

RAMBLES  
IN MY  
FATHERLAND

Part III

by J E Hanauer  
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# RAMBLES IN MY FATHERLAND

or Notes for Sketches from Palestine

J. E. Hanauer.

Part the Third.



### PART THREE - Notes.

As our water tanks at Jerusalem are running dry, it has been resolved to spend some time at Artass until the fall of the first rains which, it is hoped, will supply us with water for some time to come. Will you accompany us? By all means. I have often wished to spend some time there and become acquainted with the customs of the people, and the country south and west of Bethlehem. I cannot promise that we will be able to devote much time to exploration, but we will see what can be done. In the meantime whilst the camels are being loaded, let us descend into the valley of Gihon, and leave them to follow.

This large reservoir is the lower pool, called by the natives Birket es Sultan. That long and pompous inscription inserted in that Saracenic fountain at the southern end, informs us in intricately interwoven characters that it was erected by the Sultan Suleiman, King of the Arabs and Persians and Romans in the year of the Hejira.

What are those people squatting on the eastern platform of rock, rolling those large stones about for?

Do you see those fellah girls and children scattered along that hillside? They are gathering fragments of broken pottery, which they bring to those people to be ground under those stones. This forms one of the ingredients of the cement with which the cisterns are lined. It is called 'hamra' and the cement made out of it is very durable and impervious to water. We will see specimens of it at the pools of Solomon and other places during our rambles.

Those rocky terraces or platforms on either side of the pool are used as threshing-floors in summer. The people here thresh without the Noredj which has often been described. Let us now follow this path that leads down the valley towards Siloam.

That will lead us out of the usual track, will it not? It will, but as there are several things of interest on the way, we may safely turn aside a little. The road generally taken would lead past the Aqueduct from Solomon's Pools, which runs past that rock hewn staircase on the western side of the valley, and then we would have to follow the road, leaving that Turkish mansion on our left, and the ancient quarry on our right.

Advancing we would get a fine view of the Wady Rababeh, Valley of Hinnom. A little further on, we would leave Deir Abu Tor—those buildings on top of the hill of Evil Counsel on our left—then passing vineyards and plantations of mulberry trees we would find our way out on to the plain or Valley of Rephaim El Bukah.

What birds are those we see flying from tree to tree at our approach? They are jays, and their shrill screams remind one almost involuntarily of the dreadful noises once heard in this very valley thousands of years ago when the apostate Israelites made their children pass through the fire to that horrid idol who was set up somewhere under those cliffs.

“Moloch, horrid king, besmeared with blood  
 Of human sacrifice, and parents’ tears,  
 Though for the noise of drums and timbrels loud  
 Their children’s cries unheard, that pass’d thro’ fire  
 To his grim idol. Him, the Ammonite  
 Worshipped in Rabba and her watery plain,  
 In Argob and in Basan to the stream  
 Of utmost Arnon. Nor content with such  
 Audacious neighbourhood, the wisest heart  
 Of Solomon he led by fraud to build  
 His temple right against the temple of God,  
 On that opprobrious hill; and made his grove  
 The pleasant vale of Hinnom, Tophet thence  
 And black Gehenna call’d, the type of Hell.”

Milton: (Paradise Lost)

Isn't it strange that the present name of this vale is Wad er Rababeh, Valley of the Fiddle. Do you not think it possible that it may have got the name from a dim tradition which may exist, concerning the dreadful instrument alluded to in the scrap of poetry just quoted?

That I cannot tell you, the idea has often struck me, and I have several times asked intelligent natives the reason why the name is given to this wady, but without success.

A family of kestrels resides in a crevice in these cliffs. They feed on centipedes, lizards, etc., as I can testify from having found parts of those animals in the intestines of one that I shot. I have several times noticed that these hawks are generally found in the neighbourhood of wild pigeons' nest. So, as a general rule, if you discover the nest of one of these hawks, you may search for that of wild doves at no great distance.

Both birds are to be found in countless numbers in the Haram area, especially near the S.E. Angle, and I know a cave in the Kedron, not far from Beit Sahour where pigeons and hawks have their nests—on what footing I cannot tell, but it is certain in close intercourse.

Now we will follow this road to the right leading towards the precipices. In spring, autumn and winter you will find lots of cyclamen, ‘Hobs al Kak’ as the natives call the plant, growing among these rocks.

This rocky staircase on our right leads up to that cave and over its doorway you will find a Greek inscription quite illegible, from being weather-worn. Here is a copy of it as it is yet to be seen. This other one over this tomb close by is more legible, though some rude hands have lately attempted to deface it. There is a rudely hewn cross just above it, and another just at its commencement. It runs in two lines, thus:- [see original text]

You will find the very same inscription or parts of it on several other rock hewn sepulchres in this neighbourhood. They are hardly of any value. Along this terrace, called Aceldama, there are many rock hewn sepulchres.

Many of the caves were destroyed during the few past years, in order to meet the demand for building stone. Further down there is an ancient ruined building, which served as a charnel house for the Armenians till the year 1841. The base of the structure is hewn in the rock, as can be seen if one glances at the interior. The walls are ancient, the vault probably dates from the time of the Crusades. One can enter by an aperture from a cavern at the S.W. Angle. In a cave close to the S.E. Angle, there are still a great many bones; the entrance to this cave is blocked up.

Not far to the east of this building you will find a sepulchre, whose cornice or frieze is adorned with sculptured clusters of grapes, triglyphs, metopes, etc. The interior was once covered with plaster, portions of which remain, and show the dim traces of images of saints painted on it. An altar, constructed of rude stones, and bits of tallow tapers lying about, show that it is still considered a sanctuary by pilgrims to the holy places.

Our French Guide book gives an account of this place and its history which I will quote for your edification. The author believes that this is the sepulchre of Annas the High Priest. He says, "Après avoir monte une espece d'escalier creuse dans la pierre, on remarque a gauche un monument taille dans le roc, ayant une frise ornee de huit metopes; deux grappes de raisin, deux diademes, et quatre rosaces, separees par des triglyphes a deux baguettes....." page 199. (Guide Indicateur des Sanctuaires et Lieux Historiques de la Terre Sainte. 1869) By the bye, here on the opposite page the author gives an account of Moloch in a footnote which is interesting, and as it may throw some light on the question of Wady Rababeh, I will translate it as we follow that path up the hill.

"Moloch was a brazen statue with the head of an ox, and outstretched arms like those of a man wishing to receive something from some other person. The interior of this statue was hollow. In order to reach it, the worshippers had to pass through seven halls or chapels. The person who wished to sacrifice a dove or some other bird, entered the first of these antechambers; he who wished to offer a sheep or lamb, entered the second; the third was for the sacrifice of rams, the fourth for calves, the fifth for a bull, the sixth for an ox, but he who wished to sacrifice his own son entered the seventh and embraced the idol." This according to our author, is the meaning of that passage in Hosea 13:2, "Let the men that sacrifice, kiss the calves," or rather to translate from his quotation, "It is necessary to sacrifice men in order to be able to kiss the calves."

The child was placed before the idol which was heated till it became red, by a fire made under it. Then the priest took the child and placed it on the burning arms of Moloch and drums were sounded to prevent the parents from hearing their infants'

cries. This is the reason this place received the name of Tophet, which means drum. Then if the meaning of the name, Valley of Tophet is the same as Valley of the Drums, we would be led to conclude, that the name Wad er Rababeh, or Valley of the Fiddle, has a similar derivation.

See, here is the aqueduct from the Solomon's Pools. It runs out of a cutting in the white cretaceous rock, then along the hillside towards the rock-cut staircase on the road to Bethlehem, then along the valley of Gihon, which it crosses at some distance north of Birket es Sultan, and then it runs along the southwestern slope of Zion.

Near the English Cemetery it passes a more ancient aqueduct from the Pools, discovered by Captain Warren, and then passing Burj al Kibrete, it enters the town. I suppose that we will find plenty of fossils in these chalky cliffs, which have hollows washed into their faces by the rain. If you have any interest in such things, I must take you to Beit Sahour, a deserted village on the hills south of the Kedron, and there you will find as many as you wish for, but let us leave this path, cross the aqueduct, and gain the top of the hill of Evil Counsel.

There is a magnificent view from this spot. Behind us to the south lies the fertile little plain of Rephaim. That building on the top of that low hill to the west is a convent belonging to the Greeks. Their monastic tradition identifies it as the home of the aged Simeon. Looking northwest we notice Talitha Kumi, amongst a number of gardens and orchards. Further on, the Russian buildings ask for a moment's delay, and then our eye runs along the city wall towards the Coenaculum and the Diocesan Boys School a little to the southwest of it, and a little lower down the hill.

This last named institution lies just in front of us, Sixty orphans are educated there. Many visitors visit the house annually in order to see the ancient chamber which now does duty as a dining room.

There is a beautiful native legend connected with the ancient chamber alluded to. It tells that in Patriarchal times its site was occupied by a house belonging to two brothers, one of whom was married, and the other not. One day in summer, the two brothers having finished threshing the produce of that year's harvest on the threshing floor in the pool below, divided the grain equally between them. Night came on before they were able to remove the wheat, so they resolved to spend the night at the threshing floor together, as they had often done before, on similar occasions. Wrapping their abas round them, they soon dropped off to sleep. About midnight the married brother awoke and began to soliloquize in this manner. "I am a married man, I have a wife and child in whose society I enjoy many comforts and pleasures which are unknown to my dear brother who is single. It is therefore not fair that I should share equally with him in the produce of the year's harvest." Rising, he went to his own heap, took a certain number of measures from it, emptied them on his brother's heap, and then lay down by his side. Hardly had his eyelids closed in slumber before his brother awoke, and also began to speak to himself. "My brother is married," said

he, "has a wife and child, whom he must support, whilst I am single, and need only care for myself. It is only right that he should have more wheat than I." He rose in the darkness, took from his heap the same quantity of corn which had been poured on it by his brother, and poured it on the heap of its former owner. He then went to sleep again. Angels descended at the command of the Almighty, in order to protect the brothers and refresh them both with dreams of Paradise. Some days afterwards, a prophet to whom the matter had been revealed by God, sent for the brothers, and told them that in consideration of this virtuous action, a blessing would rest upon them, their descendants, and on all who should own the site of their dwelling after them.

On first entering the cemetery you notice three monuments larger than most of the others, standing under an olive tree on the left. They mark the graves of Bishop Alexander, the Rev. J. Nicolayson, and Dr. McGowan, whose bodies rest in that spot till the trump of the Archangel wakes them from their slumbers. In the northwestern corner of the cemetery is the staircase referred to. The steps are 36 in number, and run down to a considerable distance below the present surface of the ground. Just behind the city wall to the N.E. of the picture we notice the domes of the Jewish Synagogues, then we glance at the Mosques of Es Sukhra and El Aksa, and the next instant we have our eyes fixed on the white dome of the church lately built on the summit of Olivet by the Princess de la Tour D'Auverne, and then those long white lines, which run along the Moab range, and mark the strata of the limestone formation.

Looking at the valley of Jehoshaphat we see the houses of Siloam hanging on the western slope of the Mt. of Offense, and on our left the diamond shaped panes of the Montefiore cottages, reflecting back the rays of the morning sun.

These buildings here appear to be modern and these rough heaps of stone lying about give one no idea as to the age or character of the edifices which once crowned this summit of Deir Abu Tor. This one, with the old olive tree in its small court is a wely, but see here to the west of it is an old cistern, the form of the arch of which, and its peculiar appearance, makes it evident that it belongs to the Roman period.

I suppose that this tree all blown to one side by the westerly gales, and standing close to these conglomerate rocks, which are mixed with flints, is the traditional tree where Judas Iscariot hanged himself. It forms a landmark in the scenery. Now we will turn southward across this plain of Rephaim. That ruin on our left is of comparatively modern date. There is nothing very remarkable about it, except perhaps a small stone in the eastern wall, containing fossils. The ruin is inhabited by owls and jackals.

I remember that when a boy I once visited the edifice with my schoolmates. After having looked at the place, I was standing on the outside of the building, just under those two windows looking south, when all at once a fox jumped from one of them, more than 20 feet from the ground, and fell at my feet. For a moment the poor creature lay there apparently stunned, but reviving the next instant, he dashed

westwards across the plain and disappeared in a cloud of dust. My comrades, on rejoining me told me that they had surprised it in one of the upper chambers, and that finding no other way for escape, it had hazarded the desperate leap.

This plain is beautifully green in some parts, what crops are grown here! Those green patches are fields of doura, but in spring you will find a great deal of wheat, barley or lentils bending to the westerly breezes. Sometimes the people of Beit Safafa, that village near the southwest corner of the plain, sow sesame—but not often, nor in great quantities. Those large heaps of grey stones between us and the village are called ‘The seven heaps.’

The plain of the Rephaim is mentioned in Scripture. Several times, Rephaim means giants, and we accordingly find a valley of the giants mentioned as one of the points past which the boundary line between the tribes of Judah and Benjamin ran. The locality is precisely indicated in Josh.15:8, and Josh. 18:16. The first of these two passages runs thus: “The border went up by the valley of the son of Hinnom unto the south side of the Jebusite; the same is Jerusalem and the border went up to the top of the mountain that lieth before the valley of Hinnom westward, which is at the end of the valley of the giants northward.” Then again in II Sam. 5:18,25, and in I Chr. 14:8-17, we are told of two victories gained over the Philistines by the man after God’s own heart. Further on, in II Sam. 23:13-17, the valley of Rephaim and Baal-Perazim are connected with the gallant deed of three of David’s heroes. See also I Chr. 11:15-19. Perhaps Baal-Perazim may be the village of Zur Baher or Zur-Baal, as I have sometimes heard it called.

