertile. The reply of several peasants when questioned was, 'If we had people to till the ground, and a government that would let us live, we could grow anything.'

² Num. xiii. 23-27.

his ass's colt unto the choice vine ; he washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes : his eyes shall be red with wine, and his teeth white with milk.'¹

We noticed, too, the vineyards walled round with stones, collected from within the enclosure, each with its wine-fat and a tower, constructed, like the fences, with stones and masses of rock which would otherwise have marred the soil ; and the words of Isaiah found an exact illustration, ' My well-beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill : and he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein.'² The parable spoken by



RUINS OF TEKOA, ON THE WAY TO HEBRON.

our Lord was, at the same time, vividly illustrated. ' There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower.'³

The grapes are either eaten fresh, or dried into raisins, or boiled down into grape-honey (*dibs*), or made into wine. Of course the Mohammedans leave the production and consumption of the latter to the Jewish and Christian residents, its use being forbidden by the Koran. I found the wine of Hebron strong, but very sweet, being loaded with grape-honey, and apparently flavoured

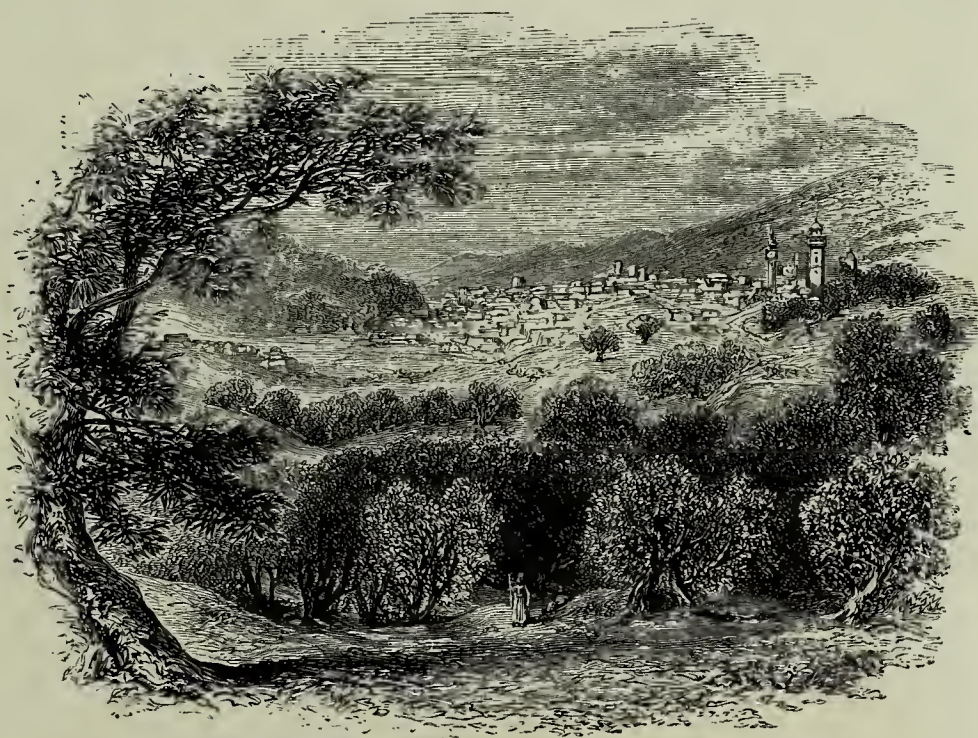
¹ Gen. xlix. 11, 12.

² Isa. v. 1, 2.

³ Matt. xxi. 33. Mark xii. 1. Luke xx. 9.

with spices, tasting much like the elderberry wine which is made in country districts in England.

The first view of Hebron is very striking. It is picturesquely situated among groves of olives, on the slope of a hill at the southern end of the valley of Eshcol. Solidly built with blocks of grey weather-beaten stone, it has an appearance of great antiquity, as befits a city reared 'seven years before Zoan in Egypt.'¹ Zoan has disappeared, but Hebron still stands, with a history which goes back for more than three thousand years. The ancient names of the city—'Kirjath-Arba, the city of Arba the father of Anak, which city is Hebron,'² are no longer used. But its modern name is strangely impressive and affecting. It is now known as El-Khulil, that is, *The Friend*, leading the mind back to the title given to the illustrious patriarch by God Himself, 'Abraham, My friend.'³ It is by this name that he is always known throughout the Mohammedan world; and the epithet has passed over from the patriarch himself to the city with which he was so intimately associated.



HEBRON, FROM THE NORTH-EAST.

Very early in the life of Abraham we find him encamped 'in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and he built there an altar unto the Lord.'⁴ He and his nephew Lot had parted. Lot had chosen the well-watered and luxuriant plain of the Jordan, which lies just across the range of hills on the western slope of which Hebron stands; and Abraham had remained on the elevated plateau, which was henceforth to be inseparably associated with himself and his descendants.

It was whilst encamped at Mamre that he received tidings of the disaster which had fallen upon his nephew. Chedorlaomer, King of Elam, with his allies, had attacked and sacked the cities of the plain, had carried away Lot as captive, and, laden with spoil, was returning to his own country. Abraham at once collected his clan, 'born in his own house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued them unto Dan,'⁵ the extreme northern city of Palestine. A

¹ Num. xiii. 22.

² Joshua xxi. 11.

³ 2 Chron. xx. 7. Isa. xli. 8. James ii. 23.

⁴ Gen. xiii. 18.

⁵ Ibid. xiv. 14.

battle was fought, in which Chedorlaomer was slain, his army routed, and Lot with his family delivered from captivity.

Some years now passed by, in which the names of Hebron and Mamre do not occur, though it is probable that some of the incidents recorded happened there. Then 'the Lord appeared unto him in the plain of Mamre: and he 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.' The prompt hospitality of the patriarch was just such as would be offered by an Arab sheikh at the present day. Travellers have delighted to illustrate the history by narrating similar incidents in their own experience. Soon the mysterious visitants 'rose up from thence, and looked toward Sodom: and Abraham went with them to bring them on the way' over the ridge of hills which divided Mamre from the doomed city. Two of them continued their journey, 'and went toward Sodom.' The third remains—it is the Lord Himself, the Angel of the Covenant. He discloses to Abraham the impending destruction of the cities of the plain, which would involve Lot and his family in the general ruin. The patriarch, who had once before rescued his nephew from the cruelty of man, now ventures to interpose between him and the judgments of God. His fervent prayer having reached its end, 'the Lord went His way, as soon as He had left communing with Abraham: and Abraham returned unto his place.'¹ With the dawn of day we find him an eager watcher from the hill-top above his tent. 'Abraham gat up early in the morning to the place where he stood before the Lord: and he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain, and beheld, and, lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace.'² It affords an interesting confirmation of this part of the narrative that from the summit of the hill just above the traditional site of Mamre a view may be gained, through a notch of the dividing ridge, right down into the desolate valley beyond.

Hebron next comes before us as the scene of bereavement. 'And Sarah died in Kirjath-Arba; the same is Hebron in the land of Canaan: and Abraham came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her.' He, to whom the whole land had been promised in 'a covenant which could not be broken,' possessed not a foot of soil in it, and must buy a grave saying, 'that I may bury my dead out of my sight.' The negotiation with the sons of Heth which followed, is finely characteristic of the courtesy, the generosity, and the practical wisdom of the bereaved patriarch. The purchase of the cave of Machpelah is effected and the place of burial is transferred, the narrative of the completion of the purchase being recorded in terms, the precision of which is like that of a legal document.³ Sarah is buried there, and 'then Abraham gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years; and was gathered to his people. And his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah.'⁴

¹ Gen. xviii. 1, 2, 16, 33.

² Ibid. xix. 27, 28.

³ Ibid. xxiii. 2-20.

⁴ Ibid. xxv. 8, 9.

Yet again we read that 'Jacob came unto Isaac his father unto Mamre, unto the city of Arbah, which is Hebron, where Abraham and Isaac sojourned. And the days of Isaac were an hundred and fourscore years. And Isaac gave up the ghost, and died, and was gathered unto his people, being old and full of days: and his sons Esau and Jacob buried him.'¹



HEBRON, AND MOSQUE OVER THE CAVE OF MACHPELAH.

Here Jacob lived after the death of his father, and hence he sent the beloved son of his beloved Rachel to visit his brethren at Shechem.² Here, too, he buried Leah, as Sarah and Rebekah had already been laid side by side. And 'he gave commandment concerning his bones,' that the same sacred enclosure should be his last resting-place.³ Hither his embalmed body was

¹ Gen. xxxv. 27-29.

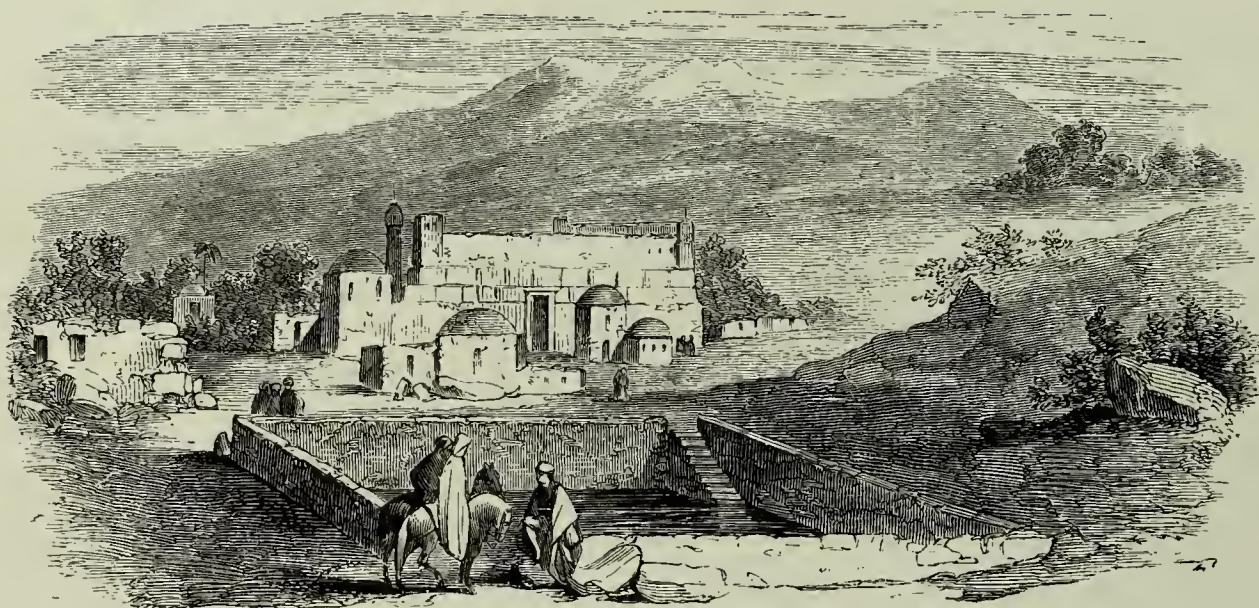
² Ibid. xxxvii. 1-14.

³ Ibid. xlix. 29-33.

brought with all the pomp and ceremonial of mourning for which Egypt was famous, and here, probably, the mummy of the last of the three great patriarchs rests to this day.¹

We have already seen that the spies, starting from Kadesh-Barnea, passed through Hebron when sent up 'to spy out the land.'² One of them, Caleb the son of Jephunneh, faithful among the faithless, had rebuked the fears of the people, and 'wholly followed the Lord God of Israel.' To him and his heirs Hebron had been promised as the reward of his fidelity. After the defeat of the Ammonites by Joshua, when the city was stormed and sacked by the victorious Israelites, Caleb claimed the fulfilment of this promise, 'And Joshua blessed him, and gave unto Caleb the son of Jephunneh Hebron for an inheritance.'³

For some time onward, Hebron receives only slight and passing mention. But in this old royal city, hallowed by so many associations, David established



POOL OF HEBRON.

his throne on the death of Saul, and here he reigned as king of Judah for 'seven years and six months.'⁴ Soon Hebron again comes before us as a place of burial. Abner, falling a victim to the vengeance and ambition of Joab, who slew him in the gate of the city, received a magnificent funeral, and King David himself followed the bier, and they buried Abner in Hebron, and the king lifted up his voice and wept, and all the people wept.⁵ A tomb is yet shown and regarded with great reverence as that of Abner.

One spot in the suburbs of Hebron we are enabled to associate with the residence of David here. There are two tanks or pools just outside the

¹ Gen. i. 1-13. It will be observed that the historian lays special stress upon the embalment. 'And Joseph commanded his servants the physicians to *embalm* his father: and the physicians *embalmed* Israel. And forty days were fulfilled for him; for so are fulfilled the days of those which are *embalmed*.' ² Num. xiii. 22.

³ Ibid. xiii. 33; xiv. 6-24; xxxii. 12. Joshua xiv. 6-15; xv. 13.

⁴ 2 Sam. ii. 2-11. 1 Kings ii. 11. 1 Chron. iii. 1-4.

⁵ 2 Sam. iii. 22, 39.

city gate, evidently of great antiquity. It was here that he executed the murderers of Ish-bosheth, the son of Saul. 'And David commanded his young men, and they slew them, and cut off their hands and their feet, and hanged them up over the pool in Hebron. But they took the head of Ish-bosheth, and buried it in the sepulchre of Abner in Hebron.'¹

When the tribes of Israel came down to Hebron, and made David king over all the land, the interest and importance of the city ceased. Only once again does it appear in history. Here Absalom came and raised the standard of revolt against his father, and 'sent spies throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, As soon as ye hear the sound of the trumpet, then shall ye say, Absalom reigneth in Hebron.'²

The name does not occur in the New Testament, nor does our Lord appear to have visited it in the course of His ministry; but on the flight into Egypt, when Joseph 'arose and took the young Child

and His mother by night,'³ they must have passed through the city and probably rested here on the first night of the journey.



From a Photograph.

ENTRANCE TO MOSQUE.

¹ 2 Sam. iv. 12.

² 2 Sam. xv. 10.

³ Matt. ii. 14.

Great and various as is the interest associated with Hebron, that interest culminates in the cave of Machpelah. Here lie the bodies of the three great patriarchs—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, with their wives—Sarah, Rebekah, and Leah. Mohammedan tradition affirms that the embalmed body of Joseph, likewise, rests here, and his cenotaph is in the mosque over the cave, with those of the other patriarchs.¹

It is thus the most interesting *Campo Santo* in the world, and shares with Jerusalem the distinction of being regarded with reverence alike by Jews, Christians, and Mohammedans. If it were possible for us to ascertain with certainty the sepulchre of our Lord, we should approach it with yet deeper feelings of awe and reverence, though He lay there only for thirty-six hours. But in seeking the place 'where the Lord lay,' we have nothing to guide us but vague conjecture and dubious tradition. Here, however, the identification is absolute and beyond the reach of scepticism. Guarded with superstitious

care for more than three thousand years, we can feel complete confidence that 'the Father of the faithful' and 'the Friend of God' lies here with his sons.

The entrance to the cave appears to have been in the face of a projecting mass of rock—there are many such round Hebron—which rose in the field of Ephron the Hittite. The trees which bordered it² were probably co-extensive with the walls which now enclose the Haram of the Mosque. At a



ROOF OF MOSQUE OVER MACHPELAH.

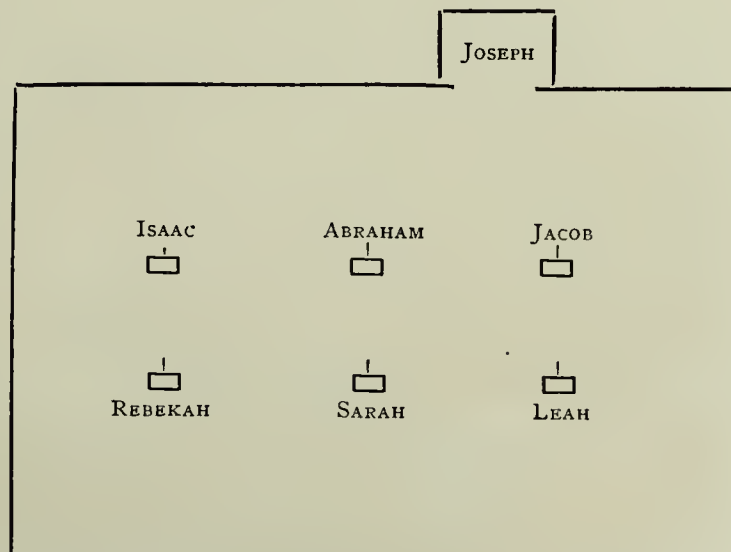
very early period, probably not later than the times of David or Solomon, an edifice was erected over the cave. The stones are of great size, with the characteristic Jewish bevel. Dr. Wilson measured one which was thirty-eight feet in length. The architecture is peculiar, being neither Saracenic nor Christian. A series of flat pilasters stand round the sides. From the main entrance a flight of stone steps runs up between the outer wall and the mosque.

¹ We learn from Gen. l. 25, 26, Exod. xiii. 19, and Joshua xxiv. 32, that Joseph gave strict commands to his descendants that his body should be carried back into Canaan, that it was embalmed and placed in a coffin, that in the confusion of the flight out of Egypt his dying injunction was not forgotten, and that, 'the bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel brought up out of Egypt, buried they in Shechem, in a parcel of ground which Jacob bought of the sons of Hamor' (Joshua xxiv. 32). The Mohammedan tradition is that the mummy was afterwards removed to Machpelah. The ambiguous statement of Stephen (Acts vi. 16) seems to imply that though buried at Shechem he was yet laid in the sepulchre with Abraham. A passage in Josephus (*Ant.* ii. 8, 2) may bear the same meaning; and the spot pointed out as that of Joseph's tomb is in perfect accordance with this view, it being detached from that of the others at one corner of the mosque, as though the wall had been broken through at a later period than the previous interments, and after the main entrance into the cave had been finally closed up.

² Gen. xxiii. 17.

We thus rise from the bottom of the cliff, in the face of which was the entrance of the cave, up to the top. Into the cave itself no one is allowed to enter. Even the mosque is guarded with jealous care. No Jew or Christian had been permitted to set foot within it, until, after immense difficulty, permission was granted to the Prince of Wales and his suite in the year 1862. Within the last few years the severity of the restriction has been somewhat relaxed. In the year 1873, I was allowed to go about halfway up the flight of steps outside the mosque, and to put my hand through a hole in the wall which I was told led into the cave. I was then led round the outside on to the roof, that I might look down through the lattice-work of a tower into the mosque. All, however, was perfectly dark, and I could see nothing. The locality of the shrines was pointed out to me, which agreed with the description given by Dean Stanley in the narrative of his visit with the Prince of Wales.

It is to Dean Stanley that we are indebted for our knowledge of the interior. He found the chapels or shrines of the patriarchs and their wives, arranged in order, over the places where the bodies were said to lie in the cave beneath. They stand as in the annexed plan:



ARRANGEMENT OF TOMBS IN CAVE OF MACHPELAH.

As we turn away from the secret and mysterious cave, where lie the ashes of the illustrious dead, under the jealous care of their Arab guardians, hallowed memories and yet more hallowed hopes suggest themselves. The hushed silence of well-nigh four thousand years shall one day be broken, and He who is 'the resurrection and the life' shall call forth the sleepers from their resting-place of ages.

'What though the Moslem mosque be in the valley !
Though faithless hands have sealed the sacred cave !
And the red prophet's children shout "El Allah"
Over the Hebrews' grave !

Yet a day cometh when those white walls shaking
Shall give again to light the living dead ;
And Abraham, Isaac, Jacob reawaking
Spring from their rocky bed.'

On the return from Hebron a slight detour by a road leading through vineyards brings us to a magnificent tree known as ABRAHAM'S OAK. Here, according to tradition, Abraham sat at the door of his tent, when he received

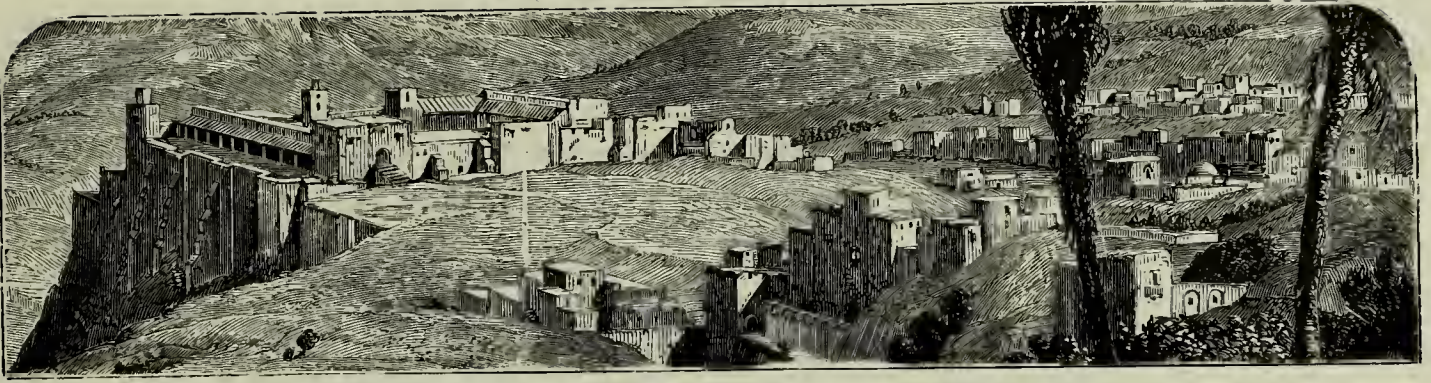
the visit of the angels.¹ It is a stately Syrian oak, of the species known to the Arabs as *Sindiân*. Though of great age it is obviously later than the Christian era. Yet it well deserves a visit, not only for its great size and beauty, but as the last survivor of the grove of oaks which stood here in Patriarchal and Hebrew times. It measures twenty-three feet round the trunk, and its branches cover an area in one direction of fifty feet, and of ninety feet in another. Its situation answers admirably to the Biblical description of Mamre, being 'before' or 'over against' Machpelah, whilst from the hill above it a view, already referred to,² of the plain of Sodom is gained. Here, therefore, I should fix the site of Mamre rather than at Rhamet el Khulil (the Hill of the Friend), which stands some distance to the north.

¹ Gen. xviii. 1-8.

² Ibid. xix. 28.



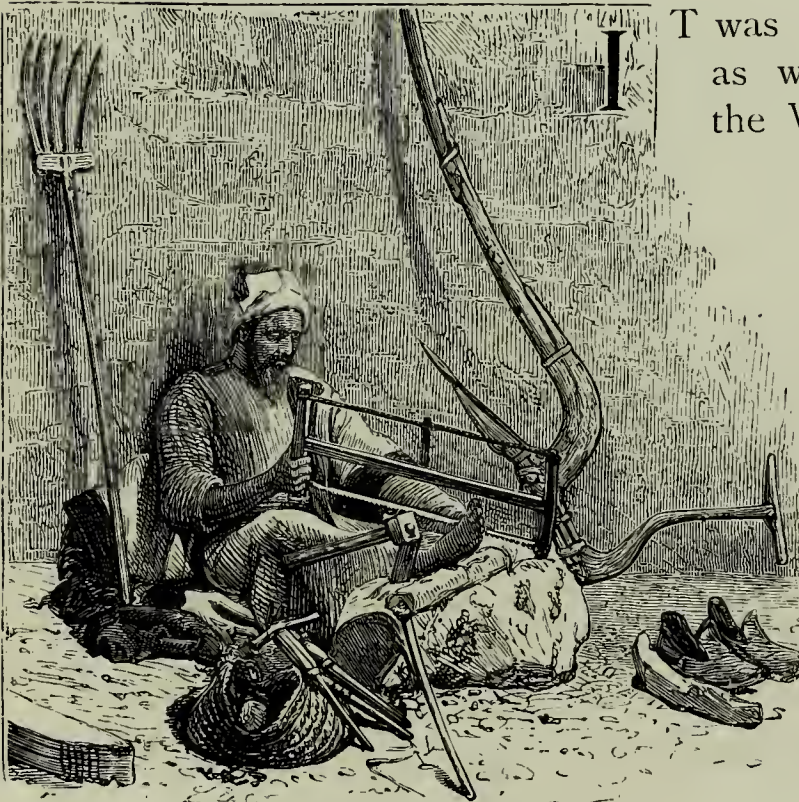
ABRAHAM'S OAK, NEAR HEBRON



CHURCH OF THE NATIVITY AT BETHLEHEM.

CHAPTER II.

BETHLEHEM TO THE DEAD SEA.



CARPENTER MAKING A PLOUGH.

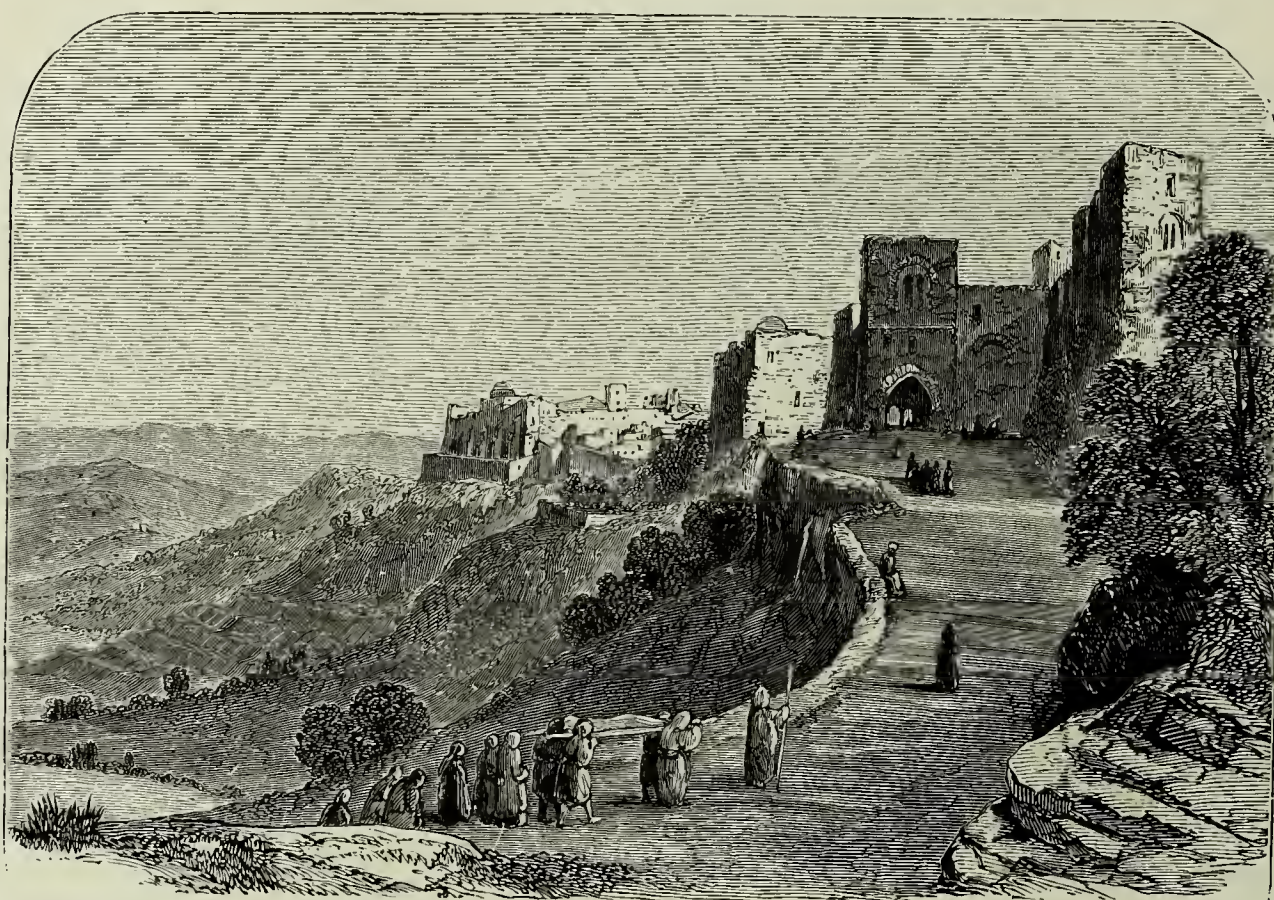
It was a brilliant morning in early spring as we rode along the hill-side over the Wady Urtas from Solomon's Pools to BETHLEHEM. The turf was vividly green, gemmed with innumerable flowers. Orchards of peach, apricot, and pomegranate with their white and scarlet blossoms, succeeded one another in an unbroken series along the valley. The conduit, which conducts the water from Solomon's Pools to Jerusalem, and which in ancient times supplied the Temple, was open in various places, and we could see the crystal stream flash past on its way to 'make glad the city of God.'¹ The Jebel

Fureidis, a steep conical mountain, visible from almost every point in Southern Palestine, formed a striking object in the landscape. 'The little hills rejoice on every side; the pastures are clothed with flocks; the valleys also are covered over with corn; they shout for joy, they also sing.'² Wherever we turn our eyes the words of the Psalmist are suggested as the aptest description of the scenery. It was easy to see where the Shepherd of Bethlehem drew the materials for his poetry.

¹ Psa. xlv. 4. It has been conjectured that the reference in the text is to the bringing of this very stream to Jerusalem. A river, in the common sense of the term, there could never have been in or near the city.

² Psa. lxxv. 12, 13.

Soon Bethlehem¹ comes into view—a white-walled village of about three thousand inhabitants, all professedly Christians. They are, however, a turbulent, quarrelsome set, ever fighting amongst themselves or with their neighbours. In the disturbances which take place so frequently at Jerusalem, it is said that the ringleaders are commonly found to be Bethlehemites. The women are remarkable for personal beauty. I saw more handsome faces here in a few hours than elsewhere in the East in many days. The dress, which is peculiar, is very becoming. A sort of tiara of some bright metal encircles the head, over which is folded a white cloth which hangs down upon the shoulders. The men are strong, lithe, well-built fellows, and I saw several young shepherds, who were models of manly vigour. Here, as elsewhere in the East, the



GATE OF BETHLEHEM.

pastoral pipe is in constant use. The shepherd-lad makes it for himself, shaping the mouth-piece out of some hard wood, and using a hollow reed for the pipe. I cannot say much in praise of the music they produce.

Bethlehem stands on the crest of a ridge of Jurassic limestone. As it is surrounded by higher hills, however, the view from it is not very extensive. Jerusalem, though only six miles distant, is hidden by an intervening height; but through the valleys stretching away eastward to the Dead Sea, fine views are gained of the mountains of Moab, and from the flat roof of the Latin Convent part of the Dead Sea itself is visible.

¹ The name Bethlehem—*the house of bread*—is probably a translation of the older name Ephrath, or Ephratah—*the fruitful*. The modern name, Beit-lahm—*the house of flesh*—is an Arabic reproduction of the sound and meaning.

Passing over the two disgraceful events connected with Bethlehem, during the period of anarchy described in the concluding chapters of the Book of Judges,¹ we come to that exquisite idyll, the beauty of which, apart from its



WOMEN OF BETHLEHEM.

religious bearing, invests the scene with a charm amounting to fascination. Read the history of Ruth on the spot, and every minutest detail acquires a new interest and meaning. We can trace the journey of Elimelech and his

¹ Judges xvii., xix.

family, as, driven by stress of famine, they make their way toward that long line of purple mountains against the eastern sky—some twenty miles distant.



SHEPHERD OF BETHLEHEM.

We see the two childless widows return—Naomi, proud and bitter in her poverty and bereavement, rejecting the greetings of the townspeople: ‘Call me not Naomi (*pleasant*), call me Mara (*bitter*): for the Almighty hath dealt

very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home again empty : why then call ye me Naomi, seeing the Lord hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me?¹ We see the young Moabitess



EASTERN GLEANERS.

with her strange beauty and gentleness winning all hearts. Amongst the youths and maidens around us, it is easy to believe that her descendants are not wanting.

¹ Ruth i. 20, 21.

We may still see the fields of wheat and barley in the valley below us from which 'Boaz went *up* to the gate.'¹ We may still hear the very same greeting as when 'Boaz said unto the reapers, The Lord be with you. And they answered him, The Lord bless thee.'² We may see the reapers resting at noon-day, sheltered from the fierce heat of the sun by some spreading tree, dipping their morsel of bread into the vinegar or eating their parched corn from the ears,³ the gleaners bearing home the wheat and barley they have gathered in the coarse cloth which serves the peasant women for a veil, or beating it out by the roadside that they may carry it more easily.⁴ Yonder are the threshing-floors in the field where the master will spend the nights of harvest to protect his produce from robbers.⁵ And here is the gate of the city where Boaz sat with the elders to redeem the possession that was Elimelech's and take the beautiful young widow to wife.⁶ Well was the nuptial benediction fulfilled, 'The Lord make the woman that is come into thine house like Rachel and like Leah, which two did build the house of Israel: and do thou worthily in Ephratah, and be famous in Bethlehem.'⁷

Nearly a hundred years must have elapsed before we hear again of Bethlehem, for the grandson of Boaz and Ruth is now an old man.⁸ He is the father of eight stalwart sons, the youngest of whom keeps his father's sheep upon the mountain-side. Though treated as of no account by the elders of the family,⁹ he is yet called David (*the darling*), is described as ruddy, blue-eyed, and beautiful;¹⁰ he is already famous as a musician, and has distinguished himself for strength, courage, wit, and piety.¹¹ These qualities commend him to the servants of Saul, and he is chosen to play before the moody king, and charm away his gloom.¹²

The life of a Bethlehemite shepherd was one of no common toil and danger, and it remains so down to the present day. Hordes of wandering Bedouin are waiting to swoop down upon the flocks and herds of the peaceful inhabitants, and need to be watched against with ceaseless vigilance and repelled with fearless courage. Bears descend from the neighbouring mountains. Lions have disappeared, but in the days of David they came up from their lairs in the valley of the Dead Sea, driven forth by the swelling of the Jordan. The prowess of the shepherd lad had been tried against these familiar perils.¹³ Yet, modest and pious, as he was strong and bold, he ascribes his success to the Lord, who taught his hands to war and his fingers to fight.¹⁴ No wonder that He who 'seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart,'¹⁵ should have rejected the elder sons of Jesse and directed His prophet to anoint the youngest as the future king.

¹ Ruth iv. 1.² Ibid. ii. 4.³ Ibid. ii. 14.⁴ Ibid. ii. 17; iii. 15.⁵ Ibid. iii. 7.⁶ Ibid. iv. 1-11.⁷ Ibid. iv. 11, 12.⁸ 1 Sam. xvii. 12.⁹ Ibid. xvi. 11; xvii. 28.¹⁰ Ibid. ver. 23.¹¹ Ibid. xvi. 12 (*see margin*); xvii. 42.¹² Ibid. xvi. 18.¹³ 1 Sam. xvii. 34-37.¹⁴ Psa. cxliv. 1.¹⁵ 1 Sam. xvi. 7.

His chequered fortunes now lead him away from Bethlehem, and we hear of him no more in his actual birthplace. But the cave of Adullam was not far distant. The limestone rocks of the district abound in caves, many of them of great size. The one which is said by tradition to have been the retreat of David and his followers is about five miles from Bethlehem, near the base of Jebel Fureidis, or the Frank Mountain, already spoken of as so striking an object in the landscape.¹ It is approached by a savage ravine, after which a steep ascent leads upward by a path so narrow that a handful of brave men might keep a whole army at bay. The entrance to the cave is by a small opening through which only a single person can pass at a time. This leads to a series of chambers, some large enough to hold several hundred men.

A perfect labyrinth of galleries and passages, never fully explored, stretch in every direction, and are said by the Arabs to go as far as Tekoa. In one of them is a large cistern, supplied, probably, by filtration through the rock above. The largest chamber has an arched roof with numerous recesses in the sides, reminding visitors of a Gothic cathedral. Here David, living in the midst of his own clan, would be promptly warned of the approach of danger, and could easily receive supplies of food. The summit of the hill above commands a view of the whole surrounding district, so that the movements of his enemies could be



ENTRANCE TO CAVE OF ADULLAM.

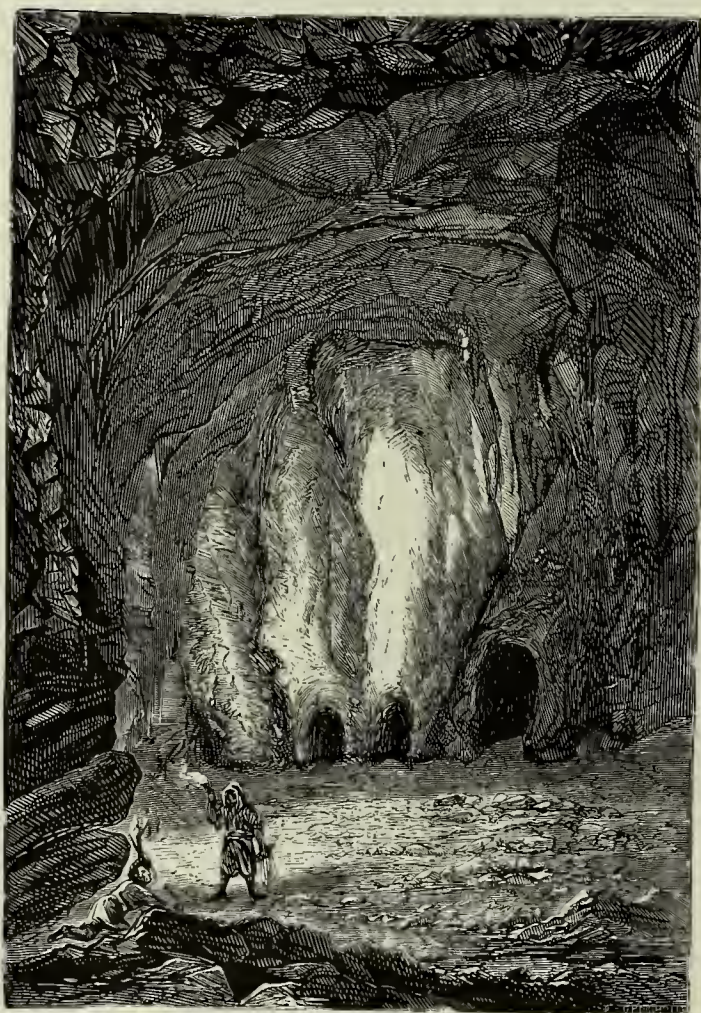
watched in every direction. His familiarity with the wild glens and strongholds of the district, gained whilst keeping his father's sheep, would prove an immense advantage in flying from his pursuers. And the proximity to Moab secured for him a safe retreat if hard pressed. In Moab, too, he could find friends and relatives, in virtue of his descent from 'Ruth the Moabitess,' to whom he committed his parents when they were exposed to danger from the vindictive fury of Saul.² The phrase that 'his brethren and all his father's house went

¹ M. Clermont-Ganneau proposes another cave at some distance from the traditional one on Jebel Fureidis, but his arguments have not convinced me.

² 1 Sam. xxii. 3, 4.

down thither unto him,'¹ which at first suggests a difficulty, from the fact that the cave is high up on the mountain-side, finds an easy explanation as we observe that from Bethlehem they must first descend into the Wady Urtas and wind along down the ravine. In the references to this cave, as everywhere in Scripture, the narrative is in such exact and minute agreement with the topography of the district that it could only have been written by an eye-witness.

It was whilst hiding here with his wild and outlawed followers that the touching incident occurred of his longing for the 'water of the well of Bethlehem, that is at the gate.'² The worn and weary fugitive who compares himself to a 'partridge hunted upon the mountains,'³ goes back to the peaceful happy days of his shepherd life. He remembers the time when, leading his flocks homeward in the evening after a day of sultry heat on the



CAVE OF ADULLAM.

mountain-side, he had quenched his thirst at the familiar well, just as we had seen the shepherds doing on the same spot. Were ever days so happy! Was ever water so sweet! The 'three mighty ones,' eager to gratify the faintest wish of their beloved chief, break through the beleaguering host of the Philistines, draw the water from the well, and return. The hero, reproaching himself for his selfish wish, that had 'put in jeopardy the lives of these men,' refuses to drink thereof, and pours it out for 'a drink-offering to the Lord.'

Only once again does the name of Bethlehem occur in Old Testament history. The reference, though slight and incidental, has an important bearing on the site of the Nativity. When David was flying from his rebellious son Absalom into the region beyond the Jordan,

amongst those who showed kindness to the 'dim discrowned king' was Barzillai the Gileadite.⁴ When the rebellion had been crushed, and the king was about to return to his own land, Barzillai accompanied him across the Jordan.

¹ 1 Sam. xxii. 1.

² 1 Chron. xi. 16-19.

³ 1 Sam. xxvi. 20. We saw and heard large numbers of the desert partridge, with its reddish legs and beak, and its sides striped with white, black, and brown, on these very mountains.

⁴ 2 Sam. xvii. 27-29.

The grateful monarch invited the old man to go up with him to Jerusalem as his guest. Barzillai declined the honour, pleading his advanced age, his growing weakness, and his failing sight. But the honour which he declines for himself he solicits on behalf of his son Chimham, who accompanied David on his return to Jerusalem.¹ Chimham seems to have been treated with peculiar favour,



BETHLEHEM FROM THE EAST.

and adopted into the family of the king ; for David, on his death-bed, specially commended him to the care of Solomon, and requested that he be of 'those that eat at his table.'² We find further that he came into possession of property in or near Bethlehem, which he transmitted to his descendants, for

¹ 2 Sam. xix. 31-40.

² 1 Kings ii. 7. That this involved admission into the family seems to be implied. See 2 Sam. ix. 11—'As for Mephibosheth, said the king, he shall eat at my table, as one of the king's sons.'

in the prophecies of Jeremiah 'the habitation of Chimham which is by Bethlehem'¹ is spoken of as a place familiarly known. That this formed part of the patrimony of David, given to him as an adopted son, is highly probable, for in no other way can we understand a Gileadite permanently owning land at Bethlehem.

But the word translated 'house' in Jeremiah, where the Jews assembled on their way down into Egypt, means a khan or caravanserai. Elsewhere, it is translated 'inn.' What then are we to understand by the khan of Chimham? It is, and always has been, the custom throughout the East for places to be provided for travellers—one in each village—where they might halt for the night. They are generally at distances of six or seven miles, so



INTERIOR OF KHAN.

as to allow of an easy day's march from one to another. Bethlehem thus formed the first stage from Jerusalem, on the way to Egypt. The duty and honour of providing and maintaining these khans devolved upon the sheikh or head man of the village, who was empowered to levy a tax upon the villagers for their support. Sometimes only a space of ground was staked out and fenced with thorns, so as to furnish protection against thieves and wild beasts. But often a wealthy sheikh would erect a substantial edifice, either defraying the cost himself or seeking aid in the work from the inhabitants. It seems almost certain, therefore, that Chimham either became Sheikh of Bethlehem, or else that, out of gratitude to his benefactor, he built a khan on a portion of the land he received from the king. Of these, the

¹ Jeremiah xli. 17.

former is the more probable, and more in accordance with the custom of the country. One thing, however, seems clear, that, long after the time of David, 'the inn' at Bethlehem was well known as the khan of Chimham, and that it stood on land which had descended by inheritance from Boaz to Jesse, to David, and to David's adopted son.¹ Here was to be fulfilled the prophecy of Micah, 'But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto Me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.'²

We thus come to that event, the glory of which transcends every other which has yet passed under our review. Here the Eternal God veiled, yet manifested, Himself in human form. The King of Glory is found 'as a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.' Omnipotence slumbered within an infant's arm. Omniscience lay concealed beneath an infant's brow. In the plain below us, the shepherds were keeping their flocks by night, when they heard the angelic anthem, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.' Up that steep rocky path they came to see this great sight. Over that mountain-side the Wise Men brought their gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh to pay homage to 'the Desire of all nations.' As we stand in the rock-hewn Chapel of the Nativity gazing upon the silver star on the floor, and read the words *HIC DE VIRGINE MARIA JESUS CHRISTUS NATUS EST*, even the most cold and apathetic can scarcely refrain from tears.

But is this the actual spot? Do we really stand on the very place where the Virgin 'brought forth her first-born Son, and called His name Jesus'? There is everything in the surroundings of the place to awaken scepticism. This series of tawdrily-decked chapels in which all the great events which have happened in Bethlehem are huddled together within one building almost compel incredulity. Here, for instance, is the altar of the Holy Innocents, and we are asked to believe that the remains of twenty thousand infants, slain by Herod, lie buried close by the place of the nativity, and we are shown the preserved tongue of one of them! However willing we may be to accept the tradition as to the site, we find it difficult to do so when it is mixed up with such preposterous legends as these.

And yet the evidence for its authenticity is strong, though not quite conclusive. The church stands upon a spot, just outside the village, which the inn or khan is very likely to have occupied. The 'house of Chimham by Bethlehem' was well known to the Jews, as we have seen, and when the khan of a village has been once established, it is seldom that its site is changed. It continues to occupy the same spot from age to age. We know that, so early as the second century, Justin described our Lord's birth-place as 'a cave near Bethlehem.' And Jerome himself, a native of Syria and familiar with the

¹ Hepworth Dixon, in his *Holy Land*, endeavours to carry the argument a step farther, and to show, by a comparison of the phraseology in the books of Ruth and of Jeremiah, that it was erected on or close to the house of Boaz. His arguments are not without weight, but they are far from being conclusive.

² Micah v. 2. Matt. ii. 5, 6. John vii. 42.

customs and traditions of the country, took up his abode in an adjacent cave, that he might be near his Lord's birth-place. The fact that the Chapel of the Nativity is a grotto, though calculated to excite suspicion, is not of itself fatal. It is by no means improbable that a cave contiguous to the inn might have served the purpose of a stable. It should further be remembered that the church may stand upon the site of the inn even though the Chapel of the Nativity has been placed in a cave in accordance with an erroneous and misleading superstition. Dean Stanley, summing up the evidence for



INTERIOR OF THE CHURCH OF THE NATIVITY.

and against the authenticity of the site, concludes with the remark, 'There remains the remarkable fact that the spot was revered by Christians as the birth-place of Christ two centuries before the conversion of the empire—before that burst of local religion which is commonly ascribed to the visit of Helena.'

Whilst feeling that the balance of probability is decidedly in favour of the truth of the tradition, one consideration made me wish to come to a different conclusion. The degrading superstition and the disgraceful discord which prevail here are a scandal to the birth-place of Christianity. Any-

thing more alien to the spirit of the Prince of Peace can scarcely be conceived than the bitter hostility which rages amongst the three confessions—Latin, Greek, and Armenian—which share the sacred shrine. The church



CHURCH OF THE NATIVITY.

—a noble edifice, with stately columns, probably brought from the Temple at Jerusalem—is no longer used for worship. It is held by a garrison of Turkish soldiers stationed to prevent bloodshed amongst the monks and

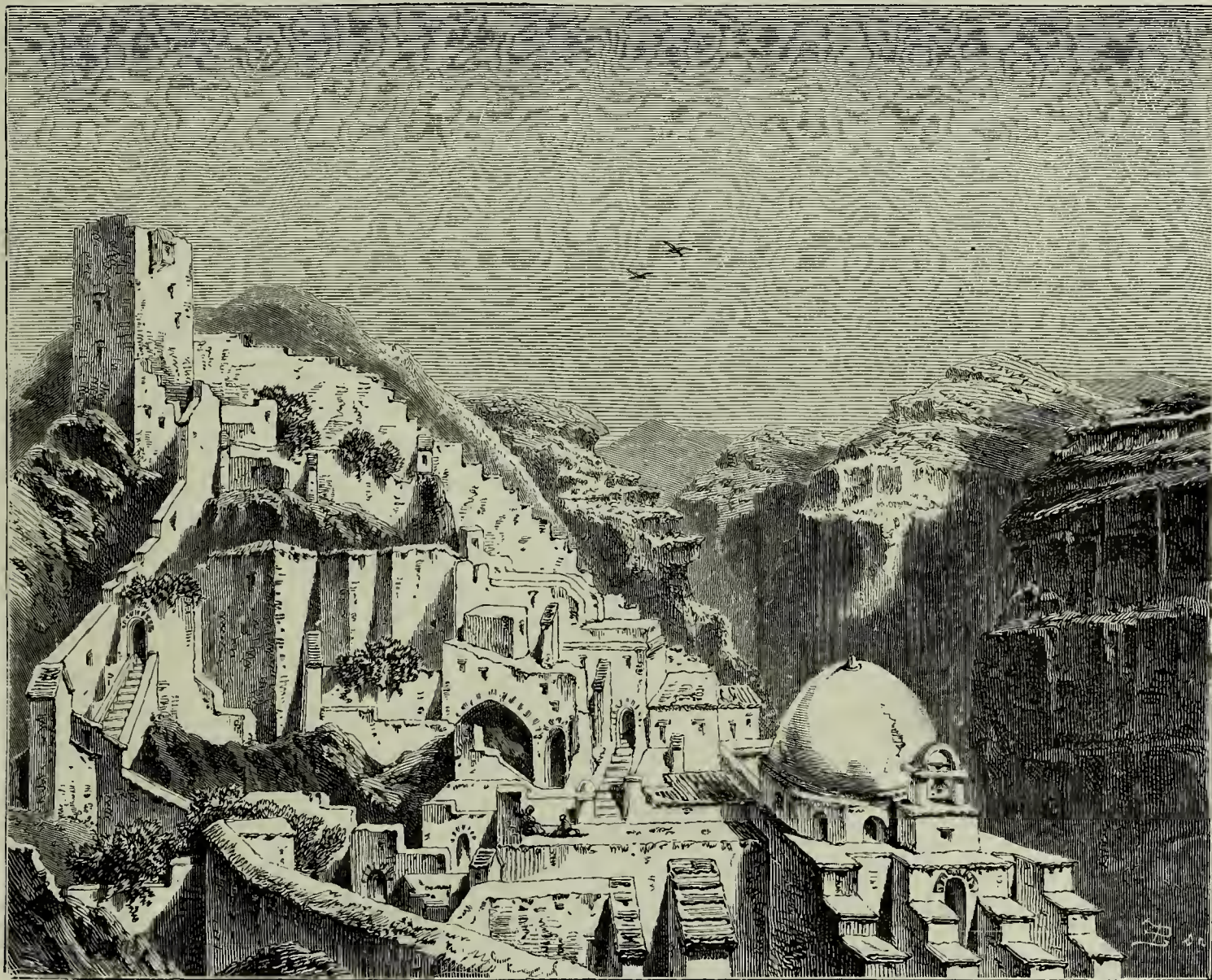
the pilgrims. Passing along the subterranean gallery, through the long series of gaudy chapels, acts of idolatry are witnessed the grossness of which recalls the fetish worship of Africa. Even a coldly scientific geographer like Ritter cannot refrain from exclaiming, 'Bethlehem has thus become a sacred name and a sacred place, although it is so poor and mean and unimportant; but unfortunately, to many who visit it, its higher significance is lost; they kiss the wood of the manger, but it is mere dry wood to them—they miss the living Spirit which once began that earthly career there which had been prepared for it from before the foundation of the world.'¹

Leaving Bethlehem on the east, the road winds down a rocky slope, past fields of wheat and barley and terraced vineyards. Innumerable sheep and goats are seen on the hills around as in the days of Boaz and David. At the foot a level plain is reached, affording good pasturage, and dotted over with clumps of olive trees. This is called the Shepherds' Field, from the tradition that here they were keeping their flocks by night when the angels appeared to them. Soon the scenery becomes wild and desolate. In no part of the world have I seen anything with which to compare it. If the chalk-downs of the South of England were denuded of grass, were heaved up and tossed about in the throes of an earthquake, and the sides of the hills thus formed were cut into ravines by the fury of winter torrents, it would afford some illustration of the weird desolation of this Wilderness of Judæa. The gorge of the Kedron runs steeply down from Jerusalem to the Dead Sea, a descent of nearly four thousand feet. The wadies which seam the mountain-sides are dry in the summer, but in the winter they form the beds of roaring torrents. Now and then a glimpse of the Dead Sea is gained—the deep blue of its waters gaining an additional intensity from the red or purple of the mountains of Moab, which form the background of the landscape. The black tents of the Bedouin, their flocks and herds feeding on the mountain-sides, an Arab horseman, or a string of camels with their noiseless tread, are the only signs of life in this region of sterility.

In about three hours from Bethlehem, the CONVENT OF MAR SABA is reached. It stands on the edge of the gorge of the Kedron, here from a thousand to twelve hundred feet deep, the rocky sides of which are almost precipitous, and at the bottom of the ravine are only a few yards apart. Looked at from beneath, parts of the building are seen to be literally clamped to the perpendicular walls of rock, and hang perilously over the abyss. Other portions of the edifice are constructed in chambers cut out of the mountain-side. The labyrinth of caves, chambers, and passages is most bewildering. Only an inmate of the convent can find his way from one part to another. What may be called the land side of the monastery is enclosed by a high wall of great thickness. The only entrance is by a massive gate,

¹ *Comparative Geography of Palestine.* By Carl Ritter. Vol. iii. p. 339.

through which no one is admitted unless vouched for by the Greek patriarch at Jerusalem. Bedouin and women are not admitted at all. The former for the obvious reason that on several occasions, having forced their way in, they massacred all the inmates. Ladies are excluded, because, as Miss Martineau bitterly expresses it, 'the monks are too holy to be hospitable.' The rule of the monastery is very rigid. The monks never eat meat, and subject themselves to severe austerities. Though there is a valuable library, it seems to be



CONVENT OF MAR SABA.

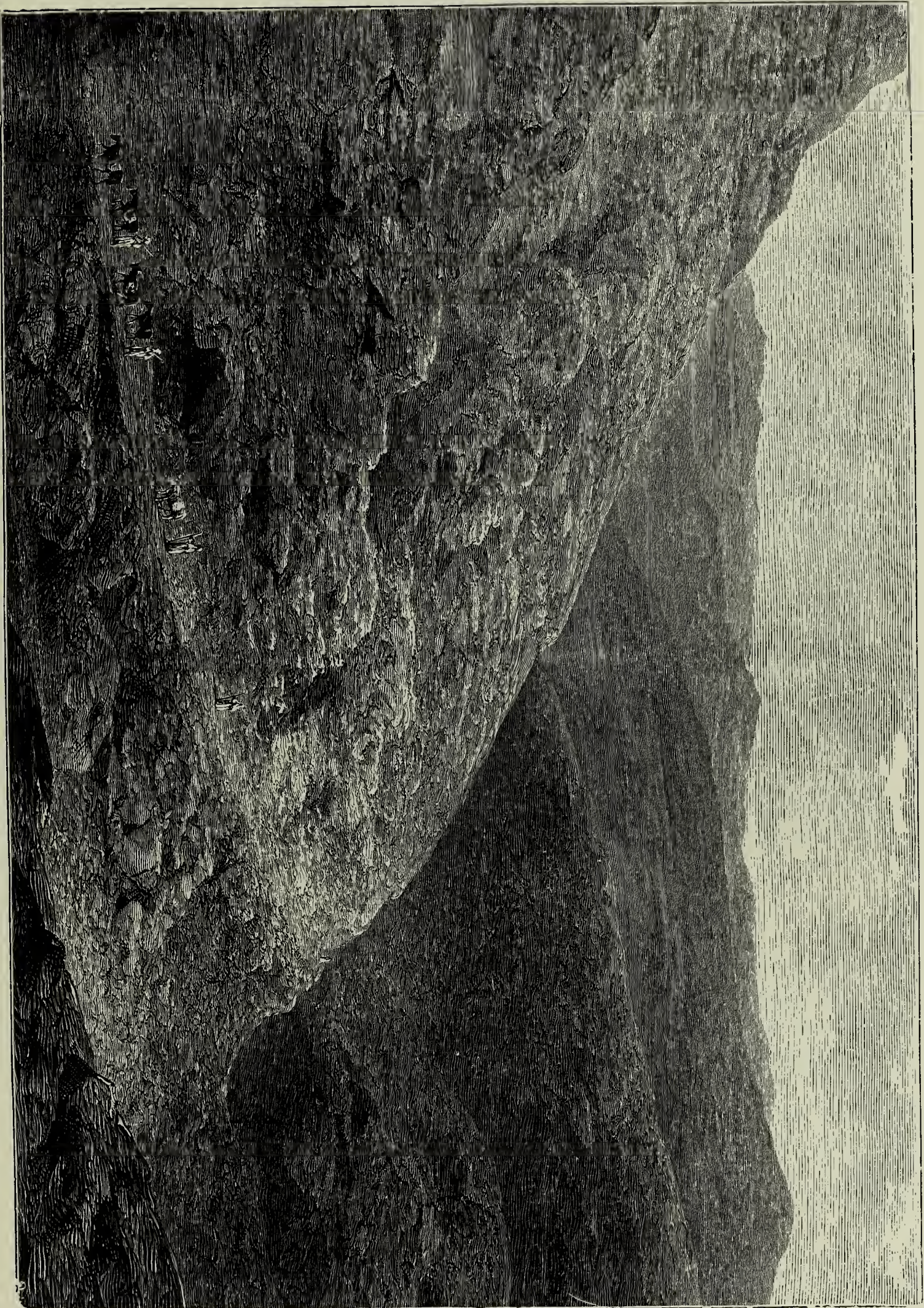
entirely unused; indeed, a majority of the ascetics are unable to read, and their only recreation consists in drinking *raki*, and in feeding the birds and jackals, which are very numerous.

Only once, when I crossed the *Mer de Glace* at midnight, have I seen anything to compare with the wild, unearthly impressiveness of one view of this famous monastery. We had encamped at nightfall about a couple of miles above Mar Saba. The stars were shining with extraordinary brilliancy in a cloudless sky, and the moon was just coming above the

horizon. I suggested an excursion along the bottom of the ravine, so as to see the convent from beneath. On proposing this to the sheikh, he of course declared that it was impossible, no one had ever done it—there was no road—he would not answer for our heads if we attempted it, with much more to the same purpose. But finding us determined to make a start, and that there was a prospect of backshish, he withdrew his objections and despatched a party of Bedouin as guides and escort. The bottom of the gorge was in almost total darkness, but we could see the jagged peaks overhead, silvered with the moonlight. Stumbling along the dry bed of the Kedron, winding in and out amongst huge boulders, scrambling over masses of rock which blocked up the narrow passage, we made our way down the valley. No sound was heard, save our own footsteps and the howling of jackals. Every now and then, emerging silently as a ghost from behind a projecting crag or from the mouth of a cave, a Bedouin, armed with his long gun, would step forward, speak a few words to our escort, and then silently disappear. At length we reach a point immediately beneath the convent. The moon had now risen high enough to pour a flood of intense white light upon it whilst we were still wrapped in gloom. It seemed to be detached from earth, and to hang suspended in the heavens. The solitary palm tree, said to have been planted by St. Saba himself, stood out clear and distinct, every frond relieved against the deep blue of the sky behind it. Even our Bedouin escort seemed awed and impressed by the wild weird grandeur of the view.

The Valley of Kedron begins its course on the east side of the Temple at Jerusalem, and runs down to the Dead Sea, through a barren, arid, waterless waste. It is thus the probable scene of the prophetic vision in which Ezekiel beholds the glory of 'the latter days,' when waters, issuing from beneath the altar, shall flow eastward in an ever-deepening stream, bringing with them fertility and beauty wherever they come. 'Very many trees' are seen to spring up along its banks on either side. Reaching the bitter, stagnant, poisonous waters of the Dead Sea, the desolate solitudes become the haunts of busy life. Fishers spread their nets from En-Eglaim to En-gedi, for the fish have become as 'the fish of the great sea, exceeding many.' 'And by the river, upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed: it shall bring forth new fruit according to his months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary: and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine.'¹ Reading such promises of future blessings amid these desolate and sterile regions, we are impressively reminded that when 'the Spirit be poured upon us from on

¹ Ezek. xlvii. 1-12. Compare Rev. xxii. 1, 2: where the symbolism of the Old Testament is adopted in the New, but lifted up into a higher sphere with the promise of yet diviner blessings.



WILDERNESS OF JUDAEA.

high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest, . . . the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.'¹

The strange unique conformation of the country which we noticed as we approached Mar Saba becomes even more extraordinary as we continue our journey eastward. The soil consists of a soft chalk or white marl, furrowed in every direction by a labyrinth of valleys and pits from fifty to a hundred feet deep, cut, ages ago, by torrents long since dried up, leaving fantastic flat-topped mounds of every conceivable shape, which Maundrell aptly compares to gigantic limekilns.



NORTHERN SHORE OF THE DEAD SEA.

In a little more than three hours we find ourselves descending into the VALLEY OF THE JORDAN and the DEAD SEA. Reaching the plain, we ride through an extensive cane brake, where the reeds are higher than our heads, and which is the haunt of wild boars, wolves, jackals, and leopards, and from which lions were driven out 'from the swelling of Jordan.'²

From this point all vegetation ceases, for the bitter, acrid waters are fatal alike to animal and vegetable life. Even sea-fish turned into the lake die immediately.³ The beach is strewn with trunks of trees, bones of animals, and shells of fish brought down by the Jordan or by the winter torrents which

¹ Isa. xxxii. 15, 17.

² Jer. xlix. 19; l. 44.

³ In a few rare and exceptional cases living organisms are alleged to have been found in the Dead Sea. In every case, however, it has been near the mouth of the Jordan, the impetuous torrent of which, after heavy rains, penetrates into the sea for some distance without mingling with its waters.

come from the mountain-sides. After tossing, perhaps for centuries, in the bitter brine, they are cast ashore so saturated with salt that the wood will scarcely ignite, and if it burn at all, only gives a feeble blue flame. These gaunt skeletons of ancient trees are all the more ghastly from the fact that they are covered by a saline deposit of which the fine glittering crystals are found efflorescing all along the beach. It is caused by the evaporation either of the receding waters after the winter floods, or of the spray which is flung ashore by the winds, which rush with extraordinary violence between the rocky walls which hem in the valley.