Isaiah, when threatening Syria and Israel, says that the glory of Israel shall be as he that gathereth ears in the valley of Rephaim, Isa. 17:5. That valley near the top of the hill on the north of Wady Haneenah, far away on our right, is named Malha. This cistern here is the so-called ‘Well of the Magi’, where, as the monks tell us, the wise men from the East recognized the Star which had led them during their wanderings, by its reflection in the water. But the guide book is decidedly wrong in calling it Bir en Nejm, for it is known to the natives as Bir Kadis.

Now we have reached the convent of Mar Elias. You notice that the northern wing and upper part of the building was only built a short time ago. The other parts look venerable, and are grey with age, reminding one of a fortress of the middle ages. This convent was built by Heraclius in the 7th century. John Phocas tells us that having been ruined by an earthquake, it was rebuilt by the Greek Emperor Manuel Porphyrogenitus Comnenus about A.D. 1165. In the church, adorned with pictures of Elijah’s ascent to heaven, etc., you are shown the tomb of Elijah—not the prophet—but a Greek bishop who died in 1345.

Dositheus, another prelate, repaired the convent in 1678.

On the other side of the road, an indentation in the rock shows the exact spot where

the Tishbite stretched his weary limbs when fleeing from Jezebel. It is true that the Bible tells us that he rested under a juniper tree at Beersheba, but as the Greek Church has one St. Elias buried here, there is no good reason why some association of the prophet Elijah should not be connected with the spot.

From here we get a good idea of the barren and desolate hills southeast of Bethlehem. That conical peak rising in solitary greatness above the rest, is Herodium—the Frank Mountain, or Jebel Fureidis.

We also get our first view of Bethlehem from this place. Now let us proceed on our way. This vine-clad hill on our left is pointed out by tradition as the spot where Jacob had his tents pitched, when Rachel died, and it still bears the name of Beit Yacob. Just opposite this place, a large block of stone with a small hollow under it is called by the natives Kala'at el Mal (the castle of treasure). They say that a great deal of treasure hid there under the guardianship of ghouls is therefore unattainable. This rock is on the left hand as you look southward.

Note those Russian pilgrims picking up peas! On that bare rock? It was (according to tradition) once a fruitful field. It is said that one day the owner, having ploughed it, was busily engaged sowing peas, when our Saviour, or as some say, the Virgin Mary, passed. He or she, it does not much matter which to the natives, being hungry, asked the sower for a handful. The peasant roughly bade the weary traveller go on, telling him that he must be blind not to see that he was only scattering stones about. “Be it so,” answered the Son of God, and proceeded on his way, leaving the terrified sower to behold his store of seed turned to stones, and his field become the barren rock we have just passed.

Here is Rachel's sepulchre, and as that company of Jews has just left, we will rest for a while in the vestibule, and read some of the names scribbled on the wall. Most of them are in Hebrew, but some are in English, and look here—there is a verse of the well known children's hymn, “Gentle Jesus, meek and mild, Look upon a little child. Pity my simplicity. Suffer me to come to Thee.” And here are other texts of Scripture written on the wall with lead pencil, evidently by the same hand—but so high up that it is evident that the “little child” was a tall man. Rachel's sepulchre is several times mentioned in the Bible. We read that Jacob erected a pillar over the grave of his beloved wife, Gen. 35:20. Rachel was buried in the way to Ephrah, which is Bethlehem. It is again mentioned in I Sam. 10:2, in connection with Zelzah or Zelah, the words are, “Rachel's sepulchre in the border of Benjamin at Zelzah.” The border of Benjamin, that is the southern boundary of that tribe, we noticed this morning when crossing the plain of Rephaim. Zelzah, or Zelah, has been identified by Messrs. Bonar, McCheyne and others as the present Beit Jalah, that large village on the hillside opposite this monument.

Josephus, writing during the first century of the Christian era, mentions Rachel's tomb. In the 5th century it is mentioned by St. Jerome and Paula. Then during the

7th century the spot was marked by a pyramid of stones.

The Jewish author, Benjamin of Tudela, writing in the 12th century found a monument, built of 12 stones on the spot, It is next mentioned in the 13th century by the German traveller Borchardt, in the 14th by the Chevalier de Bandelsel, in the 15th by Dreidenback, and in the 16th by the Prince de Radziville. During the following century we find that it was repaired by order of Sultan Mohammed the 4th, and again some years ago Sir Moses Montefiore had the place restored. The northern part of this edifice, under the dome, is evidently more ancient than the lewan or vestibule. Near the S.W. Angle of the building you will find an old trunk filled with human bones!

Dr. Thompson mentions a Ramah somewhere in this neighbourhood, about 400 yards from Rachel's tomb, and he thinks it probable that it is the Rama alluded to by Jeremiah, in the words quoted by Matthew, "In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation and weeping, and great mourning: Rachel weeping for her children and would not be comforted, because they are not." Perhaps it is the same place as the site called Khirbet al Atfal—the ruins of the infants—which is the name given to some old remains in this nursery of young olive trees on our right. The fellahin of Beit Jalah have a tradition that a great number of infants, who had been hidden there, were discovered by the monster Herod and slaughtered before their mothers' eyes.

We said that Beit Jalah has been identified with Zelzah or Zelah. It has been remarked that the modern name might easily be formed from the word Zelah, by prefixing the common "Beit", house, and softening the sibilant letter.

An intelligent native of the place, whom I asked for the derivation of the name, once told me that native traditions tell that it was founded by one Jael and that the name in former years was Beit Jael, but that it gradually became Beit Jalah. If Beit Jalah can be correctly identified with Zelah, then we have the place where the bones of Saul and Jonathan were interred "in the country of Benjamin in Zelah, in the sepulchre of Kish, his father." Perhaps the tomb of Gideon, which is shown in the village, is the spot where the two heroes rest, for Scripture tells us that Gideon was buried in Ophrah of the Abiezrites, and not at Zelah—Judges 8:52. The fact, however, that Beit Jalah is in Judah, and not in Benjamin, would make this identification hard to maintain, but it is a point which we will leave to others to discuss.

Most of those olive trees belong to the people of Beit Jalah, but a locust plague and lack of rain years ago forced many of the poor folk to sell their trees, so that many of them now belong to people from Jerusalem. When Ibrahim Pasha destroyed the Muslim quarter at Bethlehem, after the great rebellion in 1834, he cut down a great many olive trees belonging to the Mohammedans, ordering the Christians to cut crosses on theirs in order to prevent them from sharing the same fate. Some years ago, the Greeks discovered that these eight trees which we have just passed had such crosses on them, as you can see if you climb over the wall, so they claimed and

received them from the government.

If we follow this road further we will be taken to the Pools of Solomon, so we shall leave it and turn eastward towards Bethlehem. The road is cut in the marly rock, and these bits of mother of pearl scattered about tell us plainly what the principal occupation of the inhabitants is.

This enclosure, with all iron gate which we have just passed is the Protestant cemetery, and that well built house of two storeys is the Mission house. Seen from the south and southwest, the building is one of the most plainly seen in views of Bethlehem. The Mission is supported by a German Society—the Jerusalem Society of Berlin, but the missionary, Rev. Mr. Muller, is a clergyman of the Church of England. The Protestant congregation is but small, and has to suffer a great deal of opposition from the Greeks and Latins. The headstrong and turbulent Bethlehemites do not like to become humble followers of the meek and lowly Infant Jesus. They are ready enough to kneel at the manger in the church of the Nativity in pious devotion one moment, and the next they are as ready to try sharpening their knives on the person of some other Christian who may chance to be of another denomination. The Protestants have no church here, but divine service is held every morning according to the forms of the Anglican Church.

The well of David—a cistern which bears that name—is amongst the fig gardens N.E. of the village. It bears the marks of evident antiquity about it, and its position agrees well with the narration of the Scriptures. David was in the cavern at Khureitun. The Philistine garrison held the town. The camp was out on the Buka'ah, an hour north of Bethlehem. The three champions, coming from the south, cut their way through the garrison, drew the water and brought it to their leader.

We are now at the convent of the Nativity, and you must bow your head if you would enter this fortress-like edifice by its low door. This entrance was built so low in order to prevent the Mohammedans from stabling their beasts in the church. Only the wings of the basilica are in use. They are divided from the chief nave with its four rows of noble Corinthian columns by a wall with three doors. On the walls of this nave are the remains of the pictures in mosaic with which the church was adorned during the 12th century. The roof rests on a framework of cedar beams from Lebanon. A staircase with 16 steps leads down to the grotto under the high altar of the Greek Church.

Our hearts sink as we descend into this cavern. Here in the midst of darkness, only relieved by the numerous lamps suspended from the roof, a Franciscan monk hands us the wax tapers and directs our attention to a semicircular niche between the two flights of steps leading up to the church. This niche, he tells us, is the place where Christ was born, and he points to several fragments of a picture in mosaic, representing the Saviour's birth. This picture was executed in the time of the Crusades. Round about this niche 15 lamps burn day and night. Of these, 4 belong to

the Roman Catholics, 6 to the Greeks, and the remaining 5 to the Armenians. At the bottom of this recess we notice a circular hole in a slab of white marble, surrounded by a star of silver with the Latin inscription, "Hic de Virgine Maria, Jesus Christus natus est." Here Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary. Through this orifice we can perceive a bluish stone—probably jasper.

Turning away from this spot, we descend by a few low steps into the Presipio, or the Oratory of the Manger. The manger itself is a shallow alabaster trough. The rocky sides of the grotto are hung with silken curtains. Close to the manger, an altar ornamented with a painting by Maello represents the wise men from the east worshipping Christ. Another painting by the same artist shows the infant Jesus in the manger—painted in 1781. I have seen enough of this place, and somehow or other, I feel disgusted with it; what else is there to be seen?

Leaving the oratory on our left, we follow a rock-cut passage, and find ourselves in a chapel dedicated to Joseph. This chapel was hewn out of the live rock by order of a high Roman Catholic Ecclesiastic in 1621. A descent of 5 steps leads from this chapel into another, called that of the Innocents, the altar of which is said to cover their tomb.

Proceeding northwards, a staircase leading up to the Church of St. Catherine is left on our right, and now we stand before an altar which marks the tomb of Eusebius of Cremona, the disciple of Jerome. He died in A.D. 422. Further on we are shown the altar built over the tomb of the noble Roman lady Paula and her daughter Eustachia, the intimate friends of Jerome. Descended from the families of the Scipios and Gracchii, Paula was married to a person through whose veins Jewish blood flowed. After his death she left Rome and came to live in Bethlehem with her daughter. She was conversant with Hebrew and Greek, and spent much of her time perusing the Scripture. She died A.D. 404, her daughter surviving her by 15 years. Opposite the altar is another, erected over the grave of St. Jerome, the venerable translator of the Scriptures into Latin. His translation is the well known one called the Vulgate. Over this altar is a picture of the old man. Now let us enter the place where he studied so diligently. The dim light which enters from a window above is sufficient to enable us to survey this chapel without the help of tapers, and to see the painting over the altar which represents St. Jerome at his literary labours, together with the emblematic lion. Returning by the road we came, we reach the staircase leading up to the Church of St. Catherine.

What proof is there that this church of the Nativity has any right to the title? Had you asked that question of the monk who conducted us through the sonterrain we have just left, he would have proved it to your, or perhaps to his own, satisfaction by quoting history and tradition, but as he is gone I will try to do so.

Justin Martyr, a Christian writer, who suffered martyrdom at Rome during the second century, says that Jesus was born in a grotto at Bethlehem. St. Jerome, in the 4th

century, made the localities of Palestine his study and we learn that the primitive Christians built a chapel on the spot where Jesus Christ was born. This building was destroyed by the Emperor Adrian in A.D. 135. He surrounded the place with a wood dedicated to Adonis, and caused Venus to be worshipped in the place where the manger is. Helena laid the foundation of the basilica A.D. 327. It was finished 6 years afterwards by Constantine, A.D.333. St. Jerome, Eusebius of Cremona, and Paula lived here towards the end of the 4th century, and this fact is one of the strongest arguments brought forward to prove the reality of the site.

The Church was restored by Justinian in the year 630 A.D. It is probable that it suffered from the invasion of Chosroes 16 years before. Eight years after its restoration, the caliph Omar spread his carpet in the grotto and went through the Buka'ah in the place where Esa (Jesus) was born. When the Crusaders reached Emmaus, they were met by several deputies from Bethlehem, who entreated them to come and take possession of the place. Tancred was sent with some followers for that purpose. They started after midnight, and before sunrise the standard of the cross, floating over the basilica, informed the surrounding country that Bethlehem was in the hands of the Christians. I have not sufficient patience to recount all the chief events in the subsequent history of Bethlehem, or to describe the coronation of Baldwin 1st in the church by the intriguing Daimbert on Dec. 25th, 1101 or to recount the deeds of the 200 men-at-arms which the bishop, as feudal vassal of the king, with the title of Count of Bethlehem, had to furnish to the crown.

In 1167 Saladin took the place. It was restored to the Christians by a treaty of Frederic II of Germany with the Sultan Melek al Kamel in 1229 and this treaty was renewed 11 years after, in 1240 by Richard, Earl of Cornwall, and for what follows I must refer you to other authors.

I have heard enough. In fact whilst you were speaking, I hardly listened to what you said, my thoughts were wandering far back to the ages previous to our era. I thought of Rachel's death on Bethlehem's road, Gen. 35:19, then my memory took a leap over about 590 years, and lighted on IBZAN of Bethlehem who had 30 sons and 30 daughters, whom he sent abroad, and took in 30 daughters from abroad for his sons, and he judged Israel 7 years—Judges 12:9.

A large family indeed, but what were the fortunes of Bethlehem after that?