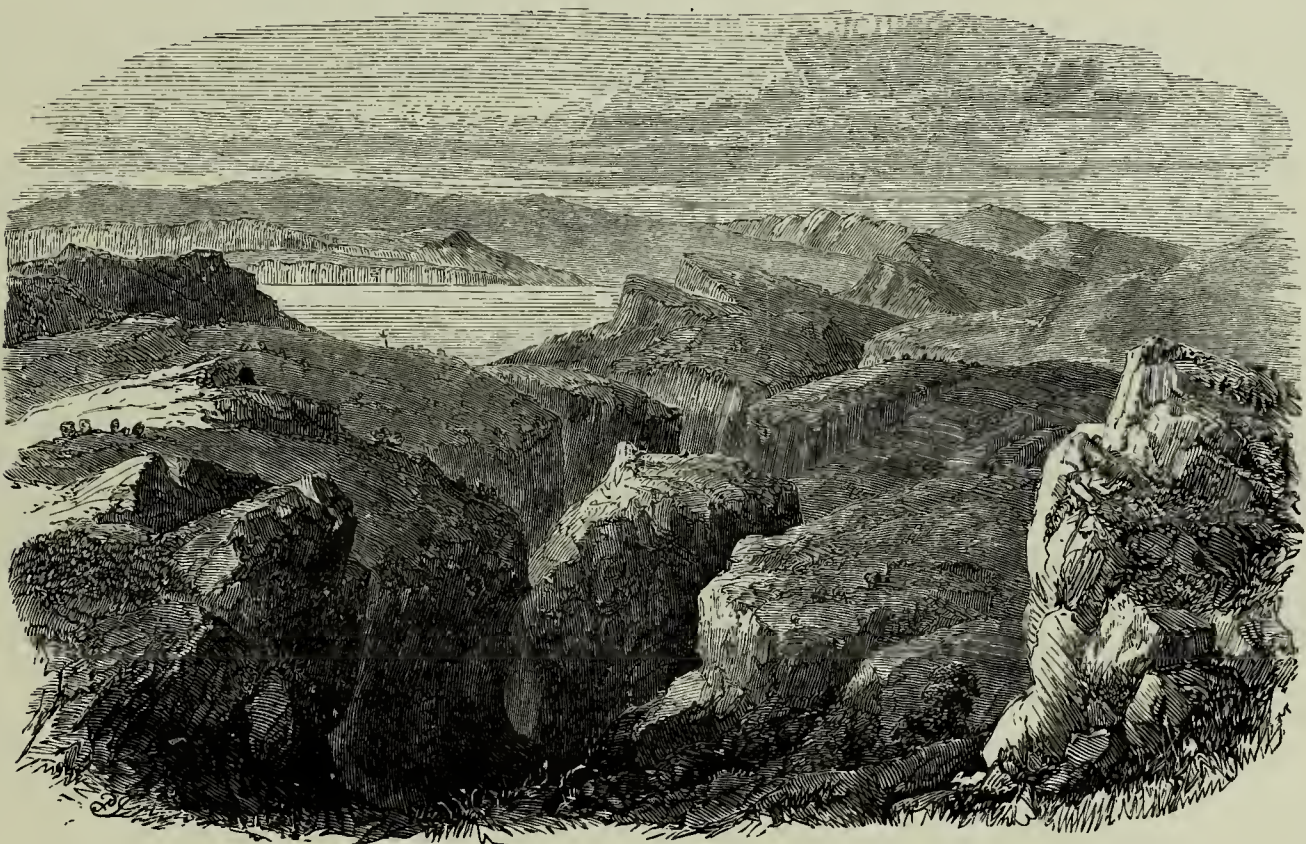
SOUTHERN END OF THE DEAD SEA.

Whilst the northern shore is thus a flat desolate waste, the view down the sea, looking southward, is not wanting in a solemn grandeur and beauty. The water, clear as crystal, is of a deep blue, almost purple; its waves are crested with foam of a dazzling whiteness. Along the eastern shore the mountains of Moab stand like a mighty wall, the ridges and precipices of which slope down 'in wild confusion to the shore, terminating in a series of perpendicular cliffs, from twelve hundred to two thousand feet above the water.'



THE DEAD SEA.

Though their outline is somewhat monotonous and unbroken, their marvellous colouring, which varies from a delicate pink to a rich crimson, invests them with a magical beauty. Seen, especially in the morning or the evening light, their tints are quite unearthly. The mountains of the western side, though lower than those of the eastern, seldom rising above fifteen hundred feet, are more irregular and broken, at least as seen from the northern end, and assume forms of striking grandeur. The most characteristic feature of the southern shore is a vast ridge of fossil salt, called *Jebel Usdum*, which is cut into ravines and hollows by the action of winter torrents. Canon Tristram describes many of these in terms which recall the glacier caves of the Alps. The light gleaming through the roof produces an exquisite play of colour—green



APPROACH TO EN-GEDI.

and blue and white of various shades. Columns of rock salt are constantly left standing, detached from the general mass. Travellers—forgetful of the fact that these isolated fragments are but of short duration, and are, in the course of a few years, washed away by the same agency which produced them—have often identified one or another with the pillar of salt referred to in *Genesis xix. 26*. Sulphur and bitumen, which are found throughout the whole region, are very abundant, and traces of ancient igneous action are more obvious here than elsewhere.

Some of the wadies of this sterile and desolate region are oases of the utmost fertility and beauty. Chief among these is that of *En-gedi* or the *Kid's Fountain*. It runs out on the western side of the sea in the direction of *Hebron*.

Fertilised by a rill of pure water, and having an almost tropical temperature, it forms a perfect garden. Even the Arabs, who are usually so insensible to natural beauty, speak of it with enthusiasm. My servant Mohammed, on one occasion, gathered twenty-five different varieties of flowers in a few minutes. Solomon sums up his description of the charms of the Shunammiteess by saying, 'My beloved is unto me as a cluster of camphire in the vineyards of En-gedi.'¹ The vineyards, the palms and the balsam trees, which once abounded here, have disappeared, but traces of ancient cultivation remain to show what the valley once was and might be yet again.

Under its original name of Hazezon-Tamar (the pruning of the palm trees), it was the scene of the first pitched battle in an organized campaign which history records.² Here, and in the adjoining Vale of Siddim, Chedorlaomer defeated his rebellious tributaries, the kings of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboim, and Zoar, carrying away Lot and his family amongst the captives.

Here amongst cliffs and precipices dwelt the Kenites when Balaam, looking across the valley from a height on the opposite side, uttered his impassioned prophecy, and said:

'Strong is thy dwelling-place,
And thou puttest thy nest in a rock.
Nevertheless the Kenite shall be wasted,
Until Asshur shall carry thee away captive.'³

Here, too, David retired when, hard pressed by Saul, he had to leave the neighbourhood of Ziph and Maon, just as many an Arab sheikh is accustomed to do at the present day, to escape from the tyranny or the justice of the government. In these inaccessible fastnesses he was safe from pursuit, almost from discovery. Behind him was the wilderness of Judæa. Before him were the mountains of Moab, in case further retreat should seem expedient. And here it was that the heroic chief mercifully spared the life of his pitiless foe when the 'Lord had delivered him into his hand.'⁴

In more modern times the shores of the Dead Sea have been associated with two tragic events which add to the gloomy memories which enshroud it. Among the mountains on the eastern side, looking down upon the gorge of the Callirhoe, is Makaur, the ancient Machærus, in which John the Baptist took his place among 'the noble army of martyrs.' Dr. Tristram, the first European known to have visited it since the time of the Romans, says that he found amongst the ruins 'two dungeons, one of them very deep, and its sides scarcely broken in. That these were dungeons, not cisterns, is evident from there being no traces of cement, which never perishes from the walls of ancient reservoirs, and from the small holes, still visible in the masonry, where staples of wood and iron had once been fixed. One of these must surely have been the prison-house of John the Baptist.' On the western shore stood

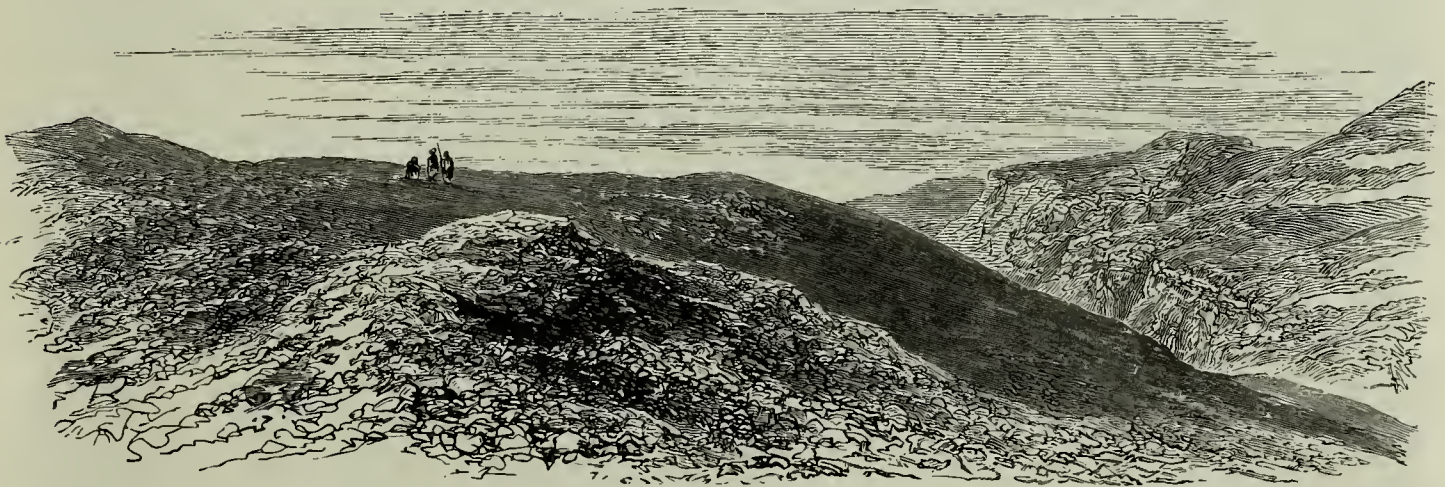
¹ Song of Sol. i. 14.

² Gen. xiv.

³ Num. xxiv. 21, 22.

⁴ 1 Sam. xxiii. 29; xxiv.

Masada, the palace-fortress of Herod, in which was enacted the last awful tragedy in the Jewish war of independence. Jerusalem had fallen. One fortress after another had surrendered to the Romans. This impregnable stronghold alone remained, held by a band of men who, with the courage of despair, determined to die rather than to yield. The fatal moment at length arrived when further resistance was impossible. Eleazar, son of Judas the Galilean, called the garrison together and urged upon them that death was to be preferred to dishonour. Each man thereupon stabbed his wife and children to the heart, and lying down beside those whom he loved, bared his neck to the ten who were chosen by lot to consummate the slaughter. One of these last survivors then slew the other nine, and, having set fire to the building, stabbed himself. When the Romans entered the breach on the morning of Easter Day A.D. 73, they found nothing but corpses and smouldering ruins. Two women and five children, who had hidden themselves in the vaults, alone survived to tell the tale, nearly a thousand persons having perished.



MAKAUR, THE SITE OF ANCIENT MACHÆRUS.

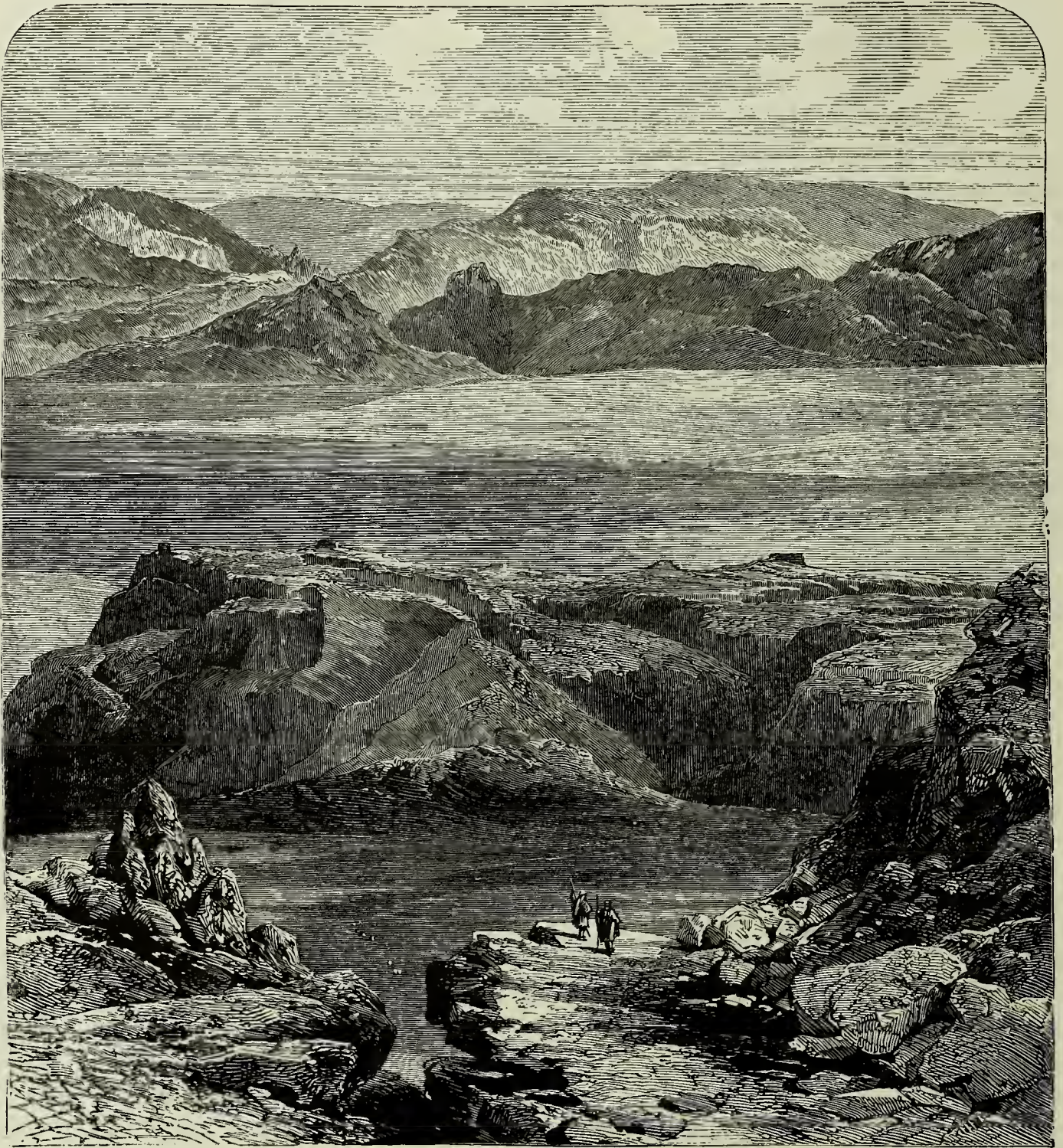
But all other historical associations with this district shrink into insignificance in comparison with that fearful catastrophe, when the Lord overwhelmed and destroyed the guilty cities with fire from heaven. When 'Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere, even as the garden of the Lord,'¹ he not only failed to take account of the licentiousness and 'filthy conversation of the wicked,'² choosing temporal wealth at the peril of his soul's welfare; but he knew not or cared not that the soil was one vast arsenal filled with instruments of destruction. The cities rested upon a bed of sulphur and bitumen. They were built and cemented from 'the slime-pits of Siddim.'³ When the longsuffering of God was exhausted and 'the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah was very great, and their sin very grievous,' the hour of judgment came. The destruction may have been altogether miraculous. Or it may have been brought about by miracle working through natural agencies. The whole

¹ Gen. xiii. 10.

² 2 Peter ii. 8.

³ Gen. xiv. 10. Compare Gen. xi. 3.

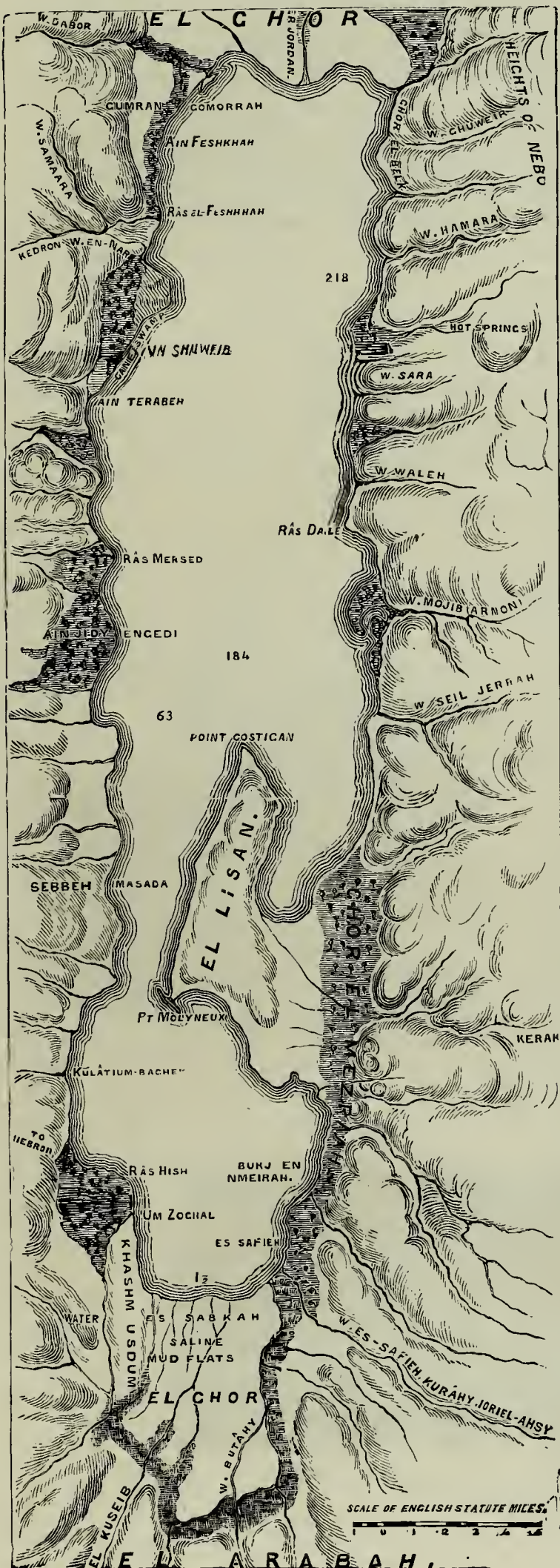
region is volcanic. Lightnings flashing from heaven, and the bursting forth of the subterranean fires, may have turned the whole plain into 'a burning fiery furnace,' in which not the cities only but the very soil on which they stood were turned into one vast sea of flame. Imagination shudders at



THE DEAD SEA NEAR MASADA.

the awful spectacle when 'the smoke of the country went up like the smoke of a furnace.'

The exact site of the cities thus destroyed cannot be decided with certainty. It has been commonly supposed that the Dead Sea covers the



MAP OF THE DEAD SEA. SOUNDINGS IN FATHOMS.

spot upon which they stood. Of this, however, we have no evidence in Scripture, and an examination of the geology of the district shows that it is impossible. Those who would locate them on the plain to the south of the Sea, urge in proof of their view an early and continuous tradition to this effect, the presence of a vast mountain of rock-salt which breaks up into isolated columns, the most remarkable of which has been called Lot's wife, and the similarity of names, Usdum being identified with Sodom, Amrah with Gomorrah, and Zuweirah with Zoar. But the Biblical narrative rather points to the conclusion that they stood on or near the northern shore, where the 'well-watered plain' of the Jordan, even to this day, is remarkable for its extraordinary fertility.¹

It is only within the present generation that the physical conditions of the Dead Sea have been subjected to scientific investigation. Dean Stanley truly says, 'Viewed merely in a scientific point of view, it is one of the most remarkable spots of the world.' At some remote period beyond the range of history or tradition, the Jordan seems to have flowed onward over what is now the elevated

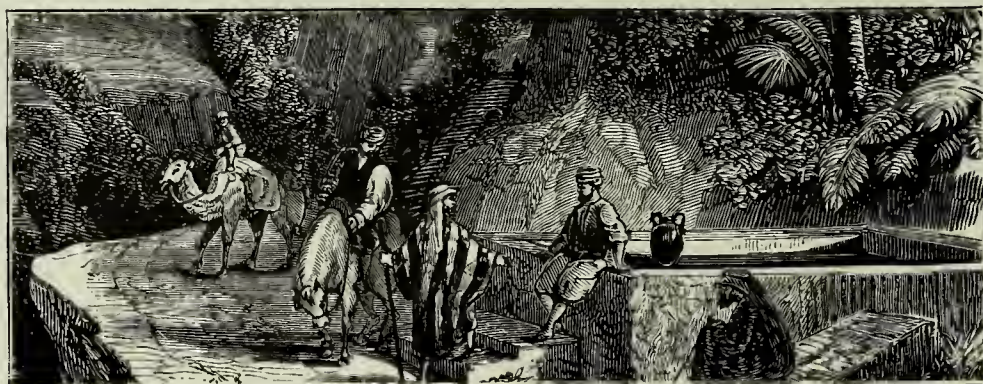
¹ It is impossible here to enter into a full discussion of this question. The student is referred to the works of Canon Tristram, and to the articles by Mr. Grove in Smith's *Bible Dictionary*.

Valley of Arabah into the Red Sea. By geological action, the nature of which cannot as yet be ascertained, the whole Jordan valley has sunk, so that the Sea of Galilee is probably six hundred feet, and the Dead Sea about thirteen hundred feet, below the level of the Mediterranean—a phenomenon without parallel on the earth's surface. The sea itself is divided into two unequal parts by a projecting tongue of land, called by the Arabs *El Lisan* (the tongue). The northern portion is very deep; the greatest depth being given by Lieutenant Lynch at thirteen hundred and eight feet. Its bed, therefore, at this point would be twenty-six hundred feet below the level of the sea. The southern portion is much shallower, nowhere exceeding two fathoms. The depth, however, varies with the seasons. The total superficial area is about two hundred and fifty miles, which is nearly that of the Lake of Geneva. Its excessive density and saltness have been already referred to. Analysis gives the following results:

Chloride of Magnesium	145·8971
„ Calcium	31·0746
„ Sodium (common salt)	78·5537
„ Potassium	6·5860
Bromide of Potassium	1·3741
Sulphate of Lime	0·7012
	<hr/>
	264·1867
Water	735·8133
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	1000

It will thus be seen that one fourth part of the water of the Dead Sea consists of various salts.¹ Hence its nauseous, bitter taste and its extraordinary density. My own experience was that I could not sink, however much I tried, and after bathing I found an acrid slime left upon the skin, from which I could not rid myself for two or three days,

¹ The full meaning of this statement will be perceived when it is remembered that sea-water contains less than four per cent. of salts, and more than ninety-six per cent. of pure water.



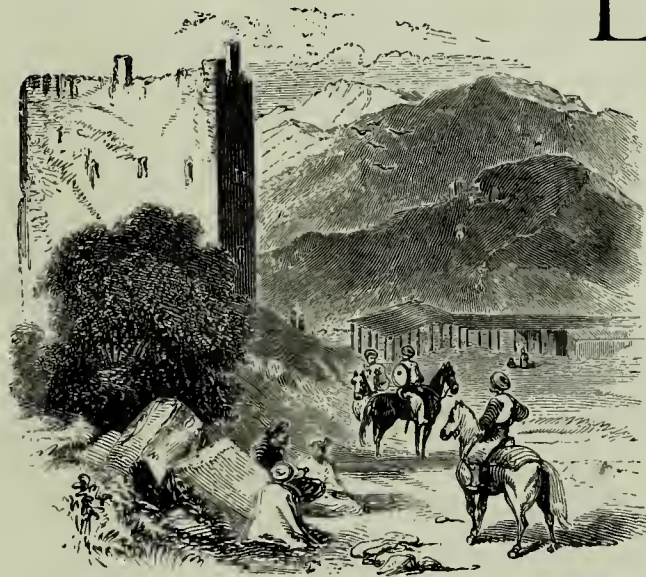
THE WELL OF BETHLEHEM.



IN THE JORDAN VALLEY.

CHAPTER III.

JERICHO AND THE JORDAN TO JERUSALEM.



ER RIHA, NEAR JERICHO.

LEAVING the sterile, desolate shores of the Dead Sea, we ride in a north-westerly direction over a plain encrusted with salt and sulphur, through a morass overgrown by a jungle of reeds and rushes, and then enter upon the plain of the Jordan. The soil is cumbered with clumps of *nubk*, its thorns sharp as prongs of steel, and thickets of *Zizyphus Spina Christi*, from which tradition says that the crown of thorns was made. The *osher* or apple of Sodom, its flowers resembling those of the potato, its fruit green or yellow, attracts the eye by its deceitful beauty. Innumerable pools and

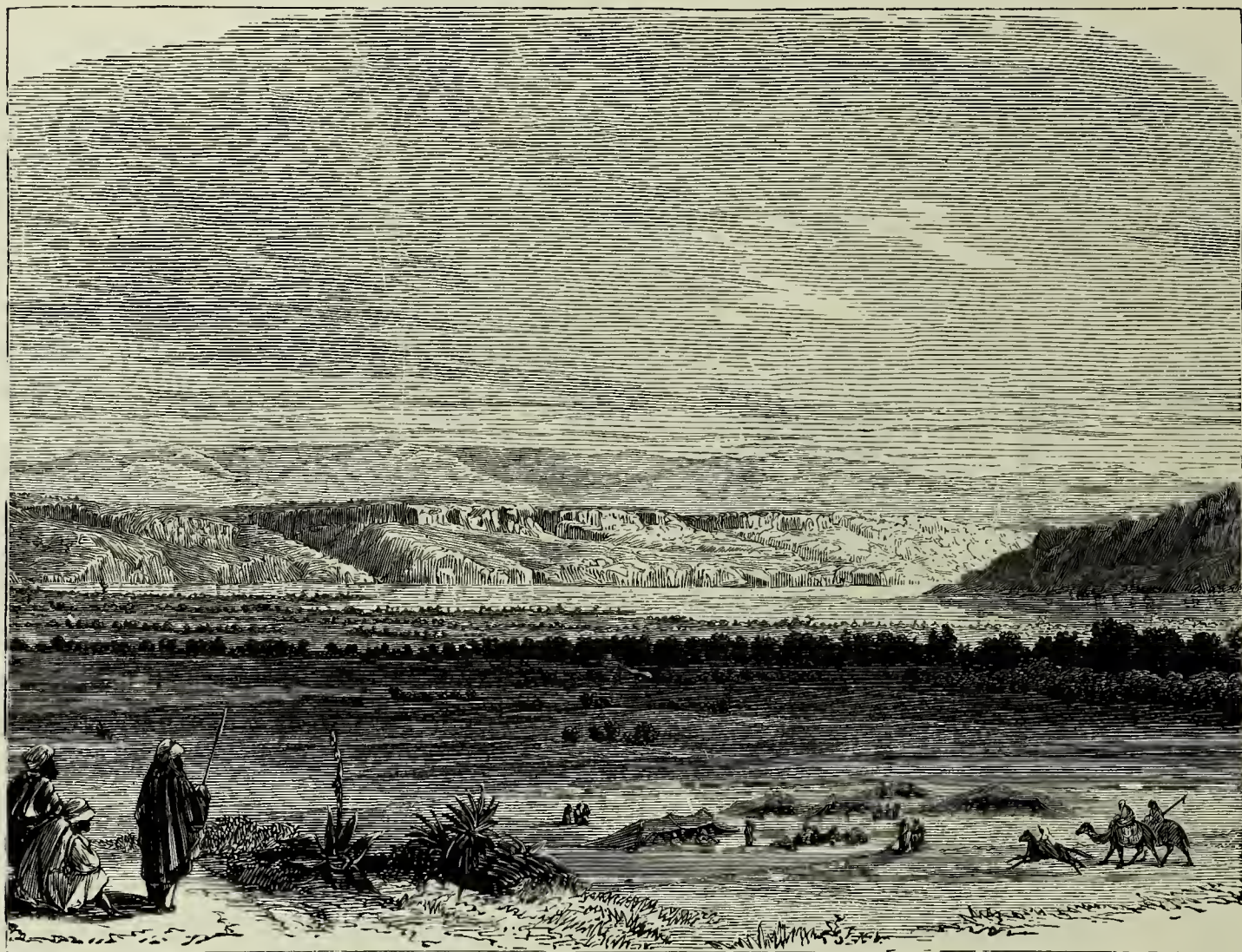
rills of water, fed by the perennial fountains which spring up near the site of the ancient Jericho, nourish this rank and unprofitable vegetation. The climate is semi-tropical, in consequence of the deep depression of this part of the Jordan valley below the sea-level. 'Well watered,' and with such a climate, the district once was, and might still be, an Eden of fertility and beauty.¹ Now its only settled inhabitants are a few wild and lawless, squalid and poverty-stricken Arabs.

Turning eastward, we soon reach the FORDS OF THE JORDAN, the traditional site of our Lord's baptism and the present bathing-place of the pilgrims. The river comes down from the Sea of Galilee in a turbid impetuous stream. It has cut its channel so deeply in the marly soil, that throughout the

¹ Gen. xiii. 10.

greater part of its course it is hidden from view. From any elevated point, however, it is easy to trace its course by the fringe of bright green which marks it. Innumerable willows, oleanders, and tamarisks grow upon its banks and overhang the river-bed. Hence the incident recorded of the sons of the prophets, who, in the days of Elisha, went down to the Jordan to cut timber, one of whom let the head of a borrowed axe fall into the river.¹

As we contrast this muddy, turbulent torrent, rushing unprofitably along



PLAIN OF THE JORDAN, NEAR JERICHO.

its deep-cut channel, with the clear bright waters of Damascus, which spread fertility and prosperity wherever they come, it is easy to understand the scornful words of Naaman the Syrian: 'Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? . . . So he turned and went away in a rage.'²

Like the Dead Sea, the physical phenomena of the Jordan are absolutely unique. Emerging from the Sea of Galilee at a probable depression of six hundred feet below the level of the Mediterranean, it rushes along a narrow

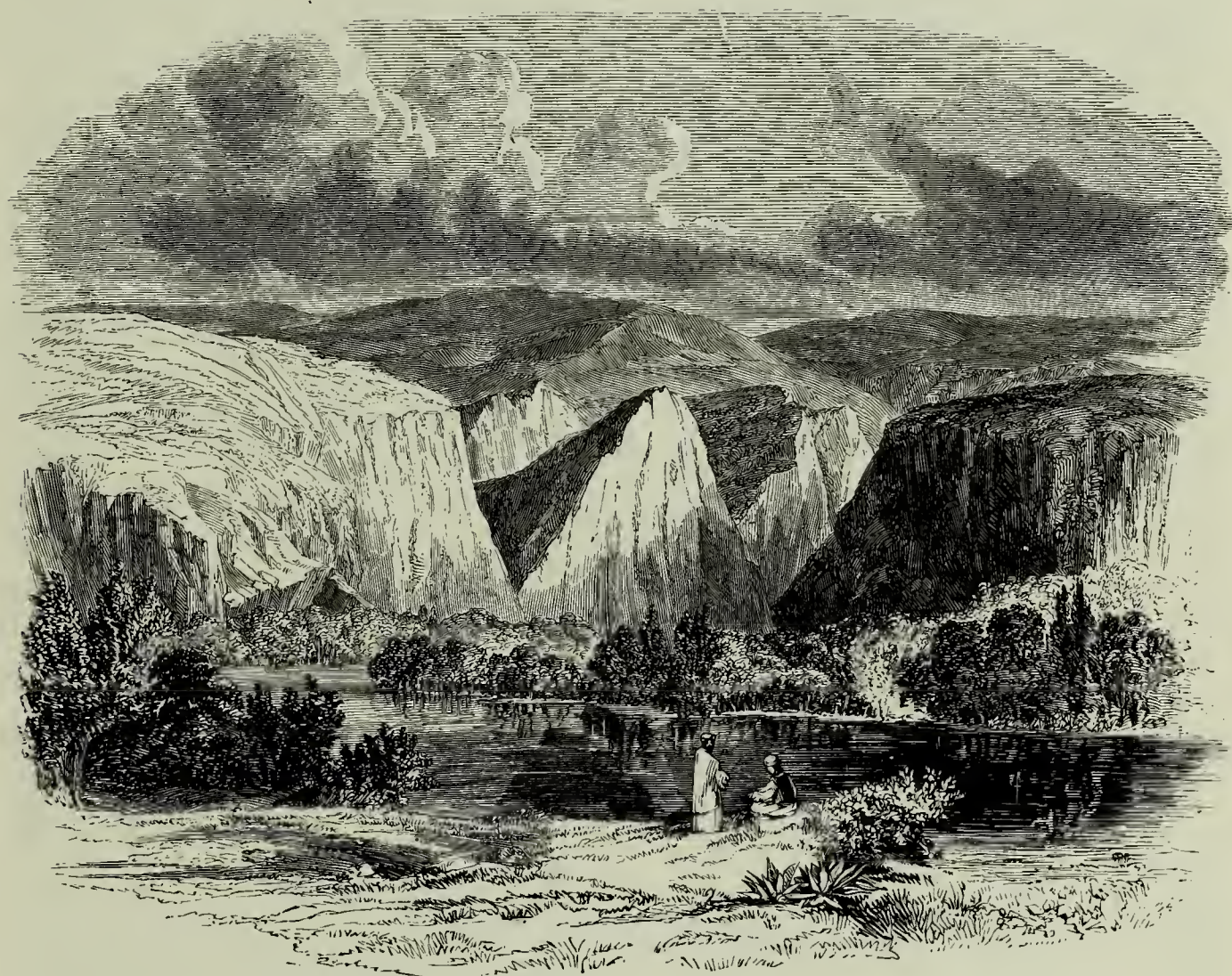
¹ 2 Kings vi. 2-5.

² Ibid. v. 12.



ARABS IN PLAIN OF JERICHO.

fissure of sixty miles in length ; but doubling and winding as it goes, its actual course is two hundred miles. Starting from so low a level, its current might be expected to be slow and torpid. So far from this, it plunges over a series of rapids,¹ and finally loses itself in the Dead Sea, to emerge no more, at a depth of thirteen hundred feet below the level of the Mediterranean. No river famous in history is so unproductive and useless. Like the Upper Rhone, its rapid torrent and its sudden violent floods,² make it an object rather of dread than delight to the dwellers on its banks. Yet, even in



BANKS OF THE JORDAN.

these physical characteristics, we can see its admirable adaptation to the Divine purpose. The Israelites were to be cut off from intercourse with the licentious idolaters on the east bank of the Dead Sea. A river easily crossed, with numerous fords and bridges, would have failed to answer this purpose. But the Jordan, though only from twenty to thirty yards wide, offered an almost insuperable barrier to intimate association, the fords being few and dangerous, and the floods rendering bridges almost impossible.

¹ Lieutenant Lynch enumerates twenty-seven, of great violence, between the Lake of Tiberias and the Dead Sea.

² From these the prophets often deduced lessons of warning for the impenitent. Thus Jeremiah says, 'If in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?' Jer. xii. 5.



SITE OF ANCIENT JERICHO, WITH MONS QUARANTANIA.

outward influences, can avail to check the corruptions of 'an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.'¹

About half an hour after leaving Er Riha, we reach some mounds of crumbling débris at the foot of a range of barren precipitous mountains, which form the western boundary of the Jordan valley. It is the site of JERICO. The soil around it is fertile as ever. Its fountains still pour forth streams over the 'well-watered' plain. Nowhere has the primeval curse fallen more lightly. With the slightest effort on the part of man, the whole region would become a garden. But, alas! it is a desolate waste. The Bedouin lead their flocks across the plain as did the patriarchs of old. But there is no other sign of human life. The groves of palm trees which once stretched for miles around the city and gave it its name² have disappeared. One solitary survivor lingered up to the year 1835, but this, too, has now perished. Nothing is left to break the depressing sense of solitude and desolation. The curse pronounced upon the doomed city still seems to linger amongst its ruins: 'Cursed be the man before the Lord, that riseth up and buildeth this city Jericho: he shall lay the foundation thereof in his first-born, and in his youngest son shall he set up the gates of it.'³

Standing upon the mounds which mark the site of the ancient city, and looking eastward, we have immediately behind us the range of mountains and table-land, which, stretching westward, as far as the plains of Sharon, formed the territory of Judah and Benjamin. Before us is the plain of the Jordan, here at its widest. The long wall-like chain of the mountains of Moab bounds the view on the east. Numerous ravines, each of which is memorable in the wars of the Israelites, intersect the range. The vast plains which stretch northward and eastward afford splendid grazing ground, now as of yore, when the flocks and herds of the Midianites wandered over them, when 'Gilead was a place for cattle' and the 'oaks,' 'the rams,' and 'the bulls of Bashan' were symbols of agricultural and pastoral wealth.⁴

Looking across the valley, attention is arrested by the numerous conical hills rising from the flat table-land which is supported by the mountain chain. Many of them attain considerable height, not only from the plain below, but from the plateau on which they rest. Of these, one holds a conspicuous place in early Hebrew history. Balak, King of Moab, alarmed at the rapid and irresistible progress of the children of Israel, and despairing of checking their advance, sends across the Euphrates to bring thence the seer whose incantations may seduce or overcome the mighty God who had given them the victory. He knew not that—

'God is not a man, that He should lie;
Neither the son of man, that He should repent:

¹ Heb. iii. 12.

² Deut. xxxiv. 3. Judges i. 16; iii. 13. 2 Chron. xxviii. 15.

³ Joshua vi. 26. After the lapse of five centuries the curse was fulfilled, 1 Kings xvi. 34.

⁴ Num. xxxii. 1. Deut. xxxii. 14. Psal. xxii. 12. Ezek. xxxix. 18. Zech. xi. 2.

Hath He said, and shall He not do it?
 Or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good? . . .
 Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob,
 Neither is there any divination against Israel.'

He had brought the seer to the top of Pisgah, whence he might command a view of the encampment of Israel in the plain below and of the whole promised land. Vain are all sacrificial rites, all magical arts, all offers of wealth and power. He who was brought to curse can only bless. 'And Balaam rose up and went to his place: and Balak also went his way.'¹

Yet again we find Israel encamped in the plains of Moab, on the eastern bank of the Jordan. Their forty years' wanderings are ended. They are now to go in and possess the good land. But their heroic leader is not to go before them. Though 'a hundred and twenty years old, his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated.'² He might, therefore, have looked forward to a further period of active service; at least he might have hoped to reap with his own hand the harvest for which he had toiled and waited so many weary years. But it was not to be. He must climb 'the mountain of Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, that is over against Jericho'—the very height upon which Balaam had stood. There 'the Lord showed him all the land of Gilead, unto Dan, and all Naphtali, and the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, and all the land of Judah, unto the utmost sea, and the south, and the plain of the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees, unto Zoar.'³ Ignorance of the topography of Palestine has led many to conclude that this extended vision was physically impossible, to be accounted for only by miracle; or by the deniers of miracles, to be rejected as mythical and legendary. So far is this from being the case, that modern travellers who have been permitted to

'Climb where Moses stood,
 And view the landscape o'er,'

have described the scene in words which only fill up the outline of the inspired narrative. The whole extent of Palestine lies stretched out like a map from the snowy summit of Hermon on the north, to the Mediterranean on the west, and the granite peaks of Arabia on the south.

Innumerable legends have gathered about the death of Moses on Nebo. The Talmud abounds with them. Even Josephus rises to pathos and poetry as he describes its traditionary incidents. The Mohammedans have wild weird myths of the war which raged amongst the spirits of good and evil around his dying form, and they perform pilgrimages to his legendary tomb on the mountain just above Jericho. All we know is that 'Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord. And He buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over

¹ Num. xxii.-xxiv.

² Deut. xxxiv. 7.

³ Ibid. verses 1-3.

against Beth-peor; but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day.' ¹ Even in Palestine itself there are few spots upon which the eye rests with a deeper sense of awe, and mystery, and reverential wonder than as we look across the Ghor of the Jordan and gaze upon this peak, glowing in the light of the setting sun, where the prophet of the Lord breathed his last earthly sigh, and awoke in the presence of his God.

As soon as the days of mourning for their great leader had been accomplished, his chivalrous successor set the host in motion. Passing, probably, down the Wady Hesban, they encamped in the Valley of the Jordan. To cross the river in the presence of their enemies would at any time have been a difficult and dangerous operation. The fords were few, the river rapid, the banks steep. And Jordan was now in flood. It had filled up its banks and was absolutely impassable. Confiding, however, in Divine aid, the signal to advance is given. The priests march first, bearing with them the ark. A mile in their rear are the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh fully armed, so as to resist any attack made upon them by their foes. ² No sooner had the feet of the priests touched the brimming waters of the river, than the stream ceased to flow downward, being cut off at a point nearly thirty miles above, at the city of Zaretan, leaving the bed dry till the whole people had passed safely over. We are told, respecting the similar miracle of the crossing of the Red Sea, that 'the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night.' ³ The inquiry suggests itself whether any natural agency, working under the control of a Divine power, can be suggested to account for this drying up of the Jordan. It has been already remarked that the whole region is volcanic and subject to earthquakes. It is, therefore, a possible conjecture that such a convulsion of Nature may have occurred at this critical moment, so that for a time the bed of the Jordan was laid bare 'from the city of Adam, that is beside Zaretan.' ⁴ We need not, however, feel any anxiety to explain these Divine interpositions by the action of natural laws. He who instituted the laws of Nature and uses them for His purposes as He pleases, can, when it seems good to Him, dispense with them altogether. The fact of the miracle is certain, account for it how we please: 'this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.'

The siege of Jericho speedily followed. The same Divine power which dried up the bed of the river (perhaps working through the same natural agency) caused the walls of the city to 'fall down after they were compassed about seven days;' and Rahab, who had 'received the spies with peace,'

¹ Deut. xxxiv. 5, 6.

² It is significant that these are the tribes to whom possessions had already been allotted east of the Jordan (Num. xxxii. 20-28). The selection was probably made either to prove their fidelity, or because they were free from encumbrances their families and possessions being left in their newly-acquired territory.

³ Exod. xiv. 21.

Joshua iii. 16. In the great earthquake of 1837 this did happen to many of the rivers of Northern Syria.

was spared to be enrolled amongst the chosen people, and even in the ancestry of our Lord, as the reward of her faith.¹

Whilst still encamped near Jericho, Joshua undertook two important military exploits. One has been already described—the relief of the city of Gibeon and the defeat of the Amorites in the Valley of Ajalon. The other has yet to be spoken of. In the mountain range which rises immediately to the west of the Jordan valley, are several passes which run up into the interior of the country. At the head of one of these stood the city of Ai, near to Bethel. It was an important stronghold, and its acquisition by the Israelites would secure them a firm and commanding position in Central Palestine. A small detachment of men was therefore ordered to advance up the pass and attack the city, whilst the main body remained at Jericho. They were, however, defeated with great slaughter by the men of Ai, and had to retreat down the steep defile. The sin of Achan having been detected and punished, a new assault was ordered by Divine command, which proved successful.² The acquisition of this almost impregnable post made Joshua master of the whole of Southern Palestine, to the subjugation of which he could now proceed at leisure.

It was along the same pass that, in after years, Elijah and Elisha went up from Gilgal to Bethel and again returned to Jericho. Then crossing the plain, they proceeded to the Jordan, whilst ‘fifty men of the sons of the prophets’ climbed the mountains in the rear, which command a view of the whole region, and ‘stood to view afar off.’ At the place where the children of Israel had crossed the river under Joshua, the prophet took off his mantle, and smiting the waters they again parted, so that ‘they two went over on dry ground.’ Here, perhaps, on the very spot where Moses had died and was buried, Elijah ‘went up by a whirlwind to heaven.’ The two, who were thus mysteriously associated in their departure from earth, were to return to it together, and, on the Mount of Transfiguration, to speak with their Lord and ours ‘of the decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem.’³

Yet once again was the Jordan to be miraculously parted asunder at the same place. Elisha, returning to Jericho, smote the waters with the mantle of Elijah, and invoking ‘the Lord God of Elijah, the waters parted hither and thither, and Elisha went over.’⁴

Reference has been made to the perennial fountains which rise around the site of Jericho. Most of the springs in the lower part of the Ghor are either brackish or absolutely undrinkable. From their salt and acrid character they cause barrenness rather than fertility.⁵ But there is one, at the foot of the mounds which attracts attention from the purity, sweetness and abundance of its waters. It bears to this day the name of ELISHA’S FOUNTAIN, and is

¹ Joshua vi. Heb. xi. 30, 31. Matt. i. 5. An interesting article on Rahab in Smith’s *Bible Dictionary* suggests reasons for believing that Salmon, who became her husband, was one of the spies whose lives she saved, and who, with herself, became an ancestor of our Lord.

² Joshua vii. viii.

³ 2 Kings ii. 1–11. Luke ix. 30, 31.

⁴ 2 Kings ii. 12–14.

⁵ Ibid. 19–22.

doubtless the one of which the historian speaks as having been healed by the word of Elisha speaking in the name of the Lord, 'so the waters were healed unto this day, according to the saying of Elisha which he spake.'¹

Whilst we have no precise indication of the scene of our Lord's baptism, yet a balance of probabilities seems to confirm the accuracy of the tradition that it was here, where the river had been thrice divided by miracle, that the event took place. John had been preaching in the wilderness of Judæa, which is just behind us. It was apparently in the same neighbourhood that he baptized the multitudes who came to him. And it was in immediate connection with his baptism that 'Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being forty days tempted of the devil.' Though the MONS QUARANTANIA, which rises immediately above Jericho, has only a vague tradition to associate it with the 'forty days' fast, yet it meets all the requirements of the narrative, and its savage desolate solitude is in keeping with the spirit of the event.

Once only do we read that our Lord actually visited Jericho. He had crossed the Jordan and preached 'on the farther side.'²



ELISHA'S FOUNTAIN, NEAR JERICO.

Recrossing the river, either by the fords or by the Roman bridge some distance up the stream, He passed through Jericho, on His way to Jerusalem. The new city, rebuilt by Herod, was now in the height of its splendour. Josephus describes the country round as surpassingly beautiful and fertile. Groves of palms and balsam-trees stretched far and wide. The roads leading to and from the city were shaded by sycamores. Having healed the blind man who sat by the wayside begging, He conferred a yet diviner boon upon Zacchæus, who in his eagerness to see the Lord had climbed into one of the wayside trees. Amidst the reproachful murmurs of the people, He went to be the guest of a man that was a sinner, bringing salvation to his house, 'for the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. . . . And when He had thus spoken, He went before, ascending up to Jerusalem.'³

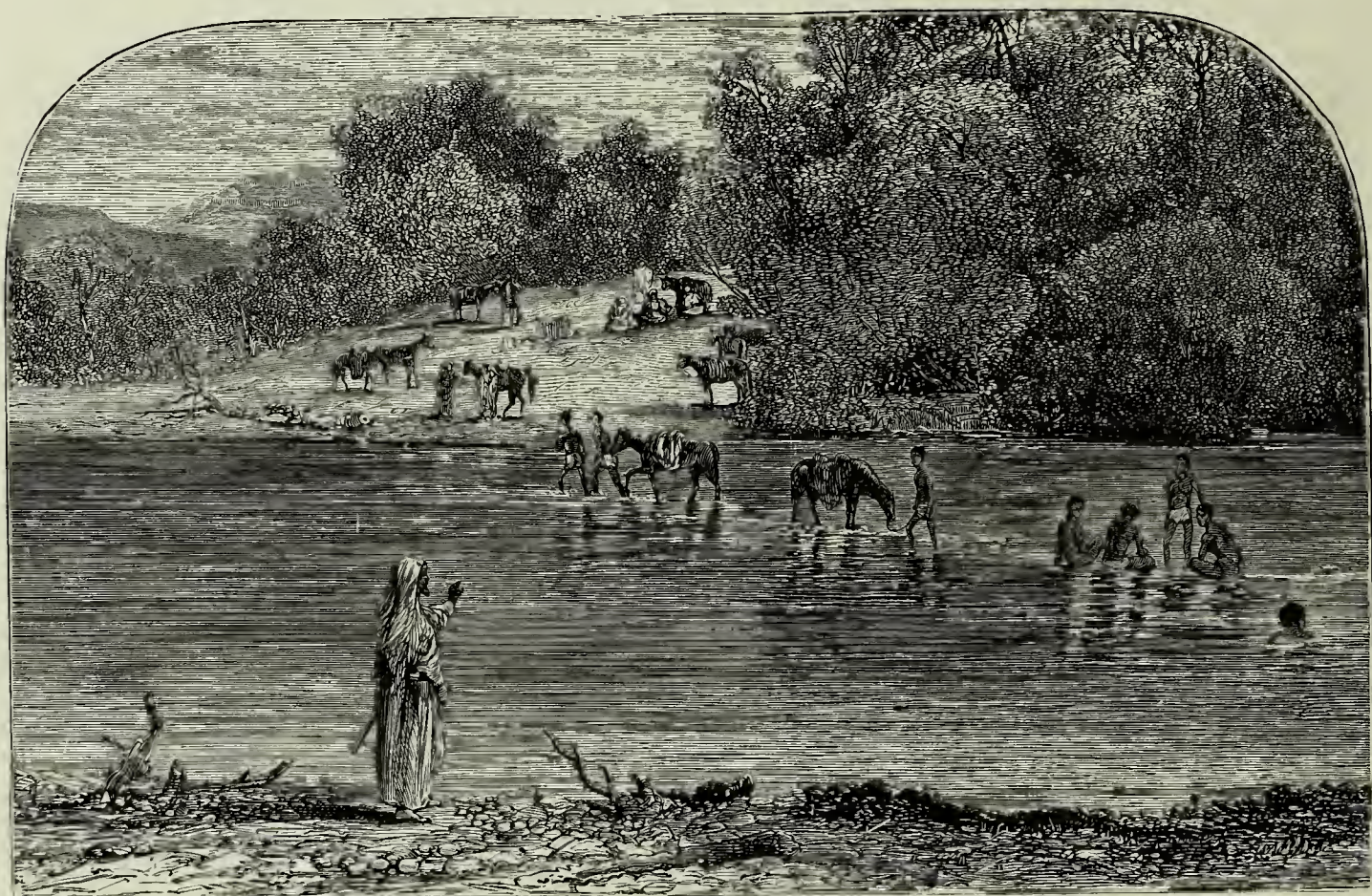
Thither let us follow Him.

¹ 2 Kings ii. 22.

² Matt. xix. 1, 2. Mark x. 1.

³ Luke xviii. 35-43; xix. 1-28.

The road at first winds amongst the mounds of débris, so often referred to, past ruined aqueducts and watercourses which in the time of our Lord conveyed the fertilising streams to irrigate the plain. The mountains above us are honey-combed by cells of hermits, who came here to live useless ascetic lives, where our Lord had fasted, prayed, and been tempted of the devil. Soon we begin to ascend and find ourselves skirting the edge of a savage ravine which plunges sheer down to a depth of five hundred feet. It is the Wady Kelt—once known as the Valley of the CHERITH, where the prophet Elijah was fed by ravens,¹ and, in still earlier times, as the Valley of Achor, in which Achan was stoned.²



Lent by the

BATHING-PLACE OF PILGRIMS ON THE JORDAN.

Palestine Exploration Fund.

The ascent is continuous and steep. In a distance of about fifteen miles we rise more than three thousand feet. Hence the constant phrases 'going *up* to Jerusalem,' 'going *down* to Jericho.' On every side are steep mountains and wild glens, the haunt of plundering Bedouin, so that a strong and vigilant escort is needful.

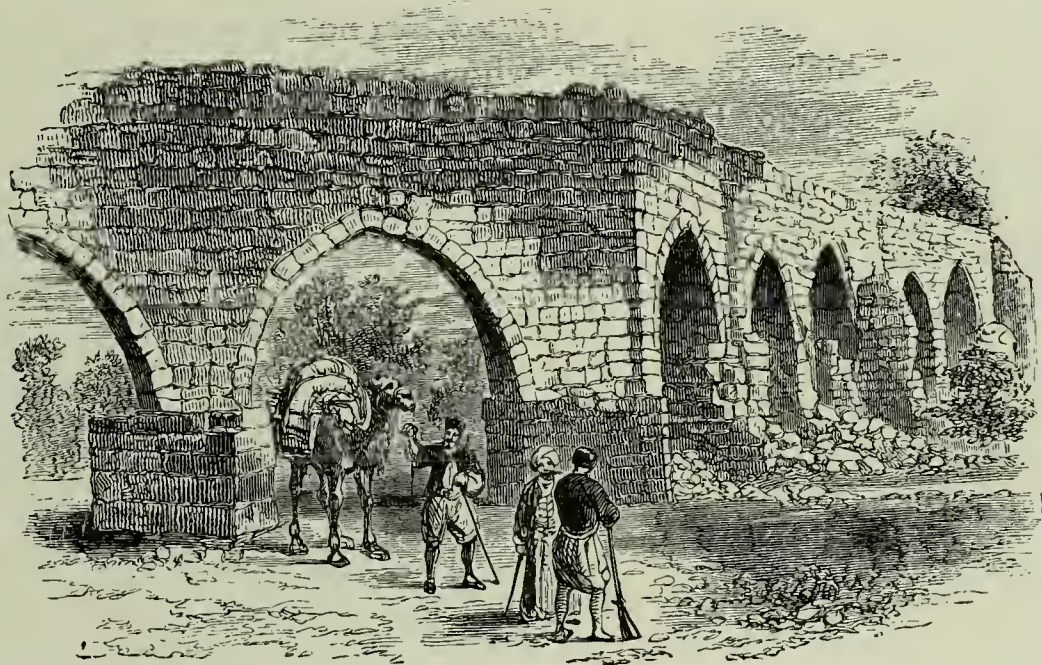
About midway on our journey, we pass the ruins of an ancient khan. In accordance with Oriental custom, noticed before, by which khans seldom or never change, but occupy the same spot from age to age, a halting-place for

¹ I Kings xvii. 1-7.² Joshua vii.

travellers has stood here from immemorial antiquity. This then is the inn to which our Lord referred in His parable of the Good Samaritan. The road then, as now, was notorious for its insecurity. Reading on the spot the narrative of the traveller who, going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, was stripped, wounded, and left for dead on the roadside, every incident and detail acquired new significance and appropriateness.

From this point the wild desolation of the earlier part of our journey ceased, and gave place to the rounded featureless hills which characterise the scenery of Southern Palestine. About mid-day we reached the Ain el Haud, or 'The Apostle's Fountain,' and halted awhile. Before us rose a steep ascent up which wound a rough mountain road. It was the Mount of Olives. Reaching the summit we should look down upon Jerusalem!

I proposed to one or two of our party that we should walk on alone, so as to indulge, without restraint, in the emotions which such a view would excite. The proposal was heartily agreed to, and we started. The day had been showery, and, though not actually raining at the moment, the clouds were black and heavy. Scarcely had we commenced the ascent when the rain began to fall in torrents. The stiff, tenacious mud, and the slippery sheets of rock over which the track led, made the walk very difficult: but still we persevered. Soon a miserable, ruinous, poverty-stricken hamlet came in view, standing on a plateau of rock in a slight depression on the hillside. The pasturage around it was good and abundant, and the olive groves ought to have been a source of wealth to the inhabitants. Under a better system of government, and with a more industrious population, it might have been a bright and prosperous village; but now its only attraction consists in its hallowed associations. It is Bethany—the home of Martha and Mary and Lazarus—the one spot on earth where He who 'had not where to lay His head' found a loving welcome and a peaceful home. It has always seemed to me to be not without meaning that our Lord, on His ascension, led His disciples 'out as far as to Bethany,' so that the last spot His eyes looked



RUINED AQUEDUCT NEAR JERICO.

upon, and His feet pressed before He left the earth which rejected Him should be the one in which He had been a loved and honoured guest.

The old name of Bethany has disappeared, together with the palm-trees which once were in such profusion as to win for it this distinctive epithet.¹ The memory of the raising of Lazarus has lived so vividly in Arab legend, that the name El-'Azirîyeh has supplanted the earlier and Biblical one.

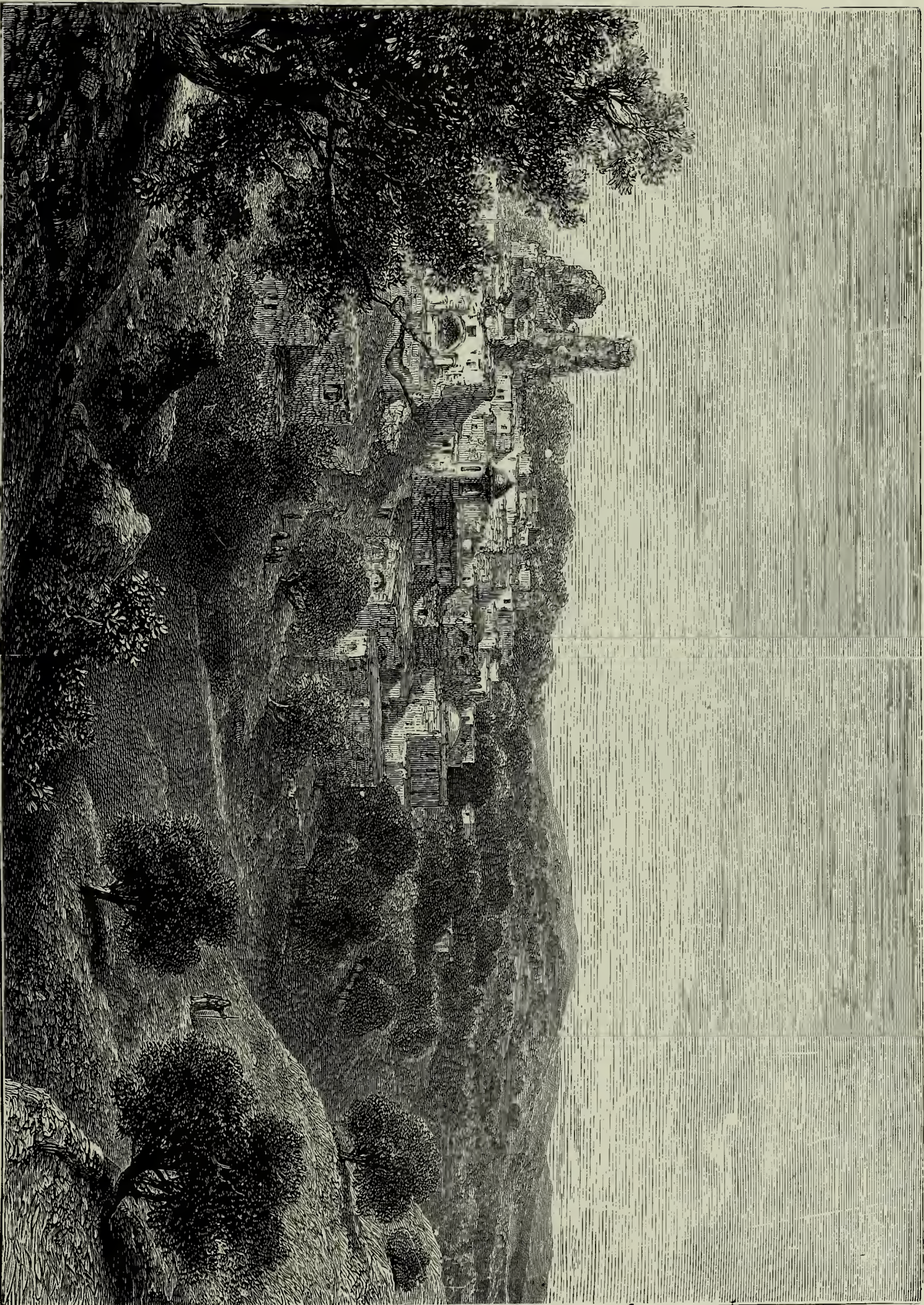
Of course traditional sites are pointed out for all the events of the Biblical narrative. The houses of Simon and of Martha and the grave of Lazarus are shown. The former may be dismissed without a glance or thought. They are evidently modern erections, certainly not earlier than the Saracenic period, and probably more recent. But the tomb of Lazarus may be authentic. The masonry, indeed, is modern, but the sepulchre itself, a deep recess cut into the rock, is apparently ancient, and, so far as I could judge, was originally a tomb. It is entered by a narrow passage, with twenty-five steps, leading to a *cubiculum*. The tradition which identifies it with 'the cave' in which the 'friend' whom 'Jesus loved' was buried, has a respectable antiquity, going back, at least, to the time of Arculf (A.D. 700). Whether this be the exact spot or not, we know that very near where we stand the memorable words were uttered: 'I am the Resurrection and the Life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.'²

Escaping from the rabble of Arabs clamouring for backshish, we resumed our journey. The rain had ceased, and a few breaks in the clouds encouraged a hope that we might gain a view of the city not utterly disappointing. But we were quite unprepared for the view which awaited us on reaching the summit of Olivet. Seen under any circumstances, it is one never to be forgotten. The deep ravine of the Kedron below us—the city on the opposite hill, with its grey venerable walls, its broad marble platform, in the centre of which stands the exquisite dome of the Mosque of Omar—the picturesque mass of cupolas and minarets standing out against the sky—the surrounding valleys and hills dotted with villages and ruined towers and olive groves—need no aid from the associations of the spot to make it a most striking view. But when we add those associations—so sacred, so tender, so sublime—it is not to be wondered at that every visitor feels himself at a loss to express the emotions which it awakens.

Nothing, however, which I had heard or read had prepared me for the view which broke upon us as we ascended the minaret on the summit of Olivet. The vast marble platform of the Temple, the dome of the mosque, the roofs of El-Aksa, the innumerable cupolas and flat roofs of the city, were all running with water from the heavy rain. Through rifts in the clouds long slanting beams of sunlight fell upon them with a dazzling splendour. The

¹ See, however, an interesting note by the late Dr. Deutsch in Dixon's *Holy Land*, in which it is maintained that Bethany meant not, as is commonly supposed, 'the house of dates,' but 'the house of poverty.' He fails, however, to take note of the fact that as we have a Mount of Olives, a house of figs (Bethphage), and a house of bread (Bethlehem), so we might naturally have a house of dates in the same locality.

² John xi. 25.



BETHANY.

From a Sketch by Captain Malan.

city flashed and shone like molten silver. All the meanness and squalor of its degradation was lost in the radiance which veiled it. The storm-clouds had drifted away eastward, and settled dark and heavy over the Valley of the Dead Sea, blotting it out from view by their gloomy mass. Above the line of clouds rose the mountains of Moab, purple in the light of the descending sun. Only one more touch of beauty, only one more suggestion of hallowed thought, was possible. This was furnished by a rainbow—symbol of Divine mercy and faithfulness—spanning the storm-cloud which hung above the Valley of Sodom. On the one side was the city of God, radiant in the ‘clear shining after rain;’ on the other the city of destruction, veiled in darkness and gloom, yet not utterly abandoned by our gracious and covenant-keeping God.

Impressive as is the view which bursts upon us from the summit of the Mount of Olives, even now that Jerusalem lies in its misery and degradation, it must have been far grander when our Lord, on His way from Bethany, standing upon this very spot, beheld the city and wept over it, saying, ‘If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.’¹ The valley at our feet was at least sixty feet deeper than it is at present. The accumulation of débris, the result of repeated sieges, has not only filled it up



CHURCH ON THE SUMMIT OF THE MOUNT OF OLIVES.

to that extent, but has choked up the bed of the Kedron, so that it has either ceased to flow altogether, or only trickles almost imperceptibly amongst the stones. The trees which once clothed the hills and the gardens which lay along the banks of the stream have disappeared. The face of the rock upon which the Temple stands, then went down almost precipitously, so that, as Josephus tells us, the spectator, standing upon the walls, grew dizzy as he looked into the ravine below him. Now mounds of rubbish, through which Captain Warren sank a shaft to the depth of a hundred feet before he reached the virgin soil, rest against the rock and rise almost to the foot of the walls. The Temple itself was a marvel of splendour and beauty. Built of costly marbles, overlaid with gold, and adorned with jewels, it shone resplendently when the light of the rising or the setting sun fell upon it, as though another sun were setting or rising. Of all this magnificence, nothing remains save the vast marble platform upon which it stood. Well might the

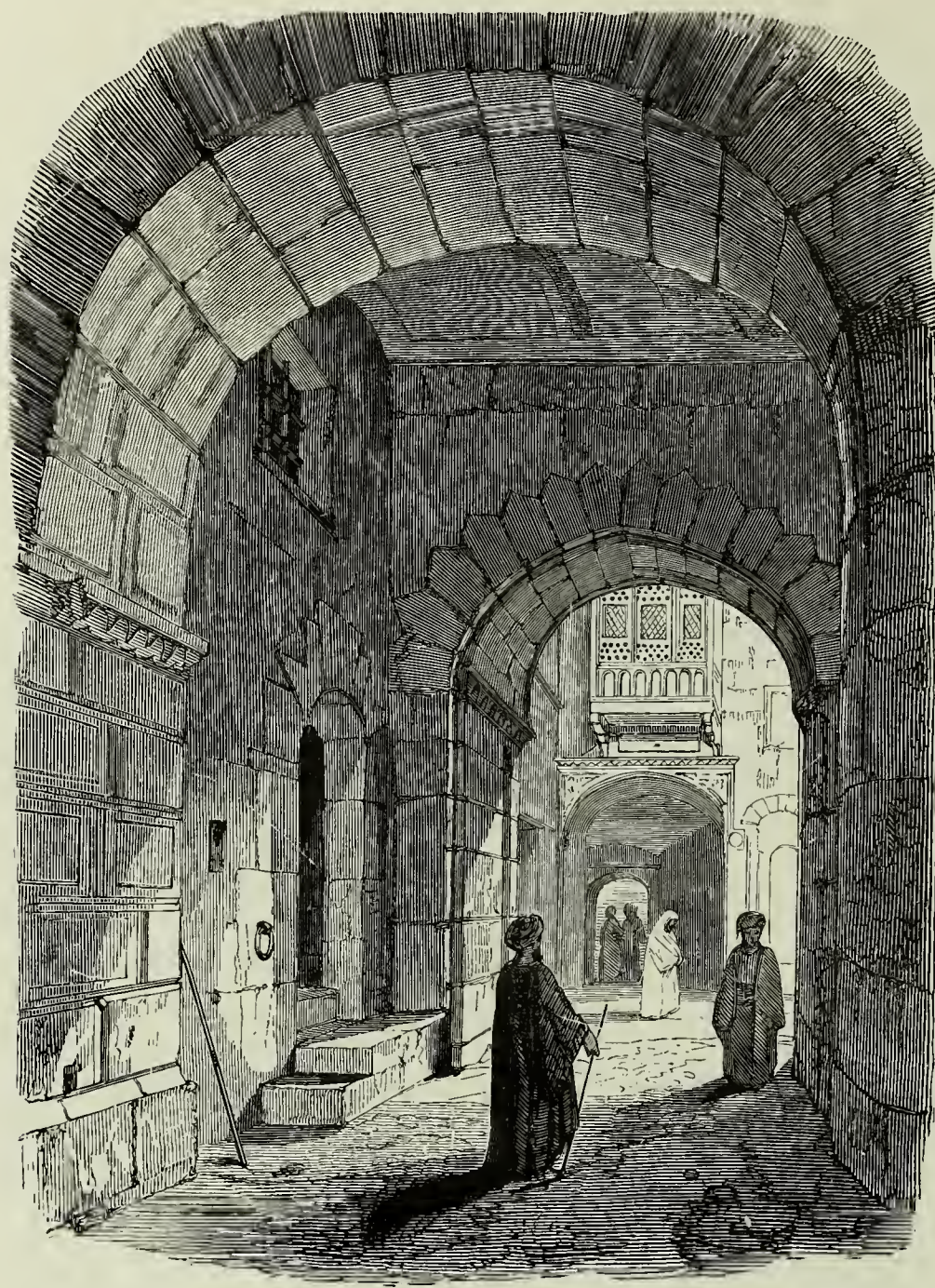
¹ Luke xix. 42.

disciples listen with reluctance or incredulity as our Lord foretold the impending destruction of a city 'beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth.'

Slowly we descended from the summit, lingering at many points to recall the hallowed associations of the scene, or turning aside to gain some fresh

point of view. We remembered not only that our Lord had often trodden these very paths in His journey between Bethany and Jerusalem, or gone out to spend the night upon the Mount of Olives, 'as He was wont,'¹ but that David, in his flight from the city, 'went up by the ascent of Mount Olivet, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered, and he went barefoot. and all the people that was with him covered every man his head, and they went up, weeping as they went up.'²

Passing the Garden of Gethsemane, and crossing the Kedron, we entered by St. Stephen's Gate. Skirting the Templearea, travers-



ST. STEPHEN'S GATE.

ing the length of the Via Dolorosa, slipping on the slimy stones or plunging ankle-deep into the mud of the wretched streets, we emerged at the Jaffa Gate and found our camp pitched on the edge of the Valley of Hinnom.

¹ Luke xxii. 39.

² 2 Sam. xv. 30.



ENTRANCE TO CHURCH OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE.

CHAPTER IV.

JERUSALEM.



TOMB OF ABSALOM.

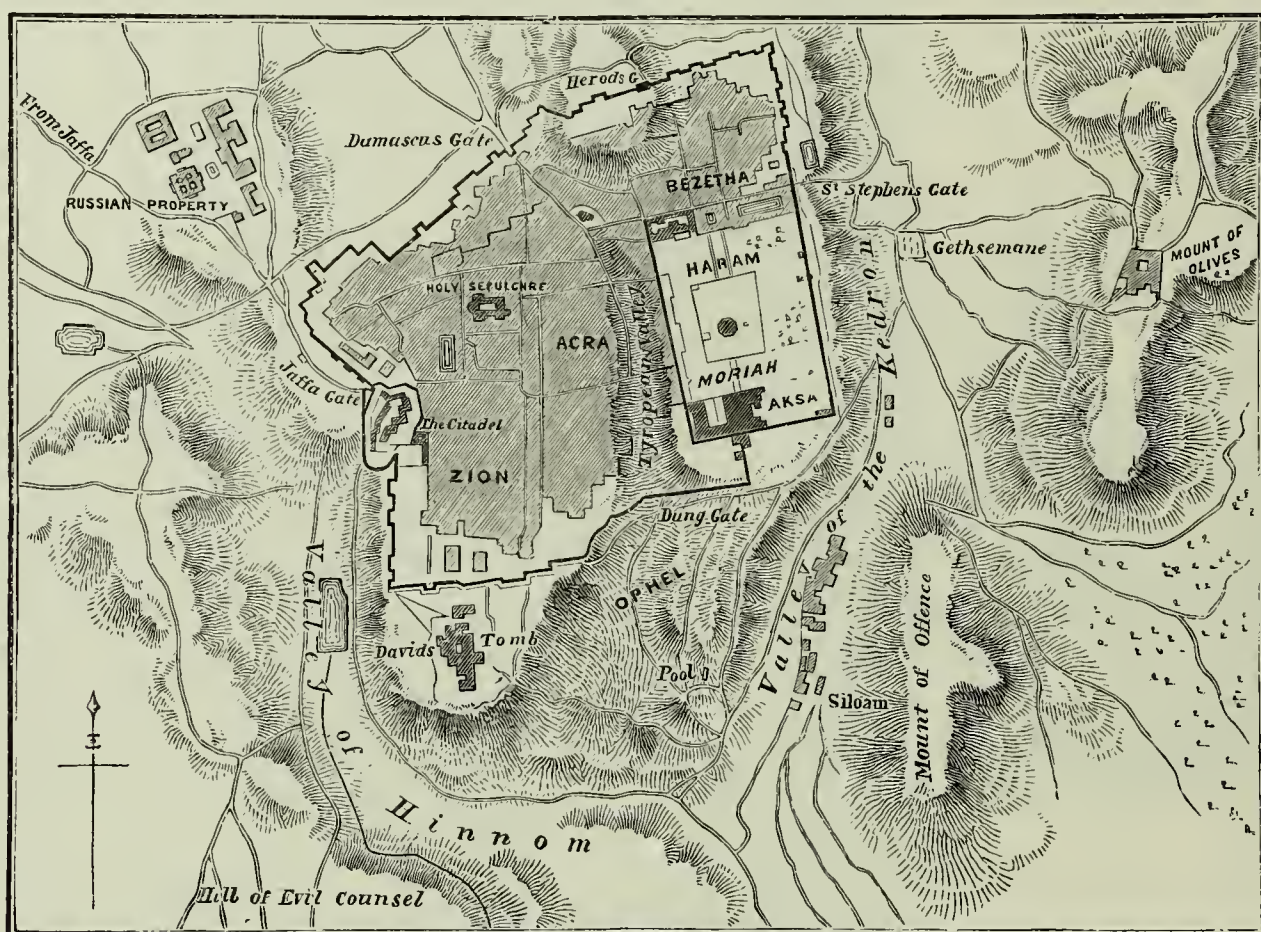
‘OUR feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem.’¹ Drawn by an irresistible attraction, pilgrims flock hither from the very ends of the earth. The crumbling walls, the squalid filthy streets, the mouldering ruins, are regarded with a profound and reverential interest by millions of mankind, such as no other spot on earth can excite. To the Jew it is the centre alike of his patriotism and his religion. The Christian remembers that here the Son of God was crucified for the sins of the world. The Mohammedan, retaining in a mutilated and distorted

form the great facts of Jewish and of Christian Scripture, and adding to them the legends of his own prophet, regards Jerusalem as second, and hardly second, in sanctity to Mecca itself. Nowhere else are the representatives of such various nationalities to be found as in this meeting-place of the three great monotheistic faiths which have spread so widely over the habitable globe. Jews who have travelled on foot from Poland or Morocco, may be seen weeping outside the Temple walls. Greeks, Latins, Armenians, Copts, kneel side by side with worshippers from America, from Australia, and from every nation in Europe. Nubians, Hindoos, Affghans, Persians, Tartars, Arabs, prostrate

¹ The etymology of the word Jerusalem is much disputed. ‘The vision of peace,’ ‘the inheritance of peace,’ ‘the foundation of peace,’ all have their advocates. Others understand it as compounded of Jebus-salem, *i.e.*, Salem of the Jebusites. Throughout the Moslem world it is now known as *El-Kuds*, the holy city, or as *El Kuds esh Shereef*, the holy, noble city. Herodotus is thought to have referred to it as Cadytis. In this case, as in so many others throughout Palestine, the modern Arabic name is simply a return to a more ancient one.

themselves before the sacred rock whence their prophet commenced his fabled journey to heaven, or gaze with awe on the spot to which he will, as they believe, return to judge the world.

The city, which holds so conspicuous a place in the later Scriptures, is in the earlier ones only referred to incidentally or obscurely. It is commonly identified with the Salem of which Melchizedek was king; and Mount Moriah, upon which Abraham was about to offer up Isaac, is thought to be the same with that on which the Temple was afterwards built. Dean Stanley argues strongly against this view, and would transfer the city of Melchizedek to a town, the site of which is marked by a village still bearing



PLAN OF JERUSALEM, FROM THE ORDNANCE SURVEY.

the name of Salem, near the ancient Shechem. The sacrifice of Isaac he would likewise place in the same neighbourhood on the summit of Gerizim. Though his arguments are weighty and deserve serious consideration, they cannot be accepted as conclusive. That the king of Jerusalem, in the days of Joshua,¹ bore a name or title almost the precise equivalent of that of the king of Salem, who was Abraham's friend, is an important fact in the discussion. Adonizedek, the Lord of righteousness, would be a probable successor of Melchizedek, the King of righteousness.

But whilst Jerusalem was thus probably associated with two most memorable events in the life of Abraham, it was not till the time of David

¹ Joshua x. i.

that the city rose into prominence. In his day it was regarded as an impregnable stronghold. The Jebusites, confident in the strength of their position, treated the attacks of the besiegers with derision; and placed upon their walls the blind and the lame, as an adequate garrison, 'thinking, David cannot come in hither. . . . Nevertheless David took the stronghold of Zion.'¹ Stung by the taunt, and incited by the promise of the king, Joab stormed the citadel and received the command-in-chief of the army as a reward of his desperate exploit. David, who had hitherto reigned in Hebron, now removed his capital to Jerusalem. The reasons for this are obvious. At Hebron he was isolated from the great bulk of his subjects; Jerusalem, though not central, was yet not very remote from the Northern tribes; it was on the frontier of his own tribe of Judah and partly within that of Benjamin, whose allegiance he thus secured. Military considerations were even more decisively in favour of the new capital. Nor must we overlook the Divine guidance which thus prepared the way for the erection of the Temple on the chosen and favoured spot. Little did the rude rough soldier, when 'getting up by the gutter and smiting the Jebusites,' think for what mighty events he was preparing the way.

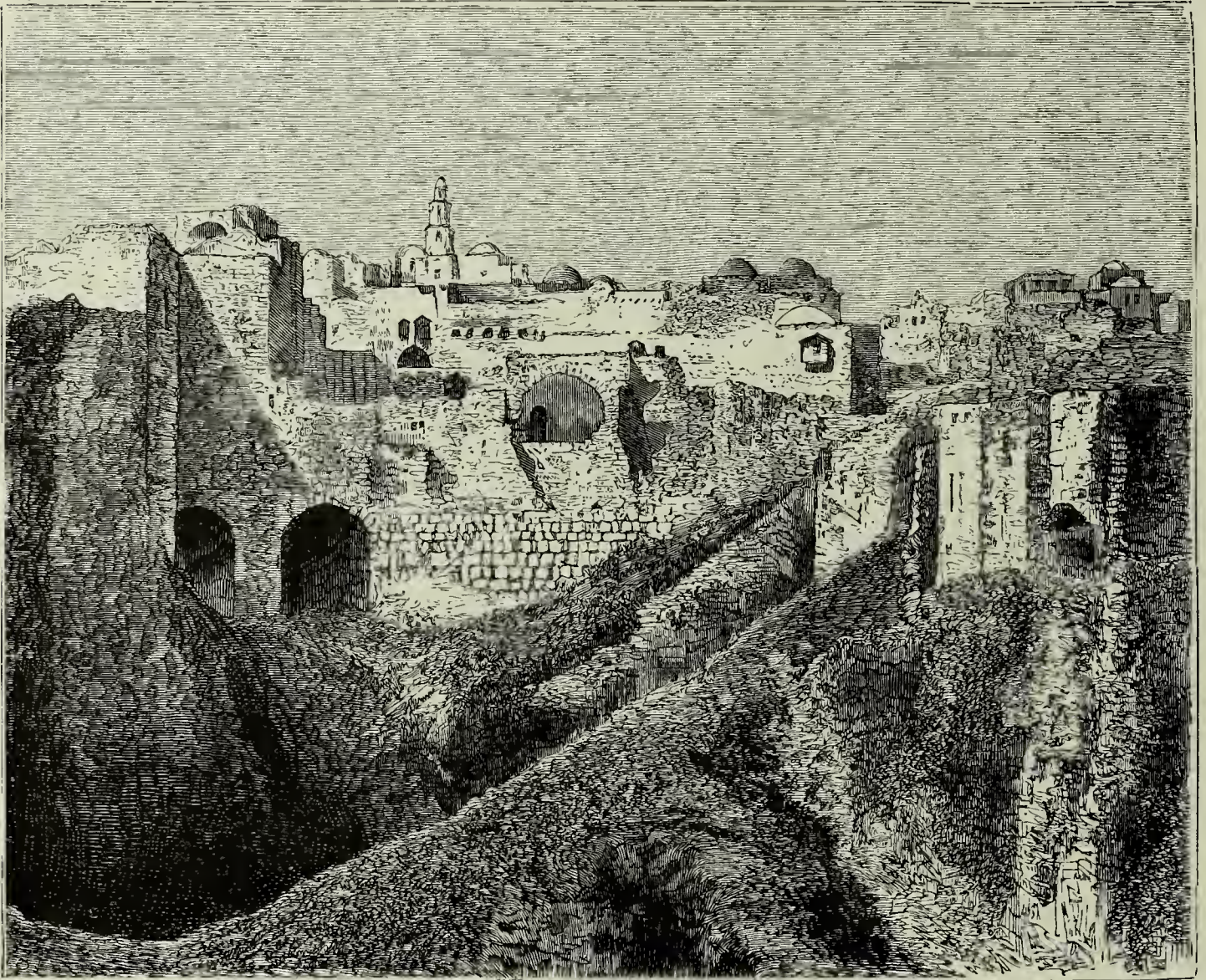
The city fortified by David, enriched and adorned by Solomon,² has continued, with varying fortunes, to occupy the same spot to the present day. Its continuity, however, like that of the human body, is a constant sequence of destruction and reconstruction, ever perishing yet ever renewed. In addition to the corroding influence of time and the destructive agencies of earthquake and fire, it has suffered yet more severely from the violence of man. Perhaps no city in the world has undergone so many or such disastrous sieges. Roman, Persian, Saracen, Christian, Turk, have succeeded one another in the work of devastation. Again and again it has been laid utterly waste, and continued for years to be desolate and forsaken.

The result of this long succession of destructive agencies is, that of ancient Jerusalem scarcely a trace or vestige remains. The city of David and Solomon lies buried far beneath the ruins of edifices which have succeeded it. It is even difficult to say, with certainty, that we can find undoubted remains above the soil of the city of Herod. The great Tyropœan valley which divided Zion from Acra has been filled up with débris, leaving only a slight depression. We cannot even trace the line of the ancient walls except where they ran along the edge of the ravine, which bounds the city on the east and south. The whole topography of Jerusalem is hence involved in the utmost confusion. The most elementary facts as to the localities indicated by the inspired narrative, have been for years the theme of keen and angry dispute. Whilst the controversial literature on the subject might fill a moderately-sized library, we seem almost as far from a satisfactory settlement of the question as ever.

¹ 2 Sam. v. 6-8. 1 Chron. xi. 4-6.

² 2 Sam. v. 9. 1 Kings x. 27.

The general outline of the country and the great natural features of the landscape are, indeed, distinct and unmistakable. The mountains round about Jerusalem, the valleys which encompass it, and the ridge on which it stands, remain as they were in the days of the patriarchs and prophets and apostles. Looked at from any of the surrounding heights, we feel no difficulty in identifying the objects which meet our view. The scene which lies outstretched before us from the summit of the Mount of Olives, has

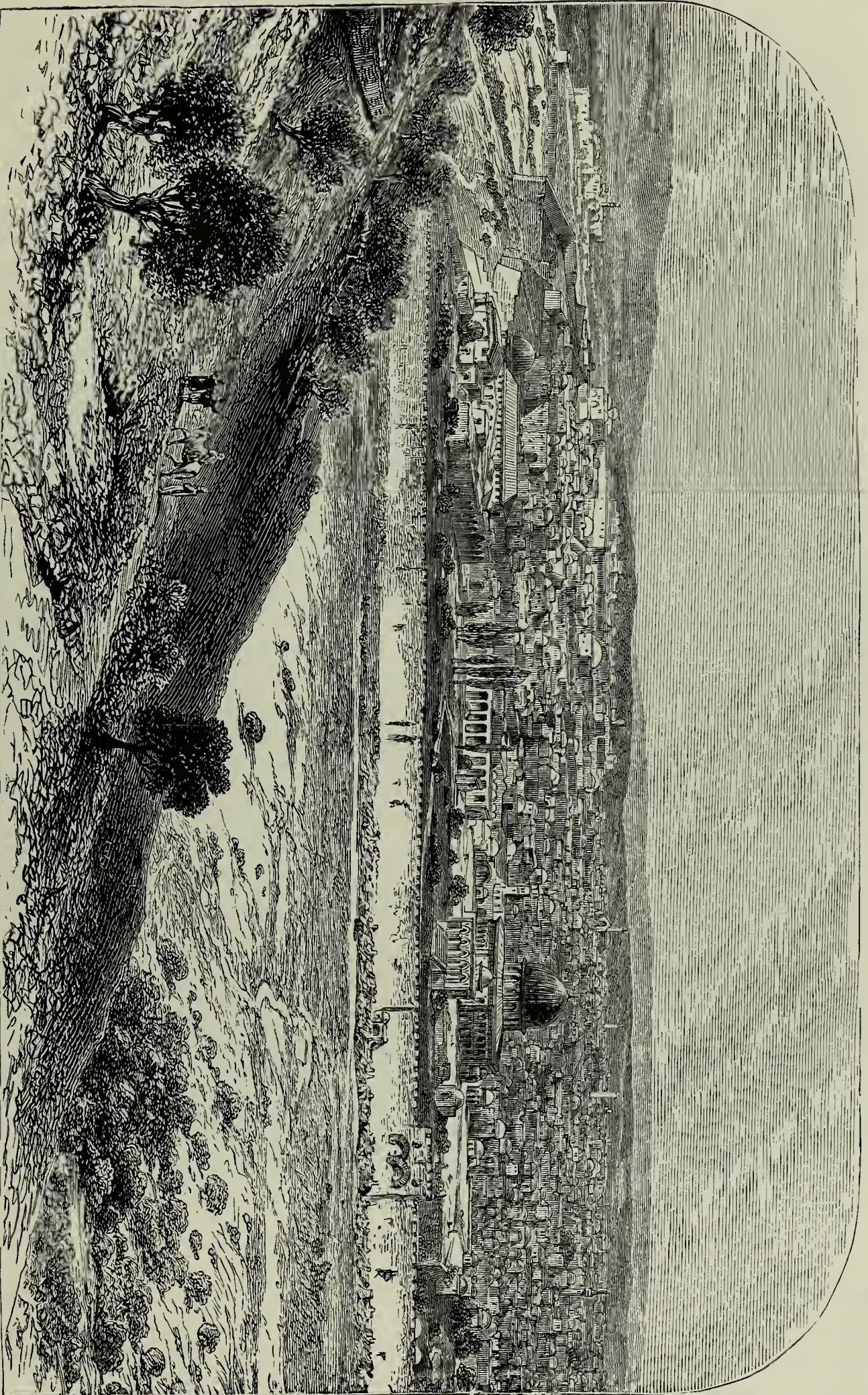


RUINS NEAR THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE.

been so truthfully and graphically sketched by Lady Strangford, that we cannot do better than reproduce her description :

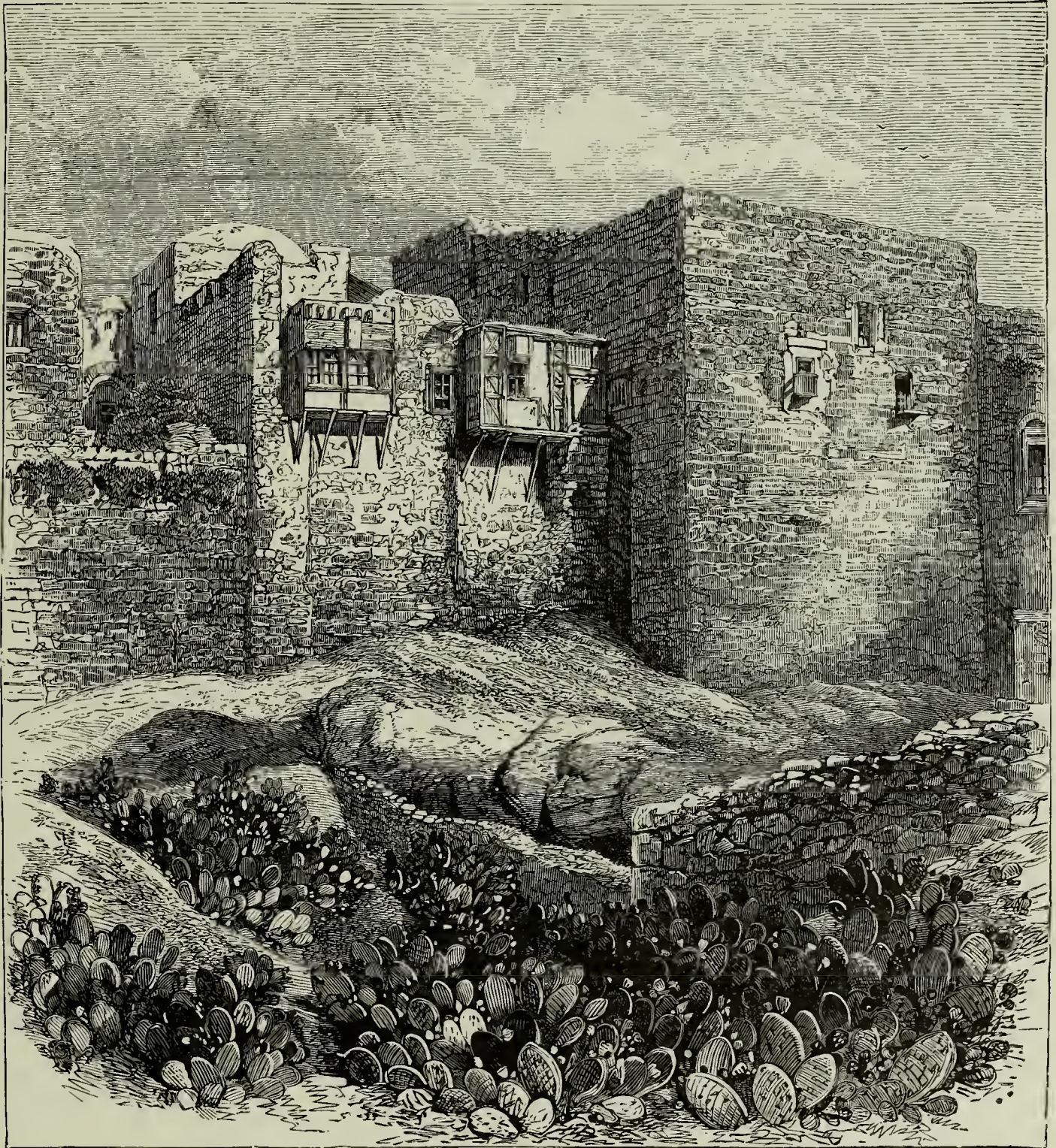
‘Let us sketch in slightly what we see : the bare hill to the south of the city, with one miserable wind-worn tree on its brow, is the Hill of Evil Counsel (where Caiaphas and the elders are said, upon no authority, however, to have taken counsel together).¹ It is rocky and irregular, sloping off to the west and dying down in the Plain of Rephaim. On the north, long ridges of low barren hills or plains, stony and bare, though dotted with

¹ Matt. xxvi. 3.



JERUSALEM FROM THE MOUNT OF OLIVES.

olives here and there, stretch one behind another. They seem to rise gently from the city until the monotony is broken by the low peak of Neby Samwil, marked by a tower, the ruin of an old convent church, since converted into a mosque.



WALLS OF JERUSALEM.

[From a Photograph.]

‘ Between these two sides of the picture the Holy City stands, apparently on a square, rocky hill, enclosed in crenelated walls, with here and there a bastion or a zigzag—very quaint and very sad those old walls look, and yet something proudly, too, they stand—while beyond them a long, dull, flat

ridge rises slightly towards the west, and two deep narrow ravines sweep round the holy mountain—the one is the Valley of Jehoshaphat, or of the Kedron, commencing from some distance to the north of the city, and running along the eastern side of it to the south. The other is the Valley of Hinnom, coming round from the western side and uniting with the Kedron at the south-east corner, embracing at that point, between them, the spur of Mount Moriah, which is called Ophel. Farthest from us, on the western wall, is the Tower of Hippicus. Near it, to the right, is the Latin convent and the two domes of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. To the left, on



STREET OF MODERN JERUSALEM.

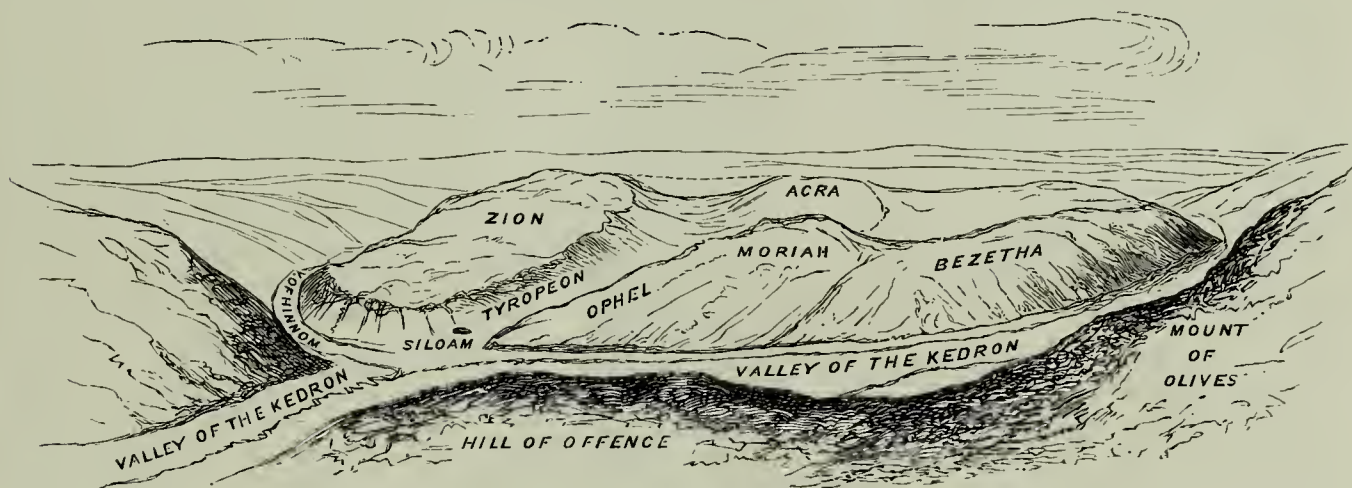
Mount Zion, the extensive Armenian Convent, the domes of some new synagogues, the English Church, and the Tomb of David are seen (the last outside the walls). These are almost the only buildings on which the eye can rest among the confused mass of little brown and white domes and grey walls: nor are any of these seen at first, for the Mosque of Omar, in the famous Harâm, the second most beautiful building in all the world, rivets all the spectator's attention. The wall inclosing the mosque occupies more than half the eastern side of the city—in the centre of which stands the mosque, an octagonal building, pierced with seven windows on each side, narrowing above into a small circle also pierced with windows, and surmounted by a most graceful dome, bearing aloft the gilt crescent of Islam; the whole building is cased

entirely in encaustic tiles—chiefly blue, green, purple, and yellow, formed into intricate and delicate arabesques, and so mingled that it is impossible to say whether the building is green or blue. The cornice is replaced by an Arabic inscription in large and prettily interlaced letters. The mosque stands on a marble platform, which is reached by broad flights of steps, and round the edge of which are several groups of slender arches and small houses, while little circular *mihhrabs*, or praying-places, shaded by a light canopy of fretted stone, are dotted over its surface. Round this platform are grassy slopes, with noble cypresses and a few other trees, the bright and dark green of which contrast beautifully with the white and coloured marbles of the buildings.

'At the southern end of the inclosure is the mosque of El Aksa, ornamented with a dome and covered by a sloping roof. The Mosque of the Mogharibeh, the college of the Dervishes, and the Serai, the residence of the pasha, stand on the west and north sides—while the whole extent of the eastern side of the city is only broken by St. Stephen's Gate, and the long-closed "Golden Gate," with its two round arches and small domes.

'This is the view over which Jesus wept, when He beheld its beauty, and thought upon its ruin and desolation; and strange and thrilling indeed is the feeling it gives to one now: the gloomy ravines lose much of their effect seen from above: the surrounding hills are, one and all, the very dreariest, barrenest, and ugliest one can find anywhere, and yet the whole is beautiful, and even the fastidious and trifling are impressed by it.'

It is when we endeavour to fill in the details of the city itself that our difficulties and perplexities commence. They are caused partly by the vague



SKETCH PLAN OF SITE OF JERUSALEM.

After Robinson.

and indefinite language of ancient historians and topographers, and partly by the fact that valleys have been filled up, hills have been levelled, and successive cities have arisen upon the ruins of those which have preceded them, thus effacing the landmarks which would otherwise have guided us. Mediæval and monkish traditions have likewise done much to obscure and pervert the true topography of Jerusalem. Learning and labour have been wasted in the endeavour to defend theories which have nothing in their favour but ecclesiastical authority. Theological controversies have thus been imported into questions which ought to have been discussed only in the light of historical and geographical science.

We know from Josephus that the city stood on two hills, divided by the Tyropœan Valley. One of these was Zion, the other Acra. We read likewise of Bezetha, Moriah, and Ophel. Did these last form a separate ridge, or were they names given to parts of one of the former? If so, to which—Zion or Acra? The sketch plan given above shows the conclusion

arrived at by Dr. Robinson, who maintains that there were three separate hills. Other writers of scarcely inferior authority identify the Temple ridge with Zion—others again with Acra. Notwithstanding the confident dogmatism with which each of these views has been maintained, I cannot say that any of them have carried full conviction to my own mind. It is to be hoped that the explorations now in progress may throw some light upon these obscure questions.

No less conflicting are the views as to the sites of the SEPULCHRE and of the TEMPLE. Though the Temple claims priority in the order of historical sequence, yet, for reasons which will subsequently appear, we shall first consider the site of the Sepulchre.

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre stands in a crowded part of the city, at some distance to the north-west of the Temple area. It is a comparatively modern structure, no visible portion being probably older than the period of the Crusades. It is entered through a courtyard, in which a market is now held for the sale of trinkets, rosaries, pictures and curiosities. Just inside the principal entrance a Turkish guard is stationed to keep order, and repress disturbances amongst the hostile sects and nationalities who visit it.

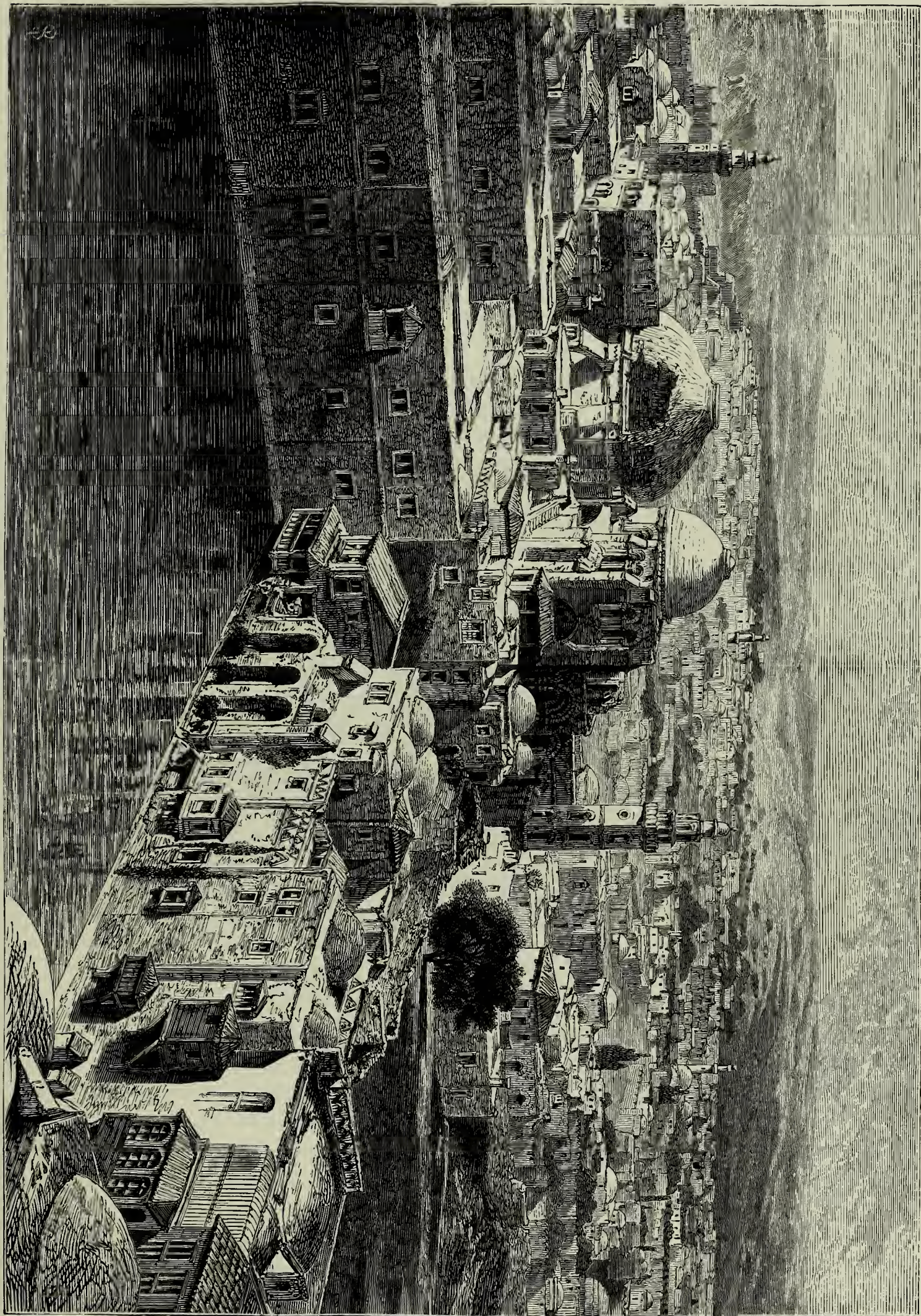
In passing round the church attention is distracted and incre-



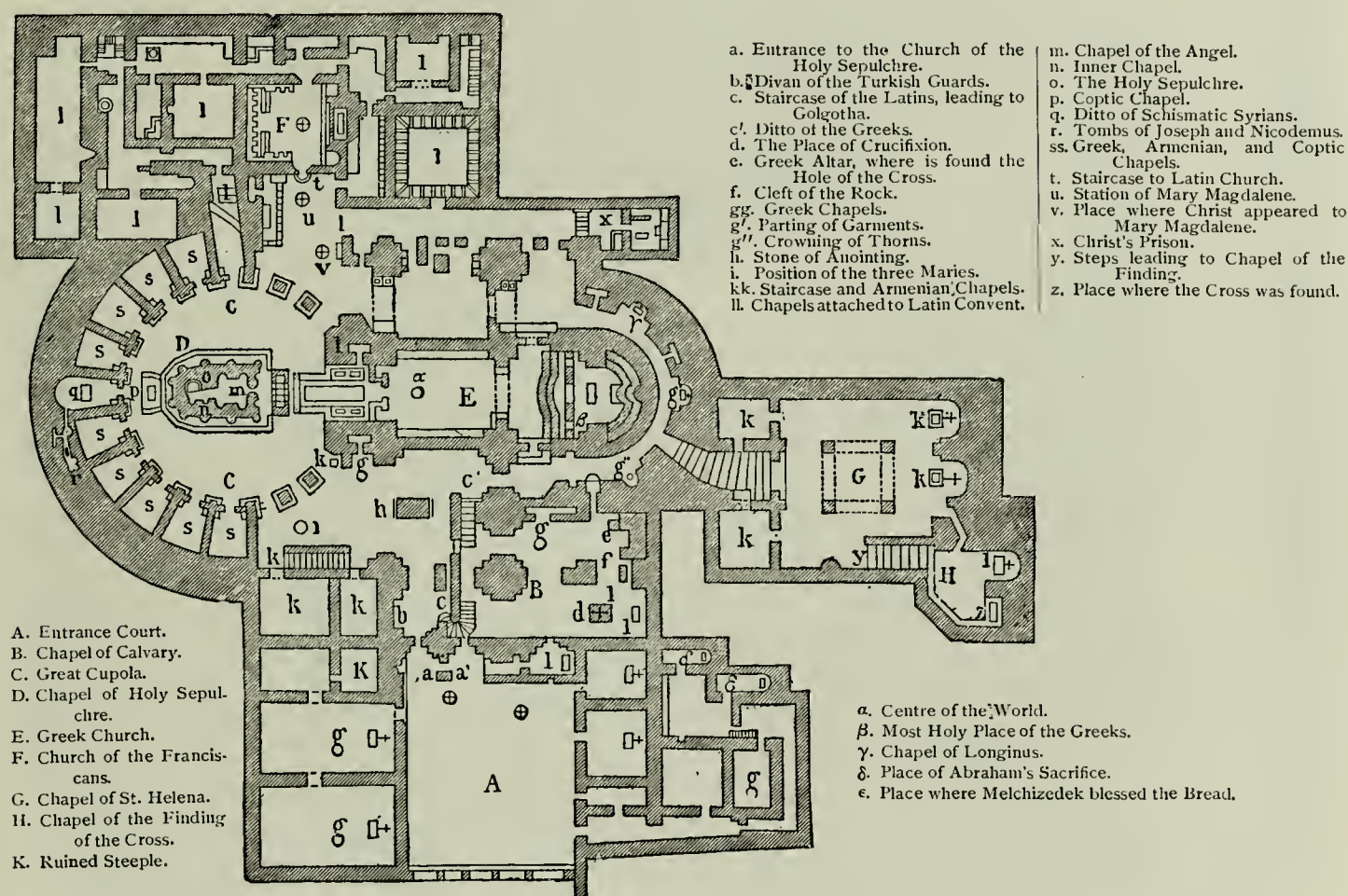
ENTRANCE OF CHURCH OF HOLY SEPULCHRE.

dulity excited by the aggregation under one roof of numerous shrines and holy places. Here are shown not only the sites of the crucifixion and the resurrection, but the tombs of Adam, Melchizedek, Joseph of Arimathæa, and of Nicodemus; the place where our Lord was crowned with thorns, and where He appeared to Mary Magdalene; the pillar to which He was bound during the scourging; the slab upon which His body was laid for the anointing; the spot where He first appeared to His mother after the resurrection; the centre of the

THE POOL OF HEZEKIAH AND THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE.



world; the place whence the earth was taken out of which Adam was made, with many other marvels. Even those who come, with simple faith, to 'see the place where the Lord lay,' depart indignant at the frauds and lying legends palmed off upon them. This feeling is increased by the tinsel and frippery which abound everywhere. The very Chapel of the Resurrection is made offensive by puerile ornamentation and tawdry finery. Yet in spite of all it is strangely affecting to see the agony of earnestness, the passionate fervour of devotion displayed by pilgrims, many of whom have travelled on foot from incredible distances to pray at the sacred shrines.



PLAN OF THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE.

We may dismiss, without a moment's hesitation, the legends which cluster around the main central tradition; but have we reasonable ground for believing that our Lord was crucified and buried upon this spot? What is the evidence upon which the authenticity of the site rests?

In the reign of Constantine the city had been laid utterly waste; its very name had ceased to be used, and Christians and Jews had been banished from it for generations. The superstitious zeal of the Empress Helena prompted her to visit the sacred places, and the site of Calvary had been fixed by the alleged discovery of the three crosses which were found in a pit, and their authenticity is said to have been attested by the miracles which

were worked. Constantine now resolved to recover the Sepulchre and to erect a church, the splendour and beauty of which should surpass all others. Eusebius tells us, that the pagans had piled a mound of earth over the cave, had paved the surface, and placed upon it a temple to Venus; the emperor caused these to be removed, when, 'as soon as the original surface of the



INTERIOR OF THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE.

ground beneath its covering of earth appeared, immediately, and contrary to all expectation, the venerable and hallowed monument of our Saviour's resurrection was discovered.' The cave was adorned with marbles, a colonnade was erected round it, and a basilica was built in honour of the *Anastasis*, or Resurrection.

Two questions at once suggest themselves. Did Constantine discover

the true site? Does the present church stand upon the same spot with his basilica? To these questions the most contradictory answers are given. By some it is maintained that the emperor was guided, in his search, by accurate information, that a continuous tradition connects his edifice with the present church, and that, consequently, we have the very places of the entombment

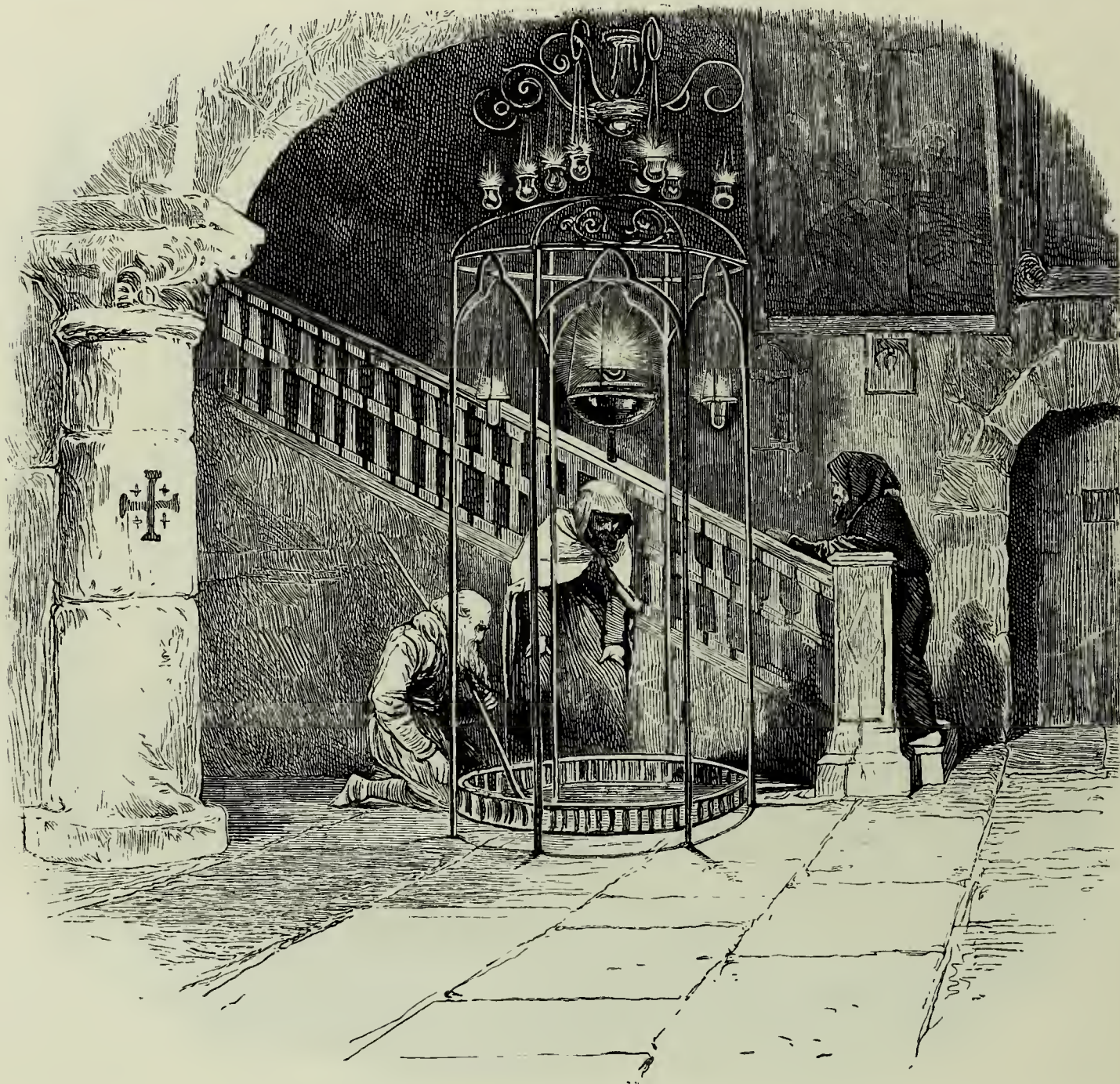


CHAPEL OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE.

and resurrection fixed beyond reasonable doubt. Others, holding that the true site was discovered by Constantine, yet assert that during the intervals in which Christians were banished from Jerusalem by Persian and Mohammedan conquerors, the original edifice was destroyed, the locality forgotten, and that a new church sprung up upon a different site, around which legends have clustered in the lapse of ages which have no historical basis. Others,

again, assert that Constantine was the dupe either of superstition or of imposture, and that there was absolutely no evidence that the sepulchre was where he sought for it.

Into the protracted and angry discussions which have raged upon these questions, I do not propose to enter here. But after a careful examination of



THE PLACE OF SCOURGING.

the site and of the arguments urged by the various disputants, I come to the conclusion that the place of the crucifixion and entombment must be sought elsewhere, and not on the spot which tradition points out. Though the indications of Scripture may be insufficient to show us where it was, they are yet quite adequate to tell us where it was not.

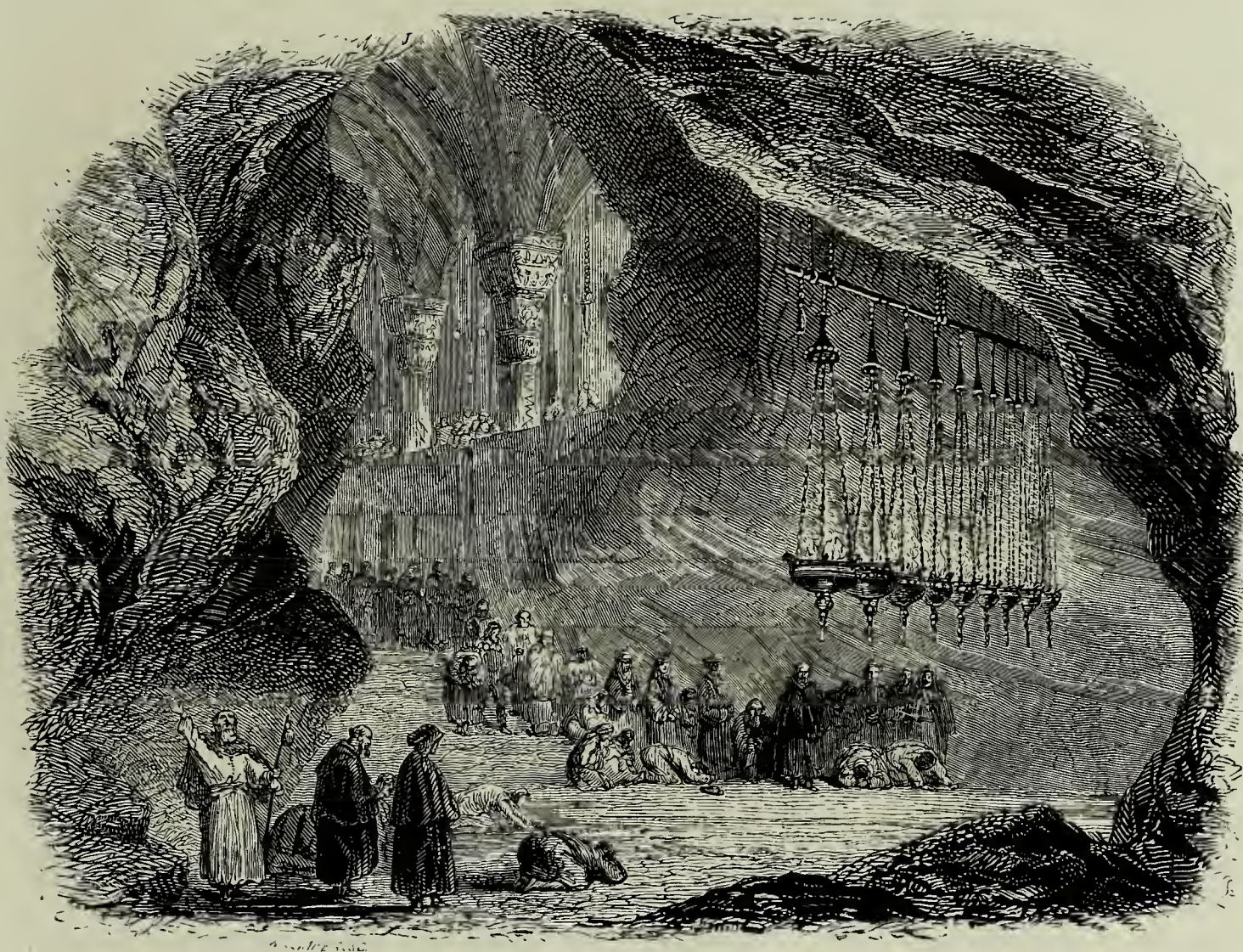
1. It was outside the city, yet near to it (John xix. 20 ; Hebrews xiii. 12).

2. It was a place where interments were permitted, and as a matter of fact did take place (Matt. xxvii. 59, 60; Mark xv. 46, 47; Luke xxiii. 53; John xix. 41, 42).

3. There was a garden in 'the place' (John xix. 41).

4. It was by the side of a road leading up from the country (Matt. xxvii. 39; Mark xv. 21, 29; Luke xxiii. 26).

5. It was a spot capable of being seen by a considerable number of persons from a distance (Matt. xxvii. 55; Mark xv. 40; Luke xxiii. 49).



CAVE UNDER THE CHURCH.

6. It was within sight and hearing of a place where the priests could stand without danger of defilement (Matt. xxvii. 41; Mark xv. 31; John xviii. 28).

7. It was not far from the barracks of the Roman soldiers, some of whom ran and fetched the vinegar—the ordinary *posca*, or sour drink of the legionaries—when Jesus on the cross cried, 'I thirst' (Matt. xxvii. 48; Mark xv. 36).

8. The language of the evangelists seems to imply that the procession, on leaving the judgment hall, passed not through the city but outside it (Matt. xxvii. 31, 32; Mark xv. 20; Luke xxiii. 26; John xix. 17).

The present site fails to satisfy any one of these conditions. It is not only far within the walls, but apparently must have been so in the time of our Lord, when the city was much larger and more populous than now, though in the time of Constantine, when the walls were demolished and the city desolate, it may have been outside the inhabited district.¹ Even if by any sudden bend, or re-entering angle, the line of circumvallation left it outside, which, however, is very unlikely, it must still have been in the midst of houses, for we find that Agrippa, twelve years afterwards, constructed a third line of wall to inclose an extensive suburb which had sprung up on this side; and we know that the ceremonial law and social usages of the Jews forbad the formation of graves among the abodes of the living.

Where could the priests have stood who so feared defilement,² that they would not enter the judgment hall amongst a crowd of Roman soldiers and rabble? In a place of public execution and interment, they must have been defiled.



VIA DOLOROSA.

If, as seems certain, houses were all round the present site, where could the great multitude have watched from 'afar off?'

The judgment hall and the barracks are believed to have been in the Castle of Antonia. In this case the Via Dolorosa must have led, as tradition now marks it, through the heart of the city, crowded at the time to its utmost capacity by the multitudes who had come up to the feast. The rulers feared 'an uproar among the people,' many of whom 'believed on

Him;' hence the need for taking Him by subtlety, and for hurrying over the trial in an illegal and stealthy manner. Is it likely that they would run the risk of a disturbance and a rescue in the crowded street, especially with a guard of only four soldiers?³ We can hardly doubt that, in accordance with the indications of the narrative, the rulers would choose some place for the execution to which they could pass immediately from the prætorium into the open country.

We have but to transfer the scene of the crucifixion from the northern to the eastern side of the city, in the Valley of the Kedron, to find all the requirements of the narrative satisfied. It is, and always must have been, outside the walls. It was a recognised place of interment, the valley to this

¹ The close proximity of the Pool of Hezekiah affords a strong incidental proof that the site of the church must always have been inside the walls. It is most improbable that this vast cistern should have been outside for the use of the besiegers, or that the wall should have included the pool and excluded the church.

² John xviii. 28.

³ Ibid. xix. 3.

day being full of graves, many of them very ancient and cut in the rock. Irrigated by the river, by wells and fountains, there were numerous gardens. The slope of Olivet would allow a great multitude to watch the scene afar off, and the priests, standing on the Temple cloisters, would be within sight and hail of Calvary without fear of defilement. One of the two main roads leading from the country into Jerusalem passed close to the spot. And the procession, leaving the prætorium, would emerge at once from the city into the open country. Assuming then that the site of Calvary is to be sought on the eastern side, the whole narrative becomes clear and consistent.

If this be conceded, a new and unexpected conformity between the type and the great Antitype is discovered. The Epistle to the Hebrews, written at a time when the Temple was yet standing and its sacrifices were being offered, says, respecting the sin-offering, 'the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the High Priest for sin, are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without *the gate*.'¹ Not merely 'a gate,' but '*the gate*,' through which the bodies of the sacrifices were carried out to be burned. The great Sin-offering for the world was thus led forth to be crucified through the very gate and in sight of the very spot in which the typical sacrifices had been burned in the Valley of Hinnom.

Again, the rending of the veil at the moment of our Lord's death gains a new significance if this view be adopted. The Temple, as we know, opened to the east. It would be within sight of Calvary and directly facing it. How striking, how suggestive that the typical veil should thus be 'rent in twain from the top throughout' just when we received 'boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh.'²

And yet, further, the fact that the place of our Lord's death, burial, and resurrection was in close proximity to the Temple, would give additional significance to the taunt of those 'that passed by saying, Thou that destroyest the Temple, and buildest it in three days, save Thyself.'³ Here again the type and the Antitype come into close juxtaposition.

The site of the TEMPLE claims our next attention.

In any view of Jerusalem from the eastward the vast inclosure known as the Haram esh Sherif, or the Noble Sanctuary, arrests the eye from its size, its beauty, and the profound interest which attaches to it. Within its limits stood the Temple, and the world can hardly afford a nobler, worthier site for the house of the Lord. Standing on a ridge, guarded by valleys on every side, it formed a natural and almost impregnable fortress. Psalmists

¹ Heb. xiii. 11, 12.

² Matt. xxvii. 51; Mark xv. 38; Luke xxiii. 45; Heb. x. 19, 20.

³ Matt. xxvii. 39, 40; Mark xv. 29, 30. See a brief statement of the foregoing argument in a letter by Dr. Hutchinson in the *Quarterly Journal of the Palestine Exploration Fund* for July, 1873; and in a valuable work, *Horeb and Sinai*, by the Rev. G. Sandie.