After the judge, I thought of Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh (Moses) a young Levite of Bethlehem, Judah, who became the first apostate priest in Israel. This Levite reminded me of the other Levite from Mt. Ephraim who went to fetch his concubine from this place, and the fearful tragedy at Gibeah—Judges 19, 20, 21. Then the Book of Ruth and its contents came to be considered, and the figures of Naomi and Ruth, Boaz and Obed and Jesse, seemed to start up life-size before my mind's eye, till all vanished and methought that I saw the ruddy form of the young shepherd who was to become the future King of Israel. Methought I saw his fight

with the wild beasts on those hillsides, his victory over the Philistine champion, and his subsequent successes. From him my thoughts wandered over the records of sacred history till a greater Son of David appeared, and celestial choirs announced the birth of the Prince of Peace to shepherds abiding in the fields, keeping watch over their flocks by night, and the rocks and caverns of the neighbouring wadis echoed back the glorious strain of, "Glory to God in the highest and peace on earth, good will towards men." These were the recollections which occupied my thoughts whilst you were recounting the fortunes of Bethlehem, and I must therefore apologise for having been such a careless listener, but where are you taking me now? We will visit a spot from whence we can survey the plain where monastic tradition says that the shepherds were abiding when the heavenly vision broke suddenly upon their startled sight. The spot is about a quarter hour's distance from Bethlehem. That village on the right is Beit Sahoor. There is nothing worth mentioning about this place, except that an old cistern is shown bearing the respectable title of Bir Miryam—Mary's well. Of course for a good reason, as every Bethlehemite will gravely tell you, the Virgin once happened to pass just as a man was drawing water. She happened to be thirsty and approached the man asking him to allow her to drink. The man, who was not over polite refused to let her touch the bucket, but told her with a sneer that she might drink. Nothing daunted by this repulse, she came close to the cistern and the water welled up to the brink and enabled her to quench her thirst, after which it returned to its ordinary level.

The Shepherd's Field itself is further to the east, and enclosed by a wall of roughly hewn stones. This area is strewn with the ruins of a convent created on the spot, said to have been erected by Paula. Whilst wandering amongst the ruins, you suddenly discover a staircase leading down to a closed door. Some beggarly fellah boy who has followed you, in the hopes of getting a baksheesh, summons the Greek priest of the village and the reverend gentleman, whose greasy and slovenly appearance impresses you, shuffles forward and unlocks the door of a grotto. You enter and find yourself in a place fitted up as a Greek chapel, whilst the clergyman endeavours to prove that this is the exact spot where the shepherds were seated when the angel of the Lord came upon them. In order to illustrate his narrative he points to the coarse daubings and Arabic inscriptions, painted on the wall. You tell him that the Bible tells nothing of a grotto, and he is confounded, only able to mutter the words "Protestant" or "Free mason," between his teeth. A small baksheesh helps him regain his temper, and give you a civil "Mah salameh."

As you leave the place and return along the chalky road, since the place now belongs to the Greeks and not to the Latins, it is only natural that the latter should raise doubts as to the authenticity of the site, and seek to establish the claims of some ruin N.E. of the place. Now we will leave Bethlehem and follow the windings of our old friend, the aqueduct from the Pools, till they lead us to Artass. Its earthen pipes are cracked in many places and allow the water to run down the hill and along these waste rills

you always find a streak of verdure showing that only water is required in order to change the cracked and parched soil into a fruitful field. At one of these broken places you will find the women of Bethlehem washing and filling their bottles (goat skins)—their features more of a European caste than those of any other natives I have seen, and one would be led to believe they are descendants of those Franks who settled in Bethlehem during the time of the Crusades.

Where does that smoke, which we see curling over that hilltop, come from?

From some Atoon (lime kiln) in the neighbourhood. All those round heaps of white stones on the hills we passed—lying round a hollow in the ground which is carefully built round inside with a stone wall—are the remains of such kilns. And here comes a long line of camels, each carrying a load of lime in sacks, hanging one on each side of the animal. A great deal of lime is made in this part of the country and carried to Jerusalem where fresh buildings are springing up like mushrooms. I hear that some acquaintances of mine from Artass are going to start a lime kiln in a few days, and then if you feel any interest in the matter, we will pay them a visit in the night, when they look most interesting.

This beautiful valley running eastwards is the Wady Artass, and the sight of its luxuriant gardens is quite refreshing after our long and dusty walk, so here we will rest for awhile. See, the baggage has arrived and we will have to devote the rest of the day to getting things to rights in our temporary abode.

You rose early this morning, where did you go? The first thing I did was to walk down to the Ain, and after undressing, I entered the long and tortuous rock cut passage and bathed in its refreshing stream. As I was curious to know where it came from, I emerged and went to get a light. When I returned, I followed the passage some distance. In some places it is so low that one has to go on all fours, but in others one can walk upright. I don't know how far, or in what direction I went, for I had no measure or compass with me.

A good way in, I came upon a family of bats all hanging comfortably from the roof and projections of the sides of this passage. Having become tired of exploring further, I returned and found that the water had become quite red—since I had disturbed the deposit of mud at the bottom as I walked along. In some parts, especially near the entrance, the bottom of the channel is very narrow—so that one can hardly walk along, but in others it is not so.

Leaving the Ain I sauntered leisurely down the valley noticing by the way, that for some time the path ran in the open channel of a rock hewn aqueduct which ran into a pool.

It is small, and situated not far to the N.W. of a European colonist's home, about half way down the valley. Further on among the gardens I noticed another old pool much larger than that I just mentioned, but half filled with red earth and I was told that it

was discovered only a few years ago. Close by are the remains of what appeared to have been a bath, and one or two Corinthian capitals, fragments of columns and bits of mosaic lying about seemed to prove that an edifice of some importance had stood there in ancient times. The sun now rose and his first beams seemed to be the signal for great numbers of bee eaters to be on the alert and enliven the valley with their harsh notes. After a bit they looked like pieces of molten gold flying about, for their brilliant metallic plumage flashed back the rays of the solar orb, in the most dazzling manner.

I did not notice many bees about, but thought it possible that they might have come in such numbers to prey on the thousands of hornets that infest the place. Returning, I noticed several boys with eyelids and cheeks most dreadfully swollen, from having been stung by these nasty insects. Their nests are found everywhere amongst the rocks, in holes in the ground and in crevices of garden walls. Having seen how they pursued and chastised a poor donkey when I was so unlucky as to step on the hole of one of their nests, I needed no further illustration of those texts of Scripture, where the insects are mentioned as having been sent by the Lord in order to drive the Canaanites out of the land. Exod. 33:28; Deut. 7:20; Josh. 24:12.

There are many other hymenopterous insects to be found in the valley, but these dubabeer-hornets are the most numerous, largest, most revengeful, and good for nothing of the lot. It is said that if 27 sting a man or beast, death is sure to be the consequence. You may see them all day amongst the peach and other fruit trees, gorging themselves with the juices, but for no purpose but that of gluttony, for they make no honey whatever, though they do not scruple to rob the bees of it if they can; and if they cannot get at the combs in the hives, they will attack and devour the bees themselves, and this is one of the chief reasons why the people of Artass keep their hives at the old castle close to the Pools.

If you are an entomologist you will find an inexhaustible field of research amongst these gardens, whose moist soil affords a home to the mole-cricket and other creatures of the same family. But I would warn you to be careful whenever you turn over stones in search of specimens, for it is not an unusual thing to find a family of black scorpions, or a venomous snake coiled up underneath. But I must beg your pardon for having interrupted you in your account of your morning walk.

I did not see much more worth mentioning as I passed by the spring. A number of women were washing a lot of dirty clothes and I was surprised to see that they used no other process but that of laying one piece atop another between two stones in the water and thumping as hard as they could with the uppermost. If that is the way washing is done hereabouts, I no longer wonder at the ragged appearance of the peasants!

Leaving the Ain I found a couple of men busily engaged in clearing the stones out of the way, and I was glad to find that they had so much sense as to improve the road. I

stopped for a few seconds to watch them, and then came up here.

You have had an interesting ramble it appears, though you give those men clearing the road undeserved praise, for they only throw the stones out of one part of the road in order to collect the manure that is under them, having done so, they chuck the stones back again, and begin their search on the other side of the road. I forgot to tell you that I must go to Jerusalem on business and will be away for a night or two.

Arrangements have been made with S. .... for him to take you to the Frank Mountain, and Adullam whilst I am away. I hope that you will find much to interest you and expect to hear a detailed account of your adventures on my return, so farewell for the present.

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Welcome back, after your long absence. Your night or two has extended over a fortnight. I really could not help it, when I left I did not intend to stay away longer than I said I would; but I was so occupied that I was obliged to stay. I hope, however, that my absence has not been found inconvenient, and that you enjoyed the trip, which as I heard, you made to Hebron in my absence. If you wish, I will give you an account of a visit I paid to Beit Mahsir near Chesalon, some days ago.

By all means, you must give me a detailed account of that excursion.

Listen then. We left Jerusalem about 3.40 a.m. It was pitch dark—no moon was visible, and the only lights we saw were the stars, which looked down mysteriously on us as we travelled, some of us on foot, and the rest of the party mounted on small but hardy and surefooted donkeys.

As we passed the custom house outside Jaffa Gate, a large and very brilliant meteor darted across the northern sky, leaving a long line of blue light in its track, which was distinctly visible for some minutes after the meteor itself had disappeared. The fellahin deem it unlucky if one speaks about a meteor, so our guide did not remark about it.

The clock struck four as we neared Godfrey's height, and on looking back, we noticed the morning star rising over the cross of the Russian Cathedral. Passing Lifta, we descended the valley towards Colonia. The road led across the old bridge, and as the dawn broke over the naked hills we might have been discovered toiling along the road towards Abou Ghosh. The sun rose as we reached the small fountain in the valley east of the village, and not long after we left the old Church on our left. The monks say that Abou Ghosh, or Kiryet el Enab is the place where the prophet Jeremiah was born, and it may as well have been. While the Scripture does not mention it as his birth place, it is mentioned several times in Holy Writ under the name of Baalah or Kiryet Jearim. It was one of the cities that sent ambassadors to make peace with Joshua—Josh. 9:17. It is again mentioned in chapter 15:9, as one of the places

through which the boundary line between the territories of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin passed. However, the place itself belonged to Judah (15:60), and in this last named passage it is also called Kiryet Baal. When the Philistines sent the ark of the covenant back to the Israelites, the men of Kiryet came and fetched the ark of the Lord and brought it into the house of Abinadab in the hill, and sanctified Eleazar his son to keep the ark of the Lord, “And it came to pass, while the ark abode in Kirjat Jearim that the time was long; for it was twenty years: and all the house of Israel lamented after the Lord.” I Sam. 1:2.

That last clause of the passage you just quoted is a very remarkable one. Oh that the Israelites of our day, who bear the name of Christian, would thus lament after the Lord! But alas, there are very few who would follow the advice given by Samuel in the following verse, and put away all their strange gods, and prepare their hearts to serve the Lord and Him only!

Yes, and if men would cast out Baal and Ashteroth, the darling sins, and the abominations they commit in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery, then instead of the complaints heard on every hand, then songs of praise and psalms of thanksgiving would oftener rise from the hearts and to the lips of men, like the joyful stream echoed back by the hills between Kirjath Jearim and Zion when the ark of the Lord was brought from the house of Abinadab, which was a Gibeah to the house of Obed Edom, the Gittite, and David and all the house of Israel played before the Lord on all manner of instruments made of fir wood, even on harps and on psalteries, and on timbrels, on cornets and on cymbals, and the 24th Psalm was sung by the sweet singer of Israel.

“The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof; the world and they that dwell therein. For He hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods. Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the Lord and righteousness from the God of his salvation. This is the generation of them that seek Him, that seek thy face Oh Jacob. Selah.

Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up ye everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in. Who is this King of Glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up ye everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in. Who is this King of Glory? The Lord of hosts, He is the King of Glory. Selah” Psalm 24.

The road now led to the summit of the hill west of Baale and on reaching the top—what a glorious prospect opened out before us. We were able at a glance to take in the plain of Sharon and identify certain whitespots surrounded with verdure as the sites of Ramleh, Lydda, Beit Dedjan, Jaffa, etc. Beyond these, the wide expanse of the Mediterranean was clearly discerned, blending its blue waters with the azure of

the sky and a few white clouds, rising on the distant horizon, served to give a last finishing touch to the beautiful landscape. Oh where, where in the world can you give me such beauty! Such magnificent scenery as in Palestine, go where you will—I defy you to present such glorious prospects as those that meet you at every step in your wanderings through this my Fatherland!

“Two voices are there; one is of the sea,  
One of the mountains; each a mighty voice.”

A man’s heart must indeed be devoid of feeling if it does not respond and vibrate with the associations which these voices call to his mind. I hardly think it possible for intelligent man, for a Christian to stand on an elevated height on the backbone of Palestine, and look over the parched valley of the Jordan, at the purple mountains of the Moab range with the stagnant and mysterious Sea of Death lying at its base, sweltering under a tropical sun; and then turn westward, and leaping over the grey and barren mountains, with their shelving strata spread one above another in so many concentric circular layers, and survey the plain of Sharon and the white belt that marks the sandy sea beach of the Mediterranean, without carrying away with him emotions and impressions which will continue to thrill through his memory till the end of life.

We proceeded on our way through jungles of low and stunted evergreen oaks—*Quercus Gramuntia*—amongst which a number of red legged partridges were running about cackling, till we reached an old cistern by the roadside. Here we left the sultaneh or sultan’s high road, and turned southward amongst the olive groves of Sarris.

The village was left on our right, and we wended along the mountainside, going on towards the southwest. The scenery varied very slightly, a series of rounded limestone hills of a yellowish white colour and covered to the top with vegetation similar to that we had, and were still passing—evergreen oak and *Raykab arbutus* (*Arbutus Andrachnae*) lay one behind another as far as the eye could stretch.