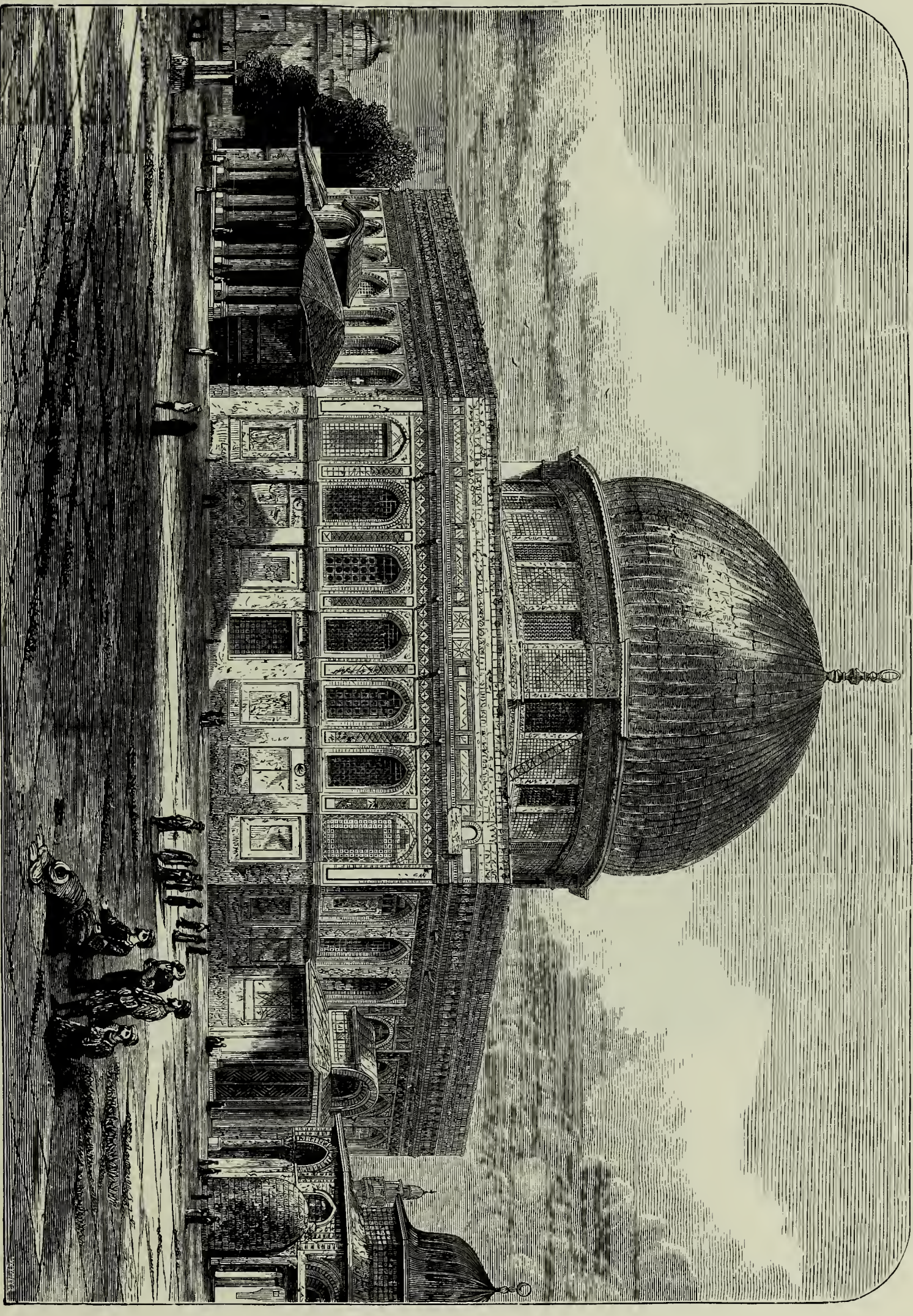
and prophets only gave expression to the feelings of the whole people when they celebrated, in exulting and rapturous strains, the strength, the beauty, and the glory of the city of God. It was a saying of the Rabbis that 'the world is like an eye. The ocean surrounding it is the white of the eye; the earth is the coloured part; Jerusalem is the pupil; but the sanctuary is the image within the pupil. There the being of God is at once mirrored and beheld.'

The walls of the Temple area inclose a rectangle of about fifteen hundred feet from north to south by nine hundred feet from east to west. Its stones are many of them of great size; Captain Warren measured one which was thirty-eight feet nine inches in length. The peculiar bevel which characterises early Jewish and Phœnician work may be observed on most of them. Occasionally, especially in the lower courses, they appear to occupy their original position, though whether placed there by Solomon, Nehemiah or Herod, cannot be ascertained at present; more frequently the stones have been replaced by later hands than those of the original builders. A careful examination often shows that the original materials have been used over and over again in successive walls, and commonly reduced in size so as to be worked more easily. Columns of the finest marble, porphyry, and serpentine built in amongst the blocks of limestone are by no means rare. These are sometimes whole and erect, but more often broken across and laid in horizontally, with the ends projecting. They evidently formed part of the Temple, and have been used by later builders as being ready to hand. Examining these massive remains of ancient power and wealth, it was impossible not to remember the words of the disciples, 'Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!' The stability of the edifice seemed to be ensured not only by the size of the blocks but by the excellence of the Jewish masonry, which was so perfect that it is often impossible to insert the point of a knife between the joints. Yet the dilapidated condition of the walls shows how wonderfully our Lord's words have been verified, 'Seest thou these great buildings? there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.'¹

Starting at the north-east angle, and going eastward, with the Valley of the Kedron and the Mount of Olives on our left hand, the Temple area on our right, we come to the Golden Gate, a remarkable double gateway, the date and purpose of which are unknown. Some have supposed it to be the Beautiful Gate at which the lame man sat begging,² but from the style of architecture it can hardly be older than the age of Constantine. It is now walled up, in consequence of a Mohammedan tradition that the Christians will again take possession of Jerusalem, and that their king will ride in victoriously through this gate. Another tradition is that the last judgment will take place in the Valley of Jehoshaphat or of Kedron, just below us, and that Mohammed will stand upon one of the projecting pillars over the

¹ Mark xiii. 1, 2.

² Acts iii. 1-11.



THE MOSQUE OF OMAR.

From a Photograph by Mr. Bergleim, Jerusalem.

entrance, and Issa—their name for Jesus—on the Mount of Olives opposite, and together judge the world.

Along the southern side there is little to detain us. We have on our right the wall surmounted by the roof of the Mosque of El Aksa, and on our left the slope of Ophel running down to the point at which the Valleys



THE GOLDEN GATE.

of Hinnom and Kedron meet. But immediately after turning the south-west corner we come upon an object of profound interest. The Temple was on this side divided from the city by a valley, now nearly filled up. From the wall, which here bears traces of extreme antiquity and appears to be a part of the original structure, some huge blocks of stone are seen to project. These were found by Robinson to form the first courses of an arch. Captain

Wilson, acting on behalf of the Palestine Exploration Fund, caused a line of shafts to be sunk due westward from this point, and discovered a series of piers upon which other arches had rested, so that we have here the remains of a bridge which ran across the valley connecting the Temple with the city. We learn from Josephus that the valley was spanned by a bridge leading from the Temple to the palace. All subsequent researches have tended to establish the conclusion at which Robinson arrived, that 'This arch could only belong to THE BRIDGE, and it proves incontestably the antiquity of that portion of the wall from which it springs.' The only difficulty in the way of



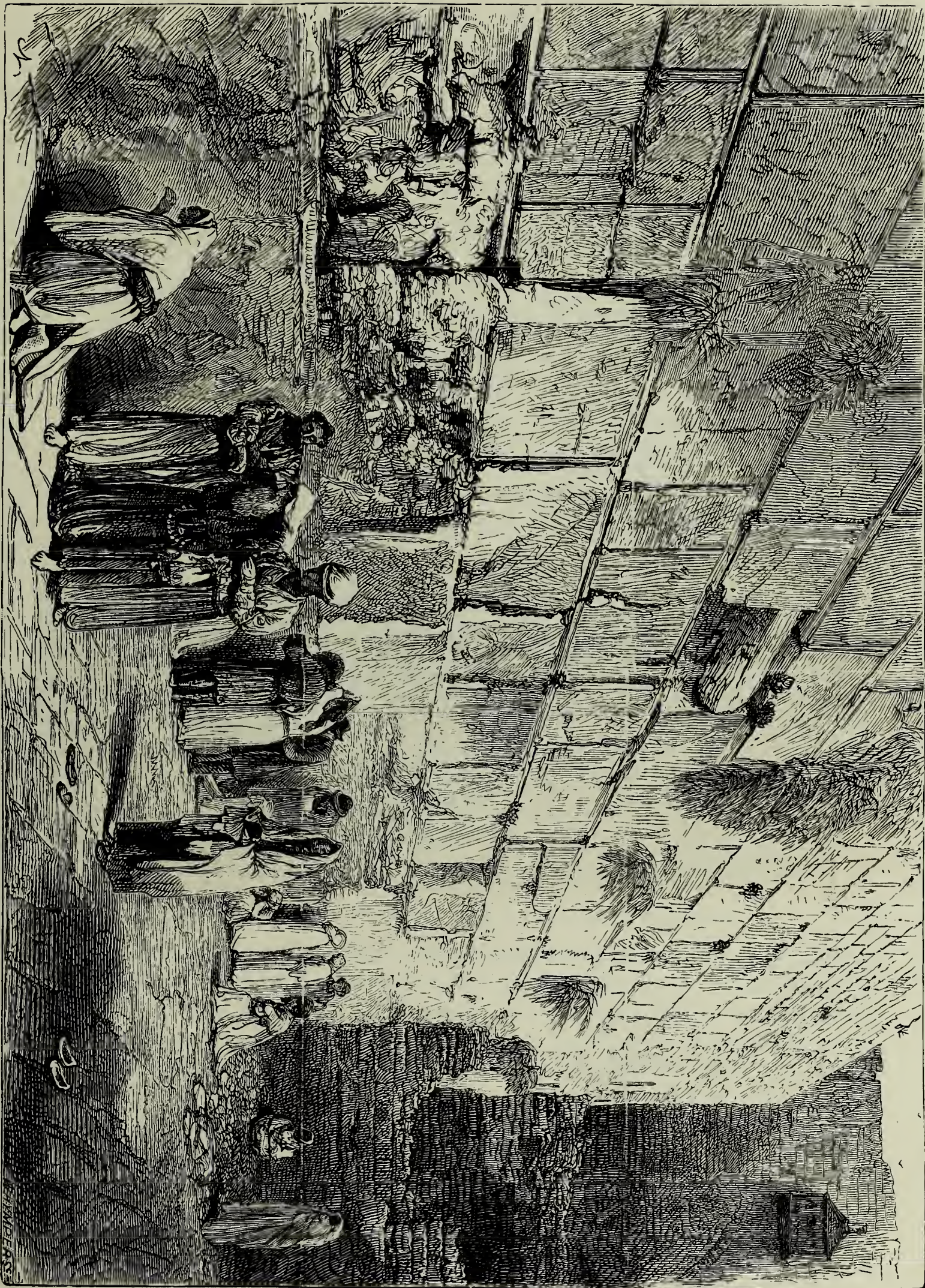
Lent by the

PROJECTING STONES OF ROBINSON'S ARCH.

Palestine Exploration Fund.

ascribing this great work to Solomon or his immediate successors is that the principle of the arch was not then known. A more thorough acquaintance with Egyptian architecture, however, proves that this statement is not strictly true. Examples of the arch, though rare, may yet be found in buildings of undoubted antiquity. In the narrative of the visit of the Queen of Sheba to Solomon we read that, 'When she had seen . . . his ascent by which he went up into the house of the Lord, there was no more spirit in her.'¹ This seems to be spoken of as the climax of all the wonders which were shown her. If we may venture to identify the arched bridge across the

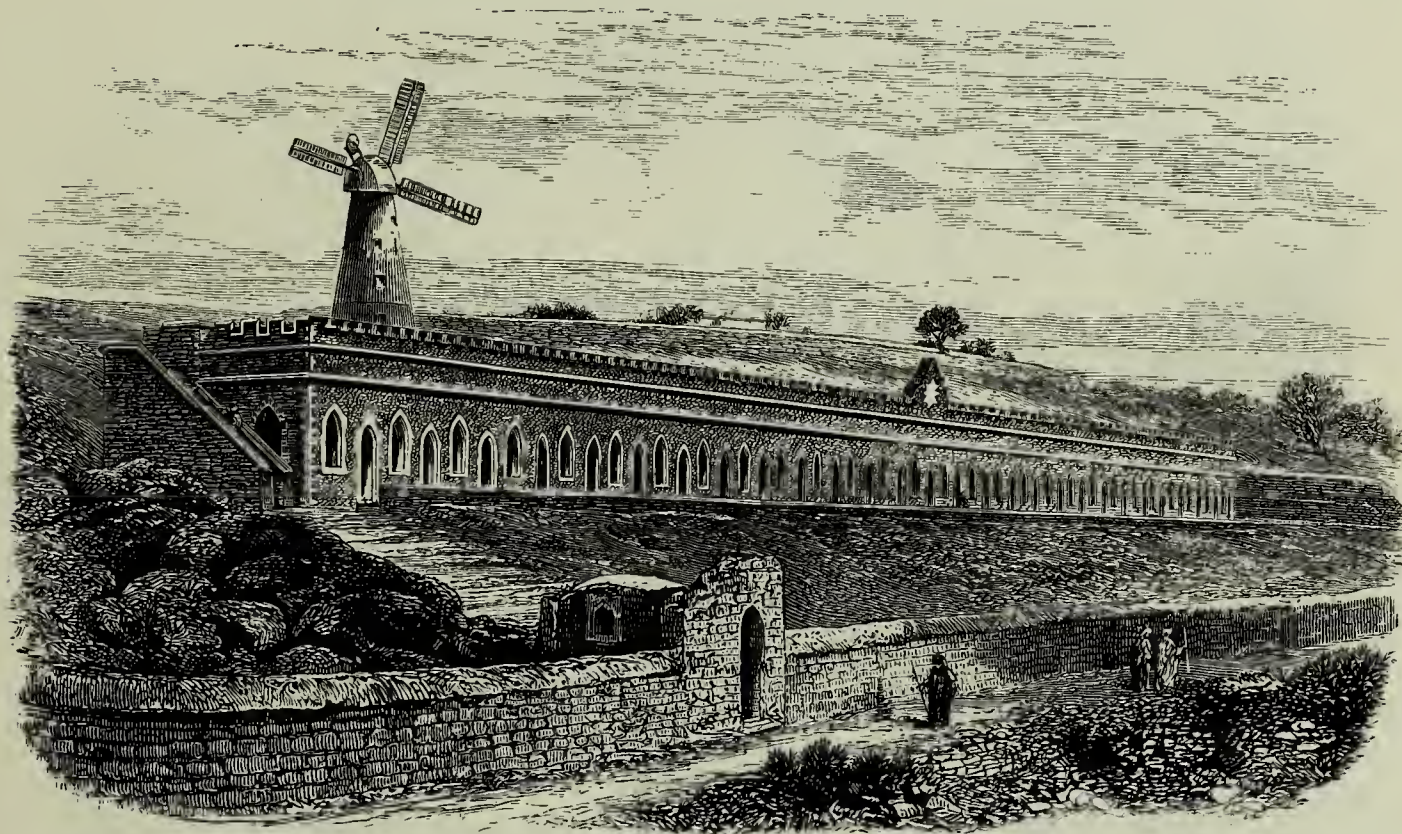
¹ 1 Kings x. 4, 5.



WAILING-PLACE OF THE JEWS.

valley with 'the ascent' thus spoken of it will adequately explain the astonishment with which it was regarded.

A little farther along the western wall we come to the Wailing-place of the Jews. It is close to the Jewish quarter—the foulest, most squalid and wretched part of the city. The masonry here is the finest, and in the best preservation, of any part of the enclosure. Many of the stones are twenty-five feet in length, and apparently have remained undisturbed since the time of the first builder.¹ Here the Jews assemble every Friday to mourn over their fallen state, especially their exclusion from 'the holy and beautiful house,' where their fathers worshipped God. Some press their lips against crevices in the masonry as though imploring an answer from some unseen



JEWISH ALMSHOUSES AND WINDMILL ERECTED BY SIR MOSES MONTEFIORE.

presence within, others uttering loud cries of anguish. Here is one group joining in the prayers of an aged rabbi; yonder another sitting in silent anguish, their cheeks bathed in tears. The stones are in many places worn smooth with their passionate kisses. The grief of the new-comers is evidently deep and genuine. But with the older residents it has subsided into little more than a mere ceremonial observance and an empty form. But in either case the scene is strangely affecting, leading back our thoughts to the self-invoked curse of eighteen hundred years ago—'His blood be on us, and on our children.'²

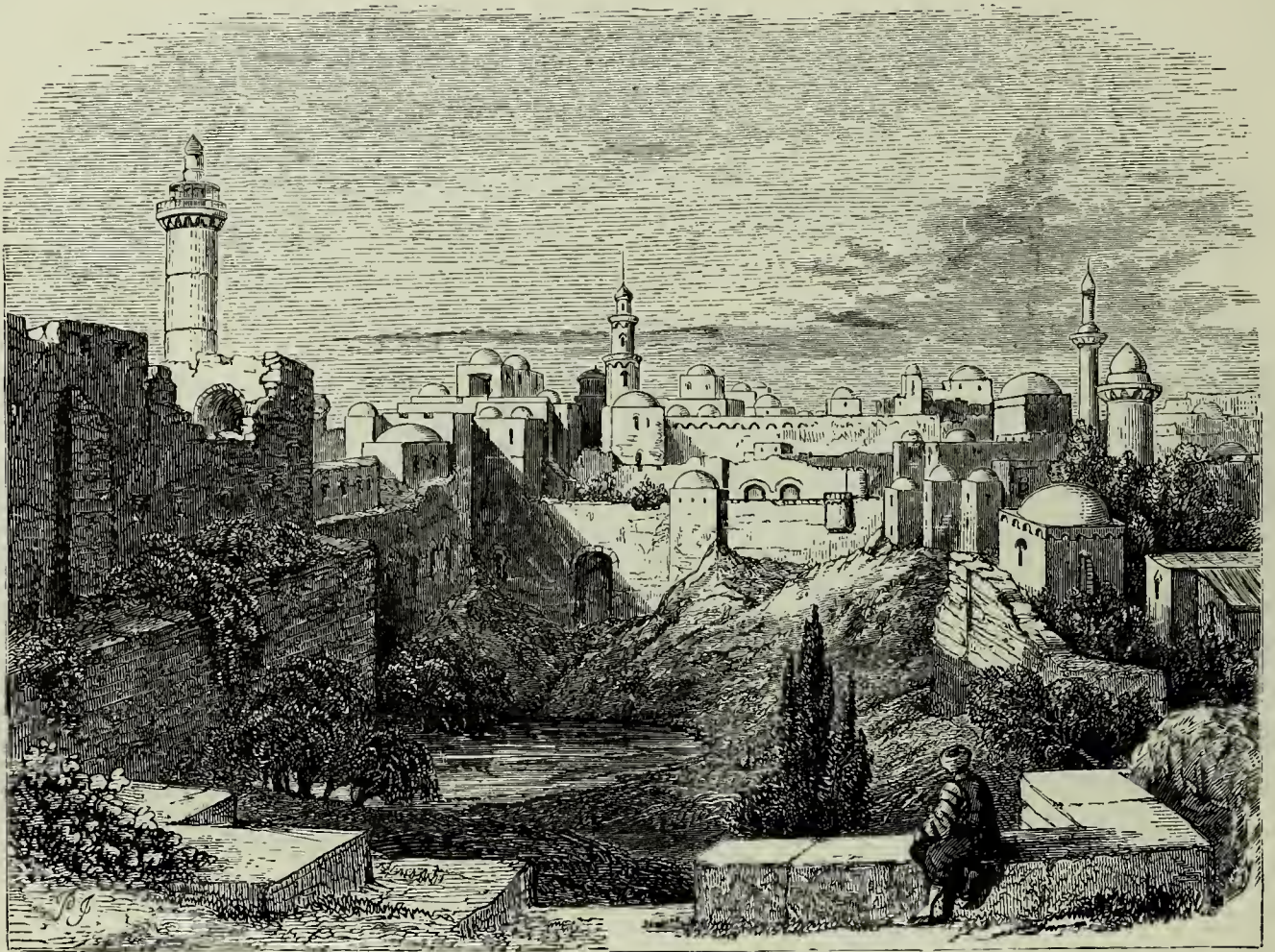
The northern wall has nothing to detain us, except the Pool of Bethesda,

¹ If we adopt Mr. Fergusson's theory as to the site of the Temple, a line running through the Altar and the Holy of Holies would cut the middle of the Wailing-place.

² Matt. xxvii. 25.

so called, but of which the identification is doubtful.¹ There are still traces of what may have been 'the five porches,' but the pool is now little more than a pit or ditch choked with filth and ordure, and, only after heavy rains containing a little stagnant, fetid water.

We now enter the Temple area and find ourselves in an enclosure of extraordinary beauty. In spring and early summer the turf is of a brilliant green, enamelled with a profusion of wild flowers, and dotted over with trees, most of them cypresses, many of which are of great size. The birds, free from molestation, are exceedingly tame. Doves and sparrows are



THE POOL OF BETHESDA.

especially numerous, reminding us of the words of the psalmist, when longing, yea, even fainting for the courts of the Lord: 'the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even Thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my King, and my God.'² Cloisters, colonnades, fountains, cupolas, and shrines, are seen here and there within the spacious area. But the eye is arrested and detained by a marble platform from the centre of which rises one of the most exquisite domes in the world. This is the *Kubbet es Sakhras*, 'the Dome of the Rock,' better known to Europeans as the MOSQUE OF OMAR, 'next after Meccà the most sacred,

¹ John v. 1-9.

² Psal. lxxxiv. 2, 3.

next after Cordova the most beautiful of all Moslem shrines.'¹ There are several other mosques within the Temple area, but none that claim special notice except the one at the south end—that of El Aksa. This is a large building, the date and original purpose of which, however, is involved in much obscurity.

The rock itself is honey-combed with excavations, most of them cisterns or conduits. Some of these are supplied with water from Solomon's Pools beyond Bethlehem. The aqueduct may yet be traced along the edge of the Wady Urtas. It is said that, in addition to the water brought from a distance, there are natural springs within the rock itself; this, however, is doubted. From whatever source the supply was derived, it was so abundant that it was never known to be exhausted. In some of these vast underground reservoirs which I visited, I found the water to be deliciously cold, sweet and clear. It was in reference to these inexhaustible stores from which the priests drew so plentifully, that our Lord, 'in that great day of the feast . . . stood and cried, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive.'²

Among the subterranean chambers is one dedicated to the Lord Issa or Jesus. Here according to Mohammedan tradition He was born; His cradle is shown, and the chapel, for such it is, is regarded as one of peculiar sanctity.

Beneath the southern end of the area is an extraordinary series of substructions which used to be called Solomon's stables, and were believed to have been erected for that purpose by the magnificent king. Their real design is obvious, though when and by whom they were built cannot be determined. The Temple area is constructed on the summit of Mount Moriah. As the hill sloped downward on the east, west, and south it was necessary to level the top to secure a plane surface. But on the southern side of Ophel, the descent was rapid. To have secured a level platform here, it would have been



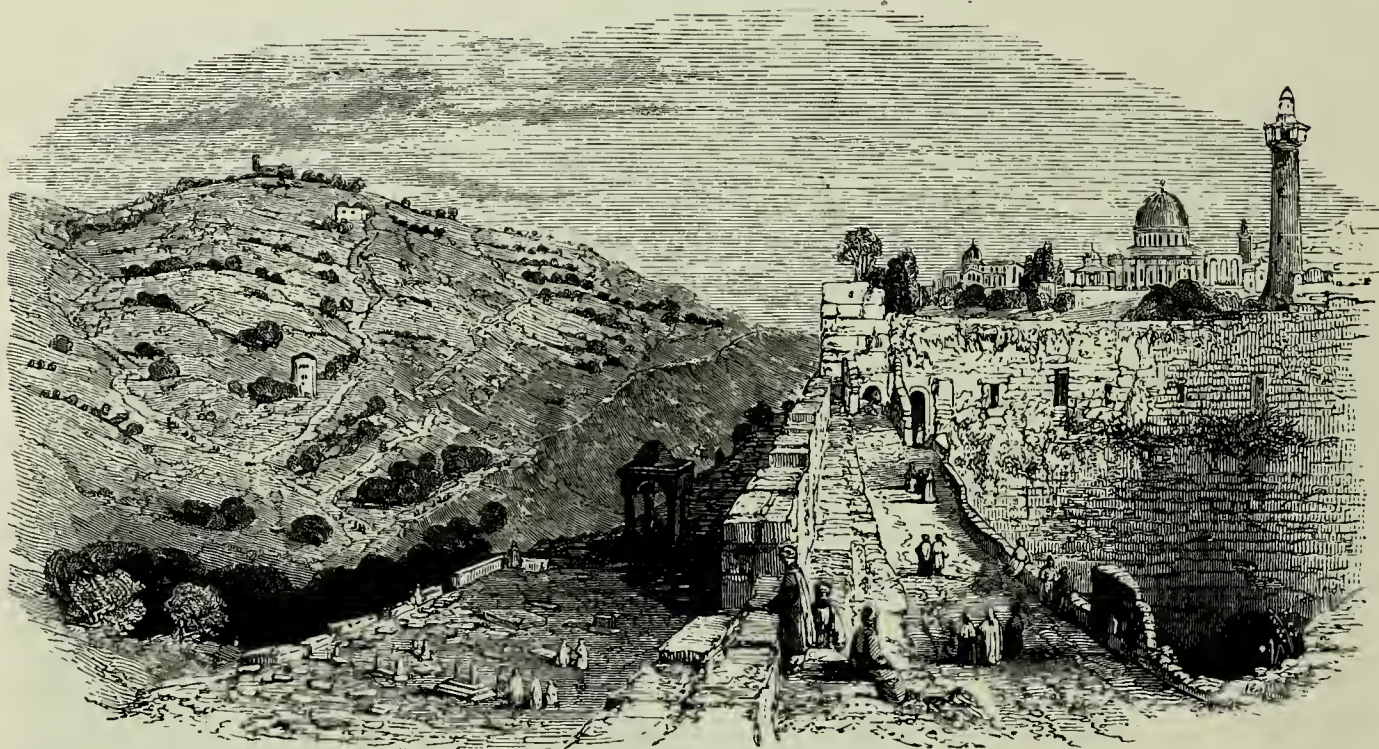
SUBSTRUCTIONS UNDER THE SOUTHERN END
OF THE TEMPLE AREA.

¹ So Dean Stanley. It is difficult to compare objects so entirely dissimilar. For my own part I should be disposed to give the preference to the Mosque of Omar.

² John vii. 37-39. It has been often said that the main reservoir was immediately beneath the Altar of Burnt Offering. This, though probable, cannot be affirmed absolutely in our present uncertainty as to where the altar really stood.

necessary to cut away so much from the summit as seriously to have reduced its height. These arches were, therefore, built up from beneath. The same method was adopted at Rome to enlarge the level area of the Palatine.

In what part of the extensive area thus formed did the Temple stand? It has been commonly assumed that the marble platform in the centre marks the site, and that the Mosque of Omar stands over the spot occupied by the altar or the Holy Place. This view, however, is not without its difficulties. The mosque incloses a mass of rock sixty feet in length, fifty-five in breadth, and standing up about fifteen feet above the earth around it. Now we know that the Temple was built upon the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite.¹ But this mass of rock with its inequalities of surface could scarcely have been a threshing-floor. It has been said that probably the rock



THE TEMPLE AREA AND MOUNT OF OLIVES FROM THE CITY WALL.

was cut away around it, leaving this portion untouched. But this explanation is equally inconsistent with the facts of the case. For the rock is unhewn, and only in one or two places bears marks of the chisel. Besides which, if it had stood within the precincts of the Temple it could hardly have escaped mention, yet neither the Scriptures, the writings of Josephus, nor those of the Talmudists allude to it.² Where could it have stood? What purpose could it have served? Its size is fatal to the theory that it was in the most Holy Place, which was a small chamber. It is possible that being inclosed by plates of brass and by an inclined plane or flights of steps it formed the core of the altar of burnt-offerings. Standing on the summit and in the centre of the ridge of Moriah, it is the likeliest place for the site of

¹ 2 Sam. xxiv. 18-25. 2 Chron. iii. 1.

² The late Emmanuel Deutsch told me that he had found one reference to it in the Talmud; but his lamented death prevented his giving me further information on the subject.

the Temple, yet the difficulties in the way of placing the Temple over it are very great.

Another theory, propounded by Mr. Fergusson and ably supported by Messrs. Lewin and Sandie, finds the Temple site on the south or south-west of the Haram area. But this theory is likewise beset with great difficulties. For the threshing-floor must then have been in a deep hollow, contrary to the invariable practice of the Easterns, who constructed them on the tops of hills where the wind might winnow the grain as it fell from the ears. Besides which, the language of the psalmist and prophets implies that the Temple stood on an elevated site; they speak invariably of going up to the house of the Lord. It is true that the southern end of the Temple area is now on the same level with the rest, but this is secured by the vast substructions which have been built up from the valley below; and it can hardly be pretended that the threshing-floor of Araunah occupied this artificial elevation; nor has any reason been suggested why, with the whole ridge of Moriah to choose from, a site should have been selected which either buried the Temple in a hollow, or required an amount of work below the surface greater than that above it to bring up the platform to the necessary level.

The startling theory of Mr. Fergusson as to the site of the Holy Sepulchre demands brief notice here. He maintains that the Mosque of Omar is the Basilica of Constantine, that the mysterious rock which it incloses is that of which the evangelist speaks, and that a cave about fifteen feet square in the side of the rock is the very cave in which our Lord was entombed. His argument, to which full justice cannot be done in a brief summary, may be thus stated. He pledges his professional reputation that the Kubbet es Sakhrâh is a building of the date of Constantine, that it is not and never could have been intended for a mosque, that it does not possess a single characteristic of Saracenic architecture, but that in its main features it is identical with the sepulchral basilica of Diocletian, at Spalatro, a type which Constantine is likely to have followed. The Golden Gate he regards as the grand entrance from the eastern side to the area of the basilica, and maintains that it is of the same style and date with the Dome of the Rock. Assuming the accuracy of his theory that the Temple occupied the south-western angle of the present area, he shows that there was ample space for the crucifixion and entombment to have taken place here without trenching upon the Temple precincts, from which it was then separated by a deep fosse or valley, now filled up. He then seeks to show that the indications of the Gospel narrative, the statements of Eusebius, and the language of early pilgrims agree in fixing upon this as the true site of the burial and resurrection of our Lord. The absence of any tradition pointing to this spot, and the fact that for nearly a thousand years the site of the sepulchre has been supposed to be where the church now stands, he explains by the statement that after the rock with its dome had been appropriated by the Mohammedans, the Christians were

banished for a long period from the city ; even on their return they were not

allowed to approach the Holy Place. A new church in another site was therefore built for the use of the pilgrims, around which the legend sprang up in mediæval fashion, so that what

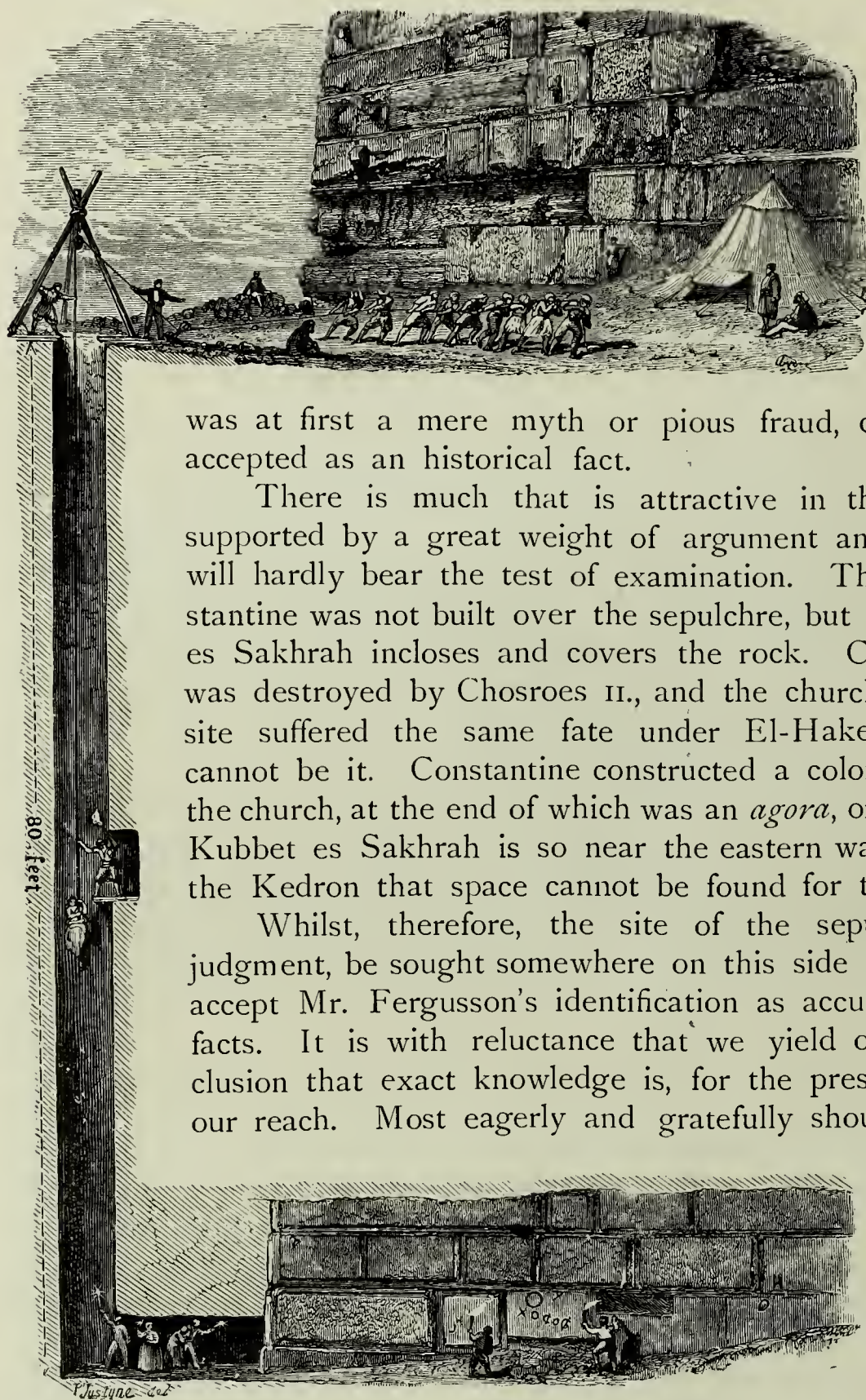
was at first a mere myth or pious fraud, came at last to be accepted as an historical fact.

There is much that is attractive in this theory, and it is supported by a great weight of argument and learning. But it will hardly bear the test of examination. The Basilica of Constantine was not built over the sepulchre, but near it ; the Kubbet es Sakhrâh incloses and covers the rock. Constantine's building was destroyed by Chosroes II., and the church that rose upon its site suffered the same fate under El-Hakem. This, therefore, cannot be it. Constantine constructed a colonnade eastward from the church, at the end of which was an *agora*, or market-place. The Kubbet es Sakhrâh is so near the eastern wall over the Valley of the Kedron that space cannot be found for this arrangement.

Whilst, therefore, the site of the sepulchre must, in my judgment, be sought somewhere on this side of the city, I cannot accept Mr. Fergusson's identification as accurate or sustained by facts. It is with reluctance that we yield ourselves to the conclusion that exact knowledge is, for the present at least, beyond our reach. Most eagerly and gratefully should we welcome any

means of determining the spot so endeared by hallowed memories and associations. But our very ignorance may have been designed or permitted for wise purposes. A su-

perstitious, an almost idolatrous, worship has been fostered by pilgrimages to the holy places. We shall do well to remember the conversation by Jacob's



TUNNEL AND SHAFT OF THE PALESTINE EXPLORATION FUND OUTSIDE THE WALL OF THE TEMPLE.



THE GARDEN OF GETHESEMANE.

From a Photograph, 1866.

well: 'The woman saith unto Him, Sir, I perceive that Thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe Me, the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. . . The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him.'

Light may ultimately be thrown upon these difficult and perplexed questions by the labours of the Palestine Exploration Fund. Hitherto, however, the obstacles thrown in their way by the Turkish government have been almost insuperable. It is only by extraordinary energy and ingenuity that they have been able to accomplish anything in Jerusalem. The sketch on the preceding page will illustrate this. Not being allowed to excavate within a certain distance of the Temple area, a shaft was sunk through the mass of débris to the depth of eighty feet, just outside the proscribed limit. A tunnel was then run from the bottom of the shaft to the wall of the Temple. The result was the discovery of courses of masonry of the original edifice, and upon some of the blocks of stone masons' marks in ancient Phœnician characters were found.

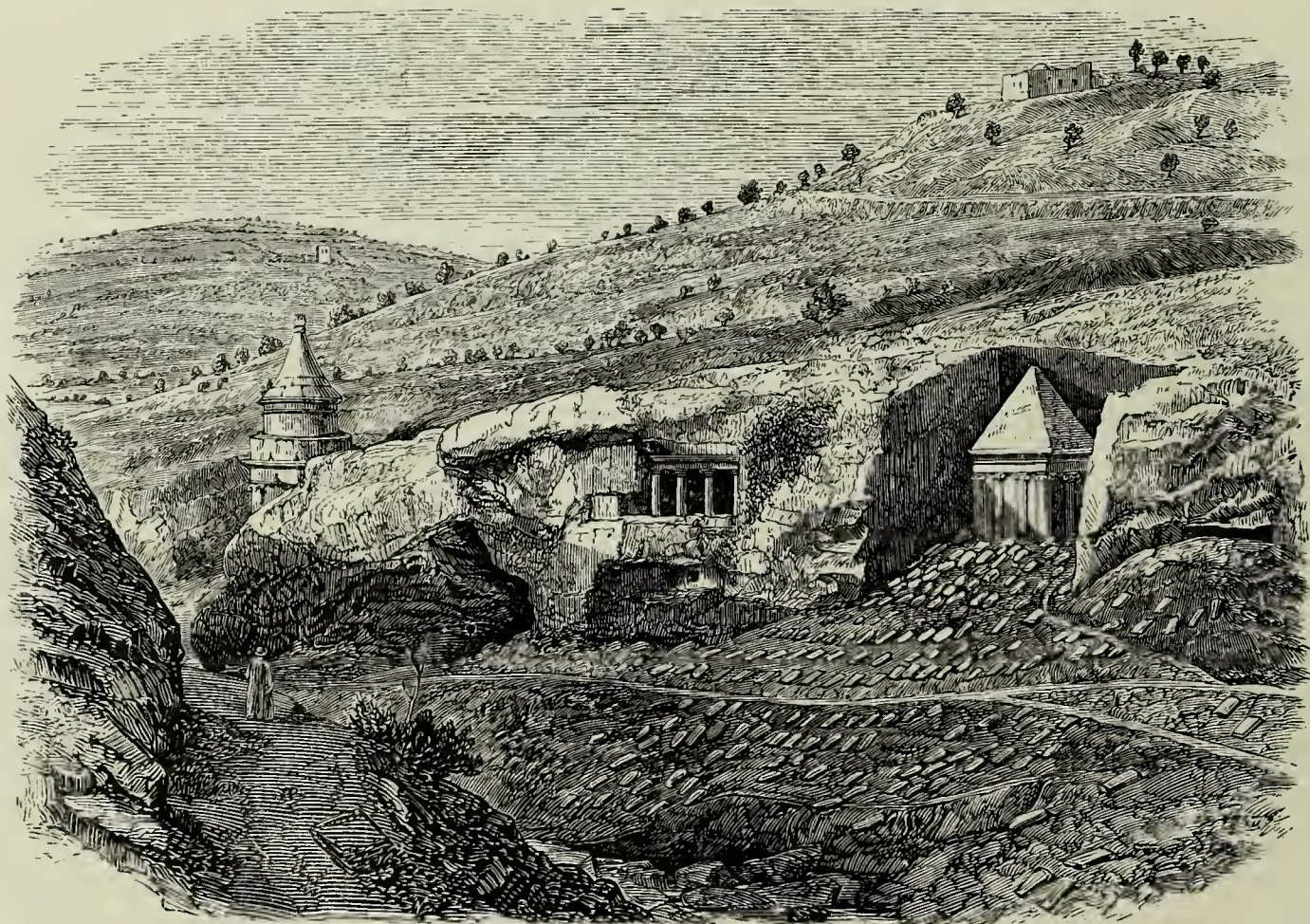
It now only remains for us to notice briefly some of the memorable spots in the immediate neighbourhood of Jerusalem. These, for the most part, lie along the Valley of the Kedron.

First in interest is the Garden of Gethsemane. Leaving the city by St. Stephen's Gate, a steep path leads us down into the valley and across the bed of the Kedron. Soon after beginning the ascent of Olivet, we come to an inclosure about eight yards square. Knocking at a low door, we are admitted by an aged monk, the guardian of the place, and find ourselves in a trim garden. The flower-beds are neatly kept and fenced with sticks. A number of olive-trees stand among them, hollow, gnarled, and, apparently, extremely old. They yet bear a few berries, which are carefully gathered and given to pilgrims, for which, of course, backshish is expected in return. Old as the trees are, it cannot be supposed that they have stood here for eighteen centuries, though it is quite credible that they may have sprung as suckers from the roots of yet older trees. The passion for localising all the incidents of the narrative is not absent here. We are shown the bank upon which the disciples slept, the grotto—all mediæval legends select a grotto—where, as a Latin inscription informs us, 'the sweat like blood ran down upon the ground,' and the place where Judas betrayed his Master with a kiss. The *Custode*, however, with a courtesy and consideration very rare in his class, does not pester us with talk, but, retiring to a distance, leaves us to our meditation.² On this spot then, or near it, happened the most solemn

¹ John iv. 19-23.

² The way in which ecclesiastical legends are invented is curiously illustrated by the fact that the Greeks and Armenians have recently constructed rival Gethsemanes of their own, this one being in possession of the Latins.

and pathetic event in the life, even of the 'Man of sorrows.' Under the shade of these grey olives He endured His bitter and heart-breaking agony; along yonder path, lighted by the full passover moon, 'with lanterns, and torches, and weapons,' came the betrayer, leading 'a band of men and officers;' ¹ here, deserted and forsaken by all, He meekly surrendered Himself to His murderers, and was led away to be condemned and crucified. Callous must that heart be which, on such a spot as this, does not breathe the prayer: 'By Thine agony and bloody sweat; by Thy cross and passion; by Thy precious death and burial: Good Lord deliver us!'

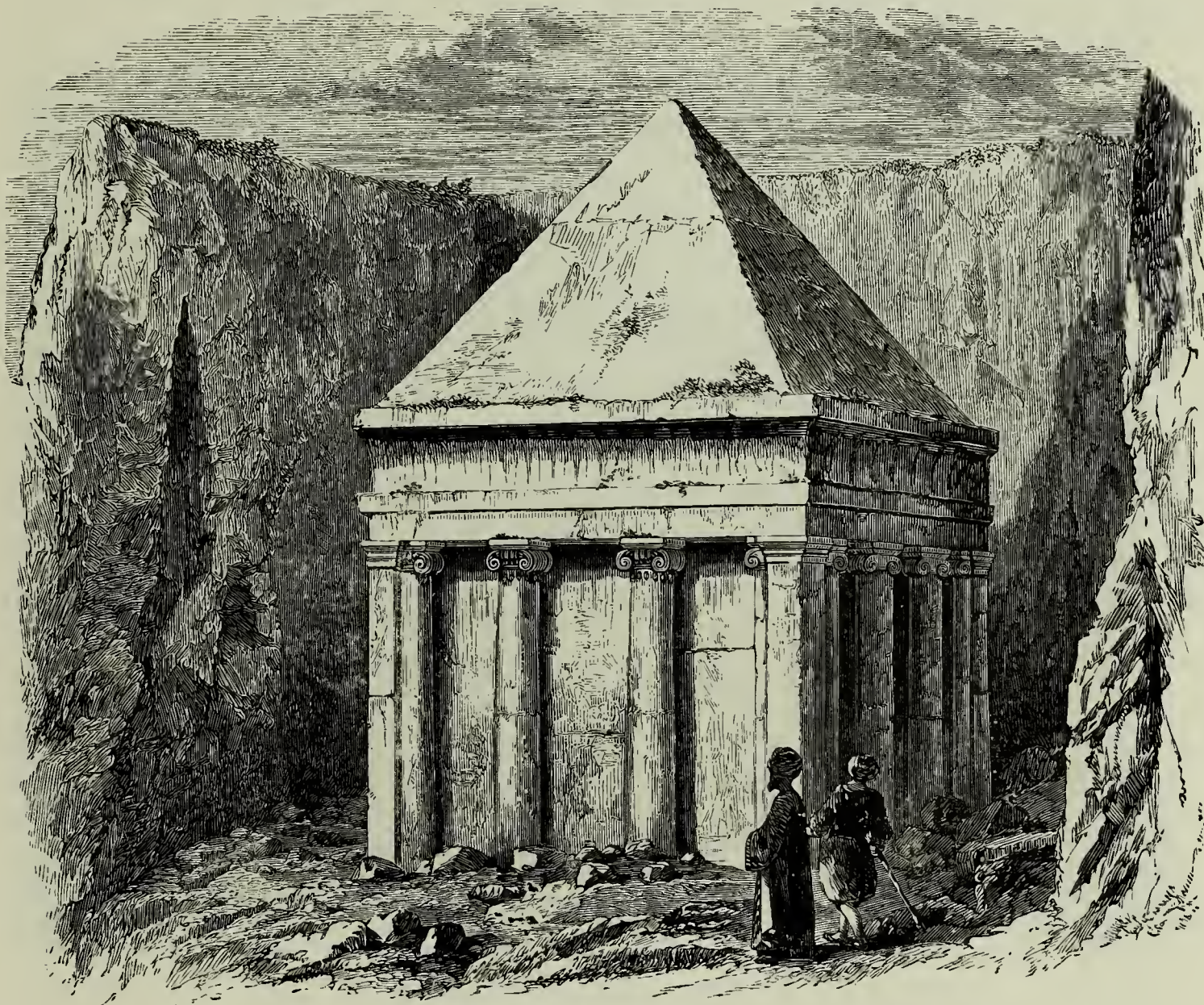


MOUNT OF CORRUPTION IN THE VALLEY OF JEHOSEPHAT, WITH THE TOMBS OF ABSALOM, ST. JAMES, AND ZACHARIAS.

Leaving the scene of our Lord's bitter agony, we pass along the Valley of the Kedron, sometimes called the Valley of Jehoshaphat. Jews and Moham-medans, alike, believe that this will be the scene of the final judgment. Hence has arisen an eager desire to be buried here, and the soil is, in many places, literally paved with tombstones, and the whole valley is one vast cemetery. A short distance from the point of junction of the valleys of Hinnom and Kedron, we reach a cluster of remarkable tombs, called by the names of Zacharias, Absalom, and St. James. The tradition respecting them is quite modern, and has no historical basis. Those of Zacharias and

¹ John xviii. 3

Absalom are similar in design, being cut out of the solid rock. The former is said to be the burial-place of the Zacharias who was 'slain between the temple and the altar.'¹ The latter, tradition asserts to be the pillar which the rebellious son 'reared up for himself during his lifetime in the king's dale, for he said, I have no son to keep my name in remembrance.'² Its base is now buried beneath a heap of stones, upon which each Jew, as he passes, throws one in detestation of his memory.



THE TOMB OF ZACHARIAS.

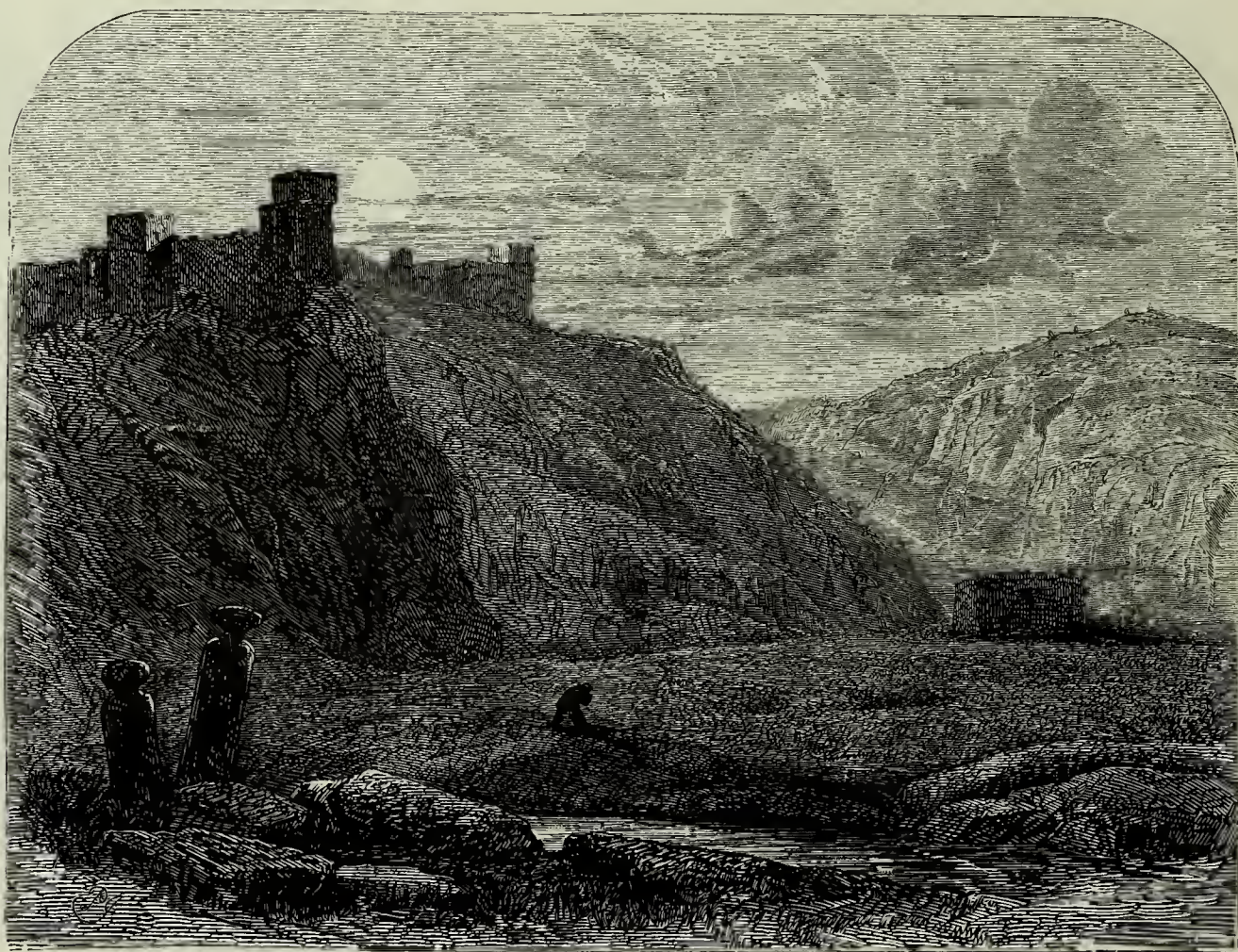
The tomb of St. James is a remarkable chamber, cut out of the side of the hill, with rock-hewn Doric columns in front. A modern tradition declares that here St. James retired after our Lord's crucifixion, and vowed neither to eat nor drink till He had risen again. On the third day the risen Saviour appeared to him, saying, 'Arise and eat, for I have now risen from the dead.' The marked resemblance between this sepulchre and the temple-tombs at Beni-hassan, in Egypt, has given rise to the suggestion that here we have

Matt. xxiii. 35.

² 2 Sam. xviii. 18.

the idol temple constructed by Solomon for his queen, the daughter of Pharaoh, in 'the hill that is before Jerusalem.'¹ The site and the style of architecture afford a certain measure of probability to the conjecture.

Just above us on the left is Silwan, the ancient Siloam—a collection of wretched hovels, inhabited by peasantry, who have the reputation of being the most dangerous, turbulent, and thievish in the district. Though I have often passed through the village alone, or with only a single companion, I have never had anything to complain of, beyond a demand for backshish more than usually clamorous. In this village, and in other places round



ACELDAMA.

Jerusalem, I found many of the peasantry occupying old tombs, which formed abodes at least as commodious as the huts in which their neighbours lived. The pool of Siloam is at the foot of a hill on our right. It and the neighbouring well of En Rogel are still much used, not only by the villagers, but by the water-sellers of Jerusalem.

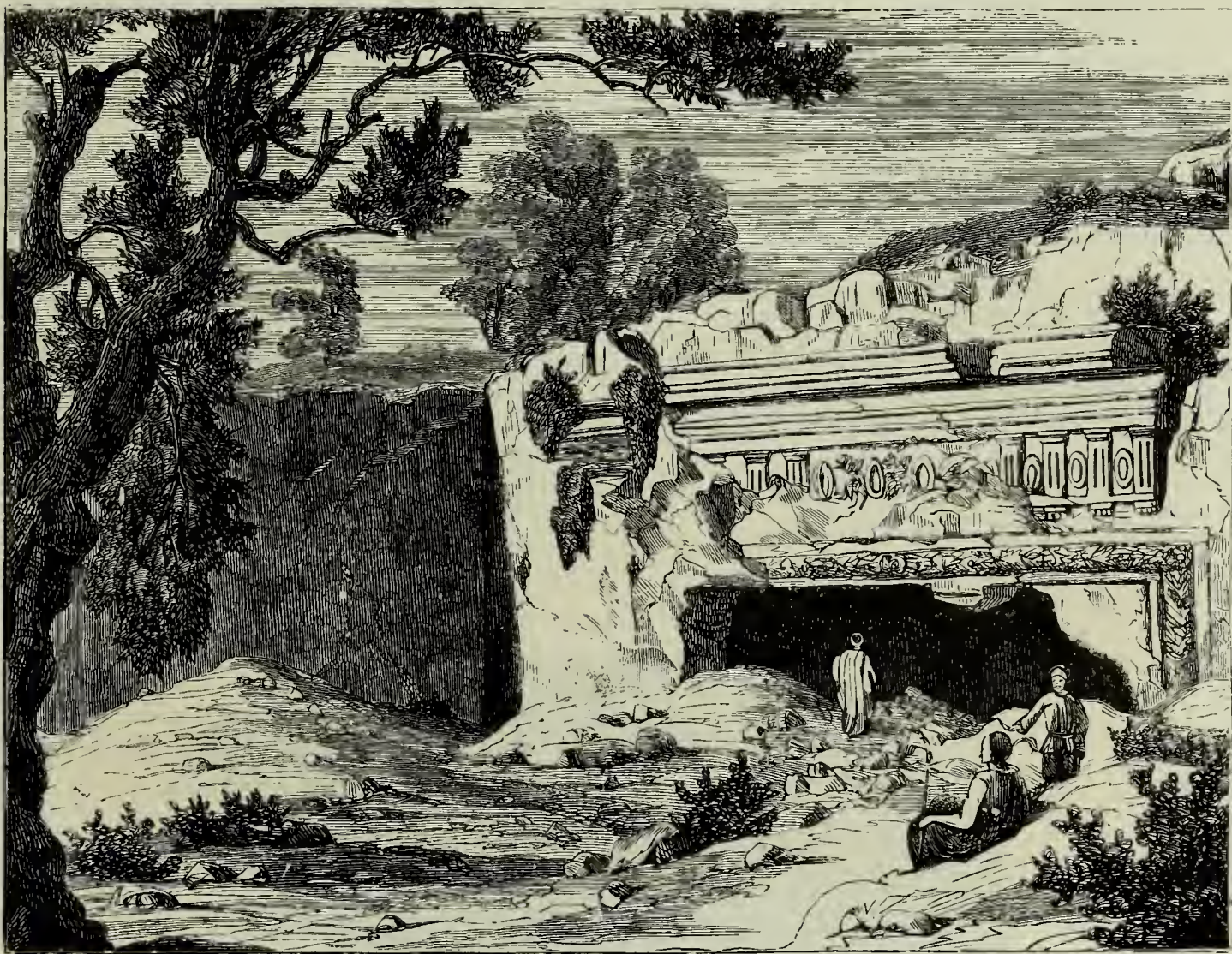
Turning to the right up the Valley of Hinnom, we see, on the dark and gloomy Hill of Evil Counsel, Aceldama. Down to a very late period, it continued to be used as 'a field to bury strangers in.'² Skulls brought away from this spot and submitted to the examination of competent ethno-

¹ 1 Kings xi. 4-8.

² Matt. xxvii. 7.

logists, have been pronounced to be those of negroes and other non-Semitic races.

Another tomb, on the north side of the city, demands brief mention here. It used to be called the tomb of the kings, but it has now been identified as that of Queen Helena, a Jewish proselyte, who in the first century of our era died, and was buried at Jerusalem. It is remarkable not only for the extent and perfect preservation of the sepulchral chambers, but for the ingenious mechanism by which the entrance was closed or opened—a huge stone being



THE TOMB OF HELENA.

rolled to or from the mouth of the entrance. It thus affords an interesting contemporary illustration of the words of the evangelists, 'Who shall *roll* away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? And when they looked they saw the stone rolled away, for it was very great.'¹

But it would be impossible, with the space at our disposal, to describe, however briefly, all the objects of interest in and around Jerusalem. Whole volumes have been devoted to the subject without exhausting it. This brief

¹ Mark xvi. 3, 4. Luke xxiv. 2.

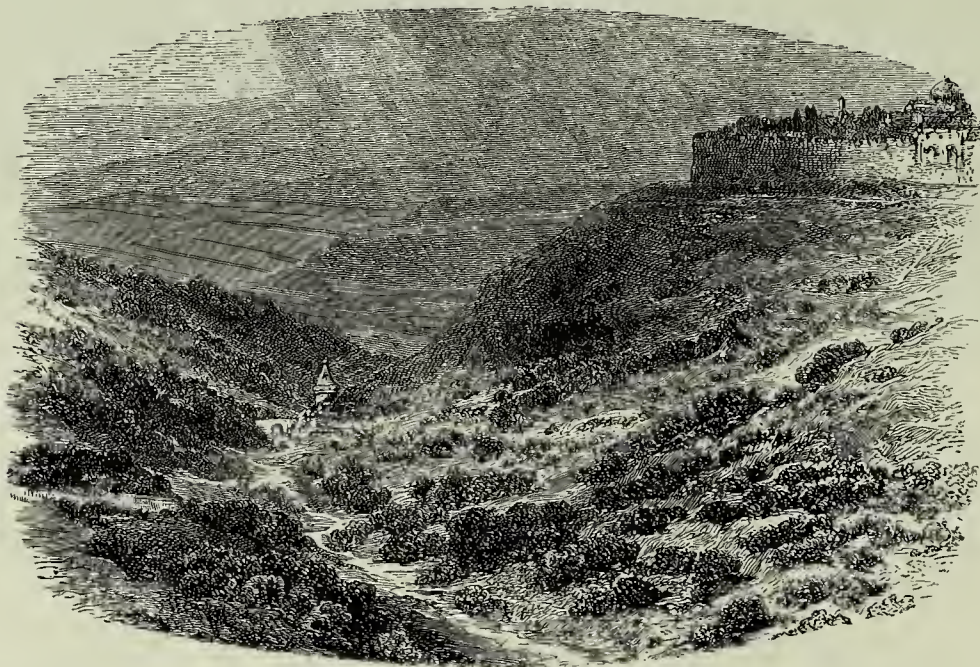
and inadequate sketch may be brought to a close by recalling to memory a Sabbath morning service in Christ Church on Mount Zion, as the Protestant church, recently erected there, is called. The liturgy had gained a deeper significance and impressiveness from the associations of the place. The sermon had set forth Christ crucified as the hope alike of Jew and Gentile. And the concluding hymn brought tears to many eyes ; solemn penitential thoughts to many hearts. Not a few of the congregation, overcome by emotion, were unable to join audibly as we sang :—

Jerusalem, Jerusalem,
 Enthronèd once on high,
 Thou favoured home of God on earth,
 Thou heaven below the sky ;
 Now brought to bondage with thy sons,
 A curse and grief to see,
 Jerusalem, Jerusalem !
 Our tears shall flow for thee.

O hadst thou known the day of grace,
 And flocked beneath the wing
 Of Him who called thee lovingly,
 Thine own anointed King :
 Then had the tribes of all the world
 Gone up thy pomp to see,
 And glory dwelt within thy gates,
 And all thy sons been free.

‘And who art thou that mournest me ?’
 Jerusalem may say,
 ‘And fear’st not rather that thyself
 May prove a castaway !
 I am a dried and abject branch,
 My place is given to thee ;
 But, woe to every barren graft
 Of thy wild olive-tree !

Our day of grace is sunk in night,
 Our time of mercy spent,
 For heavy was my children’s crime,
 And strange their punishment :
 Yet gaze not idly on our fall,
 But, sinner, warnèd be ;
 Who sparèd not His chosen seed,
 May send His wrath on thee !’

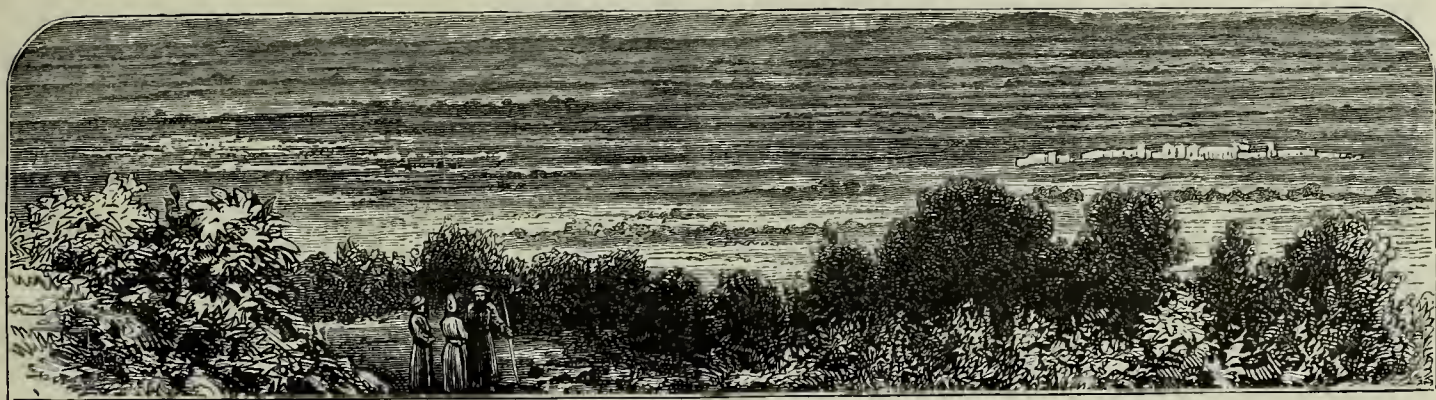


THE VALLEY OF THE KEDRON.



CENTRAL PALESTINE, OR SAMARIA.

Enlarged from Keith Johnston's Map.



CHAPTER V.

JERUSALEM TO SHILOH.



MOSQUE OF DAVID.

FROM Jerusalem northward as far as Bethel, a distance of ten or twelve miles, we pass through the territory of Benjamin. The topography of the district illustrates the prophecies of Jacob and Moses as to the destinies of this small but warlike tribe, and explains the peculiar position which it held in the Jewish commonwealth. From the central plateau, which runs north and south, a succession of rugged and difficult passes lead east and west, debouching on the fertile Philistine plain on the one side, and on the yet more fertile Valley of Jericho on the other. Its barren rocky soil, ill-adapted for agricul-

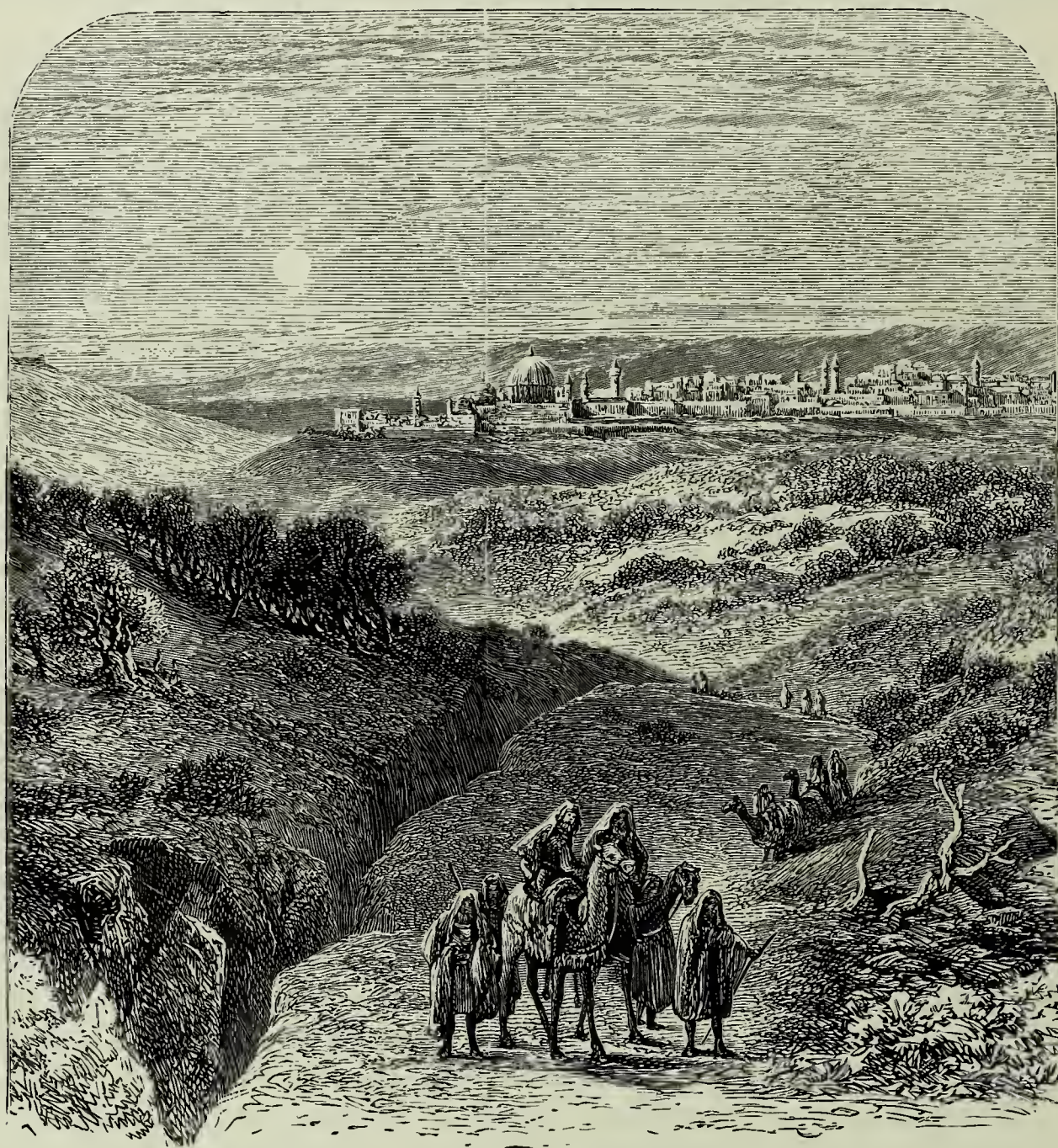
ture, gave birth to a race of hardy warriors, whose military prowess was often called into exercise in protecting Jerusalem against invaders from the north, in guarding their own mountain fastnesses, or in making forays upon the territories of their eastern or western neighbours. Almost every hill-side has been the scene of a battle: almost every mound of ruins marks the site of some ancient village memorable for the heroic deeds there enacted. 'Benjamin shall ravin as a wolf: in the morning he shall devour the prey, and at night he shall divide the spoil.'¹ 'And of Benjamin he said, The beloved of the Lord (*Jerusalem*) shall dwell in safety by him; and the Lord shall cover him all the day long, and He shall dwell between his shoulders:'² a prophecy fulfilled when centuries afterwards the Lord took up His earthly abode among

¹ Gen. xlix. 27.

² Deut. xxxiii. 12.

the Mountains of Benjamin. With its barren soil and numerical inferiority it yet won for itself the proud title of 'little Benjamin their ruler,'¹ it gave the first king to Israel, and the great Apostle of the Gentiles boasted, with a lawful pride, that he was 'of the tribe of Benjamin.'²

For some miles along the road, or from the eminences which skirt it,



JERUSALEM AND THE MOUNT OF OLIVES FROM SCOPUS.

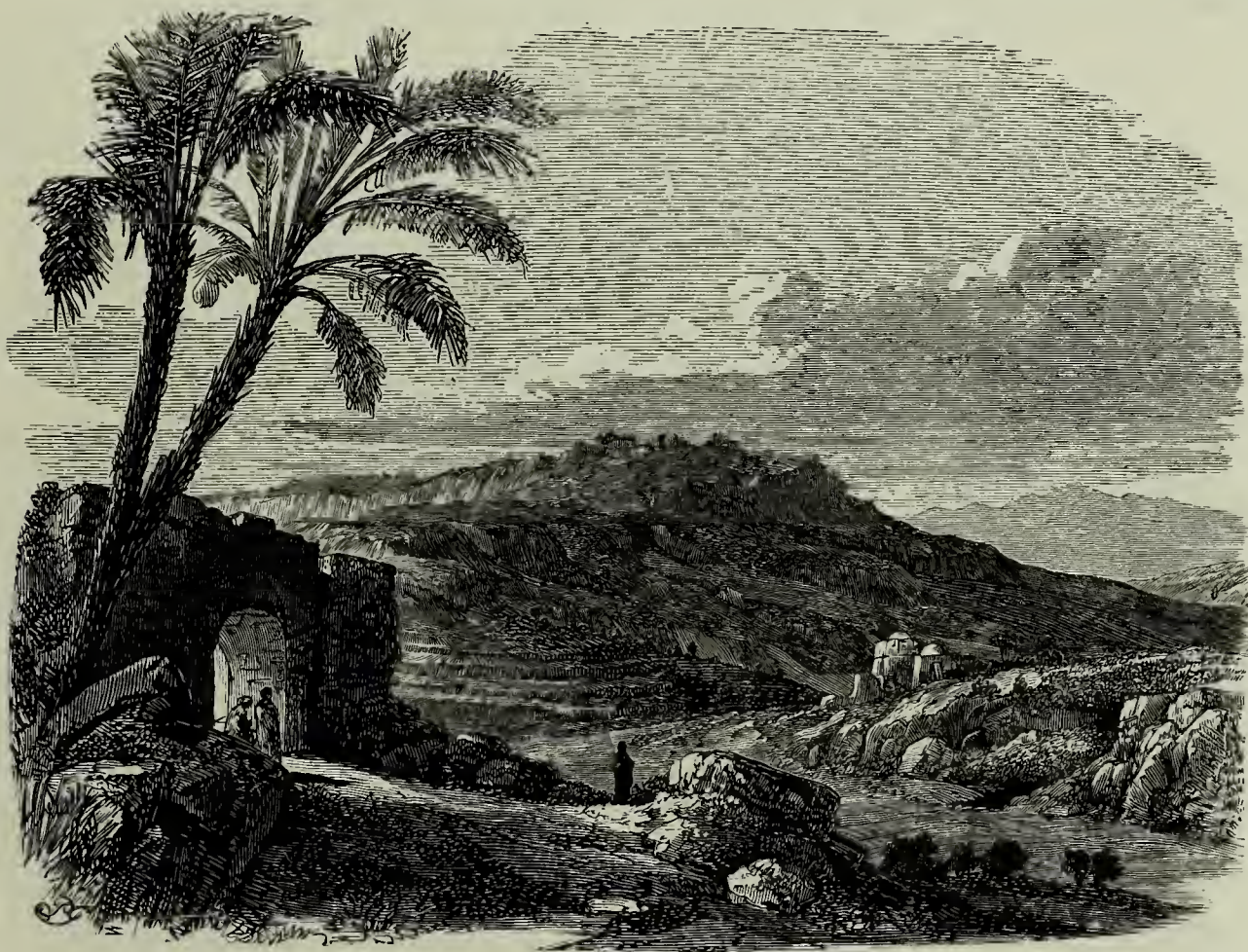
Jerusalem is visible. Age after age, invading armies, or bands of pilgrims, approaching from the north, as they turned the crest of Scopus, have gained their first view of the city—a view in some respects even finer than that from Olivet. Here the first Crusaders halted at break of day, and as Jerusalem burst upon their view, they knelt, and with tears of gladness,

¹ *Psa.* lxxviii. 27.

² *Phil.* iii. 5.

kissed the sacred soil. Richard Cœur de Lion, leaving his camp at Ajalon, pressed forward alone, and as he ascended one of these hills, buried his face in his mailed hands, and exclaimed, 'Oh! Lord God, I pray Thee that I may never look upon Thy holy city, if so be that I rescue it not from Thine enemies.'

A complete itinerary of the villages along this route is given us by the prophet Isaiah, describing the march of the Assyrian army. Beginning at Ai, near Bethel, about twelve miles north of Jerusalem, 'he is passed to Migron; at Michmash he hath laid up his carriages: they are gone over the passage: they have taken up their lodging (*i.e.* halted for the night) at Geba; Ramah



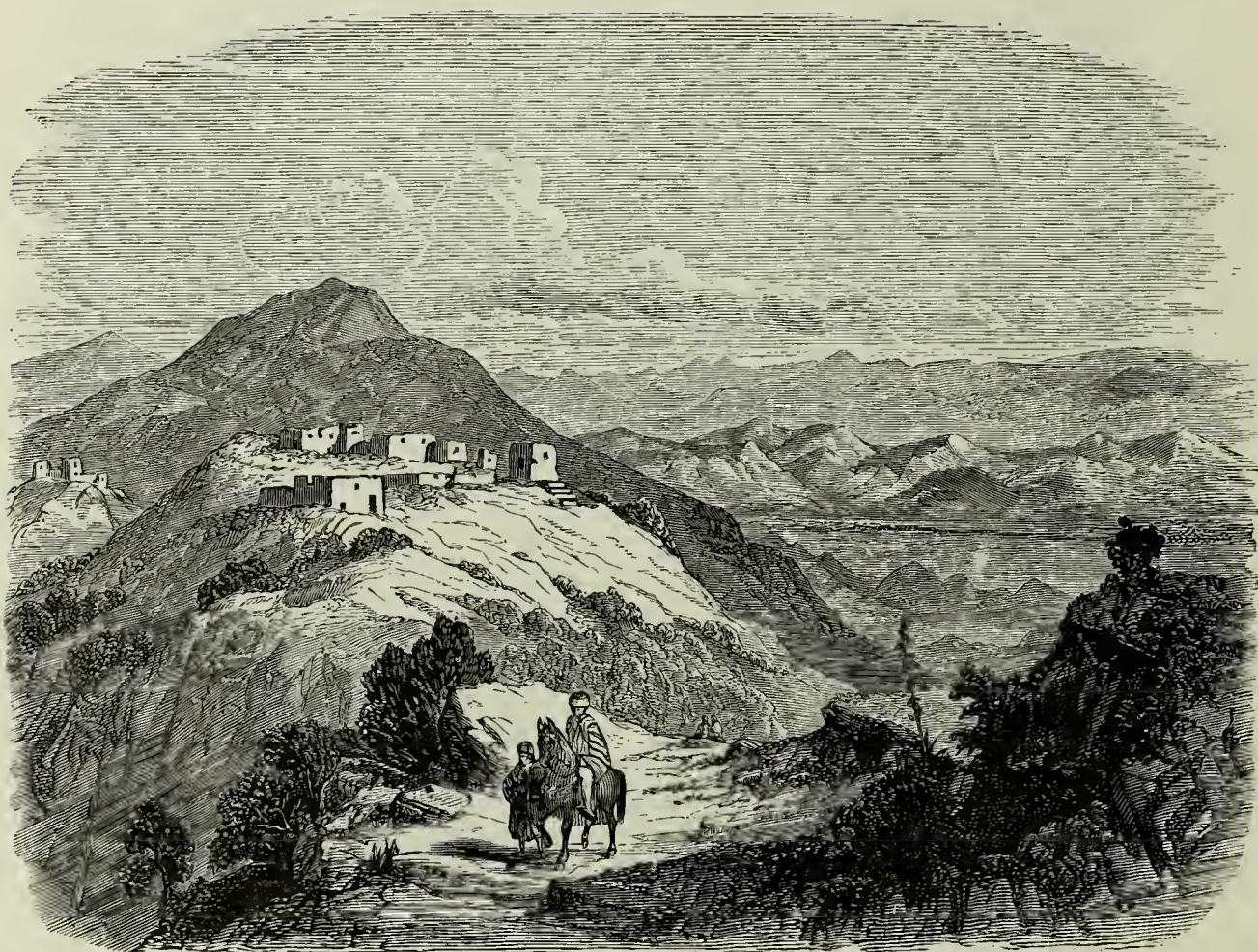
RAMAH.

is afraid: Gibeah of Saul is fled. Lift up thy voice, O daughter of Gallim: cause it to be heard unto Laish, O poor Anathoth. Madmenah is removed; the inhabitants of Gebim gather themselves to flee. As yet shall he remain at Nob that day.' Having thus seized all the villages on his line of march, he has reached the immediate precincts of the city, where the camp of the Assyrians is yet pointed out. Confident of victory, 'he shall shake his hand against the mount of the daughter of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem;' but 'the Lord, the Lord of hosts, shall lop the bough with terror: and the high ones of stature shall be hewn down, and the haughty shall be humbled.'¹

Nearly all the villages here enumerated can be identified, and not a

¹ Isa. x. 28-34.

few of them still bear their ancient names. A concordance or a reference-Bible will show what an affluence of historical associations lie all around us; Ai, the scene of Joshua's first great battle; Migron, where the army of Saul encamped in his campaign against the Philistines; Michmash, the scene of Jonathan's heroic exploit; Ramah, the home of Samuel; Gibeah, the birth-place of Saul; Gallim and Laish, the abode of Phalti the husband of Michal, when torn away from David; Anathoth, the residence of Jeremiah, and Nob, where, in the house of Ahimelech the priest, the sword of Goliath was laid up, and the shew-bread was placed before the Lord, of which David 'did eat when he was an hungered, and they that were with him.'



ANATHOTH.

Apart from its historical associations, there is little to interest us in the district through which we pass. A bleak, wind-swept, rock-strewn moor or a series of rounded hills, where the grey limestone comes up to the surface, with only a few patches of meagre vegetation on the shallow soil, make up the scene. There is, however, one steep conical hill rising above the others, which arrests attention. Like the Jebel Fureidis near Bethlehem, it is conspicuous from every direction. Its modern name, Neby Samwil—THE TOMB OF SAMUEL—embalms the memory of the prophet, who here judged Israel. With very strong probability it is identified with Mizpeh, *i.e.*, the

Watch-tower, a name exactly appropriate to this lofty eminence, from which a view is gained over the whole of Southern Palestine. Here the prophet summoned Israel to war against their oppressors, or convened them for judgment; here 'he took a stone and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it *Eben-ezer*, saying, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us;' and here was heard, for the first time, the cry of devout loyalty, so often repeated since, 'God save the king.'¹

About two hours after leaving Jerusalem, we reach a small town, Bireh, the Beeroth of the Gibeonites,² but which has a deeper interest from its connection with the life of our Lord. It was the first stage for the pilgrims returning northward from Jerusalem, where they halted for the night. The stragglers who had lingered in the city here rejoined their companions and resumed their journey to Galilee on the following morning. The Child Jesus having tarried behind in Jerusalem, 'Joseph and His mother knew not of it. But they, supposing Him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought Him amongst their kinsfolk and acquaintance. And when they found Him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking Him.'³

A little to the north-west of Beeroth, we approach an Arab village, standing on the ridge of a hill with a valley on either side. To the eastward the ridge rises considerably, giving an extensive view over the Jordan valley. A desolate moorland, strewn with ruins, stretches away to the north. As we enter the village, the first of the wretched and squalid houses which comprise it, makes some pretension to architectural decorations in a form not uncommon through Central Palestine—over the doorway a couple of willow-pattern plates are let into the wall! The modern name, Beitîn, is but a reminiscence of its ancient and venerable one, BETHEL. But except the name, there is little to remind us that we are on a spot so memorable in Jewish history. A large reservoir, similar to those at Solomon's Pools and Hebron,—three hundred and fourteen feet long by two hundred and seventeen wide—constructed of massive Jewish masonry, may not improbably go back to a very early period. It is now empty, except after heavy rains; but it was formerly filled by the springs at which Abram watered his flocks and herds when, entering the Land of Canaan, 'he pitched his tent, having Beth-el on the west, and Hai on the east: and there he builded an altar unto the Lord, and called upon the name of the Lord.'⁴

The patriarch after his journey into Egypt returned 'unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Beth-el and Hai; unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first: and there Abram called on the name of the Lord,' for wherever he pitched his tent there he built an altar—an example to all future ages of household piety and domestic worship. It was here and now that the strife occurred between

¹ 1 Sam. vii. 5-16; ²x. 17-24.

³ Luke ii. 42-50.

² Joshua ix. 17.

⁴ Gen. xii. 8.

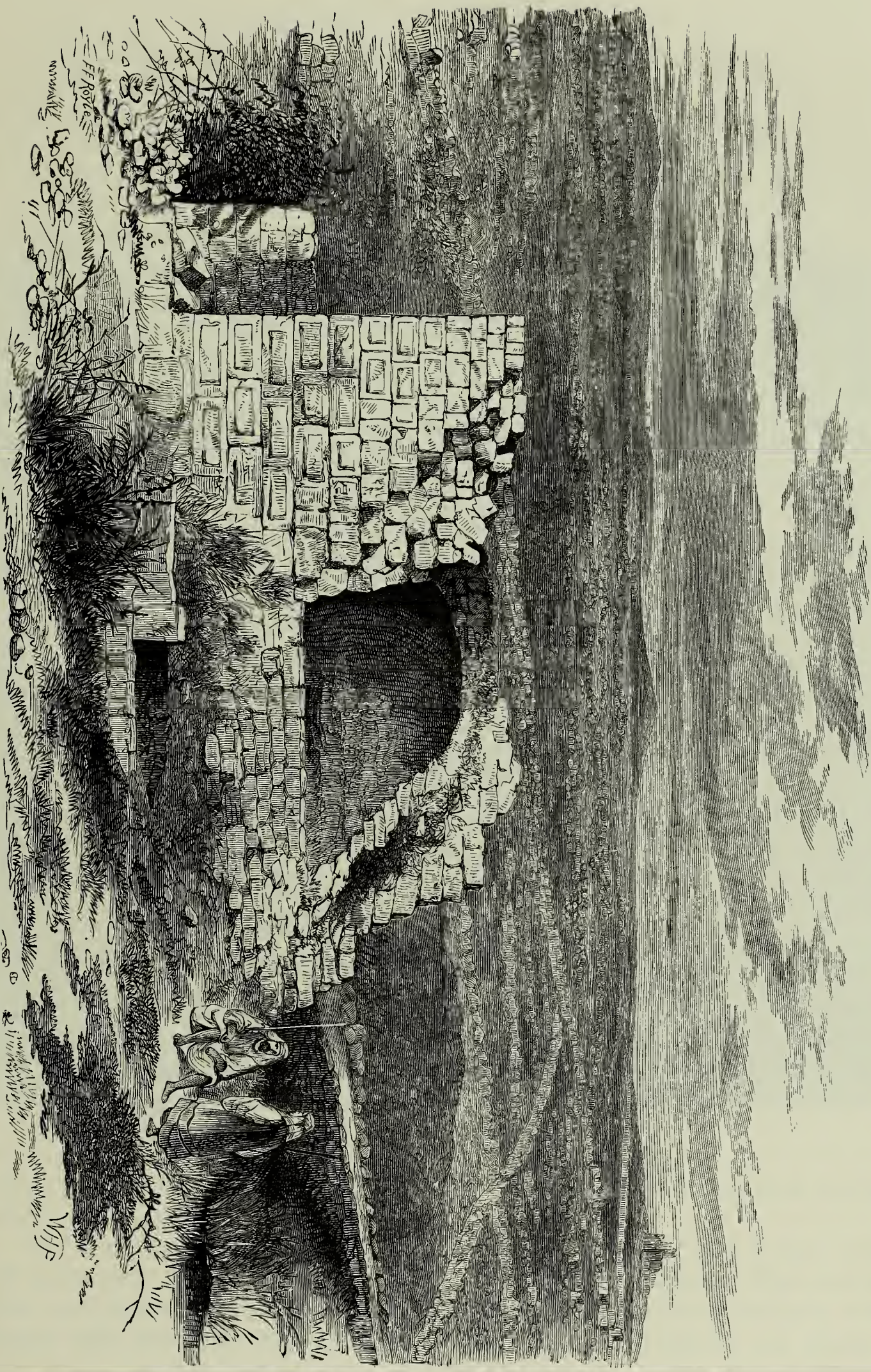
his herdsmen and those of his nephew Lot. Standing on the high ground already spoken of, the younger man 'lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere . . . even as the garden of the Lord . . . then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other.' As one contrasts the barren rocky hills around us with the rich and fertile plain of Sodom, the self-denial of 'the Father of the faithful' becomes very striking and instructive. A new meaning is thus given to the promise which followed upon the choice of Abram; 'And the Lord said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever . . . Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee.'¹ The blessing which thus came upon 'faithful Abraham,' will surely be inherited by all who, like him, are content to forego present advantages in the service and at the call of God.

Of the city which once stood upon this site scarcely any trace remains. A careful examination of the ruins of a Christian church, probably of the date of the Crusades, shows that it has been built out of an older edifice. The size of many of the stones and the peculiar bevel on the edge shows that the original edifice was Jewish.

The foundations of other ancient structures may be traced on the hill-side, and near its summit are the remains of a tower which still rises to a considerable height. Nothing has yet been discovered to fix the site of the temple which Jeroboam built here to rival that at Jerusalem, or of the altar where, as he stood to offer incense, he was rebuked by the fearless prophet, followed by the withering of the monarch's arm, and the miraculous overthrow of the altar.² A Jewish tradition tells us that the temple was so built that the idol-priests could look down upon that of Solomon on Mount Moriah. From the top of the tower this cannot now be done, but the Mount of Olives is distinctly visible almost to its base. Jerusalem is hidden by an intervening hill. I was told by my dragoman that a few years ago, before the upper courses of masonry had been removed, the temple platform could be seen, and it was evident that a very small addition to the height at which I stood would render this quite practicable.

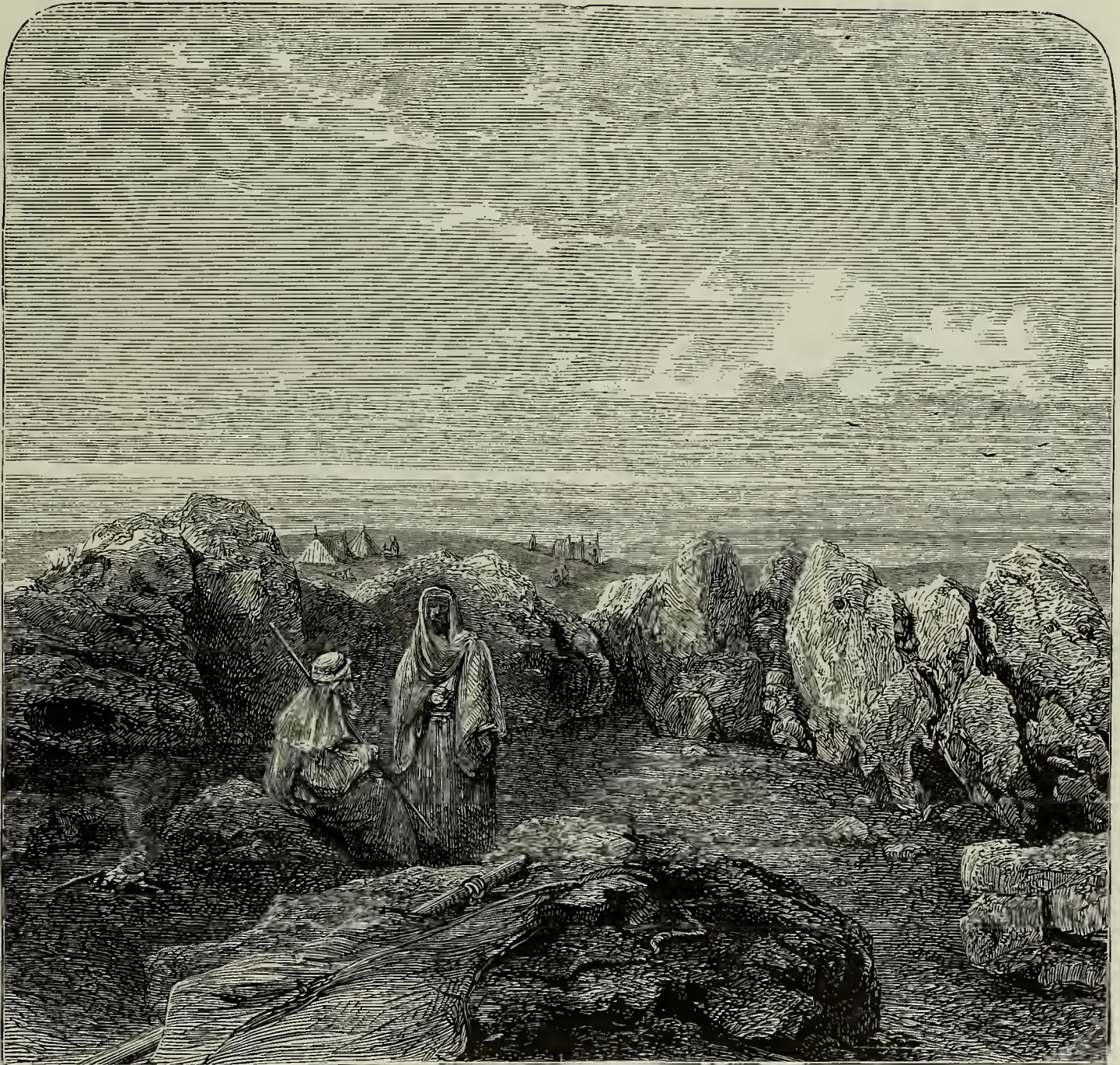
It was somewhere in the rock-strewn moorland, which stretches around the city, that Jacob, travelling northward, a fugitive from his father's house at Beersheba, saw the mysterious vision, which formed the turning-point in his career. Standing amongst these heaps of stones and sheets of smooth, bare rock, it is easy to realize the scene as 'he tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took of the stones of that place, and put them for his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep.'³

¹ Gen. xiii.² 1 Kings xii. 26-33; xiii. 1-5.³ Gen. xxviii. 10-19.



RUINS OF BETHEL.

The historian goes on to tell us that 'the name of that city was called Luz at the first,' implying an earlier Canaanitish settlement. A curious and interesting trace of this fact is found in the stone-circles, resembling those in our own country, which still exist on the east of the city. There are numerous instances in Palestine of the occurrence of dolmens and rude stone



STONE CIRCLE NEAR BETHEL.

circles. We must doubtless refer them to the early settlers, antecedent to the Hebrew conquest.

We now leave the sterile rocky heights of Benjamin and Judah, and shall soon enter upon the fertile plains and valleys of Samaria. The soil is richer and better cultivated. The hills, terraced up to their summits, are covered with corn-fields and orchards. In the days of prosperity and plenty,

when 'every man sat under his own vine and fig tree,' even the barren slopes of Southern Palestine were brought under cultivation. They drew 'honey from the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock.' Even yet we can trace the lines of these ancient terraces showing what the land once was, and what it may yet become again when 'the time to favour Zion, yea, the set time, is come.' But now these long lines or scattered heaps of stones only add to the general sense of desolation. In the country north of Bethel, however, we come to many districts in which something of the former fertility and prosperity may yet be found. From our camp in Ain Haramiyeh, or Robbers' Fountain, a few miles north of Bethel, we could see the hills clothed to their very summits with fig-gardens, now in their bright spring greenery. A Syrian gentleman, who was my frequent companion through this part of Palestine, plucked the young figs as he passed without stint or scruple. His reply to my question as to his right to do so was instructive as throwing light upon an incident in the life of our Lord as to which some difficulty has been felt. In the early spring, when the first leaves appear, an immense number of small figs are produced, which do not ripen, but fall from the branches, crude and immature, to the ground. To these we find a reference in the Apocalypse, 'as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs.'¹ The true crop is not produced till later in the year. This first crude 'untimely' growth, though of no commercial value, is yet plucked and eaten by the peasantry, sometimes with a pinch of salt, sometimes with bread. Like the wild fruit of our hedgerows, it is free to all passers-by. It was just at this early season, before the feast of the passover, that our Lord and His disciples, having walked from Bethany, 'hungered.' Seeing a fig tree 'afar off having leaves,' they sought fruit and 'found nothing thereon, but leaves only, for the time of figs was not yet.'² That is to say, seeing leaves they had a right to expect fruit. Finding fruit they would have had a right to pluck it, 'for the time of figs was not yet,' the true and valuable crop was not yet produced. This incident He turned into a solemn lesson of warning to the Jews. It was at the close of His public ministry. 'Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none,'³—nothing but the leaves of mere profession and outward privilege. The time of forbearance and patient pitying delay had passed—that of rejection and destruction had come; 'and He said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away.'

'On the north side of Beth-el, on the east side of the highway that goeth up from Beth-el to Shechem, and on the south of Lebonah,'⁴ stood SHILOH. Exactly on the spot thus precisely indicated is the village of Seilûn, the Arabic form of its ancient name. It stands on a slight eminence, rising from an extensive plain. An ancient well probably marks the spot where 'the daughters of Shiloh came out to dance in dances' at their annual festival,

¹ Rev. vi. 13.

³ Luke xiii. 6-9.

² Matt. xxi. 18, 19. Mark xi. 12-14.

⁴ Judges xxi. 19.

and were carried away as brides by the Benjamites who had crossed the frontier.¹ Of the tabernacle in which the ark rested, from the time of Joshua to that of Samuel, no trace, of course, remains. But on the summit of a little knoll we find the remains of what was once a Jewish synagogue, afterwards used as a church, and subsequently as a mosque. On the lintel over the doorway, between two wreaths of flowers is carved a vessel shaped like a Roman amphora; it so closely resembles the conventional type of the 'pot of manna' as found on coins and in the ruins of the synagogue at Caper-



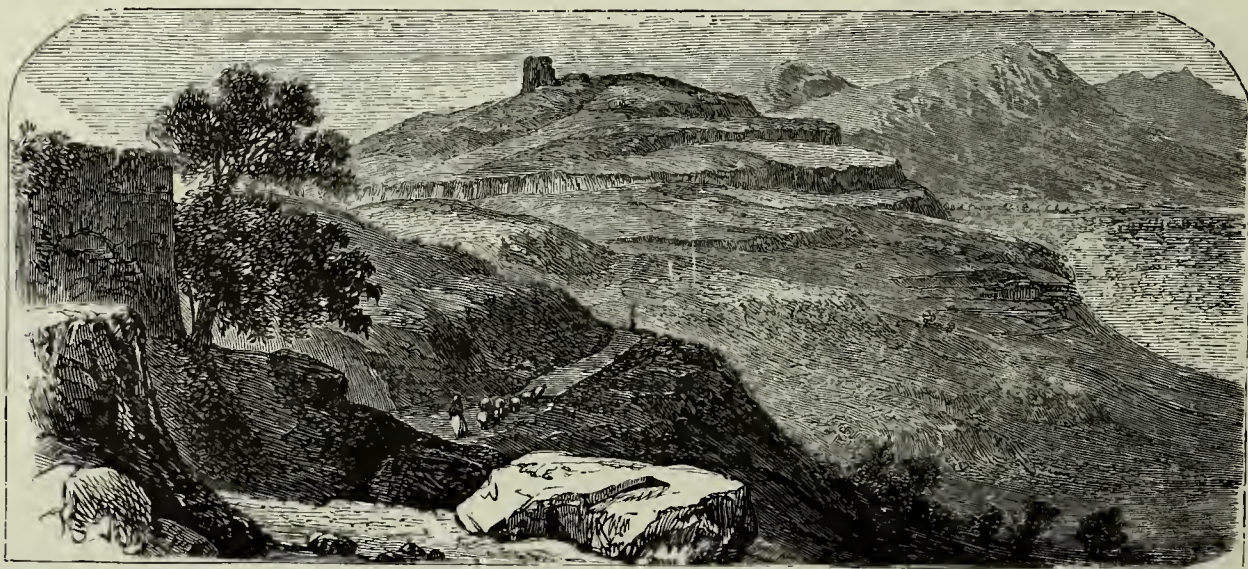
RUINS OF A SYNAGOGUE AT SHILOH.

naum, that it doubtless formed part of the original building. It is a not improbable conjecture that the synagogue may have been erected on the sacred spot which for so many generations formed the centre of Jewish worship. And in the rock-sepulchres with which the neighbouring hill-sides are honey-combed, the remains of Eli, and of the high-priests who had ministered before him at the altar, were doubtless laid to rest.

There are few spots in Palestine of which the identification is more certain, or the associations more interesting than Shiloh. Here the childless wife

¹ Judges xxi. 15-23.

prayed; and when her prayer had been heard she brought the infant Samuel (*Asked of the Lord*), and said to the aged priest, 'Oh my lord, as thy soul liveth, my lord, I am the woman that stood by thee here, praying unto the Lord. For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of Him: therefore also I have lent him to the Lord; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord.' The incidents which followed—the annual visit of the happy mother, the little coat, made with such loving care for the absent boy, the child Samuel 'growing in stature and in favour both with the Lord, and also with men,' the aged, sorrowful priest, the mysterious voice in the silence of the night, the mournful tragedy of Eli's death, and the universal recognition of 'all Israel, from Dan even to Beer-sheba, that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord,'¹—have



THE SITE OF SHILOH.

delighted infancy and instructed manhood throughout the civilized world for three thousand years.

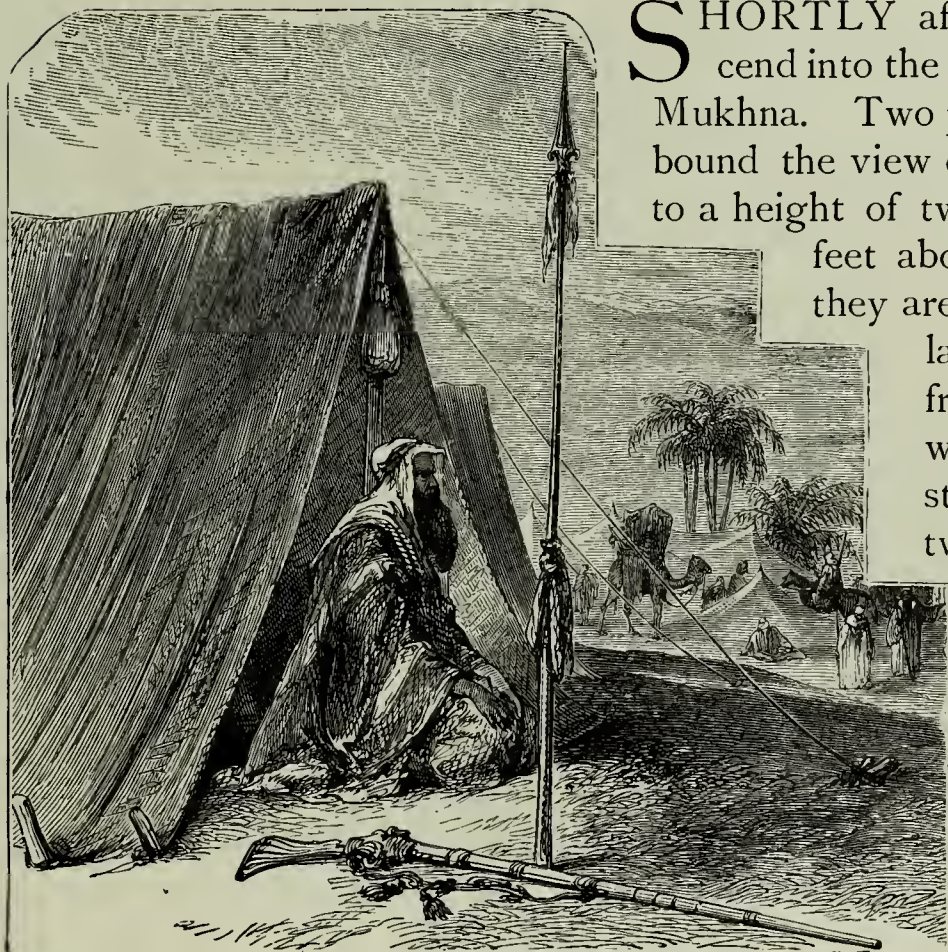
The subsequent history of this favoured spot is very mournful. Partaking in the wickedness and idolatry of Samaria, and then deserted by the apostate people for more favoured shrines, it soon sank down into ruin and desolation, so that in the time of the later kings it became a conspicuous instance of the fate which awaits all who forsake God. God 'forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent which He placed among men.' 'But go ye now unto My place which was in Shiloh, where I set My name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of My people Israel.' 'I will make this house (the Temple) like Shiloh, and will make this city a curse to all the nations of the earth.'² The same lesson is thus taught us here as in the cities in which our Lord's mighty works were performed, that privileges abused or neglected can only increase our guilt and deepen our ruin.

¹ 1 Sam. i.-iii.² Psa. lxxviii. 60. Jer. vii. 12; xxvi. 6.



CHAPTER VI.

SHECHEM, EBAL, AND GERIZIM.



ARAB AT TENT DOOR.

SHORTLY after leaving Seilûn we descend into the broad and fertile plain of El Mukhna. Two parallel ridges of mountains bound the view on the north-west. Rising to a height of two thousand seven hundred feet above the level of the sea, they are conspicuous objects in the landscape, and are visible from a great distance. Elsewhere in Palestine we are struck by the contrast between the grandeur of the history, and the unimpressive character of the scenery; but these noble and massive mountains form a fitting theatre for the grandest events. They are EBAL and GERIZIM. In the narrow valley between them was Shechem, where Abram

pitched his tent, and built his first altar, on his entrance into the Promised Land.¹ In the plain at the foot was a parcel of ground which Jacob bought, where he dugged a well, and erected an altar, and called it El-elohe-Israel, (*God, the God of Israel*).² Close by is the sepulchre in which the embalmed

¹ Gen. xii. 4-7.

² Ibid. xxxiii. 18-20.

body of Joseph was buried when his descendants came up from Egypt.¹ On those opposing heights the blessings and the curses of the Law were recited, whilst the people stood in the valley between.² It was on Gerizim that Jotham spoke his parable of the trees choosing a king.³ In this ancient and venerable sanctuary, the kings of Israel received their inauguration,⁴ and after the secession of the northern tribes, Jeroboam fixed here his capital.⁵ And it was in this birth-place of the Jewish nation, that our Lord proclaimed the abrogation of all that was local and temporary in the covenant with Abraham and his seed, 'Neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem,' shall ye 'worship the Father. . . . God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.'⁶ The associations of this spot thus cover the whole range of Hebrew history, from its commencement to its close.

The circumstances of our Lord's memorable visit are stated with great



THE VALLEY OF SHECHEM, WITH EBAL AND GERIZIM.

precision. It was on His way from Judæa into Galilee, in the early spring—'there are yet four months, and then cometh harvest'—at the hour of noon—'Jesus being wearied with His journey sat thus on the well, and it was about the sixth hour.' At the same season, by the same route, at the same hour, we reached the well. Early in the

year though it was, we found the heat very great and the journey toilsome. Thankful indeed were we to arrive at the resting-place. The fields were bright with the tender green of spring-time. The wide expanse of pasture and the patches of young corn were inexpressibly refreshing to the eye after our long sojourn among the barren hills of the south. In due time 'the sower and the reaper would rejoice together.' But alas! the spiritual harvest, which seemed ready to the reaper's hand as our Lord spoke, has issued only in disappointing failure. The Divine Husbandman Himself gathered in the first fruits; those that followed found 'tares' only. The

¹ Gen. i. 25, 26. Joshua xxiv. 32.

³ Judges ix. 7-20.

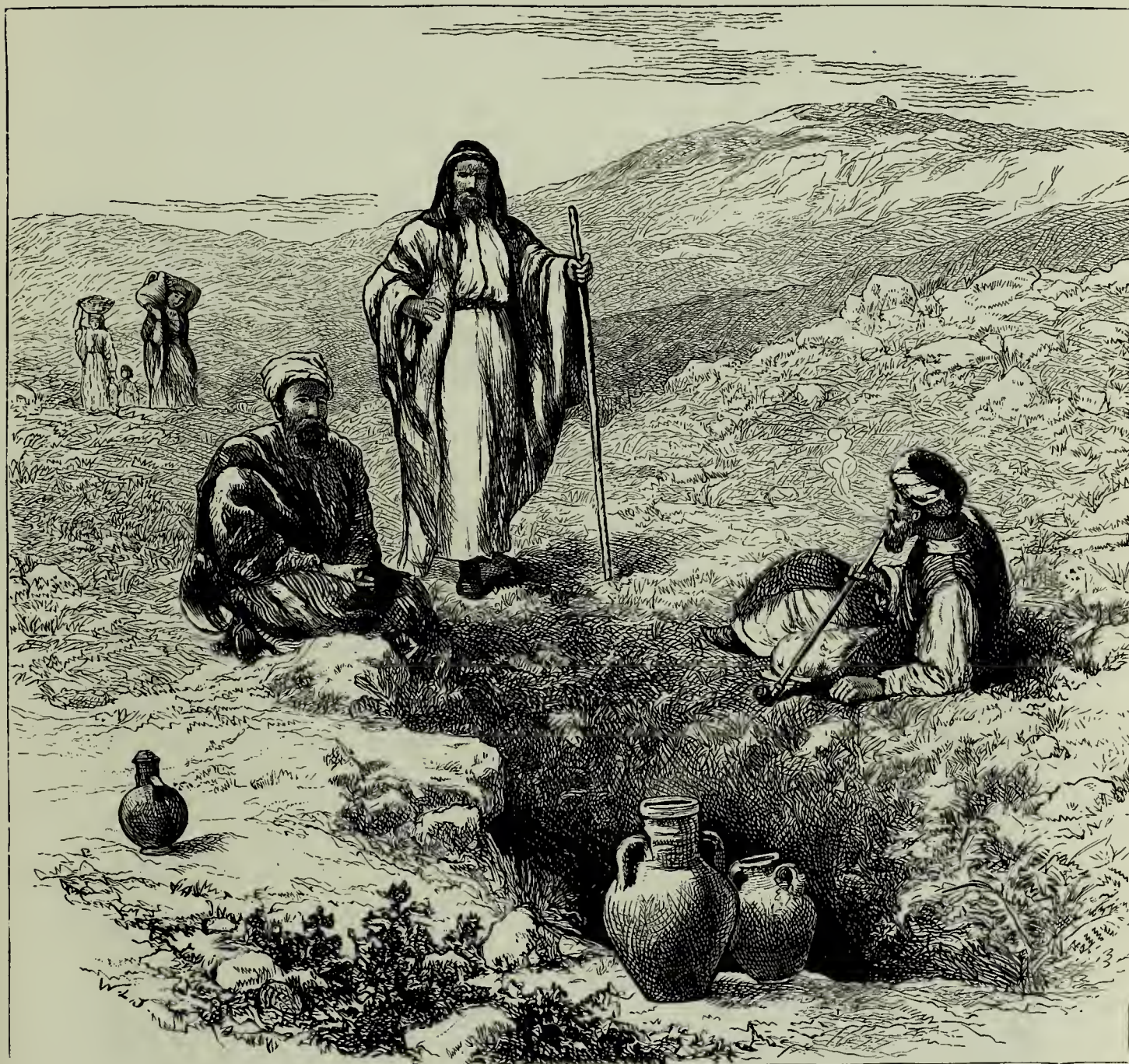
⁵ 1 Kings xii. 25.

² Deut. xi. 29, 30; xxvii. 12, 13. Joshua viii. 33.

⁴ 1 Kings xii. 1. 2 Chron. x. 1.

⁶ John iv.

bitter animosity with which the Samaritans regarded the Jews was soon turned against the Christians. Even when the empire had become nominally Christian, violent and murderous persecutions broke out against the followers of Him who had here proclaimed Himself the Messiah, 'I, that speak unto thee, am He.' And as though inheriting the fanatical hostility of their

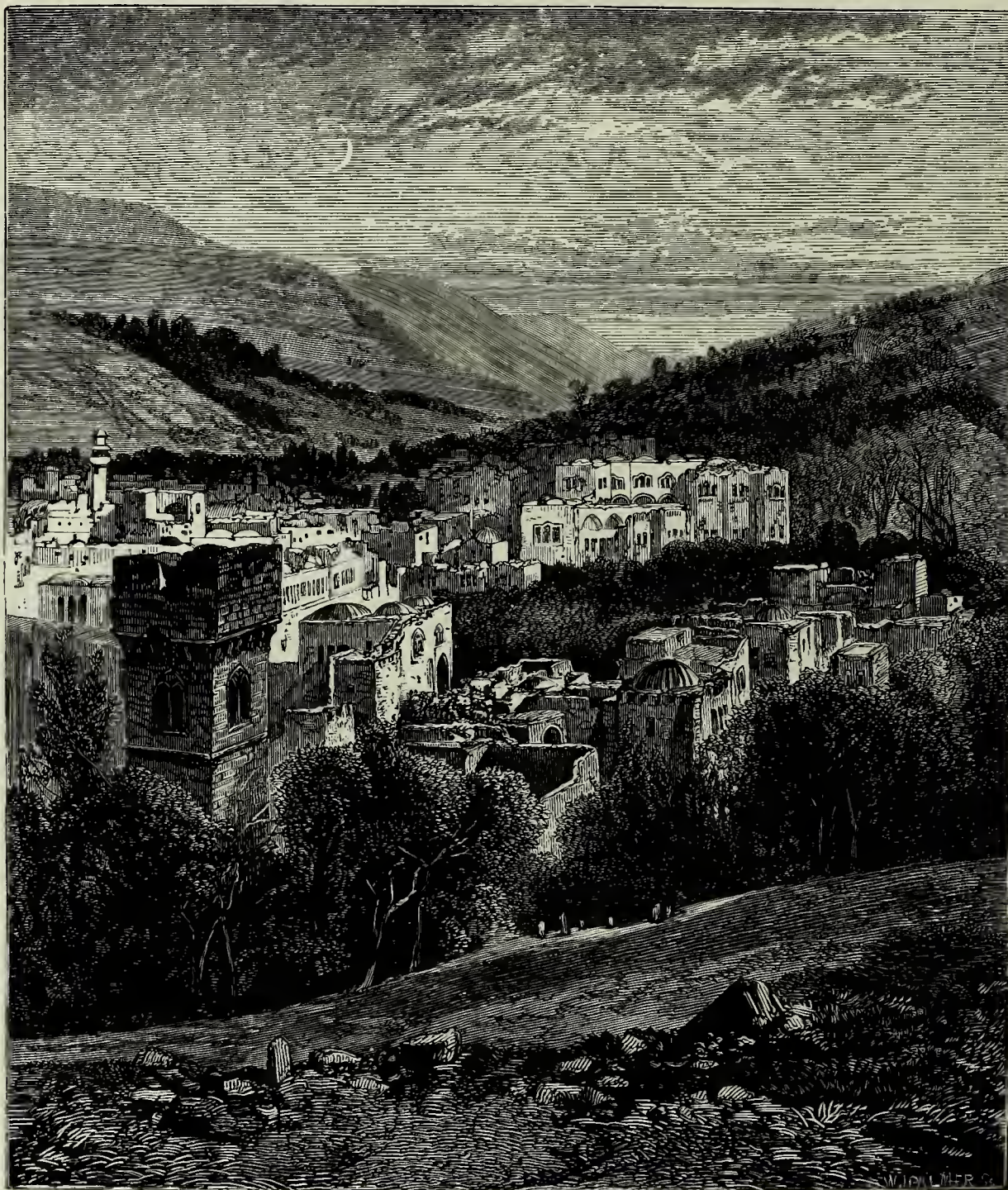


JACOB'S WELL.

ancestors, the present Moslem population of Nablus are amongst the most bigoted and violent in the whole East.

The well is still 'deep,' though the bottom is choked with rubbish and the stones cast into it by travellers. The measurements, however, vary considerably. Maundrell, and Robinson in his first edition, make the depth one hundred and five feet; McCheyne, Wilson, and Calhoun only seventy-five. The careful and repeated soundings of my own party nearly coincide

with the latter statement ; we made it seventy-eight feet. I can suggest no way of reconciling these discrepancies. It is probable that the depth may have diminished since the visit of Maundrell in 1697. Robinson does not appear to have measured it himself, but to have relied upon the report of his companions.



NABLUS.

The upper part of the shaft is lined with rough masonry. After copious rains there is a little water in the bottom, but ordinarily the well is quite dry.

A few hundred feet north of Jacob's well, in the same 'parcel of ground,' is Joseph's tomb. The structure over it is modern, and is an ordinary Mohammedan *wely*. There is, however, no reason to doubt the authenticity of the tradition which fixes upon this as the sepulchre of the



EVENING ON A HOUSETOP.

From an original sketch by W. J. Webb.

patriarch. The deep alluvial soil would not allow of the interment being in a rock-hewn grave ; but if the coffin were of granite or alabaster, like those of Egyptian magnates, it might yet be recovered if excavation were permitted. We have, however, already seen, when speaking of the Cave of Machpelah, that the Mohammedans assert that the body was removed from its original place of sepulture and placed with those of the other patriarchs at Hebron.

The valley leading up to NABLUS, the Neapolis of the Romans, the Sychar, or Shechem of the Jews, is one of rare beauty. Dr. Porter says, with slight exaggeration, 'it is the finest in Palestine—in fact, it is the only really beautiful site from Dan to Beersheba.' Without the grandeur of the snow-crowned peaks of Switzerland, it yet reminded me of the Swiss-Italian valleys in its bright colour and rich vegetation. Van de Velde's description of it is graphic and truthful : 'Here there is no wilderness, here there are no wild thickets, yet there is always verdure ; always shade, not of the oak, the terebinth, and the carob-tree, but of the olive grove—so soft in colour, so picturesque in form, that for its sake we can willingly dispense with all other wood. Here there are no impetuous mountain-torrents, yet there is water ; water, too, in more copious supplies than anywhere else in the land ; and it is just to its many fountains, rills, and watercourses, that the valley owes its exquisite beauty. . . . There is a singularity about the Vale of Shechem, and that is the peculiar colouring which objects assume in it. You know that wherever there is water, the air becomes charged with watery particles ; and that distant objects beheld through that medium seem to be enveloped in a pale blue or grey mist, such as contributes not a little to give a charm to the landscape. But it is precisely these atmospheric tints that we miss so much in Palestine. Fiery tints are to be seen both in the morning and the evening, and glittering violet or purple-coloured hues where the light falls next to the long deep shadows ; but there is an absence of colouring, and of that charming dusky haze in which objects assume such softly blended forms, and in which also the transition in colour from the foreground to the farthest distance loses the hardness of outline peculiar to the perfect transparency of an Eastern sky. It is otherwise in the Vale of Shechem, at least in the morning and the evening. Here the exhalations remain hovering among the branches and leaves of the olive-trees, and hence that lovely bluish haze.'

To enjoy this lovely scenery in its full perfection, we must spend the evening hours on one of the flat roofs of the city. One such evening I shall never forget. Ebal and Gerizim were glowing in the light of the setting sun. The long stretch of orchards and gardens along the valley were already dim in the purple shadows. The noise from the crowded streets died away. The stars began to peep out. The landscape faded from view. Our evening hymn of praise ascended to the God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, who 'sendeth darkness, and it is night.'

The abundance of water to which Van de Velde refers raises the question why Jacob should have dug a well so deep, with so much cost and labour, when the natural springs of the valley would have sufficed him? Why, too, should the Samaritan woman have come hither from the city; nearly two miles distant, to draw water, when she must have passed numerous fountains by the way? The reply to the first question is, that throughout the East water is jealously guarded by the inhabitants, who resent the intrusion of strangers upon their rights. In the Book of Genesis, as amongst the fellahin and Bedouin of to-day, we find no case of contention as to pasturage, but numerous instances of feuds arising out of the use of wells and fountains. And, as Dean Stanley remarks, we have here an illustration of the characteristic prudence and caution of Jacob, who carefully avoided all causes of quarrel with the tribes amongst whom he had settled.

The reply to the second question is probably to be found in the fact that there are indications that the ancient city extended farther to the eastward and nearer to the well than the present. There may, too, have been reasons for preferring the water drawn from hence. Its superior quality—Orientals are epicures in this respect—or the hallowed associations connected with the well may have prompted the Samaritans to fetch it from a distance, though there were fountains close at hand.¹

Doubts and difficulties have often been expressed as to the possibility of the law being read on the opposite mountains of Ebal and Gerizim whilst the people were encamped between them. It has been said that at so great a distance the voices must have been inaudible. Some commentators have felt this so strongly that they have sought for an Ebal and Gerizim elsewhere. Infidels have made merry over the assumed incredibility of the narrative. But no real difficulty exists. Just where the valley begins to narrow a deep depression indents the sides of the opposing mountains, up which at the height of a few hundred feet two level *plateaux* confront each other. At this spot, which seems as though it had been created for the very purpose, the reading of the law probably took place, the priests standing on the plateau on either side, the people in the plain below. We tried the experiment under the most unfavourable circumstances. A very high wind was blowing down the valley, carrying the sounds away from us. Neither of the readers had powerful voices. And yet not only could we who remained in the valley hear them, but they heard one another with sufficient distinctness to read alternate verses, each beginning where the other left off. Had the day been calm, or had the readers possessed voices of greater power, every word would have been distinctly audible. This is due partly to the confor-

¹ Since the earlier editions of this work passed through the press the researches of the Palestine Exploration Fund have rendered it probable that Sychar was not, as had been previously supposed, a synonym for Shechem, but was the name of a village nearer to the well.

mation of the hill sides forming, as it were, a double amphitheatre, partly to the elastic quality of the dry atmosphere of Syria, which conveys sound to an amazing distance.

The side of Ebal, the mountain of the cursing, is barren and rocky as compared with that of Gerizim, the mountain of the blessing. The latter is clothed with abundant pasturage to the very summit. The ascent is steep and difficult, but it well repays the labour, even if it were for the view alone. Nearly the whole extent of Palestine is visible—the hills of Galilee, the mountains of Benjamin and Judah, the Mediterranean and the great Philistine plain, the valley of the Jordan, the plains of Bashan and the mountains of Moab. Hermon is just hidden by an intervening height. The Samaritans assert, and many modern scholars maintain, that here, and not on the southern



RUINS ON THE SUMMIT OF GERIZIM.

Moriah, Abraham was about to sacrifice Isaac. A more imposing site could hardly be found, and reading the narrative on the spot, the imagination is strongly enlisted in favour of the opinion which has found so able a defender in Dean Stanley.

But that which invests the summit of Gerizim with an interest absolutely unique is the fact that here, and here alone, the feast of the Passover is still celebrated in accordance with the Mosaic ritual. The Jews for eighteen centuries have been unable to observe their great national festival. The Samaritans have never ceased to do so. I should gladly have been present at this interesting ceremony, but as it wanted three weeks to the full moon of the month Nisan, I was unable to remain. I received, however, a minute description of the ceremony from a native of Nablus who has often

witnessed it, and Yacoub, the high priest, gave me much information! on the subject.

Near the ruins of their ancient Temple and, as they allege, close to the spot where Abraham offered Isaac, and Joshua placed the stones inscribed with the words of the law from Gilgal, two pits have been dug, and a long trench formed and lined with stones. Early in the morning of the day the officials commence their preparations. Fuel is gathered and a large fire kindled in each of the pits, prayers being recited the whole time. Over one of the pits two large cauldrons are placed and filled with water. In the afternoon, the lambs, five or six in number, are driven to the spot. The narrative of the institution of the Passover is now chanted in a high key, the women who stand round joining in with shrill excited cries. At a signal from the priest the lambs are thrown across the trench, and, in a instant, a keen long knife is drawn twice across the throat of each, nearly severing the head from the body. When the blood has been thoroughly drained from the carcase, it is either dipped into the cauldron, or the boiling water is poured over it, to enable the *shochetim* to strip off the wool without difficulty. The entrails having been taken out and burnt, the portions allotted to the priests removed and salt added, the bodies are placed upon spits made, it is said, of pomegranate wood. A transverse bar is affixed to one end of the spit to prevent the body slipping. This forms a rude cross. Justin Martyr, a native of Nablus, writing in the second century, says that the forelegs were fastened to the cross-bar. Though this is no longer done, there is no reason to doubt the accuracy of his statement, nor can we wonder that he saw in it a type of the crucifixion of the true Paschal Lamb. The bodies are now placed amongst the hot ashes of the oven prepared for the purpose. A hurdle is placed over it, and covered with earth, so as to retain the heat. In about three hours the earth is removed, the hurdle torn off, and the lambs drawn out amidst the wild excited cries of the people. During the early part of the ceremony they had stood barefooted, in acknowledgment of the sanctity of the place, but now having resumed their shoes, tied girdles of rope round their waists, and taken staves in their hands, they proceed eagerly and hastily to tear off, and eat portions from the bodies, over which bitter herbs have been sprinkled. In an incredibly short time the whole has been consumed excepting the bones. These are then collected, and with every fragment that can be found, after the most diligent search, are thrown into the fire to be consumed. The ceremony concludes soon after midnight. It was described to me as strangely impressive. The wild cries of the worshippers, the glare of the fires, the mountain top and the surrounding landscape lit up by the light of the full moon, the solemn associations of the rite and the place, must together make up a scene of intense interest.

The Samaritans--'the smallest and the oldest sect in the world'--are now reduced to one hundred and twenty persons, all of whom reside in

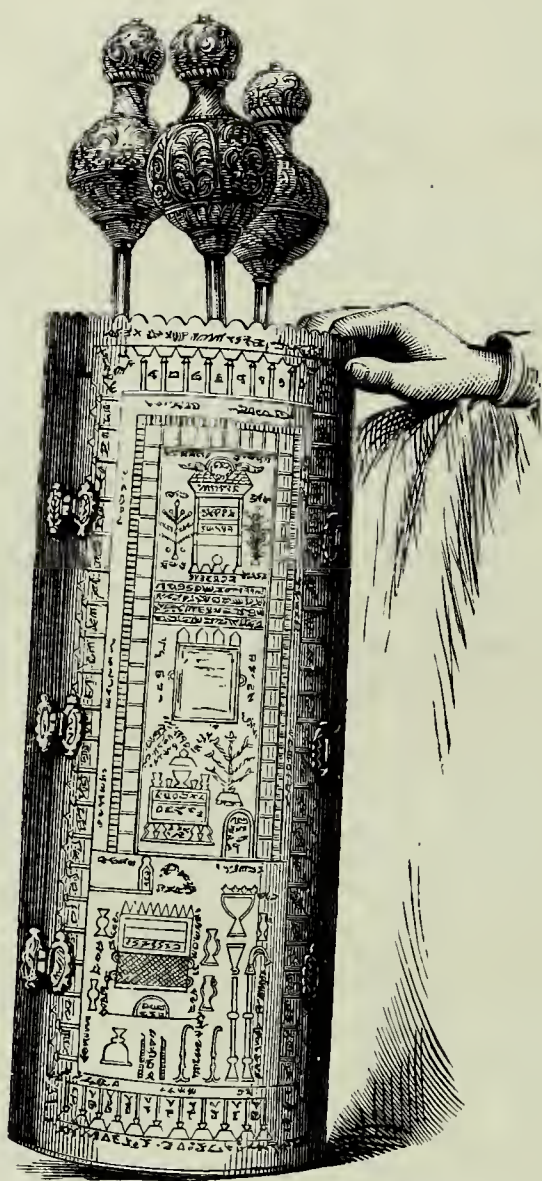
Nablus. The aged priest Amram, mentioned favourably by Wilson, Dean Stanley, and Mills, has lately been deposed from his office in consequence of an intrigue conducted by his nephew and successor, Yacoub. The latter looks about thirty years of age, though he is probably older. He has remarkably handsome and finely-chiselled features, but with a sinister, unpleasant expression. He professes to be able to trace his pedigree in an unbroken line from Aaron. The account he gives of his ancestry is that, down to the time of Nehemiah the high priesthood continued in one unbroken line, but that then one of the sons of Joiada, the son of Eliashib, the high priest, having married the daughter of Sanballat, the governor of Samaria,¹ refused to put her away when required to do so. Hereupon a schism took place, and from this point his genealogy follows a different line to that of the high priest of Jerusalem. He said that a genealogical table, laid up with the copies of the law in the Holy Place of the synagogue, gave all the generations of this pedigree, and that it recorded the most memorable events that happened in the period of each high priest. He declared that amongst these memorabilia was one recording that 'a prophet named Jesus had appeared at Jerusalem, but that the priests there, with their usual wickedness and malignity, had put him to death out of envy.' If such a contemporary record does indeed exist, it would be a document of extraordinary interest and value. He adhered to his statement, notwithstanding my strongly-expressed incredulity, and promised to send me extracts from the original roll. These, however, I have not received. The character for untruthfulness which the Samaritans bear excites suspicion, but it is difficult to see what he could hope to gain by deceiving me.