No human being was visible, except where we descried an armed shepherd leading his flock of black goats and sheep, which browsed on the foliage of the shrubs as they rolled along the hillside.

No sound was heard, except the lugubrious notes of the shepherds’ reed, which were echoed back by the solitary, but everlasting hills. A cavern was passed whose blackened entrance told plainly that it had been used not long ago as a place where charcoal had been burned. We could now no longer see the track, and our path lay along a long shelving ledge of bare rock laid out like a flagstone. We now reached a beautiful grove of snobar pine (*Pinus Orientalis*) shading the ruined grave of a Muslim saint.

Oh! how delightfully cool and pleasant it was here with a refreshing breeze waving

through the branches and cooling our heated brows, on which the perspiration stood in large beaded drops. Open fir cones and needle shaped leaves were lying about in all directions, and it was with some difficulty that, in order not to hurt the feelings of our fellah guides, we were able to keep the juveniles of our party from climbing the trees and pulling down boughs to carry along with them. The place was a wely and the trees were therefore sacred in Muslim estimation, and one could hardly help thinking, when the respect with which these trees are regarded was noticed, of the groves and high places of the Israelites, which became the cause of so much sorrow, sin and suffering to God's covenant people!

Leaving this beautiful spot, we were shown a solitary little village on a hill far away on our left. It was Chesla, the Chesalon of Joshua 15:10. On reading that chapter one can hardly help being struck with the precision with which the geographical position of the cities of Judah are named. First those on the southern boundary, then those in the valley, that is on the seaboard plain of Sharon, then those on the mountains and in the interior of the tribe, and lastly those on the eastern confines, or as it is termed, in the wilderness. The track now led through a jungle of young pines, which grew luxuriantly in the marly soil! Another sacred grove was passed, and not long after the barking of dogs announced the vicinity of a village, and we reached Beit Machsur. The Sheikh of the village and several of the old men received us courteously. A carpet was spread for us under a tree, and soon we had all the males of the village crowding round us. Coffee berries were produced, roasted, pounded, boiled, and handed round in small cups. Mr. H... having concluded the business he came for with the Sheikh, the latter personage invited us to go and visit the oil press.

We were ushered into a dark and gloomy chamber and when we had become accustomed to the dim light, or rather to the darkness, we were able to watch the process of oil-making. The black olives are poured into large and shallow stone basins, a large stone wheel is rolled over them. This wheel has a square hole in the centre through which a rough beam passes. One end of this beam is fixed to, and moves round, a pivot in the centre of the stone basin and being drawn by a horse or mule, carries the massive wheel round with it. The oil runs into a stone trough and is then gathered and preserved in jars or cisterns.

The olives, after they are reduced to a pulp, are put into baskets made expressly for the purpose at Beit Dedjan or Lydda. These baskets are put one upon another, and the oil is pressed out of them by means of a large lever. Here the lever press was worked by the help of a large and roughly made screw formed out of the upright trunk of a tree, and cut by hand. Whether this was an improvement which had suggested itself to the mind of the fellahin from seeing screws used in Frank machines, or not, we were unable to ascertain. After having been once pressed, the pulp is emptied into large copper pans, saturated with water and then warmed over a fire, and then pressed for the last time. For further particulars and details of the other way of making oil in

the ‘mutruf’ I must refer you to Dr. Thompson’s “Land and the Book.”. Here the apparatus used was the ‘ma’serah’. The oil pressing was carried on in what appeared to have been the lower chamber of a large building. The style of architecture remarkably resembles that of the substructures of the Muristan as seen in the Wheat Bazaar at Jerusalem.

Leaving this place we returned to the place where carpets had been spread for us. On the way we noticed several women weaving carpets in a very primitive sort of loom, consisting of pegs fastened into the ground, and from which the thread was stretched.

We found a substantial breakfast of fresh baked bread and boiled eggs prepared for us through the kindness of the Sheikh, and after the repast he desired one of the villagers to lead us up to the wely on top of the hill on which the village is built.

It was very warm by this time, and quite a refreshing treat to lie on one’s back in the shade of the fine pine trees which form the grove, enjoying the cool sea breeze which played with their foliage. Amongst the trees we noticed a great many large and beautiful swallow-tailed butterflies (*Papilio Machaon*) flying about.

The wely itself, where a celebrated Muslim Dervish, called El Ajame, lies buried, we found shut; but we were amply compensated for not being able to enter by the glorious view we got of the beautiful plain of Sharon and Philistia and the glittering waters of the Mediterranean in the far distance. (Speaking correctly, the word ‘wely’ should not be applied to the tomb, but to him who lies buried in it. Yet as in books of travel it is often used as a name for the mausoleum, I believe myself justified in thus making use of it). A tree of Carob (*Ceratonia siligua*) sometimes erroneously called St. John’s bread, grows near the mausoleum, and in a few minutes the boys of the party had crammed their pockets with the pods.

After remaining here for sometime, enjoying the exquisite coolness, and the magnificent prospect, we returned to the village. On our way down the western slope of the hill we passed an ancient wine press hewn in the rock, and apparently as fit for use as it had been in the days when Israel dwelt safely in the land—every man under his vine and fig tree. The Muslim villagers never make wine, so that it is never used nowadays.

In the meantime a goat had been slaughtered by order of the hospitable Sheikh, and not long after we had taken our seats on the carpet under the tree, it appeared ready, cooked, in two massive wooden dishes. One of these was for the villagers, and the Sheikh and those of our party squatted round the other. There being neither knives or forks in our host’s establishment, we set about helping ourselves with our fingers. After eating, water was poured on our hands as in times of old. We did not remain here much longer, but as the sun was already in the west, we bade farewell to our host and turned our steps homewards.

A great many large ravens were sitting in the trees near the village, but they were very

wary, and it was impossible to get a shot at them. We soon reached the pine grove on the road, and halted for a short time. There was a great deal of resinous sap flowing down the grey bark of the trees, and it looked like glittering threads of crystal in the slanting rays of the afternoon sun.

We returned to the high road passing through Sarris, and not long after we left Abou Ghosh on our right. The stars were shining when we passed Castal and descended to Colonia. The lights in a far off valley to the south showed us the position of Ain Karim. Not long after we reached Jerusalem. Now I hope that you will be so good as to give me an account of the way you spent your time during my absence.

A day or two after you left us, I was startled from an afternoon nap by the incessant noise of muskets fired off in the village. Starting up in alarm, I enquired what the matter was, and was told that the Sheikh's sister was to be married, and that the guns were being fired in order to honour her.

We learned that four years ago the Sheikh married the sister of one of the villagers. He did not buy his bride as is customary amongst the fellahin, but it was stipulated that after the lapse of four years, he was to give his sister to the youngest brother of his bride not demanding any payment for her. Further, that the bridegrooms were to provide their brides with a certain number of dresses. At the Sheikh's wedding, the intended husband of his sister presented his future bride with the amount of clothes they had agreed on. As they were worn out by this time, the bridegroom was desired to provide her with a fresh lot of dresses. This, of course, he indignantly refused to do, but after much wrangling, he at last consented to give her one new dress, which promise he conscientiously fulfilled.

As a messenger had just arrived in order to invite us, we walked down to the Sheikh's house in front of which we found all the villagers assembled. The men were shooting by turns at a stone set up as a mark at the distance of about 40 paces, the stone a foot high and 8 inches broad. The marksmen did not shoot from their shoulders, for their old and long flint lock guns were too heavy to allow them to take aim in that way. They laid then over a large stone in order to keep them steady. They were all very indifferent shots, not hitting the mark once in a dozen times, and they looked up with awe at a stalwart ibex hunter, who contrived to knock it over 3 times running, and now stood looking on with a contemptuous smile on his bronzed countenance whilst he stroked his beard and uttered, "Mash sha Allah," whenever anyone was so fortunate to hit target.

Whilst the men were thus amusing themselves, the women were not idle. A goat was led up, killed by one of the men, chopped up and placed in a caldron over a blazing fire to reappear later in circular wooden dishes amidst heaps of rice swimming in semane—clarified butter. A party gathered round each dish and began to eat as if they had been fasting for a fortnight. A portion of food was sent into the house for the bride and the other women, who were not allowed to eat with the men. When the men

had done eating, the children finished the repast, and after them the dogs, who had been hungrily looking on, were allowed to pick the bones.

The sun having set, the wedding-camel was led up loaded with a new mattress, a thick quilt, pillows and other articles of domestic furniture in use among the fellahin. The Sheikh was now called upon to bring out his sister. He entered the house, but returned a few minutes later without the bride and coolly informed those present that he was sorry to be obliged to disappoint them, but that he could not make up his mind to give away his sister, especially as he was to receive nothing for her, and the bridegroom had very meanly refused to supply her with dresses befitting a person of her rank.

Anyone who has seen Arabs quarrelling about a five para piece (about one farthing) will be able to imagine what a storm of angry words was raised by this announcement. The bridegroom himself was absent, but his brother, who, as I was told was his representative, spoke very loudly of carrying the girl off by force, and made allusions to the Sheikh's beard which were anything but polite. The excitement became general and the villagers took sides.

At last the go-between, who had arranged the matches from years before, stepped forward and endeavoured to reconcile the angry parties but without success. The Sheikh made exorbitant demands, which caused a Frank lady, a visitor from Jerusalem, who was looking on, to remark that it was a good thing for a girl to have a brother that would stand up for her in such a manner.

The bridegroom's party however, seemed to think that there might be too much of a good thing and they were not behind in speaking out their thoughts, and boldly asserted that too many dresses had already been given, that the Sheikh knew nothing of honour or decency, and that as he had broken off the match, they claimed the price of their sister whom he had married four years before, or else they would destroy his house, etc., etc.

By this time it had become dark and as both parties seemed tired of quarrelling and yet would not give up, the go-between sent for his own wife's best dress and presented it to the Sheikh in the name of the bridegroom. The Sheikh received the garment, felt, criticised and grumbled about it, but as he could not get another he had to submit.

The bride was now led to the door of the house where she was met by four bridesmaids with black veils. She was completely muffled in a red silk dress, her face veiled, and she wore four ostrich feathers on her head, which in the darkness looked like so many horns.

As soon as she came out of the house, the bridesmaids led her to the camel on which she was placed by her brother, who, at the same time slaughtered a cock over the animal's head, whilst the men fired a volley, or rather what was meant to be a volley,

for many of the guns refused to go off and the powder only flashed in the pans!

As it was now quite dark, the flashes and reports of the guns, the noise and the dark complexions of the actors made the whole scene appear quite savage and unearthly. As the house of the bridegroom was not far from that which the bride had just left, instead of being led straight to it, the bridal procession proceeded for a short way down the valley. The men and boys were shouting and firing, and the women screaming at the utmost pitch of their shrill voices.

Nobody whom I asked could tell me why a cock was sacrificed on the head of the bridal camel. It was a custom I was told, taught them by their ancestors. Leaving the bridal party we went to the house of the bridegroom. He was a robust lad about eighteen years of age. We found him sitting on the roof of his house, which was on a level with the road, and as it appeared in no good humour. He rose, however, on seeing us and received us and our congratulations with a grim sort of satisfaction. We afterwards heard that he had received no new clothes from his brother, who had charge of all household matters, and had arranged and settled the whole matter whilst he was a mere child, concluding the match without once speaking to him about it. He was dressed in his brother's best clothes for the occasion.

From the roof of the house we could plainly see the bridal procession as it skirted the hills, the gun flashes caused it and the surrounding scenery to loom into sight one instant and vanish in the darkness the next. The unearthly noises seemed to have awaked all the echoes of Wady Artass!

When the bride arrived opposite her husband's house, she was lifted off the camel and led towards the door. On reaching it, the bridegroom took his station on her right. All the noise suddenly ceased for a few minutes when one of the brides maids took a lump of dough and dashed it against the lintel of the door; as it stuck, and the fact being ascertained, those present began to shout with all their might. I was told that the adhering of the dough was taken to presage a happy union.

The bride now laid her hand upon the dough and the bridegroom struck it thrice with his fist. The bridesmaid already mentioned, who seemed to act as mistress of ceremonies, now placed a jug of water on the head of the bride and made her hold it with her left hand, whilst the bridegroom tried to knock it off. Before he could do so, all the youths of the village who were yet unmarried set upon him behind and thumped him so unmercifully, that he was glad to rush into the house dragging his wife after him. The youths were, as I was told, supposed to envy him, that was why they set upon him so. If, however, he had been married before, he would have escaped the flogging. The striking the bride's hand when on the dough, and breaking the jug (breek), were intended to show that the husband had absolute power over his bride.

In Arab households the wife is not considered as the friend or helpmate of the

husband, but as his slave and drudge, and very often he styles her simply his baby or slipper, or uses the word 'Ajellack' whenever he speaks of her.

All those present entered the house, the women surrounded the bride and unveiled her, whilst the men left the room. A band of itinerant musicians now kept up a most horrid noise with their instruments for several hours after this.

We returned home, and about ten o'clock, hearing that some closing ceremony was to be performed, we again repaired to the place.

Ushered into a room we found the women of the village clapping their hands and dancing round the bride who was sitting motionless amongst her bridesmaids. The entrance of Franks did not seem to disturb those present. The bridesmaids were busily engaged round their poor victim, painting her eyes with Kohl, a black powder applied to the eyelids with a bodkin, which gives them a queer languishing look, and her fingers were stained with henna. This done, they gilded her face by covering it with pieces of gold leaf, thus making it look as if it belonged to a golden statue. All this while she sat perfectly motionless without speaking a word or relaxing a muscle of her rigid countenance.