The synagogue of the Samaritans is a small secluded edifice, entered through a walled garden, out of which an inclosed court conducts into the building itself. It is only thirty-seven feet and a few inches in length, and perhaps twenty feet in breadth; the walls are whitewashed and the floor covered with matting. A place is railed off for the Holy Place, in a recess of which the volumes of the law are kept. We were of course anxious to see the famous copy of the Pentateuch, declared to have been written by 'Abishua, the great-grandson of Aaron, at the door of the Tabernacle in the thirteenth year of the settlement of the children of Israel' in the Holy Land. Though this is recorded in the body of the manuscript itself, the statement is discredited, and the most contradictory opinions are entertained amongst scholars as to its actual date, some ascribing to it a venerable antiquity, and others insisting that it is comparatively modern.

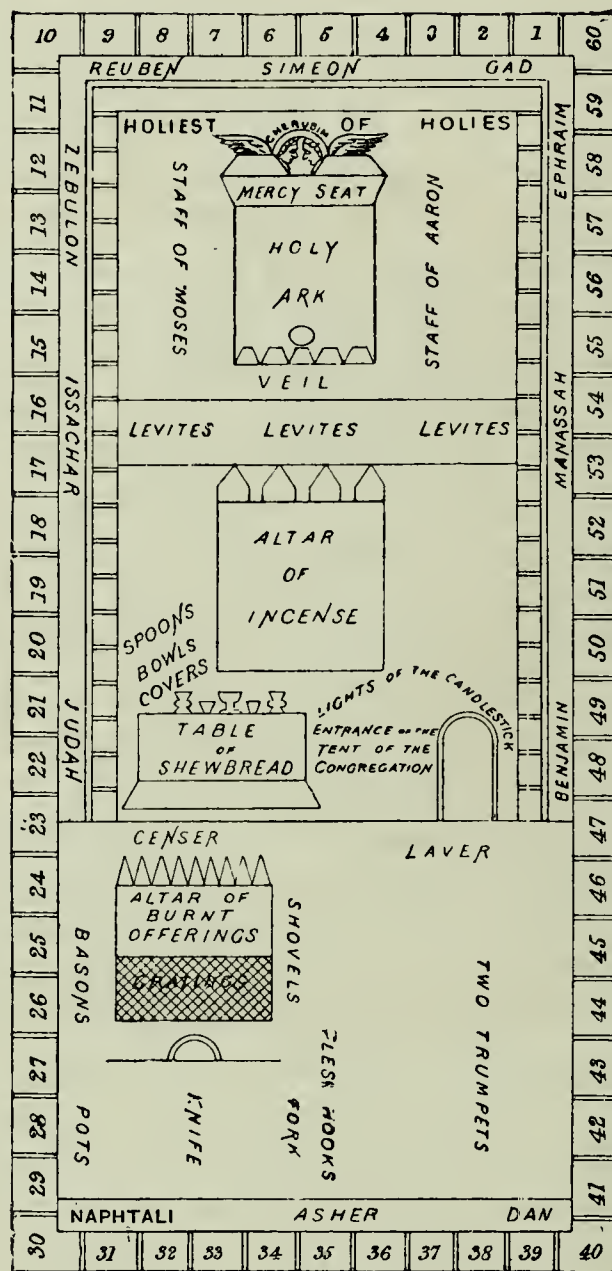
Having taken off our shoes at the entrance, Yacoub locked the door, so that none of his co-religionists might enter, and took out from the recess a roll of the law, which he declared to be the one we desired to see. According to his usual custom, however, he was endeavouring to palm off upon us a

¹ Neh. xiii. 28.

duplicate instead of the original. He persisted to the last in the assertion that this duplicate was the only copy shown to the Prince of Wales and his party in 1862, and there seems reason to believe that this was really the case. The fraud being detected, he, after much hesitation and a promise of liberal backshish, produced the genuine manuscript. It is wrapped in a cover of red satin embroidered with gold, and inclosed in a cylinder of silver, which opens on hinges.



CYLINDER INCLOSING THE SAMARITAN
PENTATEUCH.

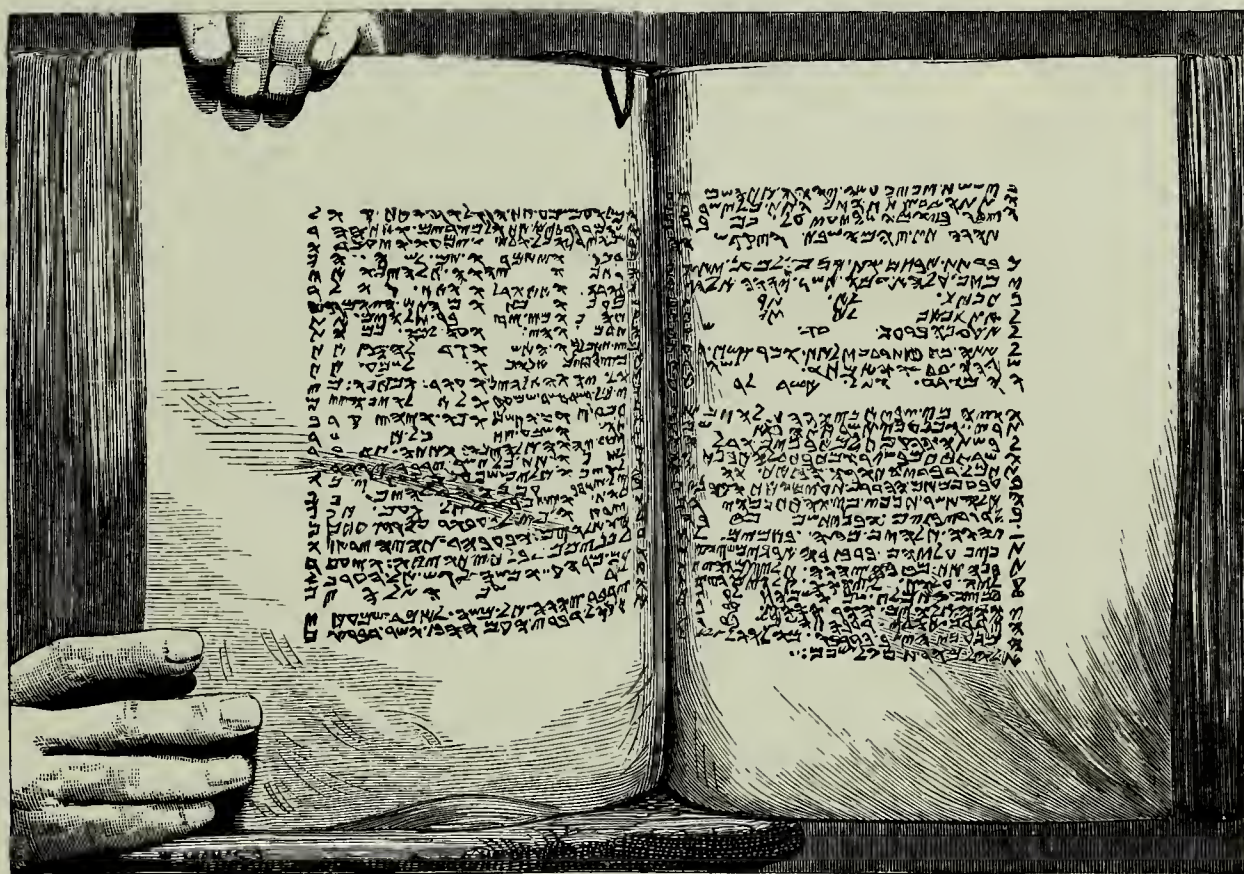


TRANSLATION OF THE INSCRIPTIONS ON THE
COVER.

Mr. Mills, who resided three months in Nablus in order to acquaint himself thoroughly with the Samaritans, says of it: 'The roll itself is of what we should call parchment, but of a material much older than that, written in columns twelve inches deep and seven and a half inches wide. The writing is in a fair hand, but not nearly so large or beautiful as the book copies which I had previously examined. The writing being rather

small, each column contains from seventy to seventy-two lines. The name of the scribe is written in a kind of acrostic, and forms part of the text, running through three columns, and is found in the Book of Deuteronomy. Whether it be the real work of the great-grandson of Aaron, as indicated in the writing, I leave the reader to judge; the roll, at all events, has all the appearance of a very high antiquity, and is wonderfully well preserved, considering its venerable age.'

One of the halves of the metal cylinder is very curious, and deserves more attention than it has received at the hands of Biblical archæologists. It is of silver, about two feet six inches long, by ten or twelve inches in diameter, and is



TWO PAGES OF THE SAMARITAN PENTATEUCH.
FROM A PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN FOR THE PALESTINE EXPLORATION FUND.

covered with embossed work with a descriptive legend attached to each portion. I procured a rubbing from Yacoub, and on my return to England found that it had been photographed by the Palestine Exploration Fund. Yacoub said that it was a plan of the Temple and its furniture; on examination, however, it proves to be the Tabernacle of the Wilderness. Mr. Van Straalen, successor to Mr. Deutsch at the British Museum, has been good enough to examine it for me, and reports that the letters are Samaritan, not later than the fourth century, and probably older. Some of the lettering he has been unable to decipher. The annexed engravings show the cylinder and a translation of the inscriptions, so far as they are yet read.

On the outer rim are a series of numbers running from one to sixty.

These probably refer to the posts, which appear to have been numbered so as to avoid confusion and delay in the erection of the Tabernacle on its arrival at the camping-ground. The instructions given to Moses 'in the Mount,' were, that there should be twenty boards on each side, but at the corners were to be two boards additional. At the end, behind the most Holy Place, were to be six boards. Nothing is said about the entrance, which apparently was to be left open.¹ Posts, however, would be needed to sustain the framework with its covering. This would give $24 + 24 + 6 + 6 = 60$, the numbers shown in the plan.

We then find the names of the twelve tribes. These are given not according to patriarchal seniority or tribal precedence, but in the order of the encampment and march, as recorded in the Book of Numbers. Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun are on one side. These tribes formed the vanguard of the army, and were followed on the march by the Tabernacle itself. Then came Reuben, Simeon, and Gad. As soon as they 'set forward' they were followed by the ark, which was thus in the midst of the people whether marching or camping. Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin come next; then Dan, Asher, and Naphtali bring up the rear.²

In the Holiest of Holies we find the ark, with its crown or rim of beaten gold, upon which are the cherubim kneeling face to face, whilst their wings projecting behind them overshadow the mercy seat.³ On one side of the ark is the staff of Moses, on the other that of Aaron. The veil hangs down in front concealing the mysterious recess. Immediately in front of the veil are the stations of the Levites. The altar of incense comes next, and then the table of shewbread with the candlestick 'over against the table, on the side of the tabernacle, southward.'⁴ The spoons, bowls, and covers are marked in the place indicated by Moses near the table.⁵ The entrance from the outer court was, as the Talmud describes it, not in the centre, but on the right-hand side.

The laver stands at 'the door of the Tabernacle of the congregation,' that the priests might wash as they entered into the Holy Place.⁶ Near it is the altar of burnt offering, with its 'brazen grate of network of brass.'⁷ This grating or network has been the subject of much controversy amongst Biblical critics. The representation here given favours the view of those who suppose it to have been an inclined plane leading up to the altar. The censer is placed immediately over against the altar of burnt offering, that the priests might take the coals from the sacrifice, and therewith offer the incense of thanksgiving.⁸ The flesh-hooks, forks, knives, pans, and basins, are represented as arranged around the altar.⁹ The trumpets at the entrance are peculiar in form, and may throw some light upon a question much debated amongst students of the Talmud as to the shape of one which appears to

¹ Exod. xxvi. 15-25.

⁴ Ibid. xl. 22-25.

⁷ Ibid. xxvii. 1-8.

² Num. ii. 11-27.

⁵ Ibid. xxv. 29; xxxvii. 16.

⁸ Rev. viii. 3.

³ Exod. xxv. 10-22.

⁶ Ibid. xl. 12, 30.

⁹ Exod. xxxviii. 3.



IN A BAZAAR.

have been bent in the manner represented. The date and value of this curious relic are as yet doubtful. Subsequent investigations may throw light upon its origin.

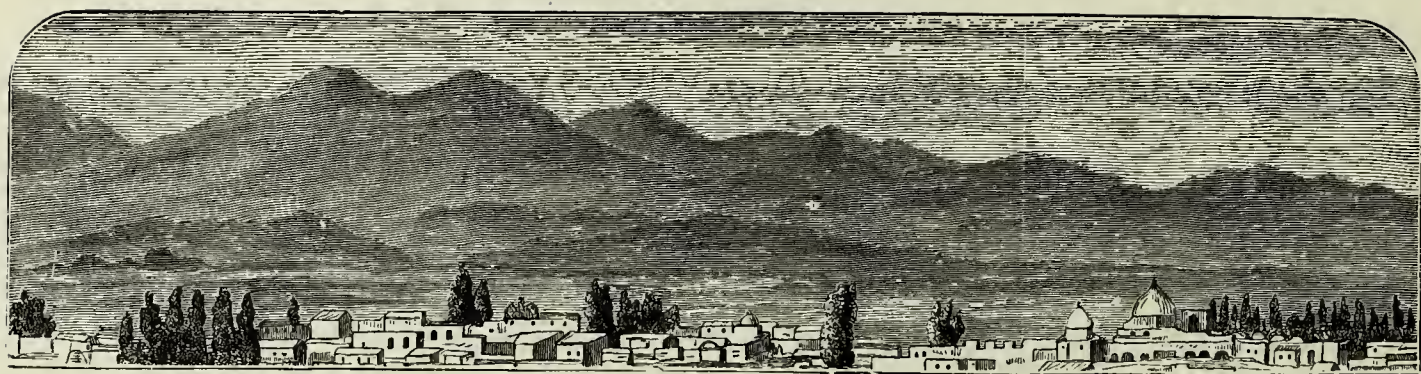
The few survivors of the Samaritans are now rent asunder by intestine feuds. Apparently, they will speedily cease to exist altogether. Their synagogue rolls may then come into the hands of Europeans, and receive a more careful and thorough examination than has been hitherto possible.

In Nablus alone of all the cities of Palestine is it possible to see and feel what 'the good land' was in the days of its prosperity. In addition to the fertility of its soil and the beauty of its situation, there is an air of activity and life which is wanting elsewhere. Lying on the main road between the interior and the coast, it has a considerable traffic. Its bazaars are crowded with Bedouin from beyond the Jordan, with the peasantry of the valley, and with Russian, Armenian and Greek pilgrims who, having landed at Haifa, are on their way to Jerusalem. The wrangling and chaffering between the buyers and sellers belonging to these various nationalities offer a curious contrast to the quiet modes of transacting business at home. The shop-keeper begins by asking four times as much as he means to take. The customer meets him by bidding a fourth of what he means to give. Bystanders join in the negotiation. The whole party work themselves up into what appears to be a fit of uncontrollable fury, shrieking and yelling at one another in their guttural Arabic till manslaughter seems imminent. At length the bargain is concluded, and peace is restored.

Nablus boasts of some manufactures. Considerable quantities of soap are made, and one large factory has quite a European look. The oil produced here is the best in Palestine ; and large quantities of cotton are grown.

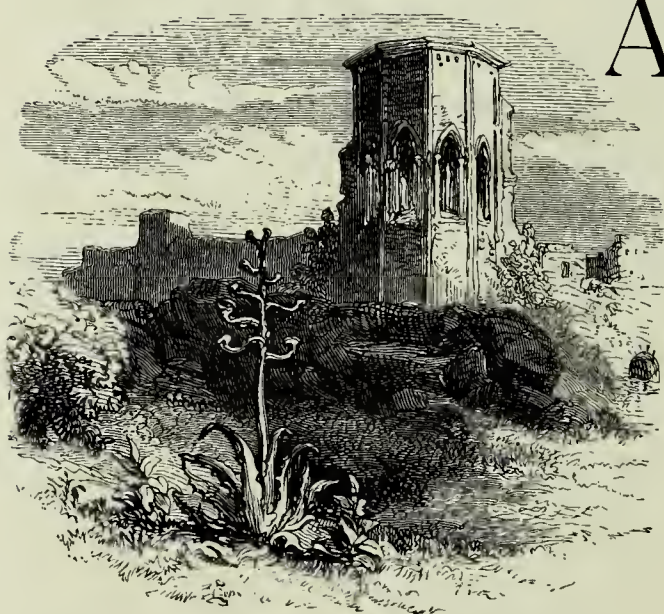


GATE AT NABLUS.



CHAPTER VII.

NABLUS TO THE PLAIN OF ESDRAELON.



RUINED CHURCH OF ST. JOHN IN SAMARIA.

magnificent city built here by Herod, and called by him Sebaste (=Augusta) in honour of his imperial patron.

The great and obvious advantages of the site of Samaria make it extraordinary that a city did not exist here at a very early period. The Biblical narrative, however, is clear that it was built by Omri, the father of Ahab, who bought the hill from Shemer for two talents of silver, and built on it a city which he called Samaria, after the name of the former proprietor.¹ Shechem, the earlier capital, lying in a valley, was exposed to attack. Samaria, seated on a hill, could be easily defended, and was more central. The seat of government was, therefore, removed thither, and gave its name to the northern confederacy. The strength of its position is proved by the fact that it sustained two severe sieges from the Syrians who attacked it with 'all their hosts.'² On the first occasion Benhadad brought

¹ 1 Kings xvi. 23, 24.

² 1 Kings xx. 2 Kings vi. 24—vii. 20.

A CHARMING ride of about six miles northwest from Nablus brings us to SAMARIA. The road follows the valley for some distance, and then mounts the western shoulder of Ebal. As we reach the crest of the ridge, a beautiful and fertile plain, surrounded by hills, bursts upon us. In the centre of the basin rises a flat-topped hill, its sides terraced to the summit, on which stand the remains of the ancient city. Rows of columns are seen clear and sharp against the skyline, and amongst the mean houses of the peasantry stand the ruins of the

against it 'thirty-two kings,' his allies. On the second, it resisted till the last horrors of famine had been endured. In both cases the city finally escaped by Divine intervention; but it must have been almost impregnable to have held out against such formidable attacks.

Climbing the rather steep ascent that leads up into the city, we come to a large pool or reservoir. Though it does not possess the same marks of antiquity as those at Hebron, Urtas and Bethel, it has yet been identified with some probability as that near which Naboth was slain by the infamous and idolatrous Jezebel, and where shortly after, 'one washed the chariot' of Ahab 'in the pool of Samaria; and the dogs licked up his blood; and they washed his armour; according to the word of the Lord which He spake.'¹

Near 'the pool of Samaria' are the remains of a large and handsome Christian church, in the cave under which, according to a very early tradition, the body of John the Baptist was buried after his execution.² Though the date of the edifice is comparatively modern, it leads back our thoughts to Apostolic times, when 'Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which he spake.' Such was the success of his ministry that Peter and John joined him in the work. Here it was that the Divine judgment fell upon Simon the Sorcerer—a solemn warning to after ages of the danger of mercenary motives in religious profession.³

Of the earlier city of Omri and Ahab no trace remains. The threatenings of ancient prophecy have been literally fulfilled. 'I will make Samaria as an heap of the field, and as plantings of a vineyard: and I will pour down the stones thereof into the valley, and I will discover the foundations thereof.' 'Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim, whose glorious beauty is a fading flower, which are on the head of the fat valleys of them that are overcome with wine! Behold, the Lord hath a mighty and strong one, which as a tempest of hail and a destroying storm, as a flood of mighty waters overflowing, shall cast down to the earth with the hand.' 'Samaria shall become desolate; for she hath rebelled against her God.'⁴ Standing on the summit of the hill, and looking down on the mounds of stone poured into the valley below, it would be difficult to find a more exact accomplishment of prophecy than that before us. The ruins of the city subsequently built upon the site are very striking, not only from their extent but from their character and position. A double avenue of Corinthian columns may yet be traced along the whole brow of the hill. The colonnade, according to Dr. Porter, runs eastward in a straight line for about one thousand feet, and then curves round to the left, following the sweep of the hill, extending altogether about three thousand feet. On the north-eastern slope of the hill the ground

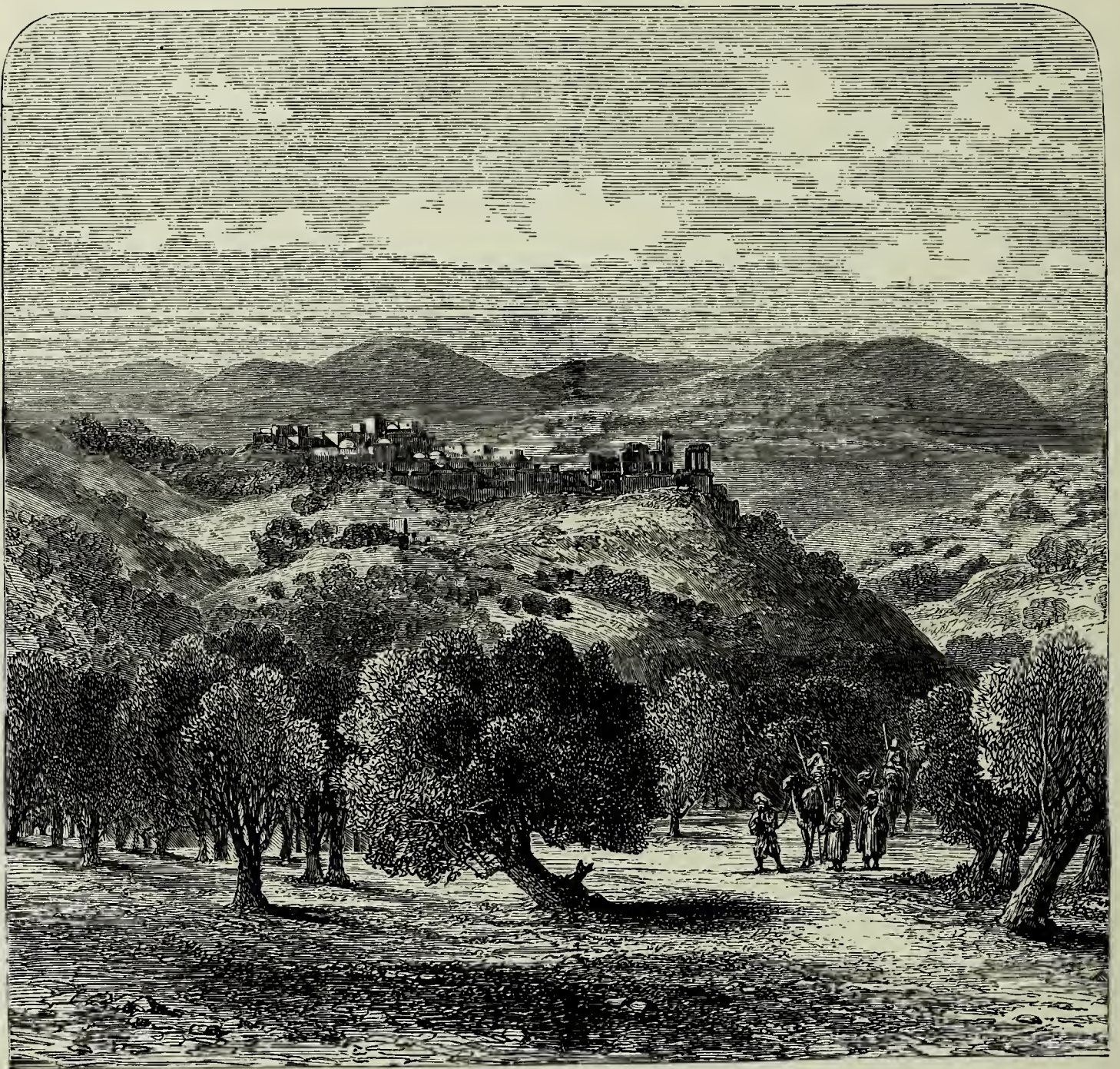
¹ 1 Kings xxi. 1-19; xxii. 34-38. It is, however, doubtful whether Jezreel was not the scene of the double tragedy.

² Matt. xiv. 12. Mark vi. 29.

³ Acts viii. 1-25.

⁴ Micah i. 6. Isa. xxviii. 1, 2. Hosea xiii. 16.

falls back into a natural amphitheatre. The central part of this seems to have been cut into steps forming tiers of seats, as though a theatre had been constructed here. In front of these earthworks are the remains of another very remarkable structure. Dr. Porter calculates that when the edifice was complete there must have been one hundred and seventy columns, of which fifteen are



THE HILL OF SAMARIA.

still standing. But we have no clue to the character of the building of which they formed part.

From Samaria northwards two routes of great interest and beauty lie before us. The one leads westward through a line of valleys of extraordinary fertility, where in spite of the sparse population and the depredations of the Bedouins large crops of wheat and barley meet the eye. A few wretched

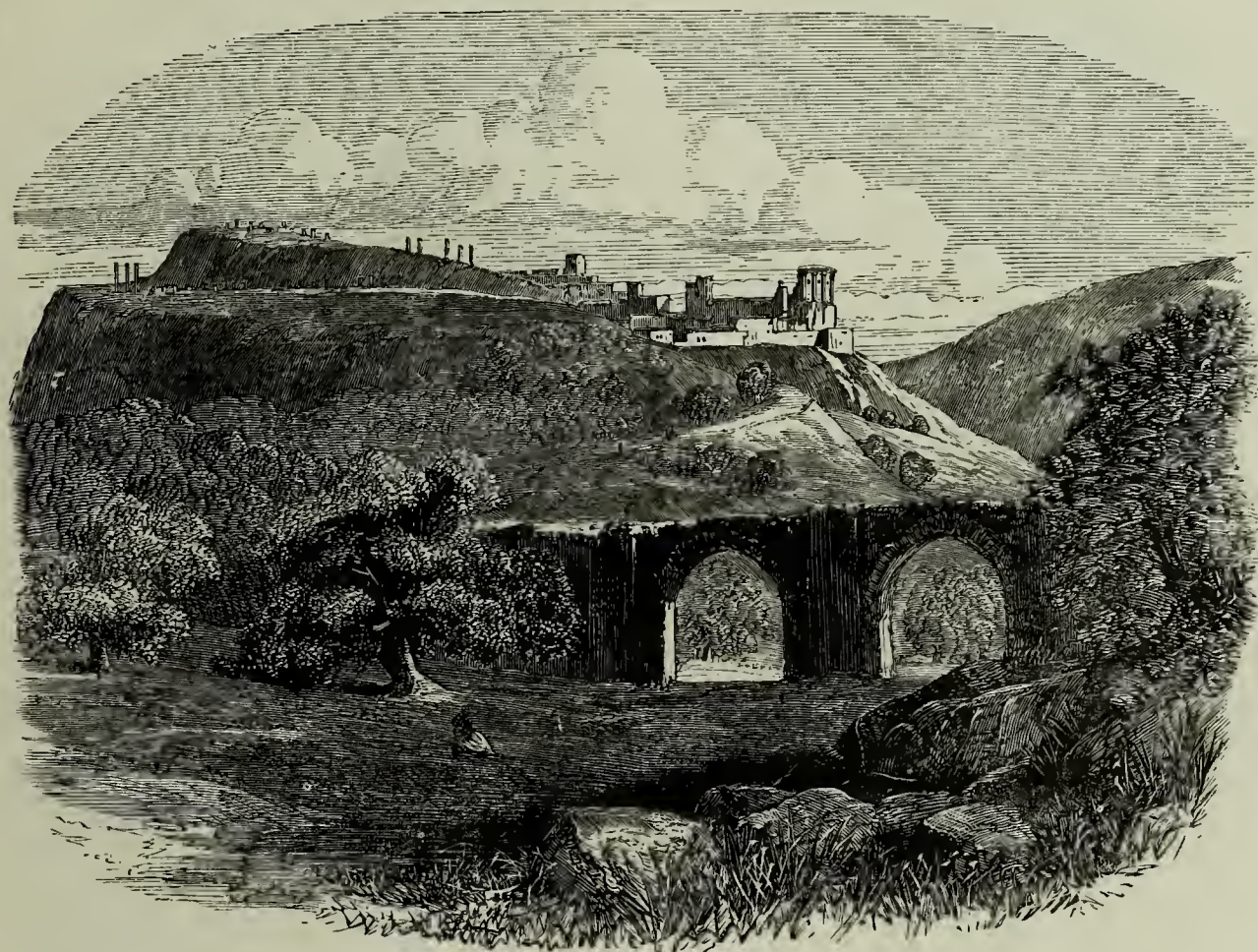


After Horace Vernet.

AN ARAB STORY-TELLER.

From Sir Richard Wallace's Collection.

villages stand amidst the luxuriant vegetation, the inhabitants of which, unprotected by the government, have to repel, as best they can, the attacks of the marauding nomads whose black tents may be seen on every hill-side. These sons of Ishmael, in whom the prophecy respecting their father is still exemplified, 'he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him,'¹ render travelling without an escort dangerous, but they add greatly to the picturesqueness and interest of the scene. In the evening their long lines of flocks and herds pouring into the encampment form a most striking object in the landscape, and the elders may often be seen grouped



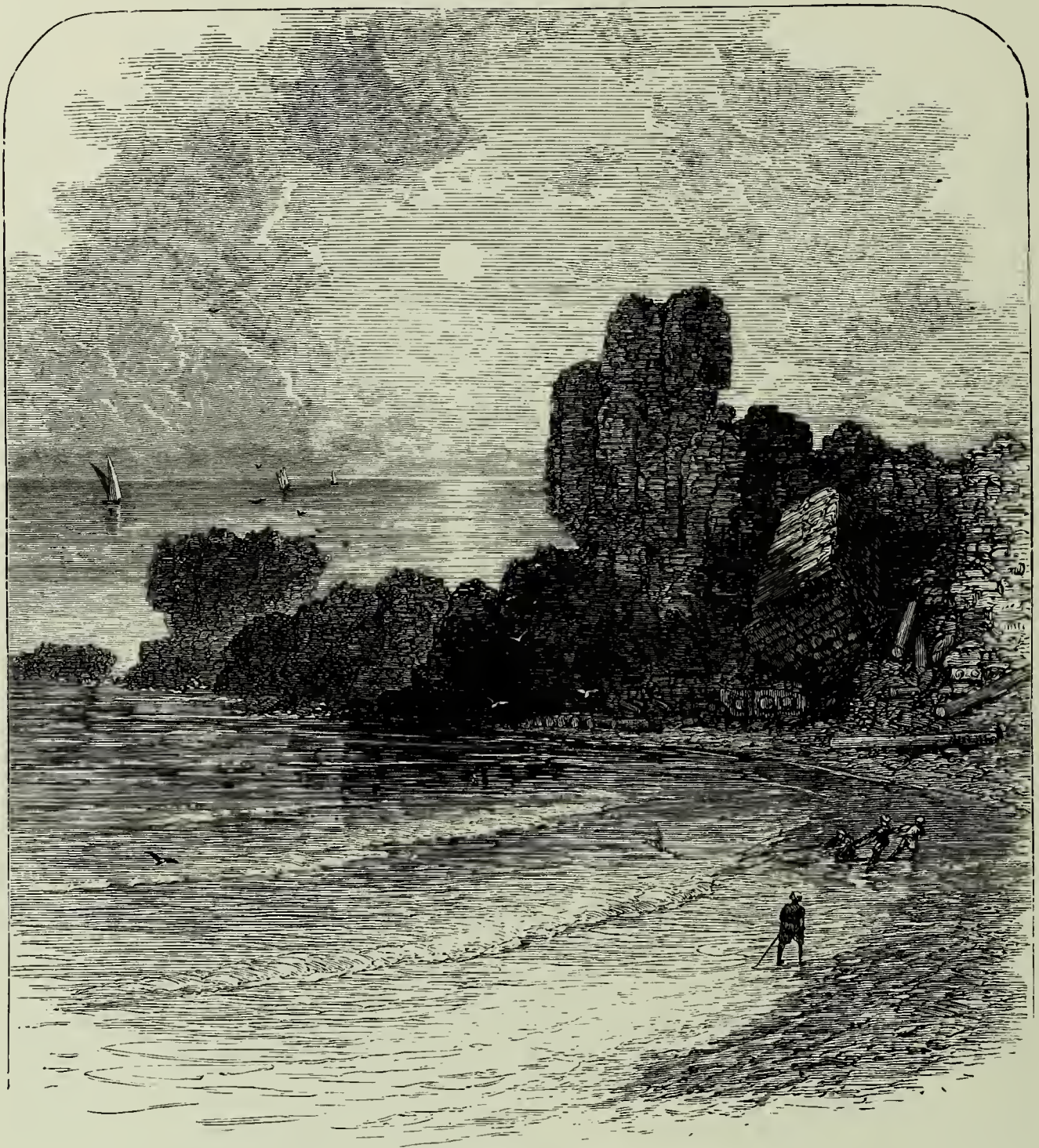
RUINS OF THE CITY OF SAMARIA.

around a tent door recounting their exploits, or planning a foray upon some hostile tribe, or listening to a story-teller reciting a tale from the *Arabian Nights' Entertainments*. Upon a life of settled industry they look down with contempt; 'Mayest thou become a fellah' (a peasant) is one of the bitterest curses which a Bedouin can pronounce upon his fellow-wanderer.

Soon we enter the northern portion of the plain of Sharon, through the centre of which we passed on our way eastward from Jaffa. Leaving behind us the mountains of Samaria and reaching the shores of the Mediterranean, we find ourselves at Kaisariyeh, the ancient CÆSAREA. This city was built by Herod the Great, with the design of connecting

¹ Gen. xvi. 12.

himself more closely with the Western world, and leaving behind him a lasting monument of his power and magnificence. A vast mole was run out into the sea to afford a secure harbour for shipping. A city was reared which might vie in splendour with those of Italy, and surrounded with



RUINS OF CÆSAREA.

fortifications which were deemed impregnable. A temple to Cæsar containing statues not inferior to that of Jupiter Olympius, so Josephus asserts, rose on an eminence within the walls. But the attempt thus to perpetuate his memory was vain. All has gone down to utter ruin and decay. Even in Palestine itself it would be hard to find a spot more utterly desolate than

that of the proud capital of Herod. In the present day it is only remembered by its connection with the obscure, hated, and despised sect whose Founder he sought to slay in His cradle at Bethlehem, and to whose death at Calvary his son and successor was a consenting party. It was the scene of some of the most memorable incidents in the Acts of the Apostles. Here Philip the deacon, after the baptism of the Abyssinian eunuch, lived for many years as the pastor of a prosperous church, and the centre of missionary activity throughout the whole region. The first Gentile convert was here admitted into 'the fellowship of the saints,' in accordance with the vision vouchsafed to Peter at Joppa, a day's journey down the coast. It was at Cæsarea that Herod Agrippa was smitten with the Divine judgment upon his impious pride and vain-glory. Hither Saul of Tarsus was brought on his way from Jerusalem; and here Paul the Apostle, as a prisoner, 'reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come' with such persuasive force as to draw from one of his judges the confession, 'Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.'¹

Continuing our journey we soon leave the plain of Sharon, and find ourselves amongst the lower spurs of Carmel, whose long ridge runs out as a bluff promontory into the sea, a few miles to the northward. This, however, will more fitly occupy a place in a subsequent section.

The other route from Samaria to Galilee leads us through a district richer in Scriptural associations than that just described. It runs almost due north through a series of picturesque glens, or over romantic hills which need only a moderate amount of labour to be turned into a succession of gardens. At a little distance to the right is Talûza, the TIRZAH of the kings of Israel, a royal residence, the beauty of which furnished Solomon with the comparison, 'Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah!'² A little further on is Tûbâs, or THEBEZ, where Abimelech was slain by the hand of a woman, his ignominious death furnishing a proverb for after years.³

About twelve miles north of Nablus, and just before descending into the plain of Jezreel, we pass the entrance to a broad, deep valley, or basin amongst the hills on our right. Its name, DOTHAN, recalls one of the most memorable incidents in the lives of the patriarchs which formed one of the turning-points in the history of the Church and of the world. Joseph, sent by his father to visit his brethren in their favourite camping-ground at Shechem, found on his arrival that they had passed northward to Dothan. Hither, therefore, he followed them; and 'when they saw him afar off they conspired against him to slay him.' Having cast him into one of those deep pits with which the district yet abounds—excavations formed by the inhabitants of the land for storing grain or water, often shaped like an inverted funnel—they left him to perish.

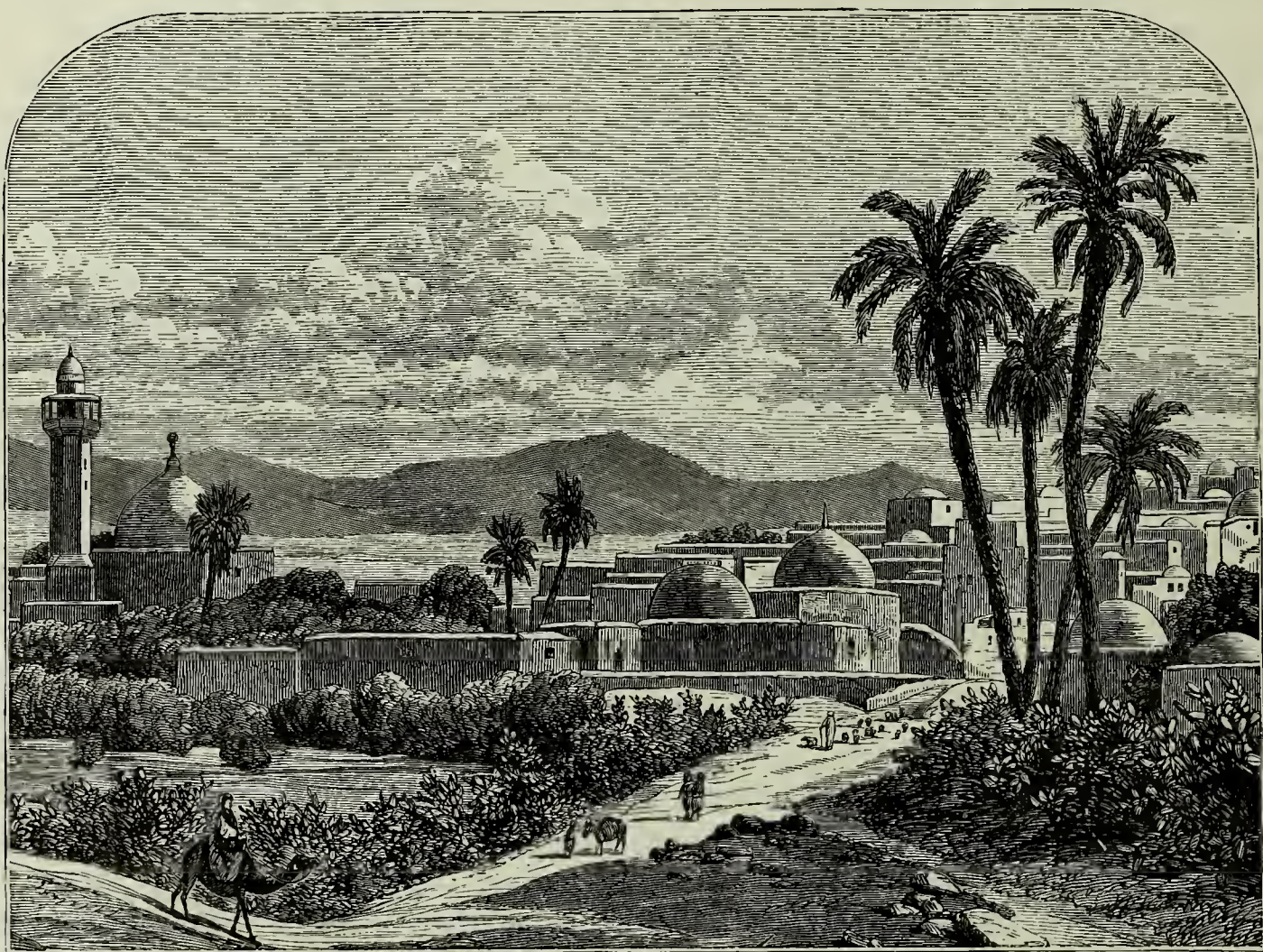
¹ Acts viii. 40; ix. 30; x. 1, 24; xi. 11; xii. 19; xviii. 22; xxi. 8, 16; xxiii. 23, 33; xvi., xxv., xxvi.

² 1 Kings xiv. 17; xv. 21; xvi. 6, 8, 15, 23. Cant. vi. 4.

³ Judges ix. 50. 2 Sam. xi. 21.

Relenting in their murderous purpose, or prompted by the selfish hope of gain, they subsequently drew him thence, and sold him to a company of Midianites from Gilead, who were passing on their way down into Egypt.¹ Upon this slight incident the whole after-fortunes of the nation turned.

Here, as elsewhere throughout Palestine, a study of the topography of the district gives unexpected confirmation or illustration to the narrative. Dothan lies just off the main route by which the Bedouins, like the Ishmaelites of old, travel on their way southward. Crossing by the upper ford of the Jordan, near to Beisan, the ancient Bethshan, the caravans enter the main



JENIN, THE ANCIENT EN-GANNIM.

road at Jenin, a short distance to the north, and pass the very spot indicated by the inspired historian. I met several parties of Bedouins near Dothan, 'who came from Gilead with their camels,' conveying the produce of the Hauran to exchange it in the bazaars of Jerusalem, Nablus; or Jaffa for the manufactures of Europe, which is to the Syrian nomads of the present day what Egypt was to their forefathers three thousand years ago.

The mound of ruins which rises from the Valley of Dothan marks the site of the city. It was here that Elisha hid himself from the fury of the

¹ Gen. xxxvii. 12-28.

king of Syria, when the monarch, infuriated at the repeated disclosure of his plans by the prophet, resolved to put him to death, and for this purpose 'compassed the city both with horses and chariots.' But whilst the valley was filled with the 'great hosts,' 'behold the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha,' so that he could confidently say, 'Fear not; for they that be with us are more than they that be with them.'¹ As we look at the valley girdled with hills on every side, and remember that mighty host of defenders once revealed there to the eye of faith, we gratefully call to mind the promise made to every believer, 'The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them.'²

The town of JENIN, which lies at the junction of several valleys and roads, is a place of considerable importance. Its Scripture name, En-gannim³, (the fountain of the gardens), seems to be derived from a magnificent fountain of water which rises in the hills just behind the town, and irrigating the rich alluvial soil turns it into a garden. It has the reputation of being unhealthy; but its picturesque minarets, surrounded by clumps of feathery palms, gardens of cactus and prickly pear, and luxuriant orange groves, make it one of the most beautiful towns in Palestine. Dr. Wilson, in his *Lands of the Bible*, calls attention to the peculiar head-dress of the women of this district, and thinks it illustrates the words of Solomon, 'Thy cheeks are comely with rows [of jewels], thy neck with chains [of gold].'⁴ Strings of gold coin hang down from a sort of tiara upon the cheeks, like the tie of a helmet, and a similar ornament is worn round the neck. A colony of Egyptians was settled in this neighbourhood about half a century ago, and as it resembles the head-dress of the fellaheen of Egypt it may have been derived from them, but it is probably much older.

We are now at the entrance of the great PLAIN OF ESDRAELON, so memorable in the military history of the Jews as the scene of some of their greatest victories and most disastrous defeats. It forms an irregular triangle, stretching from the Mediterranean to the Jordan valley, bounded on the north by the hills of Galilee, on the south by those of Samaria. Amongst the former Tabor is the most conspicuous, both from its height and its peculiar pyramidal form. The long ridge of Carmel stretches along the south-western side. The mountains of Gilboa and Little Hermon rise out of the plain itself at the eastern end.

Near the centre of the plain on a low flat-topped hill at the foot of the western extremity of Gilboa, are a cluster of wretched mud hovels, now called Zerin. They mark the site of JEZREEL, *the seed plot of God*, as the name means, and which it probably gained from the extraordinary fertility of the

¹ 2 Kings vi. 8-18.

² Psal. xxxiv. 7.

³ The description of the flight of 'Ahaziah, king of Judah,' and his pursuit by Jehu, in 2 Kings ix. 27, is wrongly translated in our version. Instead of 'by the way of the garden-house,' it should be 'by the way of En-gannim.' A glance at the map will show that he was endeavouring to escape into his own country by the direct route along which we have been travelling.

⁴ Cant. i. 10.

soil.' Here stood the 'ivory palace' of Ahab and the Temple of Astarte, with its four hundred priests supported by Jezebel. On the eastern side overlooking a steep rocky descent into the plain was the house of Jezebel, from the window of which she was cast down at the command of Jehu. Killed by the fall, she was left to be devoured by the troops of pariah dogs which to

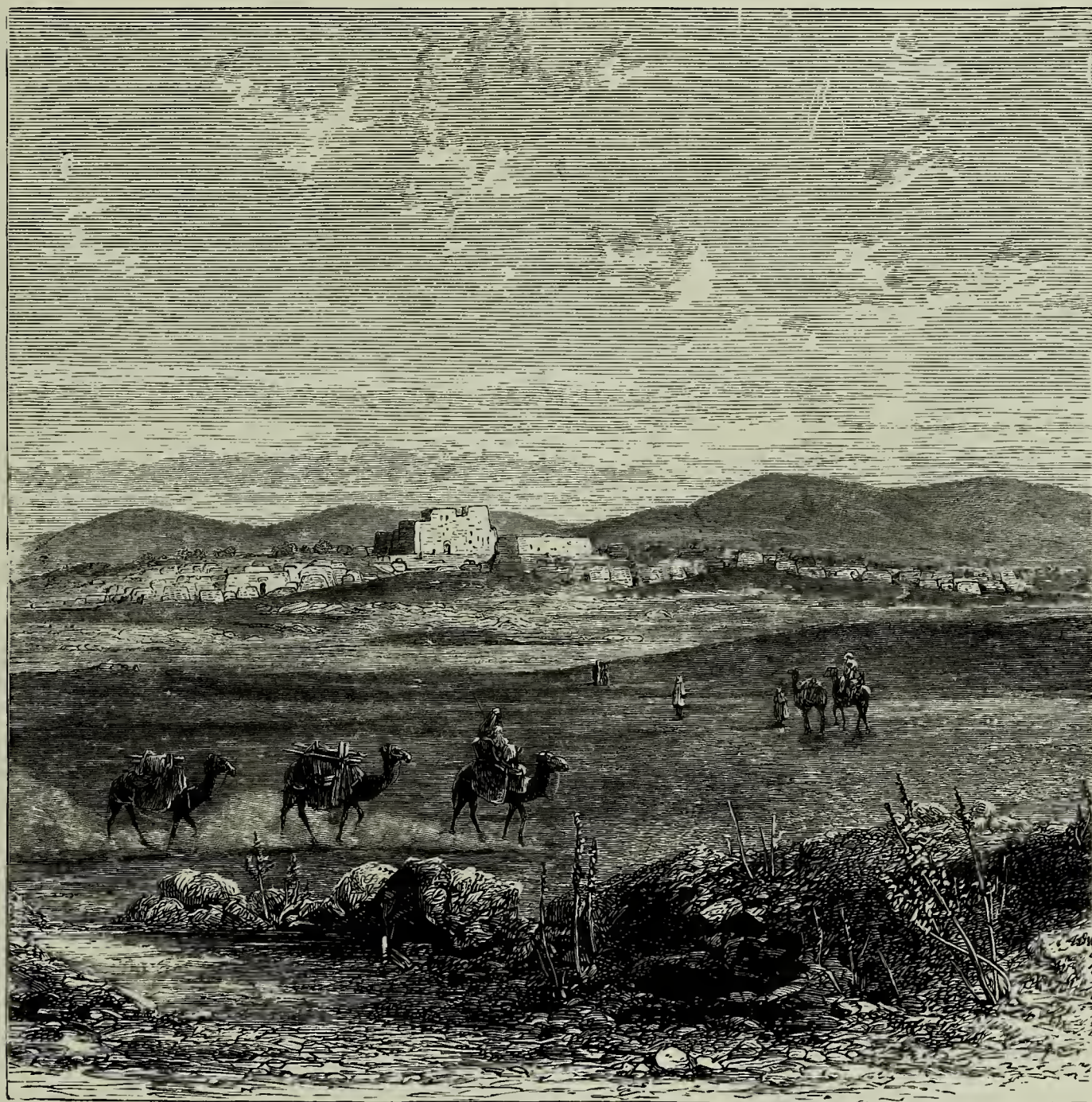


HEAD-DRESS OF EGYPTIAN FELLAHEEN.

this day prowl and snarl around every Oriental city, and are its only scavengers. The ruins of an ancient tower probably mark the spot where the watchman stood looking out along the valley toward the Jordan, and saw Jehu driving furiously towards the city. Though only the lower courses of the original *Migdol* or water-tower remain, yet a view may be gained for miles in the direction from which Jehu was approaching, and every incident in the narrative

¹ This explains the use of the word in Hosea ii. 22.

can be made out. A smooth open space outside the city is pointed out as Naboth's garden. The fountain near which Ahab was slain, and where the blood was washed from his chariot, is likewise shown, but the Biblical narrative seems to point to Samaria rather than to Jezreel as the scene of the murder and the retribution.¹



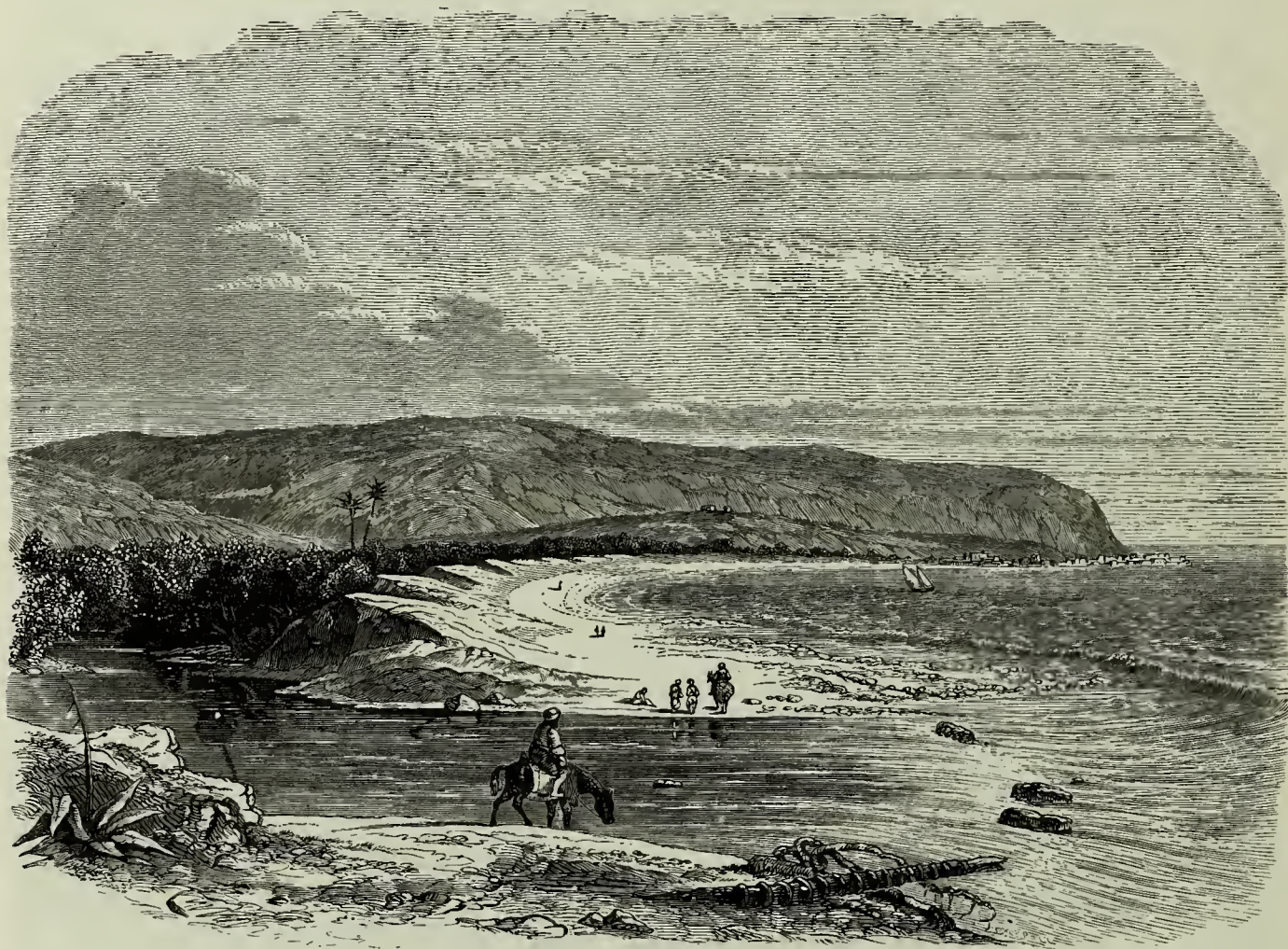
PLAIN OF ESDRAELON, WITH RUINS OF JEZREEL AND GILBOA IN THE DISTANCE.

A few flat-roofed hovels are all that remains of the beautiful city whose only associations are those of idolatry and lust and bloodshed. One marble sarcophagus, and the fragments of two or three others, lie outside the modern village. The crescent moon, the familiar symbol of the goddess of the

¹ The references are too numerous to be given in detail. They extend from 1 Kings xvi. 29 to xxii. 40, and 2 Kings x.

Zidonians, is sculptured upon them. It is possible; perhaps even probable, that these very coffins once held the bones of the royal house which 'taught Israel to sin.'

The scene of the great battle between Sisera, the captain of Jabin king of Hazor, and the Israelites under 'Deborah the prophetess,' and 'Barak, the son of Abinoam,' was at the western end of the plain. Sisera was encamped at the foot of Carmel near the Canaanitish city of Megiddo, with 'his nine hundred chariots of iron, and all the people that were with him, from Harosheth of the Gentiles unto the river of Kishon.' The Kishon is



MOUTH OF THE RIVER KISHON.

a small stream which rises at the eastern end of Carmel and flows into the Mediterranean. In summer it is nearly dry, but it rises with great rapidity and when swollen by storms of rain becomes a rushing roaring torrent.¹ The little army of Deborah consisted of the men of the northern tribes who had suffered from the oppression of the king of Hazor. Those of the south and east were indifferent to the sufferings of their brethren. 'Reuben abode amongst the sheepfolks to hear the bleatings of the flocks,' 'Gilead abode beyond Jordan,' 'Dan remained in ships,' and 'Asher continued on the sea-shore.' But

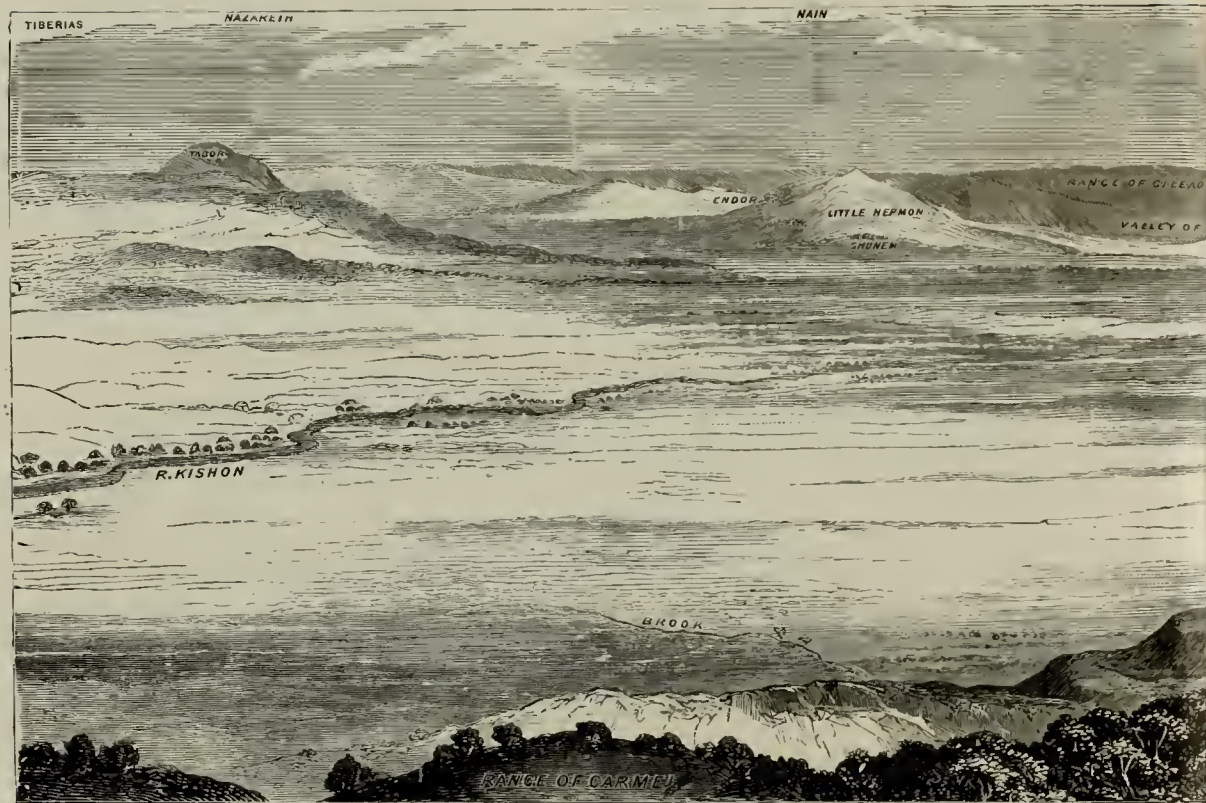
¹ A friend of mine who had crossed it dry-shod in the morning, when riding from Haifa to visit El Muhrahah, was exposed to considerable danger when endeavouring to recross it in the afternoon, and narrowly escaped being swept away.

'Zebulon and Naphtali were a people that jeopardated their lives unto the death, in the high places of the field.' With them was a contingent from Ephraim, Benjamin, and Issachar. The small but heroic band of ten thousand men encamped on Mount Tabor, a strong position, which commands a view of the whole plain. At a signal from Deborah, Barak, with his compact and resolute army, rushed down upon the foe and threw them into confusion. Josephus informs us, that a sudden and violent storm of sleet and hail aided the attack. 'The stars in their courses fought against Sisera.' The river swelling from a petty brook into a furious torrent completed the rout. 'The river of Kishon swept them away, that ancient river, the river Kishon.' Sisera alighting from his chariot fled away on foot, and as a solitary fugitive met his death from a woman's hand.¹

No long time elapsed before a new and yet more terrible oppressor was sent as a scourge to chastise 'the children of Israel, who again did evil in the sight of the Lord.' Every traveller in the Vale of Esdraelon has seen the black tents of the Bedouins who have crossed the Jordan with their flocks and herds for the rich pasturage which they here find. Until within the last few years these wild marauders were accustomed to lay waste the whole district, carrying off the crops and the cattle of the peasantry without any check from the corrupt and feeble government. It was from this quarter that the new foe appeared. Vast hordes of these 'children of the east. . . came up with their cattle and their tents, and they came as grasshoppers for multitude; for both they and their camels were without number.' 'They destroyed the increase of the earth, till thou come unto Gaza, and left no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass.' A 'mighty man of valour,' Gideon the son of Joash, was summoned by the angel of the Lord to undertake the task of deliverance. He began by throwing down the altar to Baal. The invaders at once gathered their forces to crush the rising spirit of resistance. They pitched their tents all along the Valley of Jezreel. Gideon and his men were encamped on the mountains of Gilboa. Just where the mountains subside into the plain a spring of water gushes out in such abundance as to form a pool of considerable size, and then flows down to the Jordan. Gideon, who had already reduced his numbers by dismissing to their homes all who were 'fearful and afraid,' was now ordered to reduce them still further by bringing them down to the fountain to drink. The great majority went down upon their hands and knees and drank from the stream. But three hundred hardy veterans were satisfied to take a little water in the palms of their hands and 'lap it as a dog lappeth,' whilst they stood alert and erect upon their feet. This was the little band by whom God was to work deliverance for Israel. The smallness of the number would show that God 'saveth not by many, nor by few,' but by His own power. And the selected few—men vigorous, temperate, and self-denying—were fitting instruments for Him to work with.