Having been painted and gilded, she was again muffled up in her red silk robe, the veil and ostrich feathers thrown over her head, and she was led to the side of the room, and placed bolt upright against the wall. This had hardly been done when we saw the bridegroom stride in, looking very fierce, wearing a yataghan in his girdle.

All made way for him, and a breathless silence reigned in the crowded apartment as he traversed it and stopped short in front of the bride. He unsheathed his weapon and—now don't turn pale—I am not going to recount any deed of blood—but with its point he lifted the veil and exposed her metallic features, and then striking her thrice gently on the head with the arm, he repeated the words, "Bismillah irrahman erraheem," 'In the name of the compassionate, merciful God.' He now sheathed the scimitar, and after handing it to his brother took a stand on the bride's right hand.

The chief bridesmaid now advanced and taking his right hand, led him to the bride's left. She then tied his left sleeve (which was very wide) to the bride's right one, and then told those present that the couple were man and wife. The guests now came forward and dropped a trifling contribution in cash in the hands of the young couple, and then retired. This contribution is called 'Nekoot.'

Next day Derwish (the bridegroom) was at work as usual, and Aysha (the bride) was seen filling her skin water bottle at the Ain (Spring) as she had been accustomed to do since her childhood. Thus ended this wedding amongst Fellahin. The day after the wedding, it was decided that we would pay a visit to the Frank Mountain—Jebel Fureidis. We left Artass about two o'clock p.m. The road led eastwards over the hills. On the way nothing remarkable was noticed except a number of large birds which sat on the rocks at some distance from our path.

The tanks and pool at the base of the hill were dry. We clambered to the summit and walked about the ruins. The smallness of the place quite disappointed me. Josephus tells us that Herod elevated this hill by causing a great quantity of earth to be carried to the top, and the appearance of the place would seem to confirm his statement.

The view from the top is very extensive. Looking south we noticed the deep and savage gorge at Khureitun, and the fellah who accompanied us pointed out the position of the cave. To the northwest, we could very distinctly view the olive groves of Beit Jala, and eastward our [gaze?] wandered towards the Dead Sea and hills of Moab beyond.

The whole district between us and them was quite barren and desolate. Not a tree was visible, and not a solitary speck of verdure, it was a dry and weary land! Not a human habitation was visible, not even a Bedouin encampment. A feeling of melancholy crept over us as we thought of the magnificent edifice which once adorned this place, and the dark and bloody deeds of the unhappy man who lies buried here. We descended from our airy elevation and proceeded homewards.

The deserted village of Ta'ama was passed and not long after the rays of the setting sun were seen gilding the white houses of Bethlehem.

As we returned to Artass in the twilight, I noticed that the boys of the party were conversing in a very animated manner. I found that they were amusing themselves by proposing riddles. I was glad of such an opportunity, and I collected many—some of which I will give you with their answers.

### ARABIC RIDDLES

A whitewashed cistern without an opening?

Answer: An egg.

The second one struck me very much, it is the identical one that Josephus mentions as having been proposed when Hyrcanus Maccabaeus paid his visit to Ptolemy at Alexandria.

There is an animal, which in the morning walks on four feet, at noon on two, and in the evening on three.

Answer: A child crawls on his hands and feet, a grown person walks upright, and an old man leans on a stick. The animal is a human being.

There is something as black as night—but it is not night. It carries wings, though it is not a bird. It ate barley—though it is not a donkey. It entered the house, though it is not a mouse.

Answer: The Ant.

There are rows of dishes from here to Istanbul. What are the dishes?

Answer: The foot prints of the camel.

There is something that is very, very long, and yet it will not reach the udders of the she ass?

Answer: The road.

There is something as large as a nut which has 100 staring eyes?

Answer: A thimble.

There are layers of felt from here to Baghdad, what are they?

Answer: The clouds.

There is something not larger than a wasp and it fights against the horses, (meaning it can kill) in waste places?

Answer: A bullet.

I believe that these will be sufficient to serve as specimens. They are given in the vernacular, or that dialect generally in use amongst the lower classes.

During your absence I explored the long passage at the Ain, of which I told you once before, accompanied by a party of young friends from Jerusalem who volunteered to go in with me. H. advised us not to go in during the daytime, as we would dirty the water and thus annoy the villagers. We followed his advice and went down after nightfall, well provided with candles, and some of us with stout cudgels, for some of the fellahin, hearing of our intention, had told us that the place was haunted by a ghost. We thought that perhaps one of them might hide in a nook and try to impersonate the spirit, and we determined to see if a ghost could stand a flogging.

After following the passage for some time, it suddenly became so low that we had to go on all fours for a few feet, then we were again able to walk along in an upright posture. It now turned northwards and we were not a little surprised to find that on our right hand we had rock, and on our left a wall built of beautifully cut, and good sized stones, apparently ancient, but without the characteristic bevel. The roof, formed of massive slabs of white limestone, rested on a projecting course at the top of the wall. We could see what had once evidently been a continuation of the passage southward. It was choked up with rubbish and we could not follow it. We therefore continued to follow the course of the stream which runs in a narrow channel cut for it in the rock at the bottom of the aqueduct.

A little further on we came to the end of the masonry wall and the passage became lower but broader, being hewn out of, and roofed by, rock, so that we were again obliged to go on all fours through the water which is not deep, but has a great deal of mud lying under it. We were glad when we could again stand upright and noticed that

the roof was again no longer rock, but that about 15 feet above our heads there was a masonry arch.

There was also a niche in the rock a little above us, and H. . . climbed up to see what he could discover in it. It was empty and nothing remarkable was noticed hereabouts except a number of bats, and an enormous black spider which was captured by one of us who is a most enthusiastic Collector. The roof became low again, and after crawling for some time, we again found ourselves in a wide cave through which the stream flowed between two low walls of masonry, on both sides there was an accumulation of clay and mud.

At the entrance of this cave a square rock hewn shaft was remarked leading upwards. What appeared to be the rudiments of steps built of loose stones were seen on one side of it. Our first impulse was to climb up and see what there was at the top, but on second thoughts we resolved to follow the passage to its termination and then, if our candles were sufficient to last, till we were again in the open air, we would try to ascend the shaft on our return.

We therefore left it behind us, and on reaching the other side of the cave we had again to begin the crawling process. Our journey was soon at an end, for we found ourselves in another cave much like the one we had just left.

At the other end of this I noticed the passage had suddenly dwindled so much in size that it was with difficulty that I could squeeze through on my side with the water up to my chin, so that more than once I was obliged to take a reluctant mouthful. A couple of bats were fluttering a few inches in front of me and threatened to extinguish my candle with their membranous wings. I was just going to return, when I was greatly relieved to find that the roof had become a little higher and that I had reached a little circular cave about three feet in diameter.

No outlet was to be seen, and the water seemed to ooze from the sides and bottom of this cave. I had more difficulty in getting out of this place than I had coming in! The candle went out, and I found that the matches I had brought with me were wet so that I could not re-light it.

I contrived to swallow a quantity of the turbid water and was nearly choked by it. My companions in the cave heard me gurgling and sputtering and were alarmed by the sound, though they were unable to render me any assistance. My appearance, heels foremost soon relieved them from anxiety; and when at last I stood amongst them, all that clay and my drenched appearance excited much merriment, and their laughs strange and unearthly as they were echoed back by the recesses and windings of the passage. We now returned to the shaft, which we determined to ascend. H. . . got up with some difficulty and I followed.

At the top we found a great accumulation of the droppings of bats. The place was plastered with cement, and we noticed the openings of two caverns or rock cut

passages. One of these was blocked with earth and stones.

We were able to follow the other for about twelve feet when it also came to an end.

We descended and rejoined our companions in the passage, bringing with us the fragments of a broken jar we had discovered amongst the loose stones. We were tired of our exploration, so we returned to the open air, and after having washed away the mud which stuck to our limbs, we dressed and turned homewards, having seen no traces of the ghost of which the fellahin had warned us.

They are very superstitious and greatly fear monsters, ghouls, jinn and demons. I have since heard that they believe this passage to be the abode of more than one such demon. This place is reputed to be the abode of nine devils, and four spirits, each of which have a distinct form. Some of the villagers pretend to have seen them. If you ask how it is they were not hurt, they generally point to some charm or amulet which they wear and say that preserved them.

They have charms and amulets of all sorts, but they consider those which are written by black dervishes to be the best. These are generally pieces of paper on which passages from the Koran are written. I have in my possession two very remarkable ones, which I took from a boy in the Orphan Asylum on Mt. Zion. Here they are. You see that they are similar, and instead of writing, show the impression of several large seals or dies surrounding a very large one in the middle of the piece of paper.

This middle seal bears in its centre a rough representation of the Mosque Es Sakhra. Round this diagram or plan, are eleven smaller circles containing Arabic inscriptions. To give you an idea of their contents I will give you a translation of this one which I have marked with a Jerusalem Cross. It runs: "The Apostle (or messenger) of the king, the beloved, the learned Abraham, the friend of God, to him be prayer and peace." This large centre seal is flanked on both sides by two double bladed scimitars, also bearing inscriptions which are scarcely legible. Under the large seal you will notice a smaller one with the Sakhra, between two others which are supposed to resemble hands. The largest of either bears this inscription: On the thumb the words, "God is my trust." On the forefinger, "There is no God but God, Mohammed is the Apostle of God." On the other fingers, "What God designed; there is no victory and power except from God, Ya! Lateef" (Oh! Kind one) "The Highest, the Everlasting said, 'O Bury, God sends this announcement of Asa.'" It would be tedious and uninteresting to try to translate the others. These two will give you an idea of the sort of nonsense generally scribbled on these charms. Not only Muslims, but even many Greek Christians believe in their efficacy, and pay considerable sums to the rascally dervishes who dupe them in this way.

A person, who is no bad judge in these matters, once told me that it is not unusual for a man to pay about two pounds sterling for such trumpery. I heard a pious German say once, "Where there is no Faith—Superstition is sure to be." The low state of the

people in this country seems to be a striking confirmation of this saying. The Christians of the apostate churches know nothing of the Lord Jesus Christ, and what is the consequence? They are constantly in fear of being bewitched or hurt by evil spirits, and in order to secure themselves from the malevolent attacks of these spirits, they put their trust in fasts, pictures, pilgrimages, and in Muslim charms.

If any calamity overtake them, or some beloved object is snatched from them, then they are sure it is the effect of the evil eye, and instead of bowing under the chastening hand of the Almighty, you may hear bitter curses against the person whose envy, as they suppose, was the cause of the misfortune. If a home is being built you may generally see the skull of a camel hanging out of the window in order to keep away the evil eye. If a horse is seen pawing the ground, digging it up with his forefeet, he is directly sold by his owner. He would rather have him “dig graves” for someone else than for one of his own family. If an eclipse of the moon occurs, then some great calamity is sure to befall mankind, and the same rule holds good with respect to a comet or other unwanted appearance of the heavenly bodies.

But see, whilst we have been talking night has come on, and so you must spare the account of your journey to Hebron for tomorrow. I have just heard that some of the villagers have a lime kiln burning in the neighbourhood, and if you like, let us start at once to see it.

By all means, I have seen them for a long time past gathering bundles of thorns into bundles as fuel for the kilns, and become very much interested in the matter.

Let us start then, take a stick with you to lean on whilst you pick your way amongst the rocks, for to fall over them in the dark is no joke.

I will gladly obey you, but hark! What howl is that resounding through the valley, as if a number of fiends were fighting each other.

Have you never heard it before? It is only a concert of jackals. Hark! There is their dismal howl again, further off this time, however. It begins in a single long and plaintive wail which just as it is about to cease, is taken up by a host of others, and produces a concert most terrific and startling to a person who hears it for the first time.

And the second time either, I am sure. Do you think that it is prudent for us to go on? Do the brutes ever attack human beings?

No, they do not. They are very fearful, and unless they are famished, they will never attack any animal larger than themselves, and that only when they are in a company. They prefer feeding on dead bodies, and it is doubtless to this that David alludes when denouncing those who seek the soul of the righteous to destroy it, when he says, “They shall fall by the sword; they shall be a portion for foxes.” Psa. 63:10.

The noise they make when roaming over the open grave yards, so common in this

country, is most appalling, and it reminds me of a gang of these brutes that frightened me once.

I had left Jaffa some time after sunset, and had been sent on ahead of our party in order to obtain admission for the night at the Russian Hospice at Ramleh. As I cantered along in the dark, I heard their horrid howls at a distance, but did not mind them, as I knew what sort of beasts they were.

The noise died away, and all was silent as I approached the cemetery of the Greeks and Latins just outside the town. Just as I was passing a hedge of prickly pear, my horse suddenly stood still, as if rooted to the ground, and began to tremble violently. All my endeavours to induce it to go on were vain, and I became quite alarmed. Not knowing what to do I shouted, "Meen honak?—Who is there?" Directly afterwards the howls of a pack of these sinister creatures on the other side of the hedge close by informed me what had frightened my poor horse. My sudden outcry caused it to start off at full gallop!

A few minutes later we stopped in front of the Hospice. But enough of jackals for the present. The light which illuminates the valley just ahead of us comes from the lime kiln we are in quest of, and now it is in full view. Those dark figures moving about it are the fellahin who work there. Here we are. "As salaam aleikum, sah baddenkum—peace be with you, health to your bodies—I heard that you were making lime, and so I have brought this howajah who comes from that distant Island called Ingleterra (England), where pen knives are made, along with me. How are you, I hope you are well. I have longed for a sight of you! The sound of your voice has caused my fainting spirit to revive, etc., etc."

"Ahlan wa sahlam, Es Salamat. Welcome. We rejoice to see you. Before you came we were in the dark, but we enjoy light now, your presence has illuminated this valley. Es Salaam ya Howajah. The Ingleeze are the first nation in the world. They and the Muslims are brethren, welcome, welcome. They have only one word, and that is straight as the barrel of a gun. Tefudallu—(Please sit down). Is it true that there is war in Bilad al Afranj (the land of the Franks) and that the Nusarah (Christians) are cutting each others' throats? La, La, La. I always reckoned the Franks to be men of a mind, and now they are killing each other? What folly?"

It is really great folly, Hassan, for men to kill each other, and I am very glad to see that you are engaged doing something better. How long have you been burning lime this year?

Well ya howajah I have had several lime kilns this year and this is the last of the lot. I would have begun to set it on fire before this, but a heap of thorns, which had been prepared as fuel, was set on fire by someone whilst the men were away, and so we had to gather fresh.

How much lime will one kiln yield?

Are all the fingers on your hand of the same length? Some produce more and some less. I understand, but what is the general average? From seventy to one hundred and fifty kontars (a kontar is about 500 lbs). What sort of stones are used for making lime? The best lime is made of 'mezzeh', the hardest sort of limestone, and it is often necessary to keep up the fire for ten days and nights running before the stones are well calcined. Even after the fire is allowed to go out, we find that many of them have become vitrified by the heat and are, therefore, useless. You will find lots of these stones covered with a green glass enamel lying about the remains of kilns all about the country, together with a sort of lava which runs from the heated stones. If you stand near the kiln, you may hear it dripping from the fiery dome, as if it is raining inside.

At the top of the kiln an upright stone, surmounting the kiln is called the 'Monk'. When it begins to fall and crumble from the effect of the fire, then the workmen consider that the lime is sufficiently burnt, and they slacken the fire. The smoke escapes through the interstices of the stones of which the kiln is built, and which are piled up very roughly.

You see that the fire is fed through this small hole in the side of the kiln, and a draught of air gains access to it through a covered passage at the bottom. The outer wall is only a casing round the stones which are to be calcined, and when the kiln is deserted, it remains as you will see if you look at any old kiln on the hillsides.

I suppose that your men work by relays if they have to keep up the fire night and day for a long time? They do, and in each relay there are generally partners in the business. It is in their own interest to try to produce a good article, therefore they remain near the kiln as long as the burning goes on, their food being brought to them by their relatives. How long will it take before this kiln is done with? It will take a fortnight for the red hot stones to cool down, but the fire will cease burning tomorrow. I only hope that the rains will not set in before we have finished, as a strong sale (winter torrent) always rushes down this Wad el Biyar during the wet season, and such an event would cause great damage.

Well, I hope so too, and I wish you plenty of success and a good night at the same time. I hope the visit has interested you. Indeed it has, and the whole aspect of the lime making was magnificent in the extreme! The kiln with its dome of fire, and heavy clouds of black smoke rolled away by the wind, and the swarthy, half naked forms of the men as they came into the glow of the furnace formed a picture fit for the pencil of an artist. But here we are at last. Good night.

Arrangements have been made this morning with some of the fellahin to guide us to the Cave of Adullam, so if you have no objections we will start directly after breakfast. We follow the windings of the Wady Artass, and as we are on foot, you will doubtless favour me with the account of your visit to Hebron.

I am ready to start whenever you please, and as you so much wish to hear of our excursion to Hebron, I shall begin to give you an account of it.

We started from Artass about two hours after midnight and walked up to the Pools where we had to wait for a short time till the rest of our party came up. It was very dark, and we could see nothing of the vast reservoirs except their outlines and the reflection of the starry sky from their surface. Leaving the pools, we turned southwards. The barking of dogs and the crowing of cocks showed us that a village was in the neighbourhood and on enquiry, our guide told us that its name was Faghur.

Ours was a tolerably large party and we had some donkeys with us, which we rode by turns, the pedestrians stepping out ahead. Nothing was seen except the dim outlines of the neighbouring hills, and we heard no sound save the chirping of insects in the tall bushes which flanked our path.

Abdallah, our guide, had been telling the juveniles of our party of encounters he had in this neighbourhood with the wild beasts of the waar (woods) in his younger days, when his arm was still strong and courage high. Then he began to relate stories of robberies and murders which had taken place among the lonely wadies hereabouts. As a matter of course, our party began to keep closer together, and those who were armed, instinctively seized their weapons, when M. and E. said that they had just seen some large animal rushing through the bushes. No one else had seen it, nor did we see it afterwards, so that we could not tell whether our friends had seen a real beast, or whether the tales they had just heard had induced them to fancy that they had.

Suddenly, far away to the east, a dim uncertain light was noticed overspreading the sky in that direction, and soon after a thrill of emotion ran through us as with a sudden start, we noticed a large and beautiful silver star suddenly appear above the horizon, shedding a benign ray on all below. The other stars began to pale, though the darkness seemed to increase this one star shone with undiminished splendour till, "Morning spread over earth her rosy wings." Shortly before daybreak a fire was seen far away on the distant hills of Moab. It must have been a large one to be visible so far off.

The sun rose as we stopped to drink at the old fountain at the roadside at Ed Dirweh. This place has been identified with Beth Zur, one of the places fortified by Rehoboam. It is mentioned immediately after Halhul, in the list of places in the tribe of Judah, Josh. 15:58. The name figures prominently in the history of the Maccabean Wars. Halhul is in the immediate vicinity. Taking a hurried glance at the scarped rocks close by, we pushed on.

The ruins of Neby Yunas (The prophet Jonah) were noticed on the top of a long hill on our left. Seen at a distance they looked very interesting, but we had no time to visit them. The rays of the sun began to get oppressive, and we were very glad when,

at last, we reached the vineyards at Sibta, where ‘Abraham’s Oak’ grows. We were much surprised to find that a handsome gateway, with iron gate, debarred visitors from gaining access to the spot where it stands.

Our guide bawled out to the keeper of the vineyard to come and open it, and soon after we were admitted. The tree had been purchased by the Russians some time before, and they had encircled the lower part of the trunk with a substantial wall of masonry, and built the gate already mentioned. After resting here for some time, we started in quest of Hebron. Its situation in the valley is such that it is not seen till one is close upon it, and the feelings of disappointment experienced by the traveller as he traverses the long and gloomy bazaars of the place cannot be described. We had scarcely entered before some Jewish boys followed us, and offered to lead us to lodgings.

We declined their services and proceeded to inspect the town. It is divided into several quarters which make the town look as if it had been shaken into the valley out of a large basket, and the different parts just allowed to remain where they fell. We went to see the places which are generally visited, viz the Entrance to the Mosque, the pool, the Bazaars, etc.

There is a glass manufactory here of the rudest sort, the articles made are bottles, lamps, rings, bracelets, etc. The latter articles are generally coloured, and the glass of which they are formed is made by melting together alkali from the Jordan Valley, sand from Moab, and ‘natron’ from Egypt.

The alkali and the natron are ground and sifted before being mixed with the sand. These ingredients are melted in small furnaces or crucibles built round a large fireplace.

The inhabitants of Hebron are, for the most part, Muslims, and those of the fiercest and most intolerant of their class. Sometime before our visit, we were told that a European traveller, who visited the place, had been insulted by the fanatical populace, because he had shown himself in the bazaars arm in arm with his wife.

We were so fortunate as to find that, for some reason or other, the zeal for the religion of Islam had begun to abate, for a youngster who had dared to come behind H. ... (one of our party) and give him a blow on the back, was taken to one of the Sheikhs and, as we afterwards heard, received a severe flogging.

We were, of course, not allowed to enter the mosque, so as some of our party who had been here before affirmed that a copious fountain of water and a pool existed at Ain Ungar not very far from the town, we took a guide and started in quest of it.

After a long and weary walk we at last reached the place, and you may judge of our disappointment, when I tell you that we found a flock of goats drinking at the spring, causing its current to diminish considerably, so that the pool—of which we heard so

much—was only about four feet square. Taking a draught of water in order to help us to swallow our disappointment, we hastened back. This excursion prevented us from visiting the ruins of the ‘Fort’ on a neighbouring hill, or the Citadel, which during the time of the Crusades gave the town the name of the ‘Castle of Abraham.’

We now set out on our homeward journey, and reached Artass about ten o’clock at night, quite weary, having [walked?] during sixteen out of twenty hours. But, see, what are our guides looking for amongst those rocks?

There in a tiny fountain there and they are waiting for us. The fount bears the name of Ain Hamdeh, the supply of water is not sufficient to fill two bottles, and our thirsty guides have already exhausted it.

The road leads over the ridge to the east past some threshing floors, and it is lined here and there with heaps of stones which tell that some wely must be in sight. After going a little further, we come to some ruins hanging over the magnificently savage gorge of Khureitun. These are generally supposed to be the remains of a village inhabited by Christians during the Crusading period. Let us now proceed along the narrow ledge of rock, to the hold of David, the mouth of which is hardly visible behind those huge blocks of stone. And now farewell to the outer world and daylight for a season.

Well, I am glad that we are out again, and though I am not sorry that I have been inside once, yet my curiosity has been satisfied and I don’t think that I would care to go in again.

We entered by a long, narrow and winding passage, so low that we were obliged to stoop. This led into a large cave at the entrance to which we found a large nail that had been left sticking in the wall by some former visitors. To this nail we attached the cord we had brought with us, which was to serve as a clue to finding our way out of the cavern.

There are four large caves connected to each other. In three of them we found square shafts had been sunk, and we noted the bench mark of the Palestine Exploration Fund smoked on the Walls from which water was trickling in some places. Besides these caves we saw many small passages running in and out of them, which we did not explore.

The ground was, in many places, strewn with fragments of pottery which reminded one forcibly of the band of outlaws who found a stronghold and hiding place in this cold and gloomy cave. It has probably often served as a sanctuary to the inhabitants of the neighbouring villages.

We know that in 1138, when Tekoa was plundered by a detachment of Muslims from the country to the east of the Jordan, that the inhabitants of the village found a temporary home in this cave. They never returned to Tekoa and that place has been

left desolate since that time.

I do not wonder that David should have longed for a draught of water from the well at Bethlehem, if this minute stream trickling from the rocks is the only spring close by, or that he should have penned the 142nd Psalm when surveying the sternly savage and desolate scenery around him, and feeling discouraged and depressed by the sense of his utter loneliness. These are his words and they never appeared more strikingly beautiful than they do on the spot where they were written:

Psalm 142.

“I cried unto the LORD with my voice; with my voice unto the LORD did I make my supplication.

I poured out my complaint before him; I showed before him my trouble.

When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then thou knewest my path. In the way wherein I walked have they privily laid a snare for me.

I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me: refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul.

I cried unto thee, O LORD: I said, Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living.

Attend unto my cry; for I am brought very low: deliver me from my persecutors; for they are stronger than I.

Bring out my soul from prison, that I may praise thy name: the righteous shall compass me about; for thou shalt deal bountifully with me.”

The crevices in the cliffs give shelter to large flocks of wild pigeons which may be seen at sunrise and at sunset flying ‘flying like clouds to their windows.’ They are extremely wild and it is difficult to get a shot at them. The hunters in the neighbourhood have built a small hut under the cliffs to the south of the cavern, and there they lie in wait for the birds as they come to drink, or bathe during the heat of the day. The quantity of feathers lying about would seem to indicate that these sportsmen often bag a great number of the lovely creatures. But I think it is time to retrace our steps through this Wady Artass, not forgetting, however, to notice those old aqueducts which run on both sides of the valley, along the hill’s slopes and which probably once conveyed water, that precious element in this parched and weary land, to the Frank Mountain.

I suppose that these circles of stones mark the site of a Bedouin encampment. They do, and you will meet several others along the course of the valley. These Ishmaelites change their camps every five days, as soon as fleas begin to show themselves in their tents. They have a great dread of these insects, though they are not so scrupulous about being covered with other filthy vermin. There is a proverb current in this

country that the king of the fleas holds his court at Tiberias. It is a comfort to know, however, that if we ever visit that city we will not be expected to pay our respects to his puline majesty.

Tekoah lies behind these hills south of our present position. At the present day, it is quite deserted. As I told you before the inhabitants left it in 1138. I once visited the place with a small party of pedestrians. We spent the previous night at Artass, and the next morning we climbed the hill just opposite the village, and then after walking towards the S.E. for some time, we descended into Wad ej Jisr, just where it is joined by Wady Rahal. Here we found the camp of a party of the Ta'amireh Bedouin. A man from the camp offered to go and show us the way, but as we had a guide from Artass we did not require his services. Leaving the camp, we followed the course of Wad ej Jisr. High up on the top of the hill above us rose the solitary wely and minaret of Abu Eujaym. Further on we passed under a line of precipices belonging to a wady which flows into Wad ej Jisr, and in a hole in the face of the cliff, but out of reach, two of our party discovered a raven's nest. After resting in the shadow of a great rock, we again rose upon a hillside, and when we reached the top we emerged upon the plain of Tekoah, Baka'at Taku'uh as it is called by the natives.

It was about the middle of April and we found the plateau covered with verdant and luxuriant crops of grain. To our surprise we found that these were carefully weeded, and that the peasants had laid the uprooted weeds along furrows which marked the separate portion of land belonging to each individual. These landmarks could, of course, be easily removed—and the fact made me understand very clearly the force of the passage, “Cursed is he that removeth his neighbour's landmark.” The height on which the ruins of Tekoah are situated lay just before us on the opposite side of the plain, and we hastened towards it. Reaching a cistern, whence a couple of shepherds were drawing water to wash their sheep, we got a draught of the refreshing element. The rising ground on the east and southeast of the plain is honeycombed with cisterns, all hewn out of the rock. Some of these are still capable of holding water, but most are dry, either broken or filled with rubbish. In some of them the wild pigeons build their nests. Having paid a piastre for the water we went on to the ruins. They cover a tolerably large extent of surface, consisting mainly of fallen walls and foundations of houses. We saw the bases and pieces of the shafts of several limestone columns scattered about, but noticed no capitals.