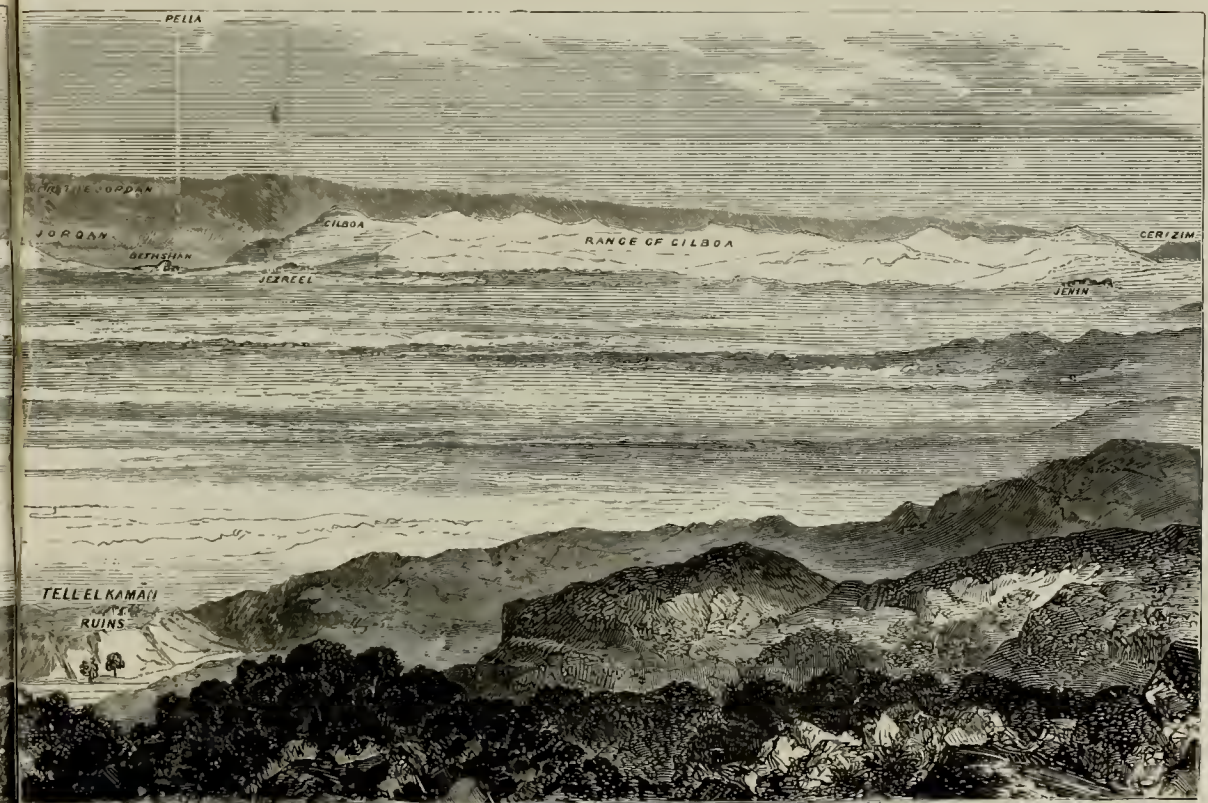
¹ Judges iv., v.

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SKETCH PLAN OF THE PLAIN OF ESDRAELON AND THE

Night had now closed over the scene. Gideon and his servant having crept down amidst the sleeping host and overheard the narrative of a dream told by one of the invaders to his companions, returned and prepared for the attack. Dividing his men into three companies of a hundred each, they rush upon the unsuspecting enemy. The trumpets peal out their shrill and startling blast: the lamps flash forth in the midst of the tents; the war-cry of Israel—‘the sword of the Lord and of Gideon’—is heard rising loud and high above the din; ‘and the Lord set every man’s sword against his fellow throughout all the host; and the host fled’ in wild confusion and disorder to the fords of the Jordan, a few miles to the eastward. Here as they attempted to cross, they were attacked a second time, suffered a second defeat, and two of their sheiks, Oreb and Zeeb—the Raven and the Wolf—captured and put to death. Gideon and his three hundred heroes, ‘faint, yet pursuing,’ continued to press upon the rear of the flying foe. Coming up with them in Karkor he attacked and defeated them yet a third time. Finding that their kings Zebah and Zalmunna had ‘slain his brethren, the sons of his mother,’



SURROUNDING DISTRICT FROM EL-MUHRAKAH.

From a Drawing by J. G. Crace, Esq.

he put them to the sword. This disastrous defeat finally broke up the Bedouin confederacy. Never again whilst the Jewish commonwealth lasted did ‘the children of the East’ attempt an invasion.’

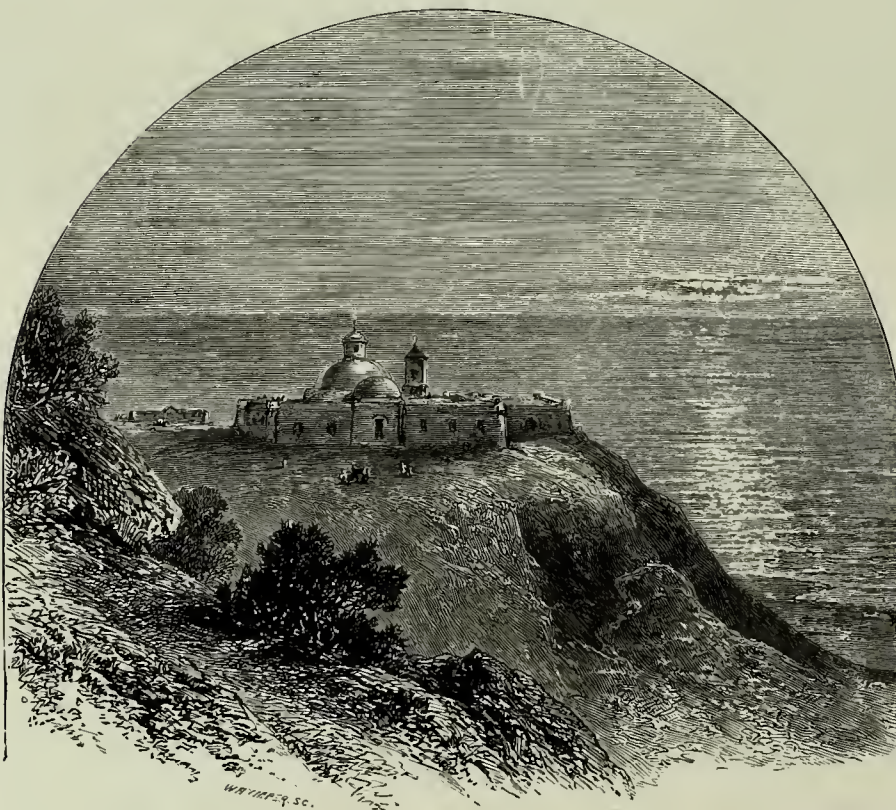
The valley which had been the scene of these great victories was next to witness a mournful defeat—that of Saul by the Philistines. The two armies were encamped in nearly the same positions with those of Gideon and the Midianites—the Israelites on Gilboa near the fountain of Jezreel, the Philistines at Aphek, or Shunem, on the opposite side of the valley. Saul, in his moody despair, ‘when he saw the host of the Philistines, was afraid, and his heart greatly trembled. And when Saul enquired of the Lord, the Lord answered him not, neither by dream, nor by Urim, nor by the prophets.’ Like the great captain who long before had encamped on the same spot, he undertook a night journey, passed the host of the Philistines, to the village of Endor, which lay in the mountains a few miles in the rear of their camp. His interview with the witch whom he went to consult but deepened the

¹ Judges vi., vii., viii.

dark and gloomy cloud which hung around him. Next morning the battle was joined, the Israelites were defeated, and 'fell down slain in the mountains of Gilboa.' The tragic end of Saul, and the pathetic lament of David are too familiar to need further record here.¹

The inspired narrative contains allusions to other engagements of minor importance as having been fought on this great battle-field : one of these, scarcely less mournful than the defeat and death of Saul, is recorded in detail. It was towards the close of the Jewish monarchy ; that of Israel had already disappeared. Pharaoh Necho, king of Egypt, on his way to attack the Assyrians, was marching through this valley. Josiah, either to preserve the integrity of his territory, or as being in alliance with the king of Assyria, met him at the western end of the plain, near Megiddo. Necho warned him against 'meddling' in the conflict which concerned the Assyrians solely, and in which he had no part. The result cannot be told more briefly and simply than in the words of Scripture. 'Nevertheless Josiah would not turn his face from him, but disguised himself, that he might fight with him, and hearkened not unto the words of Necho from the mouth of God, and came to fight in the Valley of Megiddo. And the archers shot at king Josiah ; and the king said to his servants, Have me away, for I am sore wounded.

His servants therefore took him out of that chariot, and put him in the second chariot that he had ; and they brought him to Jerusalem, and he died, and was buried in one of the sepulchres of his fathers. And all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah. And Jeremiah lamented for Josiah : and all the singing men and all the singing women spake of Josiah in their lamentations to this day, and made them an ordinance in Israel : and, behold, they are written in the Lamentations.'²



MONASTERY ON MOUNT CARMEL.

One more event yet remains to be spoken of in connection with this famous battle-field. It has been already said that the ridge of Carmel forms one of the southern boundaries of the plain. Its north-western extremity runs

¹ 1 Sam. xxviii., xxxi. 2 Sam. i.

² 2 Chron. xxxv. 22-25.

out into the Mediterranean, and is crowned by the convent of Mar Elyas, from which the Carmelite monks take their name. At its south-eastern end, a short distance below the summit, is a level plateau which looks down upon Jezreel and commands an extensive view over the whole plain. Its modern Arabic name is EL MUHRAKAH (*the place of burning, or of sacrifice*). A perennial spring, which is said never to fail even in the severest droughts, furnishes a copious supply of water. Near the foot of the hill is a mound called the Tel Kasis (*the hill of the priests*). The river Kishon, which flows along the plain immediately below the plateau, is called the Nahr el Mukatta (*the river of slaughter*).¹ All these names naturally connect themselves with the sacrifice of Elijah, who on this plateau brought together the priests of Baal, and when they had failed to win an answer from their idol gods, built an altar, and drawing water from the fountain which after three years' drought still furnished an adequate supply, poured it over the sacrifice. The Lord God of Israel answered by fire. The appeal was irresistible. The whole people exclaimed with one voice—'The Lord, He is God; the Lord, He is God.' Within sight of the idolatrous city, and beneath the eyes of the king, the apostate priests were seized, dragged down to the mound and river, and slain.

The prophet now ascends to the top of the hill just above, from which a magnificent view of the Mediterranean is obtained. Burying his face in his mantle, in importunate prayer, he sends his servant to look out toward the sea. At last a cloud is descried no larger than a man's hand. For three years the sky had been cloudless. Now the harbinger of rain is gratefully welcomed. The prophet returns with the glad tidings to the monarch—'Prepare thy chariot, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not.' These words have caused some perplexity to commentators. Their meaning becomes perfectly clear as read on the spot. The Kishon, generally fordable at this point, and now, doubtless, perfectly dry after the protracted drought, would soon become a rushing, furious torrent, as in the days of Sisera. Besides which, the Plain of Esdraelon consists of a rich alluvial soil, absolutely impassable for carriages after a heavy rain-fall, and difficult even for horsemen or pedestrians. If Ahab is to return to Jezreel he must do so at once. 'And it came to pass in the mean while, that the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain. And Ahab rode, and went to Jezreel. And the hand of the Lord was on Elijah; and he girded up his loins, and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel.'²

This famous battle-field finds a place in the prophecies of the New, as well as in the histories of the Old Testament. The name by which it is commonly known, Esdraelon, is but a Grecised form of the Hebrew Jezreel. It was likewise called the Valley of Megiddo, from the town near which some of its

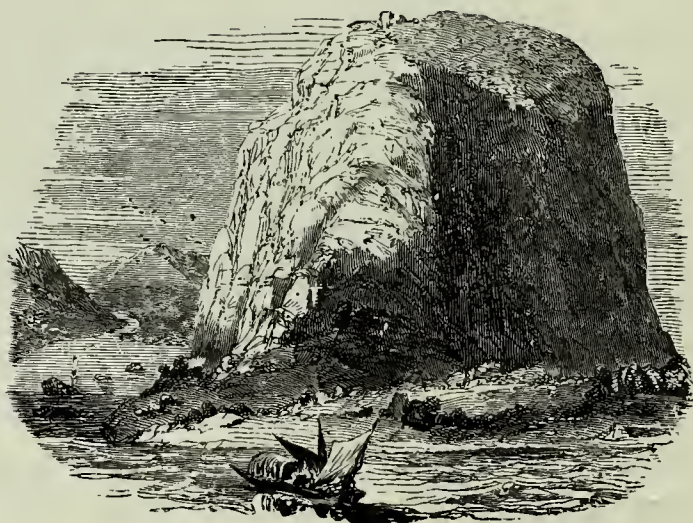
¹ It is, however, possible that *Mukatta* may be a corruption of Megiddo.

² 1 Kings xviii. In common with all recent writers on this subject, I must confess my obligations to Dean Stanley's invaluable summary of the historical associations of the Plain of Esdraelon, in his *Sinai and Palestine*, pp. 335-357.

most desperate conflicts raged. Hence in the Book of Revelation it is spoken of as 'the place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon' (*the hill, or fortress of Megiddo*). This is not the place in which to discuss the precise meaning of the prophecy, nor to inquire whether the inspired writer indicated a particular locality as the scene of the final conflict, or used this historical plain as typical of the battles yet to be fought between the powers of light and darkness. One thing is clear, that the struggles of which the valley has been the theatre only foreshadowed that more desperate conflict which awaits us when 'the spirits of devils, working miracles, go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.'¹ Whatever the time, the place, the nature of that final conflict may be, its terribleness cannot be doubted as we read the descriptions given of it in the visions of Patmos. But the issue is certain. The wars of ancient Israel were waged with doubtful fortune—victory and defeat alternated. But in that 'great day of God,' though the battle seem to hang long in suspense, the victory is sure. The 'Captain of our Salvation,' 'goeth forth conquering, and to conquer.' 'He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet.' Nor is the conflict altogether future. Even now it rages around us, and we are summoned to take part in it. Neutrality and indifference are impossible. 'He that is not with us is against us.' May the solemn words of reproof and warning spoken of those who stood aloof in the Valley of Esdraelon sink into our hearts! 'Curse ye Meroz! said the angel of the Lord, Curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof! Because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty.' 'How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him.'²

¹ Rev. xvi. 12-21.

² Judges v. 23. 1 Kings xviii. 21.



PROMONTORY OF CARMEL, FROM THE SEA.





CHAPTER VIII.

SOUTHERN GALILEE AND NAZARETH.



FOUNTAIN OF MARY AT NAZARETH.

IT is difficult to fix with precision the boundaries of Galilee and Samaria. Originally the Samaritan kingdom included the whole territory of the ten northern tribes from Dan to Bethel; but very soon it shrank within much narrower limits. Galilee, at first a small 'circle,' as the name means, around Kadesh Naphtali, on the frontiers of Tyre,¹ had in the time of our Lord become a province of great extent stretching southward to the ridge of Carmel and the mountains of Gilboa. The Plain of Esdraelon, which under the kings of Israel had been in the centre of Samaria,

was under the Romans its northern boundary, and belonged to Galilee. Jezreel and the other historic sites in the neighbourhood being so closely connected with the southern kingdoms have been spoken of in the preceding chapter. We now proceed to the region lying to the north of the plain.

Galilee thus defined consists of a series of fertile hills and valleys, stretching down from Hermon in the north to Tabor and Little Hermon on the south. Its uplands are better wooded, its valleys and plains are richer, its natural beauty greater than the rest of Palestine. Van de Velde truly describes it as 'a land rich in beauty and fertility. A thick wood of oaks and other trees continued for a considerable way over the heights, again through the valleys, but everywhere characterised by a luxuriance of verdure, by which you can recognise at once the fertility of Naphtali's inheritance.'

¹ Joshua xx. 7. I Kings ix. II.

It was a region in which Asher should 'dip his foot in oil;' Zebulun and Issachar 'rejoice in their going out, and in their tents,' and 'suck of the abundance of the seas, and of treasures hid in the sand;' and Naphtali be 'satisfied with favour, and full with the blessing of the Lord.'¹

Among the hills of Southern Galilee TABOR is conspicuous, not so much from its greater elevation—it only rises one thousand four hundred feet from the plain—as from its peculiar form. It is a truncated cone, detached from the surrounding heights, and forms a very striking object from which-ever side it is approached. Its general contour reminded me of the Wrekin in Shropshire. Formerly it was richly wooded to the very summit; but the timber has been cut down, and now only a few clumps or detached trees spring from the verdant turf which clothes its sides. The view from the summit is magnificent, commanding a panorama from the mountains of Gilead to the Mediterranean, from Hermon, with its snowy summits, to Ebal and Gerizim on the south. Well might the Psalmist exclaim,

'The north and the south Thou hast created them :
Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice in Thy name.'

Its traditional claim to have been the scene of the transfiguration is now universally abandoned. This must be sought for farther north, among the gorges of the Hermon, near Banias, the ancient Cæsarea Philippi.

In crossing the hills of Galilee from Esdraelon to Nazareth, we pass three villages, each with a place in the inspired record. The first is Sôlem, the ancient SHUNEM. It lies at the foot of Little Hermon, about three miles from the fountain of Jezreel. Luxuriant orange groves and corn-fields, fenced with hedges of prickly pear, encompass a cluster of mud-walled, flat-topped hovels. The inhabitants seemed a merry, good-humoured, contented race, fearing nothing but a Bedouin raid, or a visit from the Turkish tax-gatherer. Blocks of marble, with traces of sculpture upon them, probably brought from the ruins of Jezreel, are worked into the mud-walls of the village, and the largest house has a couple of willow-pattern plates, like those we noticed at Bethel, with a dish to match, over the doorway. But there is nothing to remind us that this is the scene of one of the most touching incidents which the Bible records. It was here that a 'great woman' of the village, 'the good, kind Shunammite,' made 'a little chamber on the wall, and set there a bed, and a stool, and a candlestick,' that the prophet might freely pass in and out. Content to dwell 'among her own people,' she refused to 'be spoken for to the king, or to the captain of the host.' And when a son was granted to her old age her cup of happiness was full. While scarcely a trace of the ancient village exists, the surrounding scenery remains unchanged. It was in these luxuriant corn-fields that the child, smitten by sunstroke, 'said to his father, My head, my head. And he said to a lad, Carry him to his

¹ Deut. xxxiii. 18-24.



TABOR.

W. H. PERSC.

mother. And when he had taken him, and brought him to his mother, he sat on her knees till noon, and then died.' We follow the bereaved mother, choking down her sobs, and saying, 'It is well,' as she rides hurriedly across the plain to the prophet's haunt on Carmel, and sympathise with her joy as she receives back her son.¹

A little farther to the north stands another village, to which a more tragic interest attaches—ENDOR, the goal of Saul's journey the night before his death. The Israelites, as we have seen, were encamped near the fountain of Jezreel on Mount Gilboa, the Philistines at Shunem, about midway between Endor and the camp of Saul. The king at the peril of his life gropes his way past the outposts of the enemy to reach the woman who is to reveal to him the secrets of the future. The village retains its ancient name unchanged. And one of the numerous caves still, as formerly, used as dwellings may have afforded a fitting abode for the miserable and wicked woman whose heart relented towards the doomed and despairing king.²

A ride of about fifty minutes brings us from Endor to NAIN. It is a small, poor village, standing on the shoulder of a hill, looking down on one arm of the Valley of Esdraelon. Not very far from Nazareth, and visible across the valley from the hill above the town, it is by no means improbable that our Lord may have known the young man and his widowed mother. If, as many believe, He was Himself 'the only Son of His mother, and she was a widow,' a special reason for the miracle is at once discovered in His deep human sympathy with a case so like His own. A steep path leads up the hill-side to a group of rock-hewn graves, marking the site of the ancient burial-place of the town. It was on this very path that our Lord saw the weeping mother and 'had compassion, and said unto her, Weep not.' Turning to the bier, His word of pity became a word of power, and 'He said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And He delivered him unto his mother.'³



NAIN.

But a spot of yet deeper and more absorbing interest than any we have visited since we left Jerusalem draws us onward, and we hasten over the intervening space till we reach NAZARETH. Up among the hills to the north of the plain is a valley about a mile in length, and perhaps a quarter of a mile in breadth. Several smaller valleys run out from it, and at the

¹ 2 Kings iv. 8-37.

² 1 Sam. xxviii. 3-25.

³ Luke vii. 11-15.

junction of two or three of these it expands into a basin over which the hills rise to a height of four hundred or five hundred feet. 'It seems,' says Dr. Richardson, rather fancifully, 'as if fifteen mountains met to form an inclosure for this delightful spot: they rise round it like the edge of a shell to guard it from intrusion. It is a rich and beautiful field in the midst of barren mountains.' The bottom of the basin is bright with gardens and orchards, divided by hedges of prickly pear twelve or fourteen feet high. The town stands on the western side of the valley, and rises a little way up the slope of the hill. It has a brighter, cleaner, and more prosperous look than any town we have seen since leaving Nablus. The population was estimated by Robinson at four thousand. It has increased since then, and is now probably about five thousand. Of these a large proportion are Christian in profession, though it is to be feared that their conduct is little in keeping with the pure and high morality of the gospel. Two large monasteries, one of the Greek, the other of the Latin rite, contain a large number of monks. A recently established Protestant mission seems to be efficient and successful.

The inhabitants of Nazareth, like those of Bethlehem, are deservedly famed for their personal beauty. I was fortunate enough to be present at the wedding festivities of a wealthy landed proprietor in the town. The bride, unfortunately, was absolutely ugly; but I was greatly struck by the fine features of many of the women and the noble bearing of the men. Dr. Porter says truly, 'If we go out and sit for an hour of an evening by the little fountain, we shall see many a face which Raphael might have chosen as a study when about to paint his *Madonna della Seggiola*, and many a figure that Phidias might have selected as a model for Venus.'

Monkish legends and traditions of course are rife throughout the town and neighbourhood. Always offensive, they are doubly so here, both from their absurdity and from the contrast they afford to the silence of Scripture respecting the youth and early manhood of our Lord. We are shown the workshop of Joseph, the house of Mary, and the place from which it was carried away by angels to find its final resting-place at Loretto! A cave is pointed out as the place of the Annunciation. A large slab of stone is declared to be the table at which our Lord and His disciples ate before and after the Resurrection. The traditional Mount of Precipitation is two miles away from the town, in defiance of the express statement of Scripture that it was on 'the brow of the hill on which the city was built.'¹

The fountain of Mary at the eastern end of the town is a place of deep interest. At all hours of the day groups of girls may be seen who have come hither to draw water. It is the common centre around which the whole life of the village gathers. The pilgrim stops to quench his thirst, the shepherd to water his flocks, the girls, with merry song and laughter, fill their pitchers, linger for a gossip with their friends, then poising the vessel upon

¹ Luke iv. 28, 29.



NAZARETH.

their shoulders, walk away with light and graceful step. The fountain has been here from time immemorial, and seems always to have been the main, if not the only source of water-supply for the inhabitants. It was to the fountain, which now bears her name, that Mary came, day by day, amongst the village maidens, to fill her pitcher and return to her home. The *Protevangelion*, one



CLIFF BEHIND THE MARONITE CONVENT AT NAZARETH.

of the earliest of the Apocryphal Gospels, says that it was here that she received the angelic salutation which marked her out as the mother of the Lord. The narrative, however, seems to indicate what the probabilities of the case imply, that the event happened in the seclusion of her own dwelling.

A hasty and general survey of the site of Nazareth produces the impression that it contains no cliff down which Jesus could have been 'cast

headlong.' The town lying along the lower slope of the hill, no steep declivity is visible. But a more careful examination corrects the error and confirms the narrative of the evangelist. I found two or three precipitous walls of rock of thirty or forty feet in depth. One of them had a considerable accumulation of débris at the bottom, which, if cleared away, would probably give twenty feet more. Dean Stanley's remarks are well worth quoting. "They rose," it is said of the infuriated inhabitants of the city, "and cast Him out of the city, and brought Him to a brow of the mountain on which the city was built, so as to cast Him down the cliff."¹ Most readers probably imagine a town built on the summit of a mountain, from which summit the intended precipitation was to take place. This, as I have said, is not the situation of Nazareth, yet its position is in strict accordance with the narrative. It is built upon, that is on the side of "a mountain," but the brow is not beneath but over the town, and such a cliff as is here implied is to be found in the abrupt face of the limestone rock, about thirty or forty feet high, overhanging the Maronite convent at the south-west extremity of the town.'

To gain a true idea of the scenes amidst which the first thirty years of our Lord's earthly life were passed we must climb the hills which rise above the town. There is very little in the Nazareth of to-day to recall that of eighteen hundred years ago. Not a single building is now standing which was standing then. It is even doubtful whether the site remains unaltered: and we know that important changes have passed over the scenery of the neighbourhood. The soil has lain fallow and unproductive for centuries. A silent, unpeopled solitude stretches for miles around us. But in our Lord's days Galilee was like a garden in its luxuriant fertility. The hills, now so bare and barren, were terraced and cultivated to their very summits. A numerous and thriving population occupied the soil. The little hills rejoiced on every side; the pastures were clothed with flocks: the valleys also were covered over with corn.² But amidst all these changes the great natural landmarks remain the same. As we stand on the ridge which rises just above the town, we know that we tread on the very spots where Jesus of Nazareth often walked, and that we look on the landscape which was beneath His eye. The hills, the valleys, the sea, the plains make up a scene of surpassing beauty, the main features of which are unaltered by the lapse of centuries. Below us lies the little town in the peaceful seclusion of its quiet valley—far from the busy crowd, aside from the thronged highways. On the west the sun is sinking down into the sea, leaving a broad line of light across the Méditerranéan. Hermon, on the north, with its crown of snow, glows in the fading light. 'The excellency of Carmel and Sharon' stretch away to the south. Eastward the eye ranges over the hills of Galilee, the valley of the Jordan, and the rich plains of Gilead beyond. The view, though some-

¹ Luke iv. 29. The translation is slightly altered, so as to bring it into closer agreement with the original.

² Ps. lxx. 12, 13.



CHURCH OF THE ANNUNCIATION, NAZARETH.

what less extensive than that from Tabor, is even more beautiful. The hours of a Sabbath afternoon and evening spent in meditation and prayer on the thymy turf of this glorious upland have left behind them memories which no lapse of time can efface or weaken.

The numerous flocks of sheep and goats which were being led in to be folded for the night formed a striking object in the landscape, and recalled to mind a question which has perplexed many eastern travellers. Our Lord, speaking of His coming to judgment, says, 'And before Him shall be gathered all nations: and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats.'¹ But the sheep and the goats are invariably brought in together. I had failed to find any instance in which they were divided. This, of all others, was the place to seek an explanation. It was given me by a shepherd who was leading his flock past the spot where I stood. The division is made not in the evening when the flocks are folded, but in the morning as they are taken out to pasture. The goats travelling much more quickly than the sheep and thriving upon a much scantier vegetation, are driven up to the mountain tops, where they pick their food from amongst the rocks and stones. The sheep are kept upon the lower slopes, where the grass is more abundant and the pasturage richer. It is thus not to the night of death when 'like sheep they are laid in the grave,'² but the resurrection morning to which the illustration points and when the final separation shall be made. In this case, as in so many others, the seeming discrepancy arises from our imperfect acquaintance with the facts. A more complete knowledge not only removes the apparent difficulty, but brings out a deeper meaning in the sayings of Him whose 'words are spirit and are life.'

We cannot leave Nazareth without reflecting on the silence of Scripture respecting our Lord's residence here. Of the thirty-three years of His earthly life, twenty-eight were spent in this secluded valley; yet the history of those years is an almost total blank. A journey to Jerusalem is the only incident recorded. 'The child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon Him. . . . He was subject unto His parents. . . . He increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.'³ This is all we know—no more. Imagination, working upon apocryphal legends and obscure hints, has endeavoured to fill in the vague outline with biographical details. But the attempt is unwarranted, even if it be not irreverent. It is impossible for us to lift the veil which hides these years of mysterious growth and silent preparation. When 'the day of His showing unto Israel' had come, He emerged from His obscurity; and we shall trace His footsteps on the shores of the neighbouring lake, the world's great Teacher, revealing God to man, and man to himself.

It was at CANA OF GALILEE, the home of Nathanael,⁴ that our Lord

¹ Matt. xxv. 32.

² Ps. xlix. 14.

³ Luke ii. 40, 52.

⁴ John xxi. 2.

worked His first miracle, 'and manifested forth His glory.'¹ There are two villages near Nazareth, still bearing a similar name, each of which has been regarded as the scene of the manifestation. Kefr Kenna, a small village about an hour and a half to the north-west, and Kana-el-Jelil at double the distance. The former is the traditional site. The claims of the latter are supported by the deservedly high authority of Robinson, and its name is absolutely identical with that of the Biblical narrative. It is perhaps impossible to decide in which of the two it was that

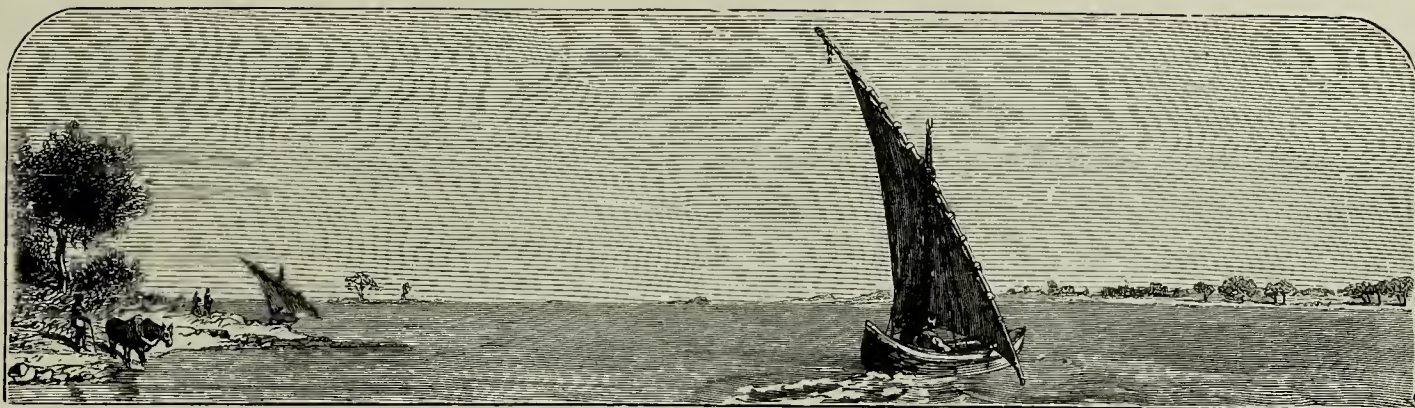
'The modest water, awed by power divine,
Confessed the God, and blushed itself to wine.'

With the exception of a fountain, apparently of the Roman period, said to have been the place from which the water was drawn, there is nothing in either of them to connect itself with the miracle. In the wedding festivities at Nazareth, of which I have already spoken, the bride was brought from near Kefr Kenna. The innumerable guests who thronged the house for a week, served to illustrate and to account for the inadequacy of the supplies provided for a similar festivity in the time of our Lord.

¹ John ii. 1-11. See also John iv. 46-54 for an account of a second miracle wrought here.



FOUNTAIN AT CANA.



CHAPTER IX.

THE LAKE OF GENNESARETH.



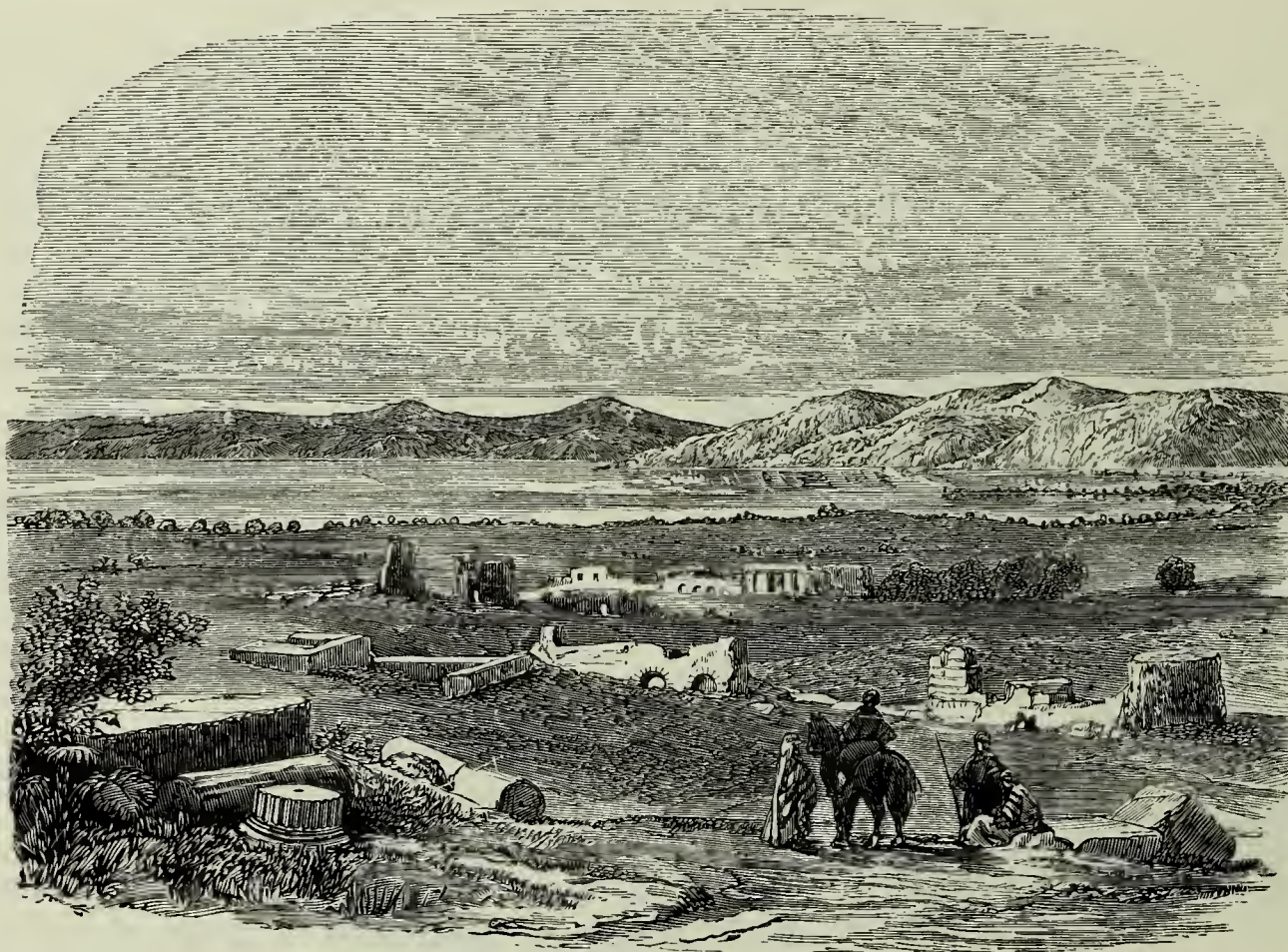
TOWN AND LAKE OF TIBERIAS.

ONE of the most interesting passages in the writings of Josephus is that in which he narrates the history of his campaign against the Romans on and around the Lake of Gennesareth. Having spoken of the clear, cold waters of the lake, the innumerable ships and boats which floated upon it, and the prosperous towns and villages which lined its banks, he proceeds to describe the fertile plain from which it takes its name. 'The country also that lies over against this lake hath the same name of Gennesareth; its nature is wonderful as well as its beauty; its soil is so fruitful that all sorts of trees can grow upon it, and

the inhabitants accordingly plant all sorts of trees there; for the temper of the air is so well mixed, that it agrees very well with those several sorts, particularly walnuts, which require the coldest air, flourish there in vast plenty; there are palm trees also, which grow best in hot air; fig trees also and olives grow near them, which yet require an air that is more temperate. One may call this place the ambition of Nature where it forces those plants that are naturally enemies to one another to agree together; it is a happy contention of the seasons, as if every one of them laid claim to this country; for it not only nourishes different sorts of autumnal fruit beyond men's expectation, but preserves them a great while; it supplies men with the principal fruits, with grapes and figs continually during ten months of the year, and the rest of the fruits

as they become ripe together, through the whole year; for besides the good temperature of the air, it is also watered from a most fertile fountain. The people of the country call it Capharnaum.¹

The traveller who visits the Lake with this passage in his mind, and expects to find its descriptions realised, is doomed to disappointment. The population has disappeared. To the stir of busy life a mournful silence has succeeded. A single filthy ruinous town—Tiberias—half-a-dozen wretched villages, and the black tents of the Bedouins, are the only human habitations on the banks. Where Herod, Josephus, and Titus could, without difficulty,



THE NORTH SHORE OF THE LAKE, NEAR TELL HUM.

collect fleets of from three hundred to five hundred vessels, I only found three small fishing-boats, and these so dilapidated that their owners dared not launch them except in a perfect calm. The soil is fertile and productive as ever, but labour is wanting to break up the fallow ground, to cast in the seed, or to reap the harvest.

But there is a sense in which this mournful silence and solitude are not inappropriate. There is nothing to distract our thoughts from that Divine Presence which here abode in human form. One great memory lingers undisturbed amongst these hills and valleys. The bustle of modern life and the squalid misery and degradation of the Eastern peasantry would

¹ *Bell. Jud.* x. § 8.

equally clash with the sacred, tender associations of the spot where 'most of His mighty works were done,' most of His 'gracious words' were spoken. The stage is empty, and there is nothing to prevent our peopling it with hallowed memories of Him who spake as 'never man spake,' who was Himself 'the way, the truth, and the life.'

The contrast between the silence of Scripture as to our Lord's life at Nazareth and the ample details which it gives of His life here is very striking. To mention them all would be to quote the larger part of the first three Gospels and some of the most striking incidents of the fourth. He 'dwelt in Capernaum,' which was 'His own city.'¹ On the shores of the lake He called Peter, Andrew, James, John, and Matthew to be His disciples.² In the villages and towns around it 'most of His mighty works were done.'³ In a mountain overlooking it, from a boat upon it, and in a town on its banks, He taught the people in His most memorable discourses.⁴ Over its waters He often sailed, on them He walked, hushed its storm to a calm, and rescued His faint-hearted disciple who was sinking beneath them.⁵ In a desert place on its shore He twice fed the assembled multitudes.⁶ But space is wanting to enumerate all the mighty deeds and gracious words of which this hallowed spot was the scene, and which culminated in that affecting interview when He manifested Himself to His disciples after His resurrection and restored Peter to the place from which he had fallen in the apostolic band.⁷

In the Old Testament the lake is known as the Sea of Chinneroth, or Chinnereth, from a city which stood on its north-western shore.⁸ Gennesareth is probably a Grecised form of the earlier name, though its etymology (*a garden of riches*) suggests a very suitable derivation. By this name or by that of the Sea of Galilee it is commonly known in the New Testament. John, writing after the city of Tiberias had risen to importance as the capital of Galilee, speaks of it as 'the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias,'⁹ a fact which is not without importance as fixing the date of his Gospel.

The road from Nazareth to Tiberias leads over the low ridge which bounds the valley on the north-west, across a broken table-land, and through the village of Kenna, already spoken of as the traditional site of Cana in Galilee. Sefurieh, the ancient Sepphoris, is passed. It played an important part in the heroic but unsuccessful resistance of the Jews to the Romans under Titus, and hither the Sanhedrim retired after the fall of Jerusalem. The battle-field of Hattin is likewise distinctly seen, where the last great battle was fought between the Crusaders and Saladin, issuing in the total destruction of the Christian army and the establishment of the Moslem power

¹ Matt. iv. 13; ix. 1.

² Ibid. iv. 18-22; ix. 9.

³ Ibid. ix., xi. 20-24. Luke x. 13-15.

⁴ Matt. v., vii., xiii. Mark iv. John vi. 24-71.

⁵ Matt. viii. 23-27; xiv. 25. Mark iv. 37-41; vi. 41. Luke viii. 23-25. John vi. 19.

⁶ Matt. xiv. 15-21; xv. 32-39.

⁷ John xxi.

⁸ Num. xxxiv. 11. Deut. iii. 17. Joshua xi. 2. 1 Kings xv. 20.

⁹ John xi. 1; xxi. 1.

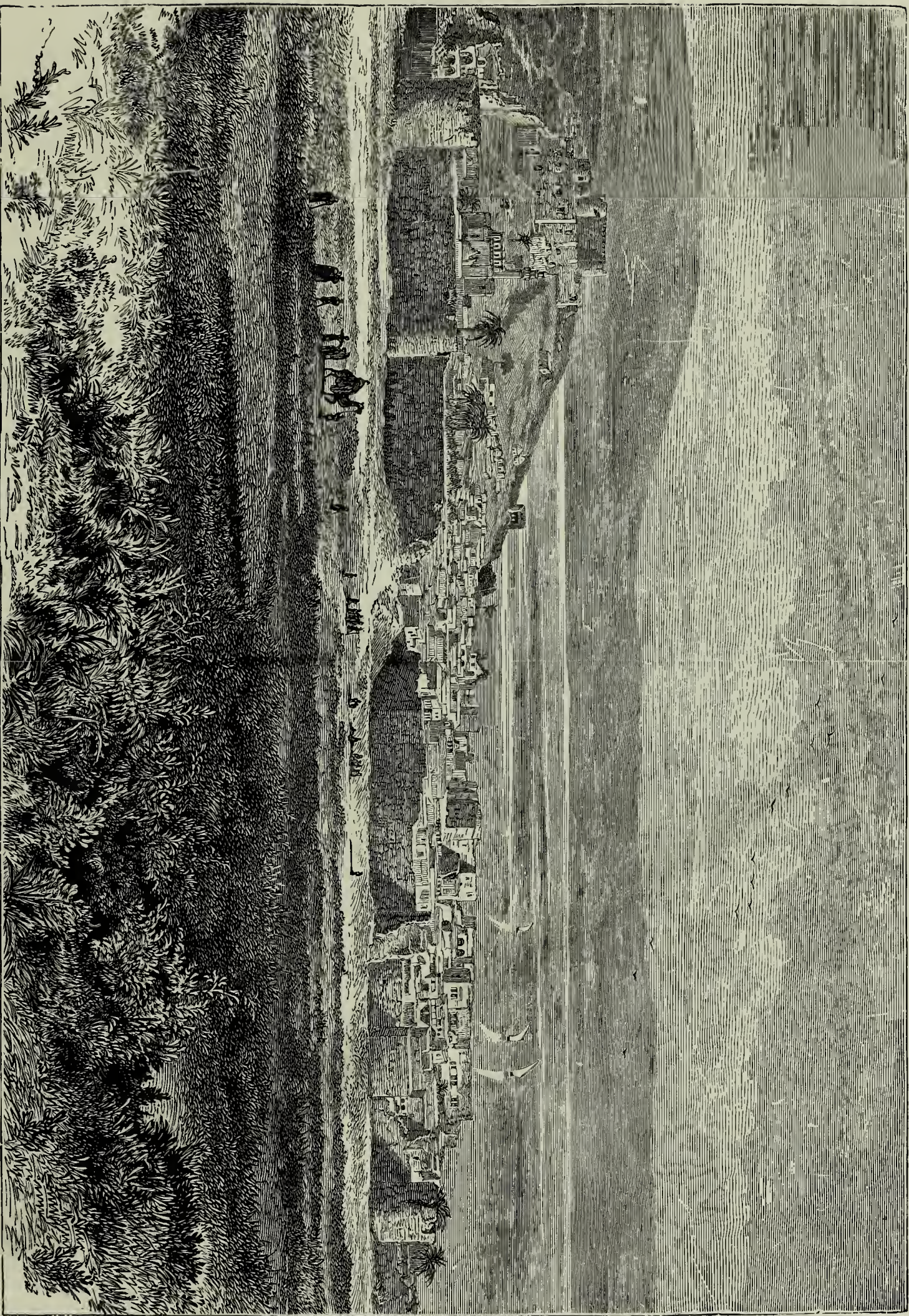
in the East. The hills which inclose the lake soon come into view, but the lake itself is not seen till we reach the summit of the steep descent which leads down to Tiberias, a thousand feet below us. The clear, blue, placid waters lie in a deeply depressed basin nearly seven hundred feet below the level of the sea. Some geologists have supposed it to be the crater of an extinct volcano. More careful investigation, however, proves that this is a mistake. It is but a part of that long line of depression which, starting from the sea-level near the Lake Hûleh, sinks down along the whole Ghor or Valley of the Jordan, till at the Dead Sea it has reached the unparalleled depth of thirteen hundred feet.

The lake is about thirteen miles in length by about six or seven in breadth at the widest part. The mountains on the eastern side rise to a height of two thousand feet, but they are flat and monotonous, destitute alike of colour and of foliage. The scenery has neither the bold outline of the Swiss lakes, nor the rich verdant loveliness of our own. The tamer parts of Windermere, stripped of their glorious mantle of forests, the grey hillsides bleak and bare, would give a not unapt illustration of the shores of the Sea of Galilee.

We do not read that our Lord ever entered Tiberias. The reason is doubtless to be found in the fact that it was practically a heathen city, though standing upon Jewish soil. Herod, its founder, had brought together the arts of Greece, the idolatry of Rome, and the gross lewdness of Asia. There was a theatre for the performance of comedies, a forum, a stadium, a palace roofed with gold in imitation of those in Italy, statues of the Roman gods, and busts of the deified emperors. He who 'was not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel' might well hold Himself aloof from such scenes as these.

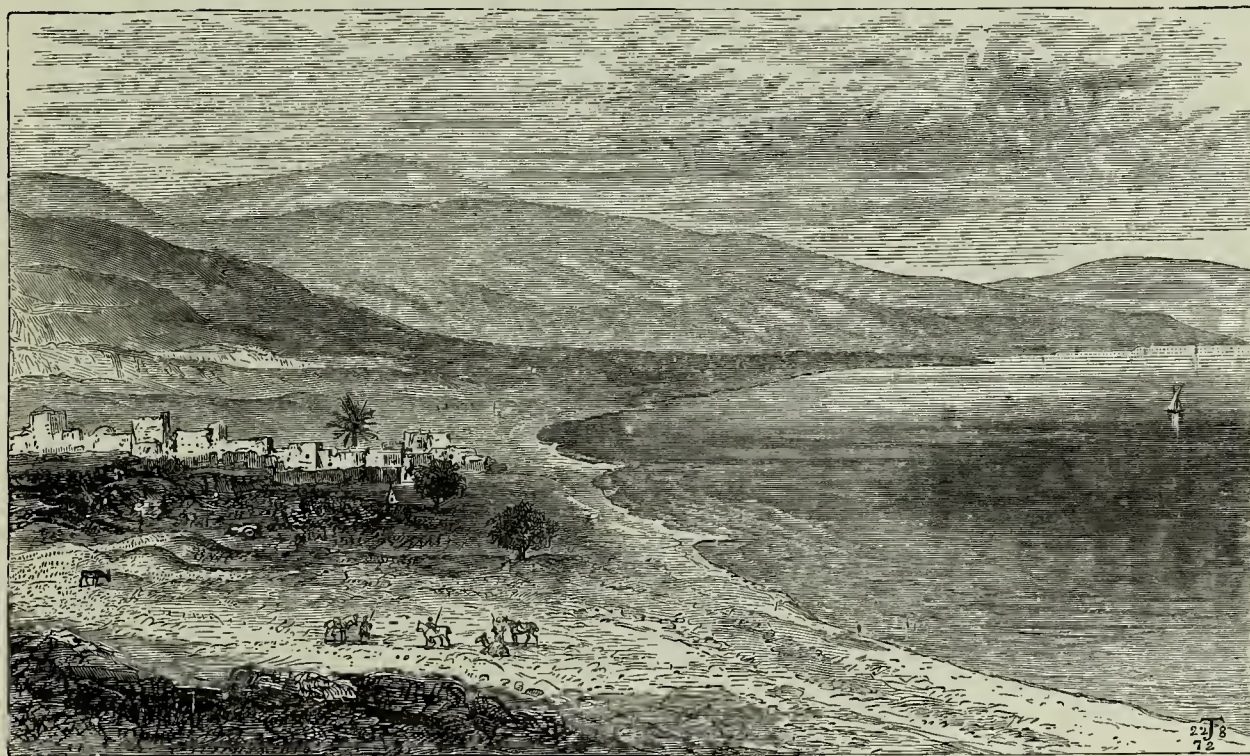
Modern Tiberias is a village of about two thousand inhabitants. A large proportion of these are Jews, who regard it as one of their holy places and have here a rabbinical school. It is filthy and squalid beyond even the average of Eastern towns. From the swarms of vermin with which it is infested, the Arabs have a proverb that 'the king of the fleas lives at Tiberias.' Wilson says that on spending a night here he was literally covered with them and plucked them from his coat by handfuls. In common with other places in the Valley of the Jordan it suffers severely from earthquakes. In the great shock of January, 1837, the Turkish walls which surround the town were shattered, and in many cases laid prostrate. As under the present government nothing is ever repaired, the fortifications remain in the dilapidated condition in which they were left fifty years ago.

Northward from Tiberias the hills on the western side slope gently down nearly to the edge of the lake. The strip of shore is of extraordinary fertility. Though now uninhabited and uncultivated, it is easy to believe that the glowing descriptions of Josephus were in no degree exaggerated. In about



THE TOWN OF TIBERIAS.

an hour after leaving Tiberias we find the hills gradually recede, leaving a broad open plain—that of Gennesareth. The only sign of human habitation is a cluster of mud hovels near the water's edge. There are a few remains of other buildings, one of which seems to have been a watch-tower (*Migdol*). A palm tree rises from the centre of the village, and a few thorn bushes cluster round it. The modern name Mejdol reminds us that this was MAGDALA, the place where our Lord came ashore after feeding the multitude on the opposite bank,¹ and the home of Mary Magdalene.² Into the disputed questions as to her history we do not enter here. We know how great a debt of gratitude she owed to her Lord, who had delivered her from demoniacal possession in its most aggravated form; and how fondly and devotedly she attached herself to His service, ministering to Him of her substance,



MAGDALA.

From a Sketch by T. Jenner, Esq.

waiting at His cross, present at His entombment, watching at His sepulchre, and first to welcome her risen Lord when He had burst the 'bonds of death' and 'led captivity captive.' As we stand amongst these crumbling ruins and squalid hovels we cannot but reflect upon the fact that through her the name of this spot has passed into all the languages of Christendom, is commemorated in the noblest ecclesiastical edifice of modern France, and holds a conspicuous place in our military history as that of the almost impregnable stronghold of a bloodthirsty Abyssinian tyrant.

Every step we took in this district, hallowed by so many sacred associations, seemed to furnish a fresh commentary on the discourses of our Lord.

¹ Matt. xv. 32-39.

² Matt. xxvii. 56-61; xxviii. 1. Mark xv. 40; xvi. 1-11. Luke viii. 2, 3; xxiv. 10. John xix. 25; xx. 1-18.

Every detail in the parable of the sower passed under our view—the hard pathway running through unenclosed fields upon which the seed fell without finding entrance, the soil choked with thorns through which the tender blades were struggling, the thin, shallow coating of earth resting upon the rock beneath, and the luxuriant growth of the rich deep loam bringing its return of a hundredfold to the sower.¹ The edge of the lake is fringed with thickets of oleander in full bloom. The turf carpeted with an incomparable profusion of wild flowers, the variety and splendour of which surpassed all



By permission of Mr. Macgregor.

NORTHERN END OF THE SEA OF GALILEE.

that I had seen elsewhere, covered the earth with a mantle of beauty with which 'Solomon in all his glory' could not vie.² Here and there is a fisherman who has cast off his 'fisher's coat' and stands 'naked' in the water 'casting his nets,' or drawing them ashore, or examining his haul, choosing the good, rejecting the worthless.³

Many travellers have spoken of the sudden and violent storms to which the lake is liable. This is common to all lakes surrounded by mountains. But the danger is greatly increased here by the depression

¹ Matt. xiii. 3-9.

² Ibid. vi. 28, 29.

³ John xxi. 7. Matt. xiii. 47, 48.



HILLS OVER GENNESARETH.

of the surface below the sea-level. Gusts of wind rush down from the mountains into the rarefied air below, and raise storms of extraordinary suddenness and fury. One of these I experienced which illustrated many of the details of New Testament history. I had taken a boat on a bright cloudless morning, to explore the eastern shores and the point where the Jordan enters the lake. There was not a ripple on the water, not a perceptible current in the air. Almost without warning the wind rose, the waves, crested with foam, began to break over the sides of the boat. I was sitting on a cushion or 'pillow' on the flat, raised stern 'in the hinder part of the ship' and watched the crew 'toiling in rowing.' But all their efforts were vain. They were unable to make any way, for 'the wind was contrary.' At length one of them jumped overboard, and partly swimming partly wading, towed the vessel ashore close to the site of Capernaum.¹ Walking thence to our camp at Khan Minyeh, we passed the probable site of Bethsaida (*the house of fish*). Here we found the fishermen washing, drying, and mending their nets.²

At the end of a glen which ran westward from our camp is the mountain, which tradition asserts with some probability to be that of the Beatitudes, and high above it, visible from every point for miles around, is the city of Safed—'a city which is set on a hill and cannot be hid.'³

The hills do not rise direct from the lake but stand at a little distance from it, leaving a strip of shore, of varying breadth, at their feet. But there is one striking exception to this rule. On the eastern bank, near to Khersa, the ancient Gergesa, is a steep almost precipitous descent coming down into the lake itself with no intervening space between. It was here in the very place which the narrative indicates, that the 'herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea.'⁴

Into the disputed questions as to the topography of the northern and north-western shore we have not space to enter. A volume might be written summing up the various arguments adduced as to the sites of Capernaum, Chorazin, and the Bethsaidas, without arriving at a conclusive and final result. The balance of probability seems to me to incline in favour of the identification of the fountain of Tabigah with that of Capharnaum described by Josephus. Capernaum as the chief town of the district would stretch for some distance along the shore. The ruins of Tell Hum are not so far distant from the fountain, but that they might have formed part of the city or its suburbs. And nowhere else have remains been found the character and extent of which would indicate the site of a commercial centre and great military station, which we know Capernaum to have been. The similarity of name is likewise an important point. *Tell* is a mound of ruins; *Kefr*, or

¹ Matt. viii. 23-25. Mark iv. 35-39. Luke viii. 22-25. John xxi. 7, 8.

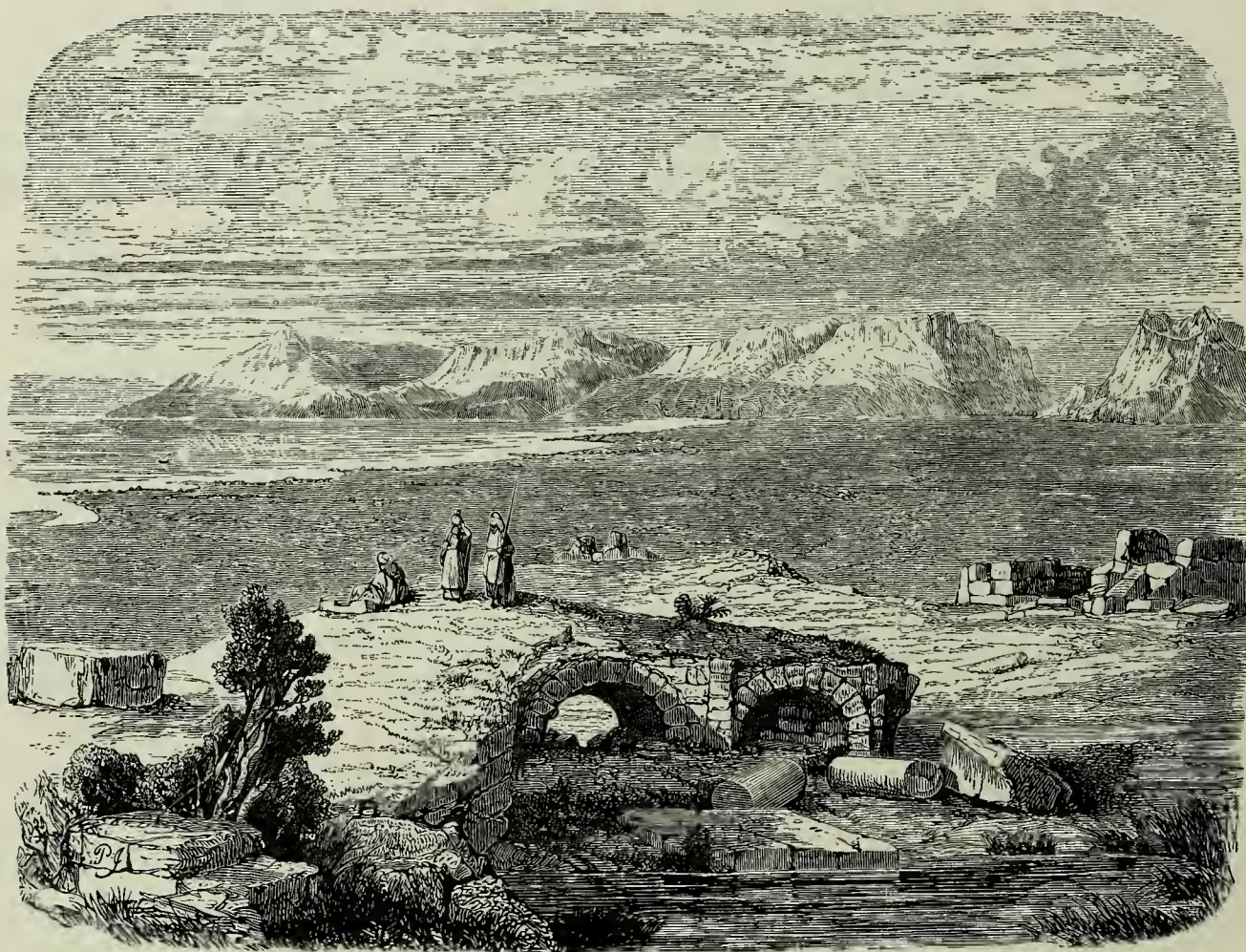
² Matt. iv. 18-22. Mark i. 16-21.

³ Matt. v. 14.

⁴ Matt. viii. 28-32. Mark v. 1-13. Luke viii. 26-33.

Capher, is a village. Tell Hum would thus be the ruined mound of the ancient Capher Nahum, or village of Nahum. Without presuming to dogmatize on the subject, the weight of evidence seems to favour the view that it was here that our Lord took up His abode on leaving Nazareth, so that it was called 'His own country.'

Amongst the ruins of Tell Hum, the most interesting and important are those of a synagogue apparently of the Roman period. It was built of white marble, with finely-carved Corinthian columns, and sculptures of the seven-branched candlestick, the paschal lamb, and the pot of manna. If Tell Hum



RUINS OF ET TABIGAH (BETHSAIDA?).

be indeed the site of Capernaum, this ruined synagogue becomes invested with an interest absolutely unique, for it is the only edifice now remaining which we can, with any probability, associate with the personal history of our Lord. It was here that 'He taught on the Sabbath days. And they were astonished at His doctrine: for His word was with power.' Here, too, He cast out the unclean spirit who acknowledged Him as 'the Holy One of God,' and, amid the murmurs of the Pharisees, healed the man with 'a withered hand.' Whilst the ruins are unmistakably those of a Jewish synagogue, the Corinthian columns seem to indicate a Roman element and

¹ Mark i. 21-27; iii. 1-5. Luke iv. 31-36.

feeling at work in the construction. It is thus, at least, a plausible conjecture that this is the very edifice referred to by 'the elders of the Jews,' when pleading on behalf of the centurion they said, 'he loveth our nation, and he hath built us the (τὴν) synagogue.'¹ Captain Wilson, cautious and careful almost to excess as he is, says, 'If Tell Hum be Capernaum,



From a Photograph by the Palestine Exploration Fund, 1866.

THE RUINS OF TELL HUM.

this is without doubt the synagogue built by the Roman centurion, and one of the most sacred places on earth. It was in this building that our Lord gave the well-known discourse in John vi.; and it was not without a certain strange feeling, that on turning over a large block, we found the pot of

¹ Luke vii. 1-5. The definite article is omitted in our version.

manna engraved on its face, and remembered the words, 'I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness and are dead.'¹

But we must leave, though reluctantly, this hallowed spot with its inexhaustible treasures of sacred associations. As we do so the words of McCheyne rise to our lips :

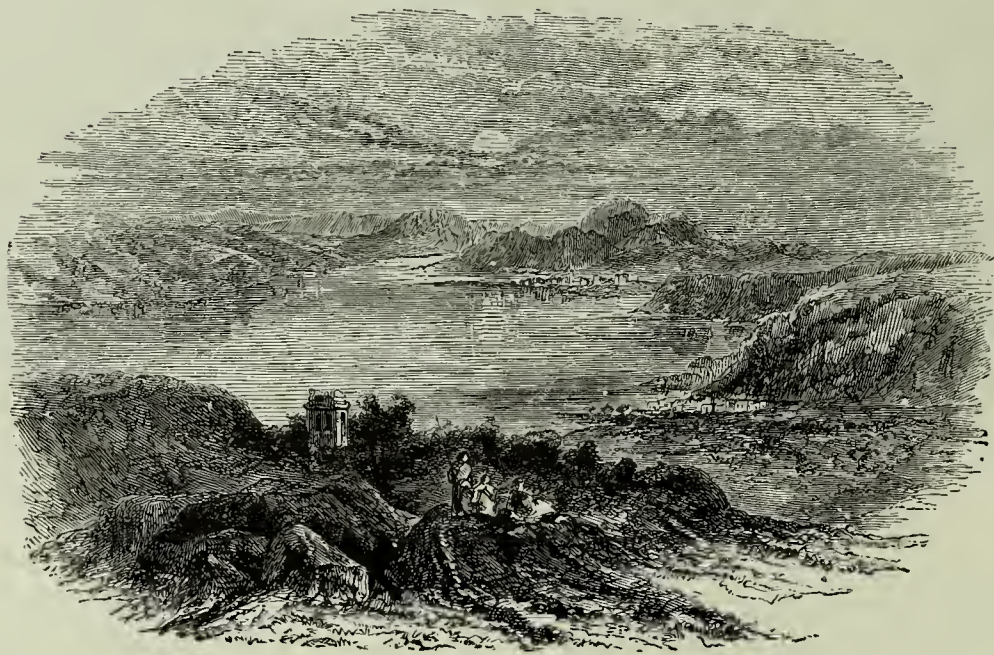
'How pleasant to me thy deep blue waves,
O Sea of Galilee;
For the glorious One who came to save,
Hath often stood by thee.

It is not that the wild gazelle
Comes down to drink thy tide;
But He that was pierced to save from hell,
Oft wandered by thy side.

Graceful around thee the mountains meet,
Thou calm, reposing sea :
But, oh, far more ! the beautiful feet
Of Jesus walked o'er thee.