There was another Ta'amirah encampment here, and one of the men took us to see the old font in the fallen Greek church. Its form is octagonal, it is about three feet ten inches high, the diameter of the widest part of the inside is about the same, but lower down it is smaller, and as there is a step running all round the interior, the diameter of the font is about three feet two inches. Each of the sides measure about two feet three inches in width, they are ornamented by square panels, on which ornaments are cut, intersecting squares and Crosses of the Hospitallers with circular wreaths. The whole

is much battered and worn, especially on the weather side. It is cut out of a block of red limestone verging into marble.

At the N.E. part of the site are the ruins of a square tower or castle which once overlooked the town. We returned from Tekoa by a road different from that by which we approached it. As we crossed the plain we noticed a great number of large white birds stalking about the fields, at a great distance. Whether they were storks or cranes we were unable to tell. Our guide tried to get a shot at them, but without success, for as he could not get near enough, his fire only made them fly away.

The road led away to the northwest till we again reached the Wad ej Jisr, but not at the same place we came to in the morning near the Bedouin camp. Descending quickly, we crossed and climbed the hill on the other side. Arrived at the top, we again dived into Wady Rahal, after crossing which, we turned down a ravine. Here we found the ruins of a large building near the top of the glen. The outer walls are still partially standing. The stones of the eastern wall and the S.E. Angle are of a respectable size. They are about four feet long and two feet two inches high. They are bevelled. The average width of the bevels is five inches. The faces are very rough. The stones of the northern and western walls are smaller, and about two feet long, sixteen inches high. Along the interior of the walls there is a lining of smaller stones and there are many small stones stuck in between the outer courses.

The stones on the N. and W. sides are not bevelled. On the other side of the ravine are the remains of a smaller building. In the bed of the torrent just below, and between them is a tiny spring near which the fellahin often lie in wait to shoot the partridges which come thither to drink early before sunrise. A couple of yards higher up they lately found another spring about as large, and as they were clearing it out they dug up several old Greek lamps, made of earthenware, one of which is in my possession. The name of the place is Deir-al-Benat—the Convent of the Maidens—and the local tradition is that it is the place where Solomon used to keep his numerous concubines.

Turning our backs upon the ruins, we followed the downward course of the valley till joining the Wady coming down from Solomon's pools, it becomes the Wady Artass. After heavy rains in winter, a rushing torrent or 'sale' comes down each of these wadies, and joining at this spot, rush down valley—often tearing down walls, uprooting trees and causing considerable damage.

On the top of the hill separating the two vales, and just above the spot where they join, is a ruined site. The foundations of many of the buildings can be clearly traced, as well as rock hewn caves, cisterns, etc. From this spot one can look down on the smiling and verdant vale of Artass, and then turning one's head, get a glimpse of the Pools of Solomon to the west.

This site bears the name of Khirbet al Khoch—Ruin of the Peach. It may mark the

site of a fortress once commanding the valley, but I think it probable that it may be the spot where once stood the fortified town of Etham, or perhaps one of the houses mentioned by the Preacher in connection with orchards, vineyards, and pools of water (Ecclesiastes 1:4-6). At the foot of the hill, just where the valleys join, are the remains of a small pool, which is not formed by building a strong dam across the valley, but built of strong substantial masonry.

Here the gardens of Artass began, and in a short time after passing it, we found ourselves again in the village. There it lies just ahead of us and we have reached it just in time to escape the shower, with the dark clouds which have gathered during our absence.

See, the villagers are busy carrying earth on to the roofs of their houses and rolling it down solid lest the water penetrate the roofs. Hark! There is the first peal of thunder rumbling among the hills, and now the rain comes pattering on the parched and thirsty soil. It is the first shower after a drought of six months duration, and well may be welcomed with joy, for it is the herald of the rainy season that will cover all these dry and dreary hillsides in a garb of luxuriant verdure. In a few days the fellahin will begin to plough and sow, and for six months after the country will wear a different aspect from its present one.

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H. ... returned from town last night and reports that a good deal of water has run into the cisterns from the other day's rain, so it has been decided to start back to town. The camels will be sent off as soon as loaded, whilst you, H. ... and myself proceed by way of Bettir and Solomon's Pools. We will start at once if you have no objection.

By no means, I have often wished to visit those places and expect no small share of pleasure from the visit.

Do not be too sanguine in your expectations, lest you find yourself bitterly disappointed, but here we are again on the line of the aqueduct from the Pools. It is our old acquaintance, and as we are not likely to come across it again during our rambles, we will trace it to its source, or if it pleases you better, to its father's house!

Here just after leaving the Pools, it is joined by another coming from the south. At about a hundred yards from here, the tributary aqueduct passes through a vault about two feet long and eight wide, the semicircular arch and massive masonry of which would make us attribute its construction to the Roman period. This vault or chamber bears the name of Ain Ethan, which is remarkably suggestive of the name 'Etham' and the only trace of the word which we have as yet found in the neighbourhood.

Close to this vault are the masonry shafts belonging to another old aqueduct. There are a great many such artificial water courses in the vicinity. Some of them have, I believe, been traced to the Wady Arrub. Under the lowest of the three Pools there is

such a work. One can reach it by following the course of an arched passage, the entrance to which you may notice, overshadowed by a bramble in the centre of the eastern embankment.

Let us climb this embankment and get a look at this pool. Its length is 580 feet, and its breadth at the widest part 200. Its depth is fifty feet rough measurement. The Government had it repaired by forced labour some years ago. The fellahin from the neighbouring villages were pressed into the service, and every man had to labour for a certain number of days.

At present it is out of repair again, part of the wall on the northern side having fallen in. The Middle Pool is about 420 feet long, 250 wide, and 40 deep. It generally contains a good deal of water all through the summer. The Upper Pool—380 feet long, 230 wide, and 25 deep, is generally dry in summer, and it is not unusual to see the bottom planted with gourds, vegetable marrows, or cucumbers belonging to the two or three irregular horseman who live in the castle. A little water remains at the bottom of the lowest pool all through the summer.

The Middle Pool is visited regularly every afternoon by the flocks and herds belonging to the villages and camps of Ta'amireh Bedouin in the neighbourhood. Many of the shepherds swim well—having learnt to do so here. They generally plunge in after their flocks have drunk. Those still learning use inflated goat skins or hollow gourds to support them.

The Pools are infested with water snakes, yet they swim about quite fearlessly, and I have never heard of anyone being bitten by the reptiles. Besides snakes, the water is alive with frogs, leeches, and worms and animalculae of different sorts which grow in amongst the long and tangled green weeds.

Water fowl are not often seen. Now and then a diver or wild duck may be startled from the blue surface; and sometimes though very seldom, a white heron may be noticed fishing for frogs.

In the Museum of the Literary Society at Jerusalem, some years ago, there was a stuffed pelican which was shot at the Pools. Wild pigeons and doves of different kinds come hither in flocks at sunrise to drink and again in the afternoon, and I have often waited here for hours trying to get a shot at them. They are extremely wild and wary, and if they notice any human being near they will not approach at all, but pass high overhead, and then settle on a rock high up on one of the hills overlooking the place till all danger has passed.

There is an old, dry water course near the southeastern corner of the lowest Pool, and there I have often hidden myself lest they should see me. They are most beautiful creatures, and more than once I have not had the heart to kill any of them, though I could easily have done so as they were strutting about and bathing at a distance of a few yards.

Besides the pigeons, water wagtails—some with yellow tails, and some with white—there is a small kind of wading bird which the natives call ‘Kayap’ which may always be seen at the water’s edge, or skimming across the surface. A family of kestrels has built a nest in a crevice in the western wall of the lowest pool, which they find to be a capital hunting ground. Then there is also another kind of hawk, a trifle larger than these, which the fellahin call ‘Iktameh’, which also lives on frogs, but does not always enjoy the meal he gains by hunting. It often happens that he has hardly secured his prize before he is obliged to relinquish it in favour of a sort of eagle that has been watching his operations, unseen by him, then pounces on him as soon as he has caught anything.

The hawk, terrified, is only too happy to escape by letting the prey drop, and the eagle contrives to catch it before it reaches the surface of the water. Sometimes the hawk thinks that he can secure his booty by precipitate flight if the eagle is not very near, then a most exciting chase ensues which usually ends in favour of the pursuer. I do not know whether the eagle acts thus because he is unable, or too indolent to hunt for himself.

These ‘Iktameh’ also hunt quails, young partridges and doves, and it often happens that the fellahin act the part of the eagle and make it give up the game, if it is worth having. The hawk cannot fly well if its load is heavy, and as it does not like to be disturbed whilst feeding, it prefers to fast.

When I visited Tekoa the guide got a fine quail in this manner. It was still alive, but being severely wounded by the talons of the hawk, he cut its throat in order to put an end to its sufferings.

I never have noticed water-tortoises at this place, though I remember once seeing the dead body of one of the land-tortoises so often found on these hills, floating about on the surface.

The castle here, close to the northwest corner of the Upper Pool, is occupied by three or four horsemen, who are supposed to guard the reservoirs and the road from Jerusalem to Hebron—which passes here. They make every fellah who passes with loaded animals give them a contribution in kind for their fictitious services. The castle, or caravanserai, is in a very dilapidated condition. The villagers of Artass keep their beehives, from which they realize a handsome profit yearly, in the deserted chambers, and it is the presence of the bees which has attracted the great number of bee-eaters we now see flying about the edifice.

About thirty yards from the building, we notice another low one with a still lower door. Entering this we notice a flight of steps which leads us down into subterranean chambers, which receive a little light through shafts from the surface of the ground above. After groping our way carefully to the foot of the staircase, we stand still for some minutes till our eyes are accustomed to the gloom, when we discern a small

pool about 5 feet by three feet, just in front of us. This is supplied by a stream of water flowing through an earthenware pipe from the chamber directly to the west of this. Entering this room by an arched doorway we find that it is much smaller than the one we have just left. In the centre, almost, of this chamber is a circular pool or basin about three feet in diameter. In this, the water of three small rills is collected before it passes into the outer pool through the earthen pipe just mentioned. Both of these chambers are arched over. At a short distance from the south end of the square pool, the floor rises all of a sudden, so as to form a low platform, which reaches to the southern wall of the chamber. Immediately opposite the arched doorway, which leads into the small chamber, there is a high passage leading off towards the Pools.

One of the peculiarities of this passage is that its roof is not formed of slabs laid across horizontally, but of two courses of slabs leaning against each other, and forming a pointed roof. In the northwest corner of this outer chamber is the outlet of a passage running N.W. and ending in a vault which is now blocked up with stone. In the roof of this vault is a square shaft leading upwards, but it is now covered with earth and stones. The passage to the vault is in some places built of solid masonry, and in others it is rock. The place is infested with bats which hang in great numbers from the roof.

Having again reached the upper world and daylight, let us proceed northwards along the plain towards the village of El Khudr. The Greek Convent of St. George, whom the Muslims style El Khudr, and whom they believe was a true Muslim, looks quite imposing, rising as it does above the mud built hovels of the villagers.

The convent is celebrated all through the country for the cure of lunatics. These unhappy beings are brought here, and confined in the dirty little chapel till they are well again. If they are raging, there are heavy chains and fetters in store to control them, and often the superior of the convent himself, does not think it derogatory to his priestly office to come down with a heavy horsewhip of hippopotamus hide, wherewith he belabours his captives much in the same manner as Giant Despair is represented as doing in the Pilgrim's Progress.

Near the northeast corner of the monastery are the remains of an old building. Part of the vault is still standing, and now used as the 'Menzil' or guest house of the village. The hospitality shown by these villagers of S. Palestine may well occupy our attention for lack of more interesting topics to beguile the way, now that we have the village behind us.

The 'Menzil' is the usual resort of the villagers in the evening after the day's work. Here the topics of the day are discussed—the price of grain, cattle, or wives—the most convenient way of cheating the government officials who come to collect the taxes—or if these subjects are exhausted, one of the men who may happen to be a musician takes the one stringed fiddle from the wall, and touches it now and then as he recounts the deeds of Antar, or Abu Zayd—the invincible. If there is no one

present who can do this, some one tells a story—one of the stories so full of oriental metaphors and imagery—of jinns, ghouls, magicians, fair princesses and all the other details necessary to constitute a true Arab tale, whilst the audience sits round, gravely stroking their beards—ejaculating as each fresh marvel is recounted, “There is no God but God, Mohammed is the Apostle of God. God is great.”

If a guest comes to the village he proceeds to the Menzil. The villagers bring supper if he is a person of consequence, or if there are several persons a sheep is killed and all present partake of the dish. Every house in the village has to provide the meal by turn. After supper those present sit chatting, smoking or spending the time as related above, whilst one of them looks after the fire in the centre of the room, boils the coffee, and hands it round. When the time for rest is come, a coverlet is brought for the guest, the villagers disperse, some going to their houses whilst others roll themselves in their abbas and lie down near the fire in the Menzil. This is almost universally the custom in Southern Palestine, and those villages where the rites of hospitality are neglected are looked upon with contempt by the fellahin of the others.

Ain Karim especially has, of late, been proverbial for the inhospitable spirit of its people, and a native of that place has often to hear the taunts of people of other villages for that reason.

The hills between El Khudr and Bether abound in fossil remains, consisting of shells of different kinds and sizes. A friend and I once spent a day on these hillsides looking for them, and it was not lost, as we found a great number.

Those villages on the hills to our left are Hoosan and El Kabu. They are too far out of the way to be visited today, so we will turn down this Wady Khalt al Hareb. The hillsides on either hand show the marks of having been terraced in times gone by, and probably were once covered with vineyards, of which however, nothing is to be seen nowadays.