O Saviour, gone to God's right hand,
But the same Saviour still ;
Graved on Thy heart is this lovely strand,
And every fragrant hill.'

¹ *The Recovery of Jerusalem*, p. 345. Published by the Palestine Exploration Fund.

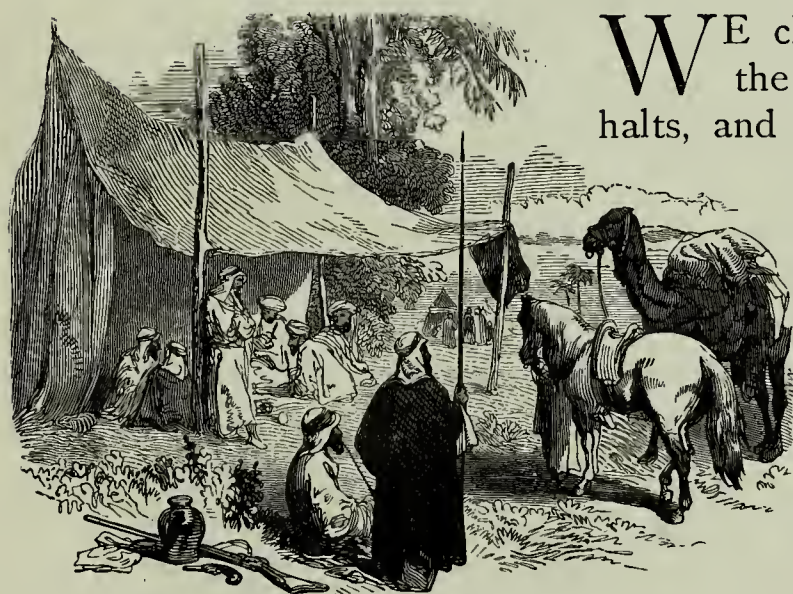


THE LAKE OF GENNESARETH, FROM NEAR KHAN MINYEH.



CHAPTER X.

GENNESARETH TO THE SOURCES OF THE JORDAN.

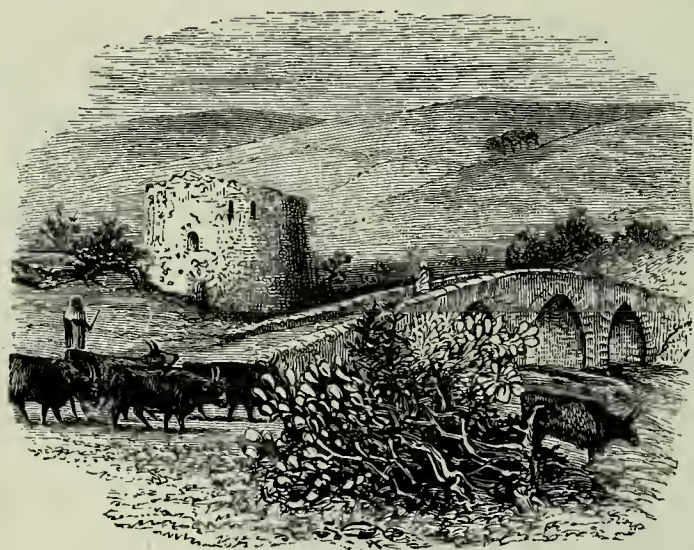


WE climb the steep ascent which rises to the north of Khan Minyeh with frequent halts, and casting many a 'longing, lingering look behind;' for we know that when we turn the crest of the hill we shall have lost sight of the lake on whose waters we have sailed, round whose shores we have wandered, with such profound interest. The district upon which we are now to enter, though the scene of many memorable events, is yet barren of Scriptural associations as compared

with the region we have left. The tribes of the extreme north played a conspicuous part in Jewish history under the Judges. But with the establishment of the Kingdom the chief, almost the sole, interest is concentrated in the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, of Ephraim and Manasseh. The records of the tribe of Dan are especially meagre. It contributed only one great name to Jewish history—that of Samson—and he belonged to the original settlement of the Danites in the south-east on the borders of the Plain of Sharon. The statement in Judges xviii. 30, 31, seems to imply that even at this early period the children of Dan had separated themselves from the commonwealth of Israel and established a political and religious organization of their own, which lasted down to 'the captivity of the land.' This may account for the remarkable omission of all mention of the tribe not only in the genealogical tables of 1 Chronicles ii.–xii., but also in the enumeration of 'all the tribes of the children of Israel' in Revelation vii. 4–8.

The contrast between what the country once was and what it is now, which has so often been referred to already, is most striking in the district upon which we are now entering. Dr. Porter says: 'On reaching the brow of the long ascent, where the lake lies far below us, with the green valleys radiating from it, and the rich plateaux spreading out from the top of its high banks, we cannot refrain from sitting down to gaze upon that vast panorama. A mournful and solitary silence reigns over it. Nature has lavished on it some of her choicest gifts; but man has deserted it. In the whole Valley of the Jordan, from the Lake Hûleh to the Sea of Galilee, there is not a single settled inhabitant. Along the whole eastern bank of the river and the lakes, from the base of Hermon to the ravine of Hieromax—a region of great fertility, thirty miles long by seven or eight wide—there are only some *three inhabited villages*! The western bank is almost as desolate. Ruins are numerous enough. Every mile or two is an old site of town or village, now well-nigh hid beneath a dense jungle of thorns and thistles. The words of Scripture here recur to us with peculiar force—"I will make your cities waste, and bring your sanctuaries unto desolation. . . . And I will bring the land into desolation: and your enemies which dwell therein shall be astonished at it. And I will scatter you among the heathen, and will draw out a sword after you; and your land shall be desolate, and your cities waste. Then shall the land enjoy her sabbaths, as long as it lieth desolate, and ye be in your enemies' land; even then shall the land rest, and enjoy her sabbaths."'

Leaving the hilly country which lies on the northern side of the Lake of Gennesareth, we enter a broad open plain through which the Jordan meanders on leaving Lake Hûleh, the WATERS OF MEROM of Scripture.



BRIDGE OF JACOB'S DAUGHTERS.

From a Sketch by T. Jenner, Esq.

About two miles south of the lake is an ancient bridge called Jisr Benat Yakûb (*the Bridge of Jacob's Daughters*). The exact meaning of the name is unknown. It seems to have originated in an erroneous tradition that the patriarch crossed the river at this spot when returning from his sojourn in Mesopotamia, and met his brother Esau here. But no reason is assigned for his daughters being introduced in connection with it. It was formerly a post of considerable importance, being the point at which the main road from Egypt and Jerusalem turned westward to Damascus.

Century after century invading armies or caravans of peaceful traders have passed to and fro along this route; but

¹ Lev. xxvi. 31-34. *Handbook for Syria and Palestine*, vol. ii. p. 434.



ROB ROY CAPTURED BY THE ARABS OF LAKE HÔLEH.

none of them have left results so deep and lasting as when, eighteen hundred years ago, Saul of Tarsus, 'breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, . . . journeyed to Damascus,'¹ little thinking, as he crossed this bridge, that he should return to preach the faith he now sought to destroy.

Of Lake Hûleh little was known until it was explored by Mr. Macgregor in his canoe voyage on the Jordan. It is a triangular sheet of water, about four and a half miles in length by three and a half in its greatest breadth, surrounded by an impenetrable morass covered with tall canes and papyrus



THE MOUTH OF THE JORDAN, LAKE HÛLEH.

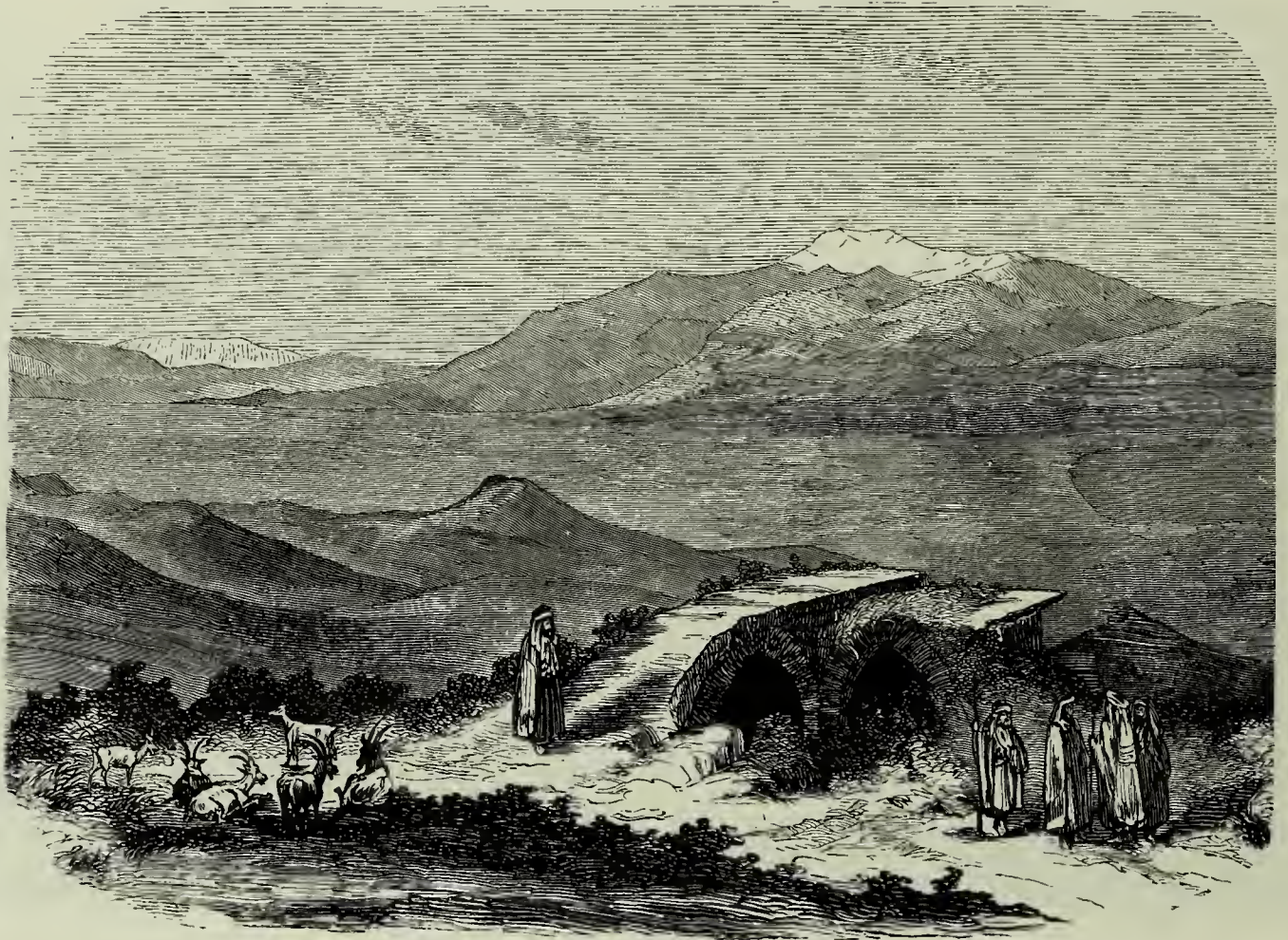
By Permission of Mr. Macgregor.

reeds, through which, as the Arabs declare, it is impossible even for a wild boar to make its way. It could not be surveyed from the shore, and until Mr. Macgregor's adventurous expedition no boat had ever floated on its waters. The additions which he has made to our knowledge of the hydrography of the district are of the highest value; and his vigorous narrative of the difficulties he surmounted, and the perils he escaped amongst the wild Bedouins of the district is familiar to all our readers.

It was in this hot, seething, pestilential, but fertile plain that Joshua, after the subjugation of Central and Southern Palestine, fought his third and last

¹ Acts ix. 1-3.

great battle with the hosts of Canaan. Jabin, king of Hazor, rallied round him all the chiefs who had not yet yielded.¹ They came from 'the plains south of Chinneroth,' the Jordan valley south of the Sea of Galilee, the Jebusite from the fortress of Jerusalem, the Hittite and the Amorite from the far south, to 'the Hivite under Hermon,' in the north. 'And they went out, they and all their hosts with them, much people, even as the sand that is upon the sea shore in multitude, with horses and chariots very many. And when all these kings were met together, they came and pitched together at the Waters of Merom to fight against Israel.' It was doubtless the multitude



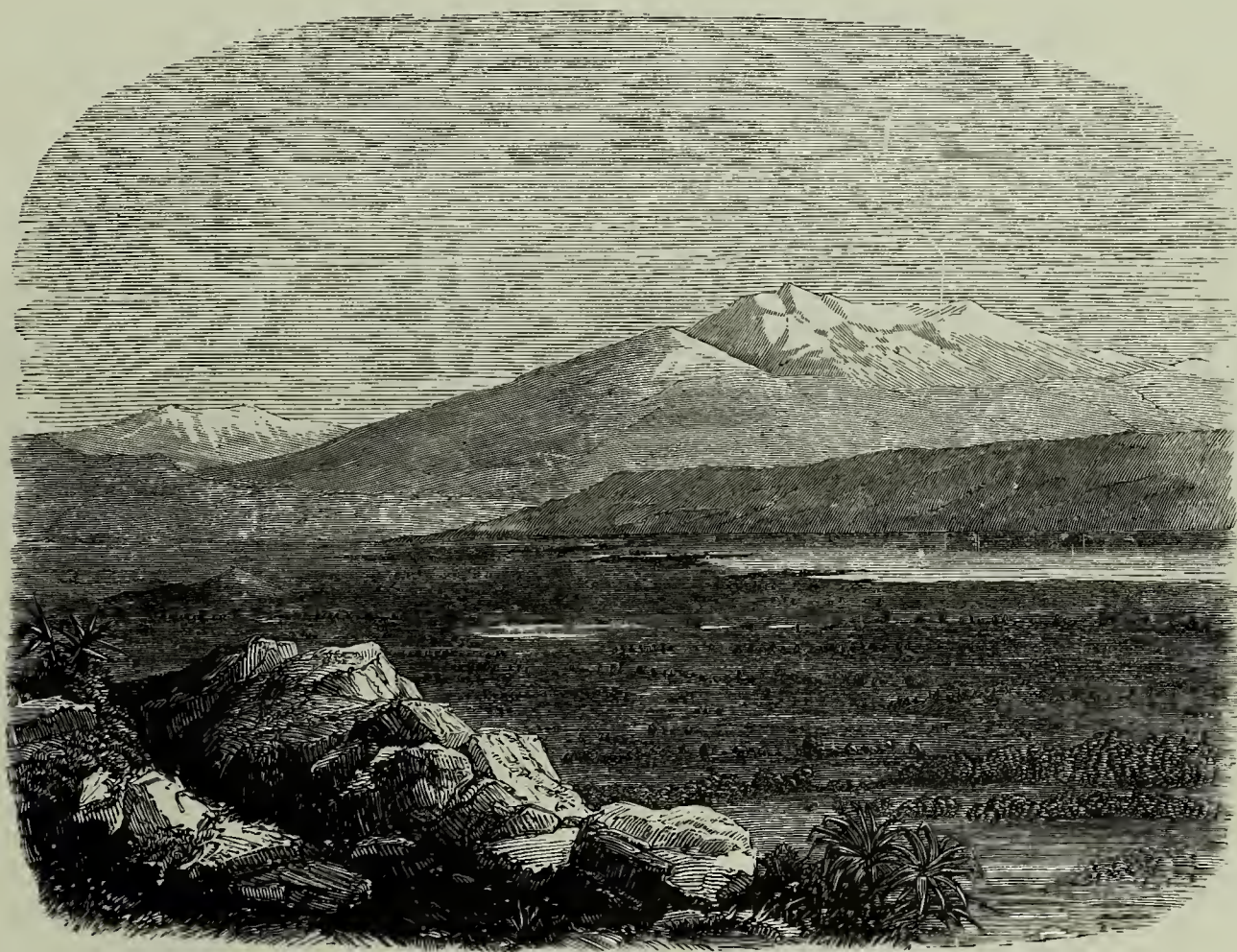
LAKE HÛLEH, OR THE WATERS OF MEROM.

of their horses and chariots, a force not possessed by Israel, which induced them to select this great plain as their battle-field. Suddenly Joshua and his men fell upon them from the heights above, and the Lord delivered them into the hands of Israel, who smote them and chased them far to the west, across the hills and valleys of Galilee, where their horses and chariots could only encumber them, right across the land to Zidon, utterly destroying them in the long pursuit, houghing their horses, and burning their chariots. Northward and eastward, too, Joshua chased the Hivites even to the Valley of Mizpeh, the plain of Cœle-Syria, which extends to the entering in of

¹ Joshua xi.

Hamah. So utter was the rout, so complete the victory, that no cities attempted further resistance, as they had done in the south. Hazor, the capital, and probably the stronghold of King Jabin, was the only place which Joshua burned with fire when he turned back from the pursuit. The whole land was now secured to Israel to the base of Lebanon, and the four northern tribes were settled in their allotted possessions.

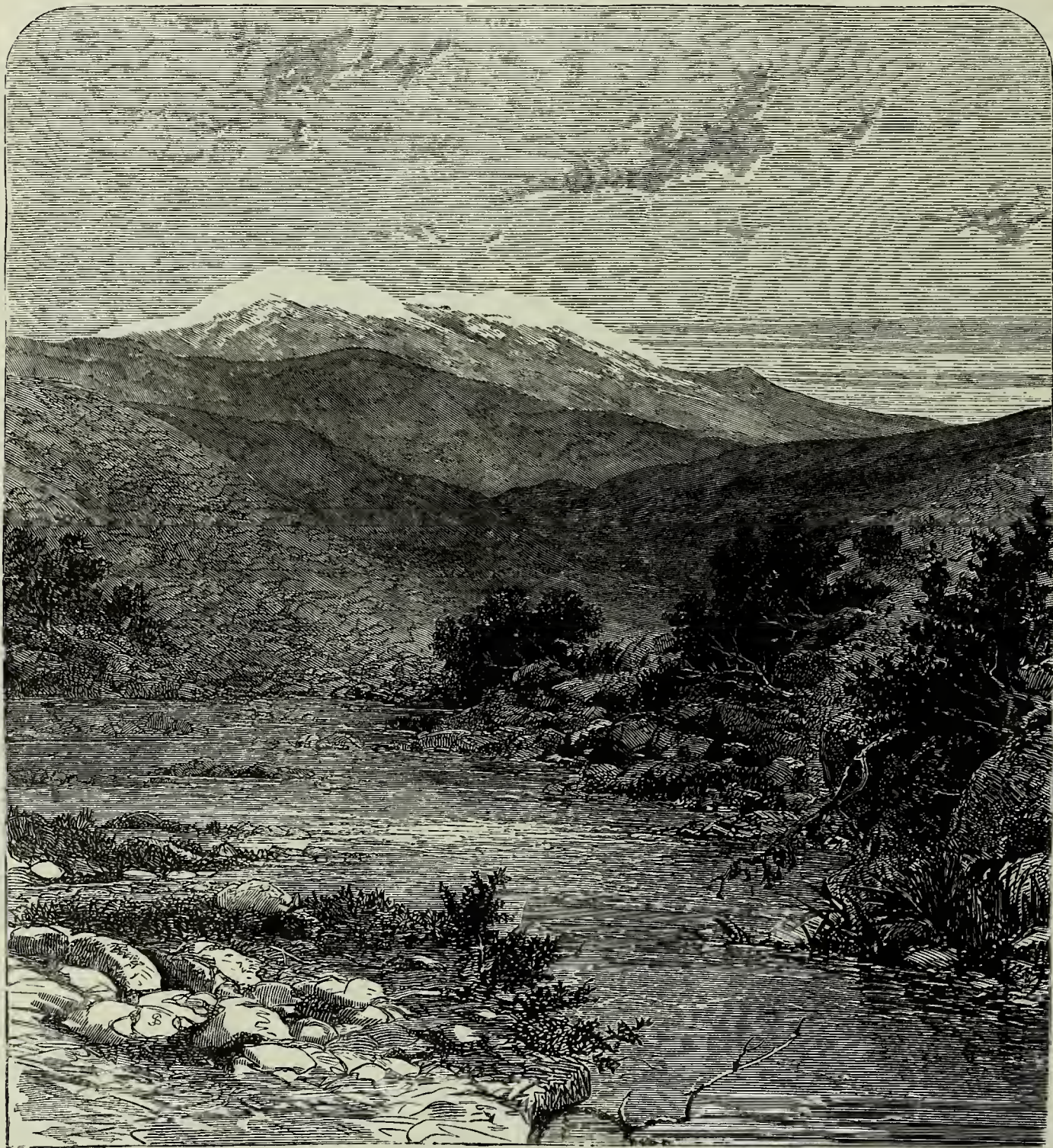
Soon after passing the northern end of the lake the snowy summit of Hermon, which has been previously visible at intervals for some days,



HERMON FROM THE NORTHERN SHORE OF LAKE HÛLEH.

comes full into view, and forms a fine feature in the landscape. A cool, refreshing breeze flows down from its glittering heights, and is doubly welcome in the sultry plain over which we are toiling. The contrast between the near and the distant landscape is very striking. The Plain of Hûleh might be a portion of tropical Africa. Drove of black, hairless buffaloes wallow in the swamps. The Gawarineh Arabs, almost black and quite naked, live in reed huts like many negro tribes, and twist their hair into a tuft like the inhabitants of the Gold Coast. The intense heat produces a semi-tropical vegetation. But we have only to turn our eyes to the northern horizon to see a long stretch of snow as bright, and clear, and cold as that of Switzerland.

We cross a fine old Roman bridge which spans the picturesque gorge of the Hasbany, and soon reach a remarkable mound or *tell*, from the foot of which gushes out a stream of water so broad and deep that we may almost call it a river. This is one of THE SOURCES OF THE JORDAN. The mound



HERMON FROM NEAR TELL-EL-KADI.

above it is called the Tell-el-Kadi (*the Mound of the Judge*), a rare instance of a name being retained not in sound but in meaning. 'Dan' in Hebrew, like Kadi in Arabic, means judge; and here stood the CITY OF DAN. The history of the conquest is graphically told in the Book of Judges.¹ The tribes,

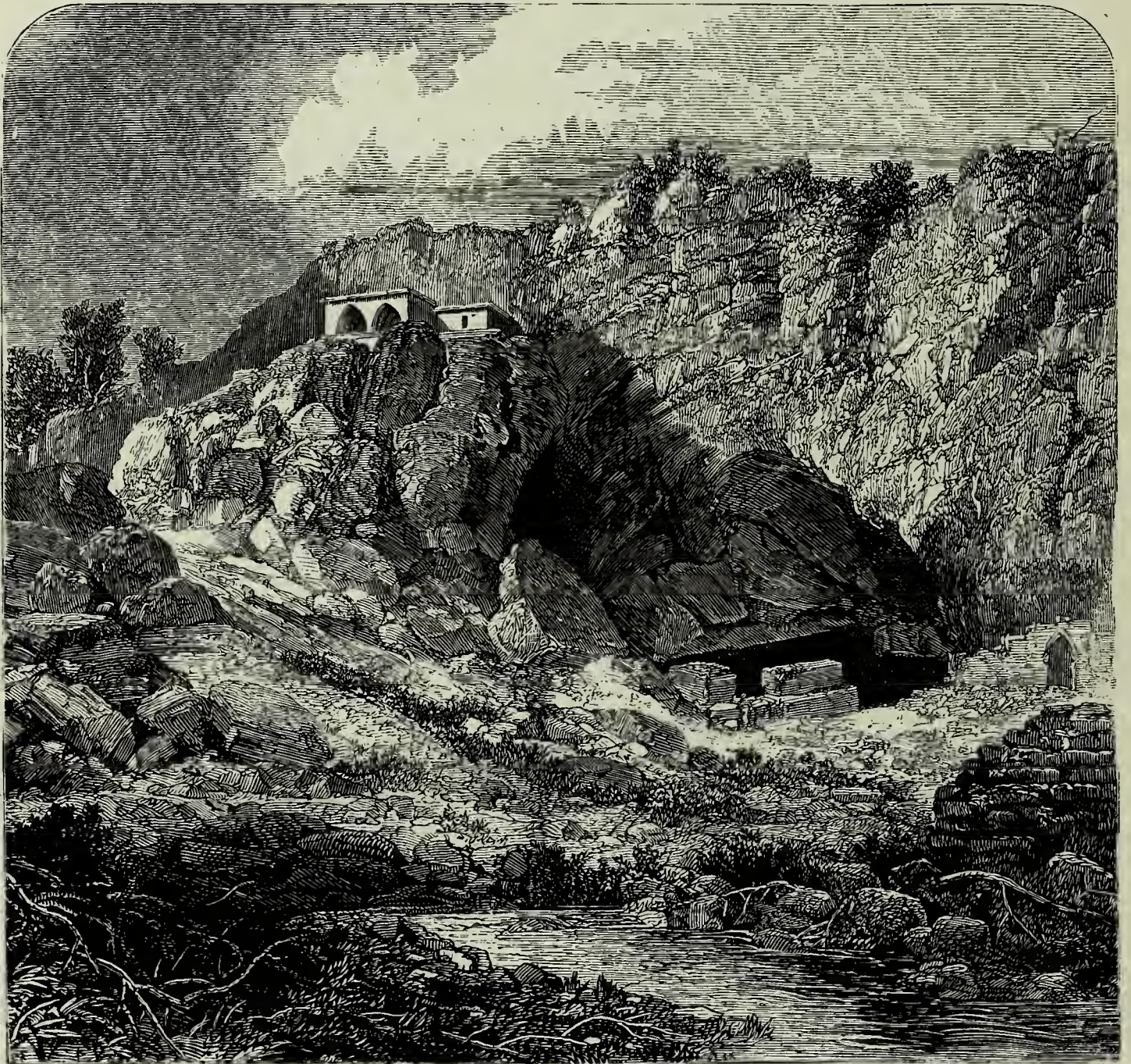
¹ Chapter xviii.

finding their territory on the borders of Sharon too strait for them, sent spies northward, who reported that 'the land was very good, a place where there is no want for anything that is in the earth.' The Zidonian colonists, far from their mother city, were leading lives of luxury and licentiousness; 'they dwelt carelessly after the manner of the Zidonians, quiet and secure; and there was no magistrate in the land that might put them to shame in anything.' The warlike Danites burst upon them, stormed their city of Laish, conquered the whole territory, and transferred the head-quarters of the tribe to their new home. The exquisite fertility and beauty of the country justified the report of the spies. But, like Lot under a similar temptation, they seem to have succumbed to the evil influences around them, and to have sunk down into a condition of semi-heathenism from which they never emerged. The mounds of ruins which mark the site of the city show that it covered a considerable extent of ground. But there remains no record of any noble deed wrought by the degenerate tribe, and, as we have seen, their name disappears from the roll both of the natural and of the spiritual Israel.

The other main source of the Jordan rises at the town of Banias, about four miles from Tell-el-Kadi. At the foot of a limestone cliff is a large cave, formerly dedicated to the god Pan, from which the modern Arabic name of the town is derived. Several niches and dedicatory tablets, with Greek inscriptions cut in the face of the rock, yet remain. Masses of fallen rock and débris obstruct the entrance and bury the actual fountain-head. From beneath these a stream rushes forth in wonderful strength and volume. As at Tell-el-Kadi, it is a river at its source. Only a few yards from the spot at which it emerges from its rocky birthplace, I plunged in, and found myself out of my depth in a current so strong that it was difficult to swim against it. The torrent rushes on over a rocky bed fringed with oleanders, past the ruins of the ancient city, and soon is joined by its sister-stream from Tell-el-Kadi. The Hasbany then falls into it a few miles above Lake Hûleh. The united waters from this point take the familiar name of the Jordan, to pursue their impetuous course till they are lost amid the arid shores of the Dead Sea.

The situation of Banias is one of unusual beauty. Robinson speaks of it as 'unique: combining in an unusual degree the elements of grandeur and beauty. It nestles in its recess at the southern base of the mighty Hermon, which towers in majesty to an elevation of seven thousand or eight thousand feet above; whilst the abundant waters of the glorious fountain spread over the terrace luxuriant fertility, and the graceful interchange of copse, lawn, and waving fields.' All travellers are struck by the park-like character of the surrounding district. Trees of great size and beauty stand in clumps upon the green turf. Innumerable rivulets and waterfalls give vivacity to the scene, and justify the epithet of Dean Stanley, who calls it 'a Syrian Tivoli.' Massive remains of Roman fortifications give to the modern village an air of

venerable dignity. The ruined castle of Es-Subeibeh, on the peak of Hermon just above the town, is incomparably fine. Its situation, its extent, and the magnificent views which it commands over the fertile plains of the Upper Jordan on the one side, and the gorges of Hermon on the other, are perhaps unsurpassed in the world.¹



THE SOURCE OF THE JORDAN AT BANIAS.

Banias does not appear in Scripture under its present name. Robinson suggests that it is the 'Baal-gad in the Valley of Lebanon under Mount Hermon,'² up to which the conquests of Joshua extended in this direction. For us its chief interest is found in the fact that it was the CÆSAREA PHILIPPI which formed the northern limit of our Lord's ministry, and the neighbourhood

¹ See Frontispiece.

² Joshua xi. 17.

of which was the scene of His transfiguration.¹ The monkish legend which placed it at Tabor is now universally abandoned. The secluded valleys and gorges which run from the very suburbs of the town amongst the spurs of Hermon afford a fitting theatre for this wonderful manifestation. It was in sight of the mighty mass of the venerable mountain that He proclaimed Himself to be the rock upon which His Church should be built. Surrounded by the temples of Syrian, Greek, and Roman deities, with which the region was profaned, He declared that the gates of hell should not prevail against it. It was amongst these solemn solitudes that the voice was heard from heaven saying, 'This is My beloved Son : hear Him.'

There was deep significance in the time and place at which this manifestation of Divine glory was made. It was, as we have seen, the northern limit of His earthly ministry. It was, too, at the close of His last missionary journey. Henceforward His face was 'steadfastly set to go up to Jerusalem,' for 'the time was come that He should be received up.'² He now commenced that pilgrimage southward of which the cross was the foreseen goal. Step by step along the road by which we have travelled He pressed onward, each step bringing Him nearer to 'the decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem;' of which 'Moses and Elias spake with Him' as they 'appeared in glory.'³

The thoughts and feelings excited by a visit to Palestine, find apt expression in the words of two authors, widely separated from each other in time and in character. The first is a crusader, Sir John Mandeville, deeply imbued with the credulity and superstition of the Middle Ages. Writing more than five centuries ago, he says in the Prologue to his *Voiage et Travaille* : 'Forasmuch as the land beyond the sea, that is to say, the Holy Land, which men call the land of promise or of behest, passing all other lands, is the most worthy land, most excellent, and lady and sovereign of all other lands, and is blessed and hallowed with the precious body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ ; in which land it pleased Him to take flesh and blood of the Virgin Mary, to environ that Holy Land with His blessed feet ; and there He would, of His blessedness, shadow Him in the said blessed and glorious Virgin Mary, and become man and work many miracles, and preach and teach the faith and the law of Christian men unto His children ; and there it pleased Him to suffer many reprovings and scorns for us ; and He that was King of heaven, of air, of earth, of sea, and of all things that are contained in them, would only be called King of that land, when He said, "Rex sum Judeorum," that is to say, I am King of the Jews ; and that land He chose before all other lands, as the best and most worthy land, and the most virtuous land of all the world. See, now, how dearly He

¹ Matt. xvi. 13-28 ; xvii. 1-13. Mark ix. 2-13. Luke ix. 28-36.

² Luke ix. 51.

³ Luke ix. 31.

bought man, that He made after His own image, and how dearly He redeemed us for the great love that He had to us, and we never deserved it of Him; for more precious goods or greater ransom might He not put for us, than His blessed body, His precious blood, and His holy life, which He enthralled for us; and He offered all for us, that never did sin. Oh! dear God! what love had He to us His subjects, when He that never trespassed, would for trespassers suffer death! Right well ought we to love and worship, to dread and serve such a Lord, and to worship and praise such a Holy Land, that brought forth such fruit, through which every man is saved, unless it be his own fault. Well may that land be called delectable and a fruitful land, that was made moist with the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ; which is the same land that our Lord promised us in heritage.’¹

The second is a writer living in our time and expressing the critical and sceptical tendency of modern thought—M. Renan. He says: ‘The scientific mission, having for its object the exploration of ancient Phœnicia, which I directed in 1860 and 1861, led me to reside on the frontiers of Galilee, and to travel there frequently. I have traversed in all directions the country of the Gospels, I have visited Jerusalem, Hebron and Samaria; scarcely any important locality of the history of Jesus has escaped me. All this history, which at a distance seems to float in the clouds of an unreal world, thus took a form, a solidity which astonished me. The striking agreement of the texts with the places, the marvellous harmony of the gospel ideal with the country which served it as a framework, were like a revelation to me. I had before my eyes a fifth gospel, torn, but still legible, and henceforward, through the recitals of Matthew and Mark, in place of an abstract being, whose existence might have been doubted, I saw living and moving, an admirable human figure.’²

The superstitious crusader and the cold sceptical critic thus agree in attesting the influence exerted upon them by ‘those holy fields.’ The devotion of the one is kindled as he visits the earthly abode of the incarnate Deity. The intellect of the other is convinced as he traces the footsteps of Jesus of Nazareth. To many of the readers of this volume it may not be granted to gaze upon the spots hallowed by memories of patriarchs and prophets, and apostles, and of our Lord Himself. But all may reach ‘the better country, that is, a heavenly,’ of which the earthly Canaan was but a type; all may share the vision and the blessedness of ‘the New Jerusalem,’ ‘the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.’

¹ *Early Travels in Palestine*. Edited by Wright, pp. 127, 128.

² *The Life of Jesus*, by Renan, pp. 30, 31.

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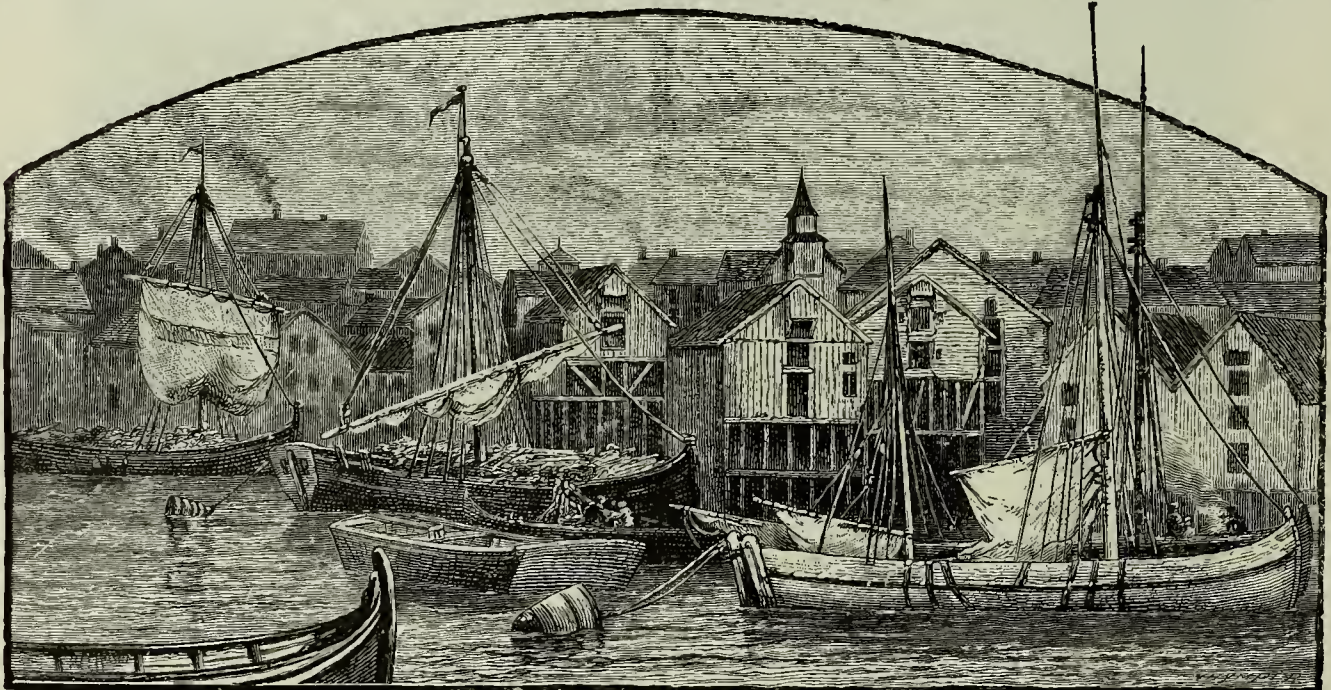


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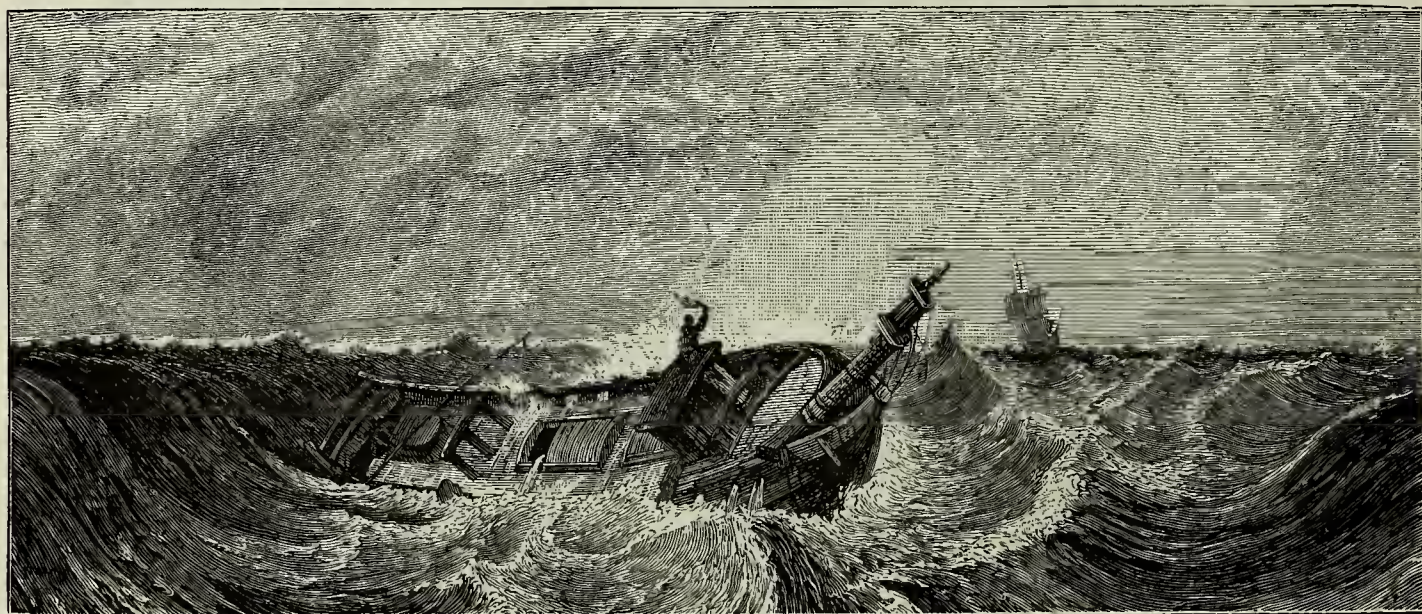
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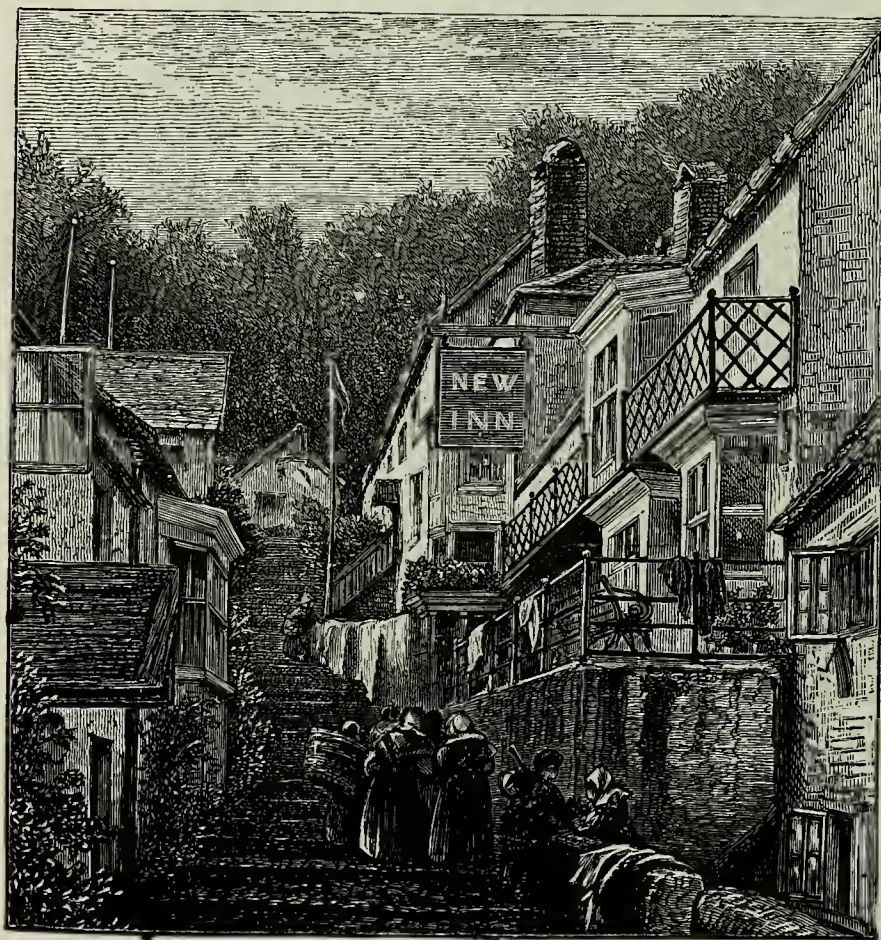
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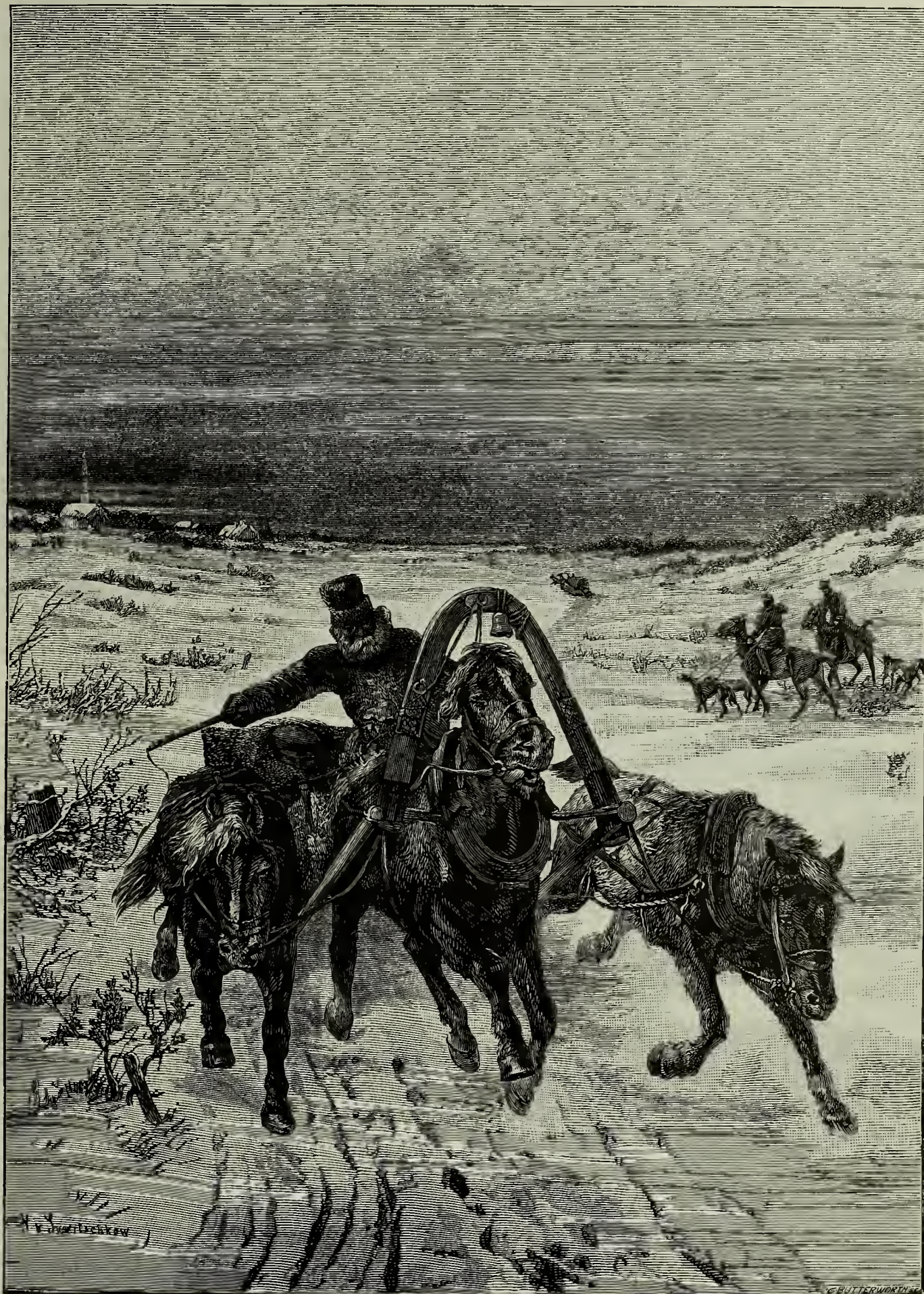
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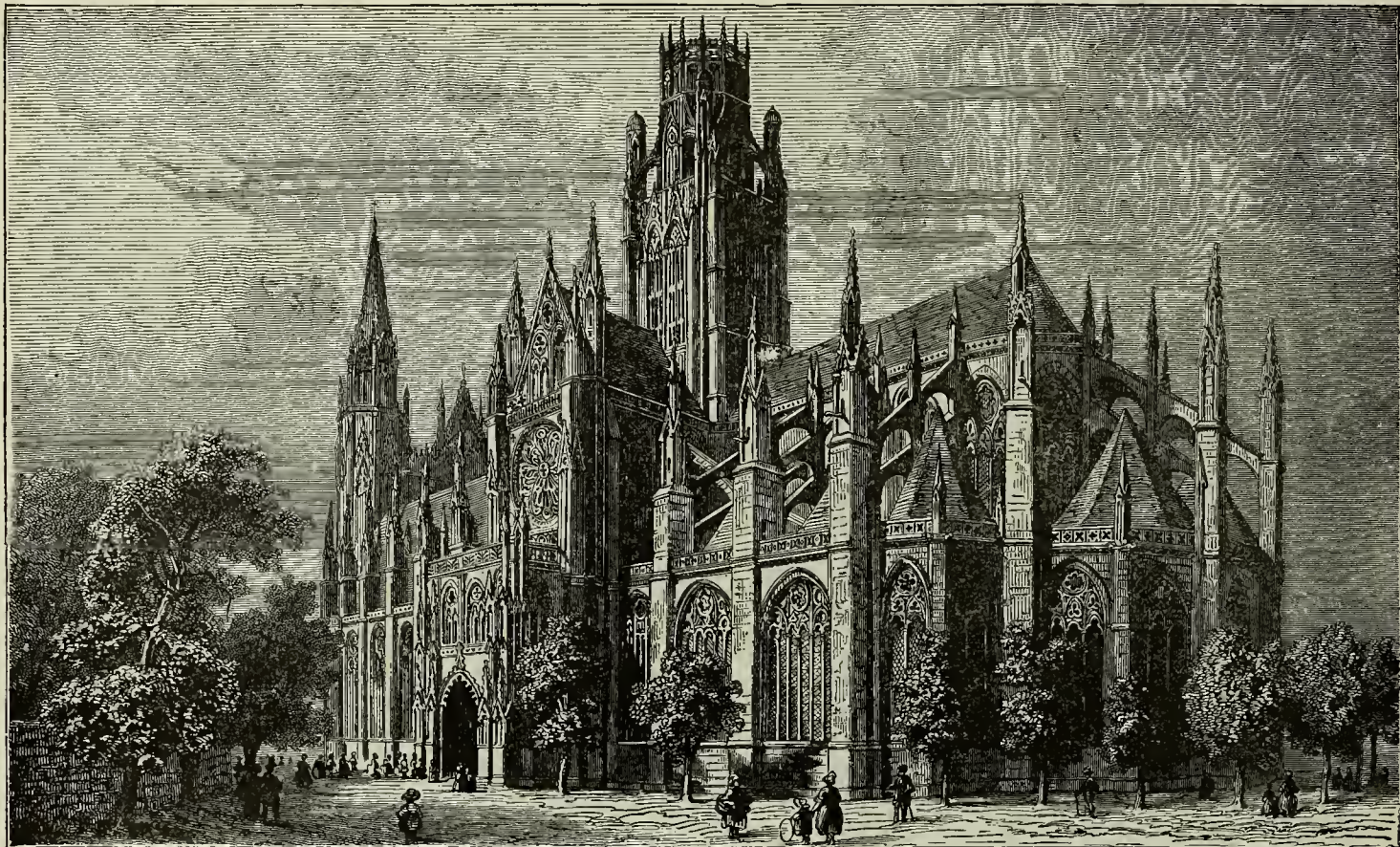
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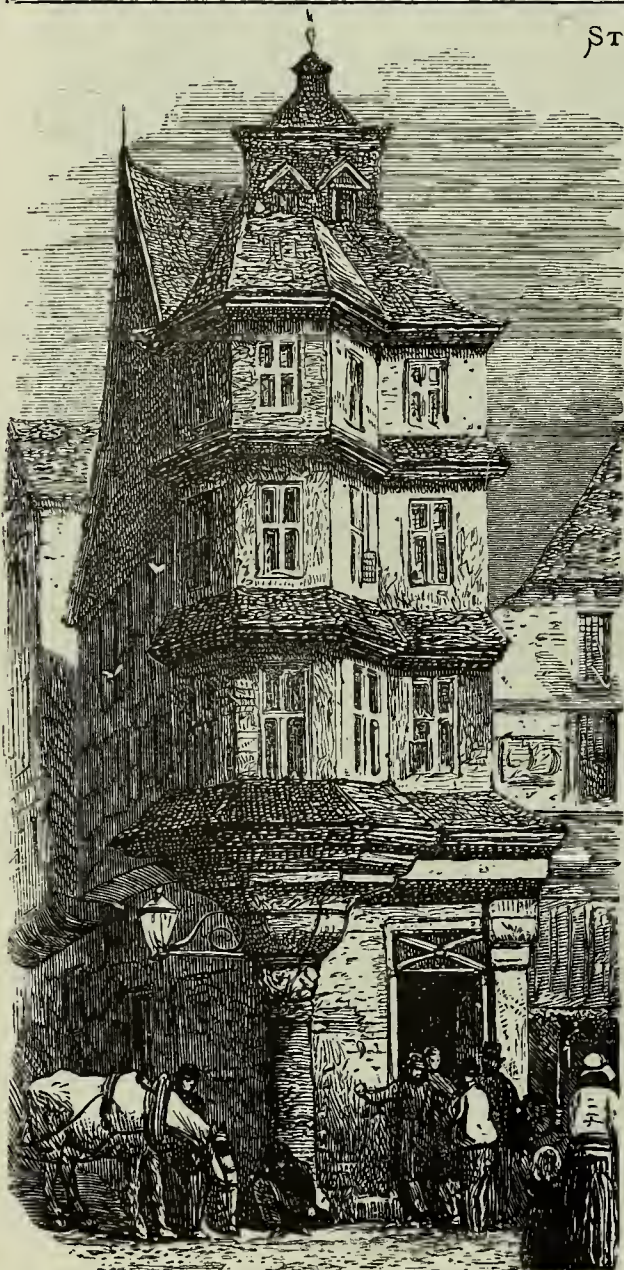
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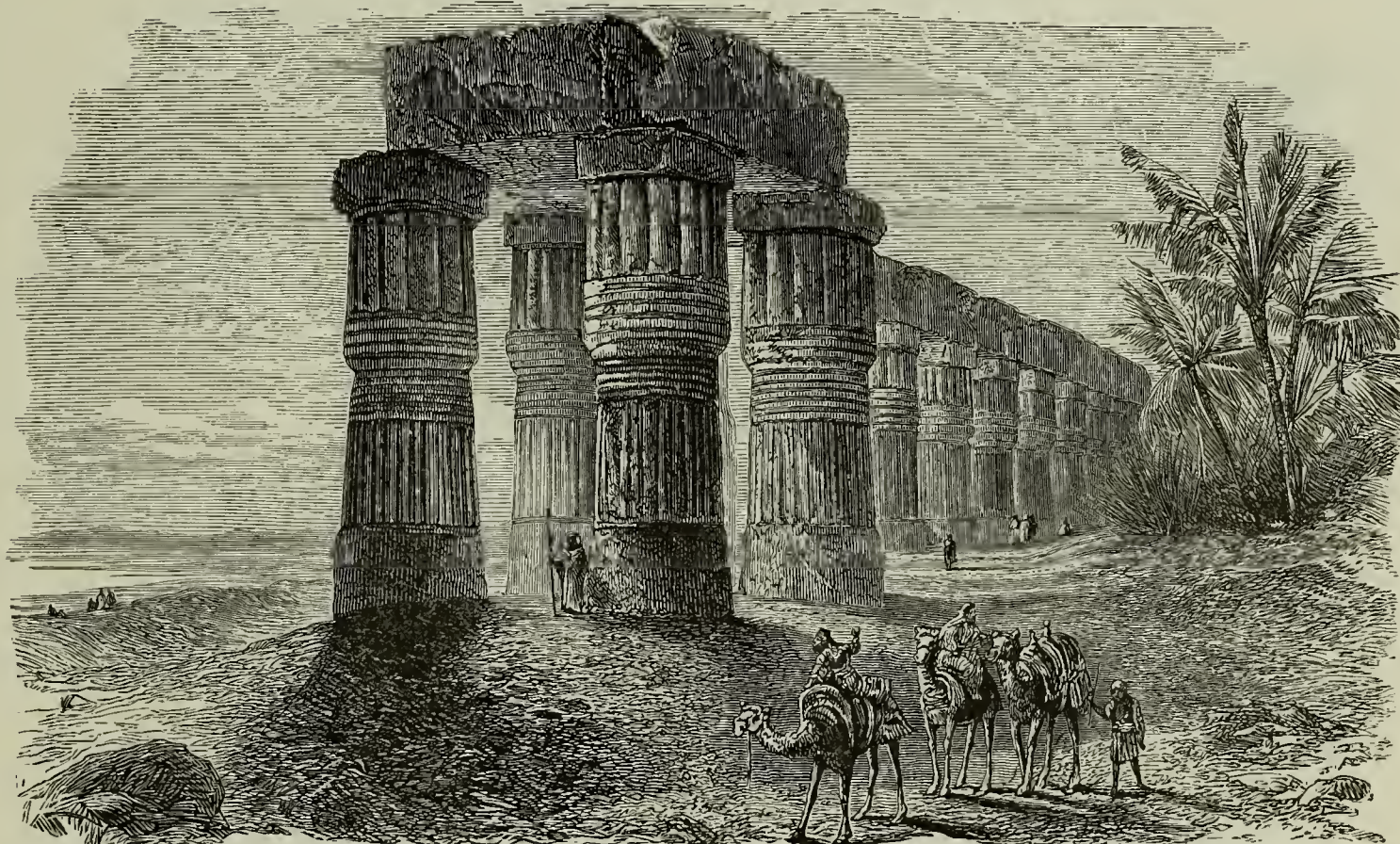


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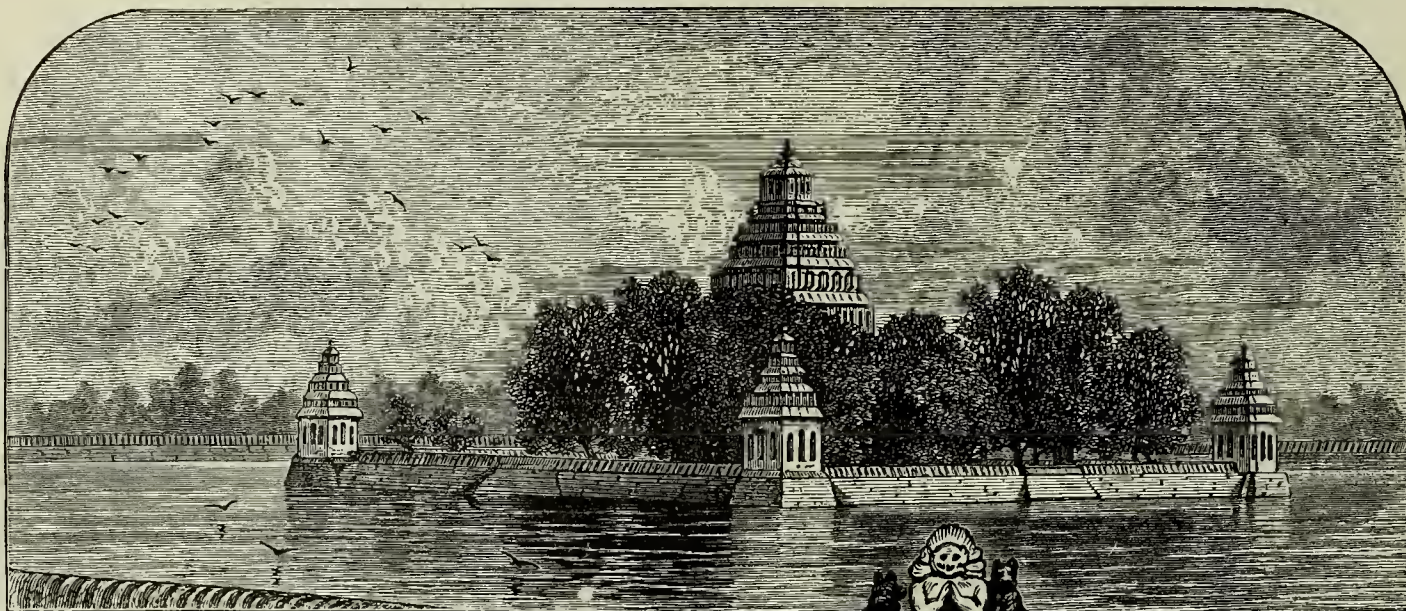


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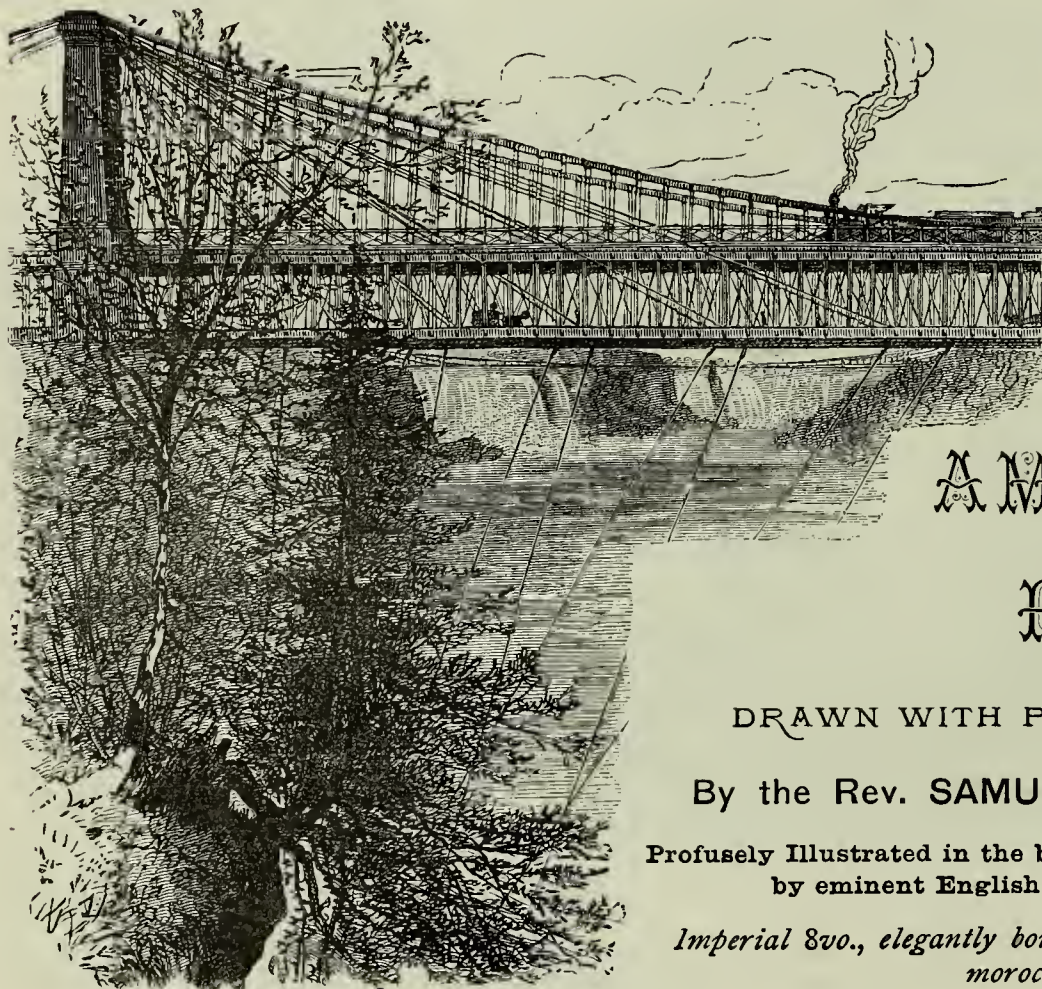
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