When the winter rains pour down over the retaining walls, the rich earth is washed into the valley below, leaving the white limestone strata to peep through at intervals, like the bleached ribs of a skeleton.

Now let us ascend this steep mountain path on our left. It is too narrow for us to ride abreast, but as we proceed we get a view of a wady running S.E. towards Beit Jalah. A friend of mine who passed up that valley some time ago told me that a high rock or cliff was pointed out to him, bearing the name of Kala’at Sabah al Kher, i.e. ‘Castle of Good Morning.’

There is a small cave in this rock and a local tradition relates that, during a persecution of the Christians in ancient times, a monk walled himself up there in order to hide from those who sought his life, and was found dead in it some time after.

But see, the path has wound round the hillside, and that cluster of houses some

hundred yards ahead of us is the modern village of Bettir, the miserable representative of the ancient Bether of Scripture and Jewish history. The site of the old fortress is not here, but on that bold eminence north of, and opposite to, the village.

The village itself is separated from the castle by a valley which declines in successive terraced gardens which are watered by the spring to the west of the hamlet. The houses are built on the limestone strata of the hill, which project in broad shelves—each receding from that below it, like so many immense steps.

The foundations of the upper tiers of houses are on a level with the roofs of those below them, and in case of an earthquake, would tumble down upon and destroy them. The lowest row of buildings stands on the edge of a cliff, and as seen from the valley below, the whole place looks imposing.

Amongst the houses themselves there is nothing worth looking at except a few rock cut water channels, niches and fragments of broken columns.

Passing through it westward, we notice a good sized mulberry tree overshadowing the Menzil. Further on the spring claims a moment's notice. The water rushes into a trough surrounded on three sides by a wall of solid masonry, formed of finely dressed stones. In one or two places there are traces of these stones having been once covered with cement. This has almost all disappeared at present. Close to the spring is a vault of masonry of the same character and age apparently as that at the spring.

Further down the hill is a reservoir into which the water runs, and from which it again issues to water the terraced gardens. Now let us ascend and inspect the site of the ancient fortress.

The natives call it Khirbet el Yehud, and the present people of Beitir are often taunted with the epithet of 'Yehud'. The villager, who now accompanies us in hope of getting a baksheesh, is very anxious to impress us with the fact that he and all the other people of the place are true Muslims, and that the ruins are called Khirbet el Yehud because the Jews once entrenched themselves here in rebellion against the 'Dowla'—the Government.

This we know as well as he does, and we may as well let him hold our horses whilst we look over the place. There is not much to be seen in the way of architectural remains. A few courses of dressed stones here and there, marking the lines of wall and traces of towers.

The summit of the hill is covered with fig and olive trees. The position itself is very strong, and before the invention of cannon; must have been almost impregnable. You will notice that the hill stands quite isolated, being surrounded on three sides by deep valleys, and that on the west a steep rock scarp separates it from the adjacent hill.

Here, then, on this rock summit, the brave but infatuated Jewish people made their last desperate stand against the forces of Imperial Rome. Stung to desperation and

madness by seeing the summit of Mt. Moriah, the site of their ancient sanctuary polluted about A.D. 131 by the erection of a heathen temple, and the holy place where once the Shechinah rested, polluted by idolatrous sacrifices, led on by fanatics who seem to have been more enthusiasts than impostors, they eagerly welcomed the appearance of Bar Cochba, and gladly supporting his claim to the Messiahship, they rose en masse against this oppressor, and in the first fiery onset of their forlorn hope, they were successful.

Down fell the temple built by Hadrian, down fell—slain by the sword of the avenging Israelites—the Legionaires who had been left to garrison the ill fated city of Jerusalem—struck down like blades of grass when touched with the scythe; and once more, triumphant, the Jews stood, sword in hand, in possession of their Holy City.

Vain, transitory, delusive triumph! Soon the Roman Colossus recovered from its surprise at its defeat by the nation it had so long oppressed, and boiling with rage that the crushed and dying worm should, in its expiring throes, dare to turn and sting the feet that trampled it, vowed stern and unsparing vengeance.

Swiftly its iron clad cohorts assembled in Palestine, reverse after reverse befell the arms of the Israelites. Driven from stronghold to stronghold, they at last stood at bay in this their last fastness, and under these heaps of stones we see around us, lie buried their lives, liberties and their existence as a nation.

Since that time, for more than 1700 years, they have been scattered amongst all nations as a byword, and a reproach, and thus they will remain until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled, and the Jews return and own Him whom they hanged on a tree.

Come, let us leave this sad place, where such a bloody tragedy in the world's history was enacted. My heart sickens as I think of the mournful associations of this place; the Gentile Christian may perhaps feel and see nothing but God's vengeance on Israel for their rejection of Christ, but if a drop of Jewish blood flows in his veins—as there does in mine—he cannot help commiserating the dreadful downfall of his people as well as indignation at the barbarism of their oppressors, and the cruelty with which the vanquished were treated.

The villagers have planted young fig trees on the spot where Captain Warren excavated, and they seem to thrive well. There are a very few caves on this hillside.

Our road now leads us down to the vineyards of Beitir and then eastward along the dry water course of Wady ---. Away on the hills to our left is situated the village of El Walajeh with its springs and vineyards, and now we may let our weary steeds drink at the fountain of Ain Hanayeh—called by some 'The fountain of Philip' supposing that it was here that the eunuch was baptized by that apostle.

The water flows from under a semicircular apse or niche of well built masonry, flanked on either side by a Corinthian pilaster. The whole has a very pleasing

appearance. There are a good number of hewn stones lying here and there, and a little further on a prostrate column lies by the roadside, showing that buildings of some architectural pretensions must, at one time or other, have stood in the neighbourhood.

A ten minute gallop brings us to another small fountain called Ain Yalo or Ain Malcha, from the insignificant village of Malcha situated on a hillside on the north of the valley. This dale is generally known in Jerusalem by the pleasing name 'Valley of Roses' from the number of those beautiful flowers which are grown here, and brought to Jerusalem for sale in spring.

This valley opens out upon the Plain of Rephaim, and as we crossed that plain on our way from Jerusalem to Bethlehem, we will take this road on our left which will lead us to the Greek Convent of the Cross and will enable us to pass behind the range of low hills which form the western boundary of the Plain of the Giants.

That fortress-like building in the valley ahead of us is the Convent of the Cross, within the walls of which exists a college or seminary for youth belonging to the Orthodox Greek Church.

The church within its walls was built by the Emperor Heraclius in the 7th century on the spot where the tree grew from which the wood was taken, and the cross made on which our Lord was crucified. It was doubtless restored in the times of the Crusades, having been pillaged by the infidels in 1099, so we are told by Saewulf, who visited it in the year 1102. At the demand of the Superior of the convent—the Abbot Pader—the church was restored and decorated with pictures in mosaic representing Biblical events and legends, by King Georgian Leontiantiani. The principal legend illustrated in these pictures is the following:

“Lot, having taken refuge with his daughters in a cave, after the fall of the Pentapolis, his daughters made him drunk and committed incest. In order to alleviate the reproaches of his conscience, he came and dwelt in this spot where the church now stands. Yet although he fasted and wept, his crime remained as a heavy load upon his conscience. One day, after having prayed for forgiveness, the angel of the Lord appeared to him and presented him with three boughs. “Take these boughs,” said his heavenly visitor, “Plant them and water them with water from the Jordan, which you are to procure daily; if they take root, you may be assured of pardon, if not, you may be certain that you are reprobate.” The words of the angel awakened hope in the heart of Lot. He took the boughs and did as directed. Satan, however, who saw it in his interest to prevent the boughs from taking root and the patriarch from receiving pardon, used an artifice to gain his end. As Lot was returning from the river bearing the water, the Evil One met him in the form of a beggar and asked to be allowed to drink. Lot pitied him, and granted his request. A little further on he met another who also asked for a draught, and further on several others whom he also allowed to drink, so that when at last he reached the place where he had planted the boughs, his store of water was exhausted. Nothing daunted he went to fetch water the next day, and for

several more days, never succeeding in bringing a drop to the place he wished due to the beggars who crowded round him on his way back. At last, weary and dejected, and on the verge of despair, one evening the same angel appeared and told him that his charity had been approved by God, and the boughs would now take root without his aid. They grew and became the tree from which the Cross was made. The spot where this wonderful tree grew is shown under the high altar of the church, the floor of which is tessellated and apparently ancient. Its walls, as I have already said, are covered with old paintings.

Let us now push on. A ride of a few minutes brings us to the brow of the range of hills to the east of the valley in which the convent is situated. From this spot our eye roves over a Mohammedan cemetery with a large pool—the upper pool of Gihon, mentioned in the account of the threatened siege of Jerusalem by Sennacherib—in its centre, and in the background the Russian Hospice and Cathedral meet our view. Due east we see the grey battlements of modern Jerusalem, and behind them in the distance rises the calm grey summit of Olivet.

Venerable old hill! If thou hadst the power of speech, how many lessons couldst thou teach us, and how many interesting accounts would we hear of the scenes which thou has witnessed—from the time of Melchizedec, King of Salem and priest of the living God, till the day when a greater Melchizedec made thee the stepping stone from which he ascended up on high leading captivity captive, and receiving gifts, and where He is now interceding for us.

And now onwards. A few minutes will bring us to the Jaffa Gate, and our feet shall again stand within thy walls, O Jerusalem, where we shall end our rambles for the present.

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### VISIT TO THE CONVENT OF MAR SABA

It was a delightful morning in August when we started on this excursion. We had been up long before sunrise, and the luminary of day had hardly shown his fiery disc above the horizon before we were off on our journey.

Some days before we had visited the deep and romantic gorge of Wady Farah, about 2½ hours north of Anathoth, with its wild scenery and deserted hermitages. Our minds were full of eager expectation to visit the famous sect of anchorites in the Kedron, founded by, and known by the name of St. Saba.

We had read all accounts and descriptions of the place that we could lay our hands upon for some time past, and in our imagination had formed a picture of the place which was to be dispelled by the reality, though we could not fairly say that we had been disappointed in our expectation. But to our narrative.

We soon passed down the valley of Hinnom with its gloomy associations, its olive

trees and high cliffs. Having left Joab's well, where men of Siloam were busied drawing water and pouring it into small masonry tanks, from which donkey boys were filling their black goat skin bottles. These when filled were lifted to the backs of their animals, then driven off to the city to supply the inhabitants with water. This done, they rush down to the well again with loud shouts and lusty blows on their donkeys' backs.

We soon came to Ain el Lozeh, where Captain Warren discovered subterranean staircases and rock hewn passages. No water was now flowing from this place and we passed on, leaving it on our right. A little further on we came to a road leading up the hill to the deserted village of Beit Sahour with its marly rocks full of tiny fossils. It has been uninhabited for about 40 years—due to oppression and heavy taxes by the Turkish government. So one fine night, they packed up their things and fled. Since then many have existed as a small tribe of Bedouin, roaming about among the hills on the western shore of the Dead Sea, reminding one of the state of things in Israel during the times of the Judges, as described by Deborah in her magnificent song of thanksgiving and triumph. "The inhabitants of the villages ceased, they ceased in Israel until that Deborah arose, that I arose a mother in Israel."

Our road did not lead up to the deserted spot, but through the valley. The fig gardens on either side of the road were alive with the merry shouts of boys and girls who were climbing about among the branches. Here and there among the trees were little booths where the owners of the fig trees lived and slept, every man under his own fig tree till the crop was over.

A pleasant breeze was blowing through the valley and from the boughs of some olive trees came the pleasant sound of the cicadae's song. We had now to leave the road through the valley and climb the pathway leading up the hillside on the left. The change was disagreeable, for the sun had become warm and there was no shade on the hill path.

About one hour after we left home we lost sight of Jerusalem and, following the path which had been formerly in the soft white rocks on the mountainside, began to descend gradually till it led us into a valley running between steep and barren hills. We walked on till we came to a cistern, the mouth of which was covered with a stone. We removed this, but a glance, and a stone dropped in, having shown us that it was empty, we covered it again with a slight feeling of disappointment.

As a few projecting rocks close by offered some shade we crept under them to rest for a short time. Having refreshed ourselves, we stepped briskly onwards, and soon after came to a spot where a number of shepherds were watering their flocks. We now regretted having stopped at the former cistern as it had now become very warm, and we could not now stay for a long time in this cool place. The water was none of the best, but we were glad to wash our faces and hands, and cool ourselves in it.

We had hardly done so before another division of our party mounted on donkeys came up with us pedestrians, and after another short delay we started on our journey. Ten minutes walk brought us to the cemetery of the Abbedieh Bedouin. The monuments were of the rudest description, consisting of heaps of rough, unhewn stones. The most remarkable was the tomb of a dervish, whose memory is highly venerated among the country folk, who honour it by offerings of old rags, broken ploughs, jars, etc.

The hills close to this spot rise steeply, though not quite precipitously and are covered with a network of sheep paths to their very summits. Half an hour further on we came to a spot where the Kedron valley becomes a deep ravine with precipices rising grandly on either side. The rocks lie in distinct strata—displaced at different points, and full of caverns and grottos, once the abode of anchorites at a period when an ascetic life was in better repute than nowadays.

These caves are of all shapes and sizes. Some of them have walls with a door built in front of them where the natural opening was too large. A tolerably good road leads along the side of the hill on the southern side of this ravine, and from it one can look down into the gorge below. The caverns are empty and deserted now, except for wild animals that find a lair in their recesses.

A turning in the road brought us suddenly in sight of an immense edifice, which at the first glance bore no small resemblance to an old fortress of the Crusading period. Rising on massive piers from the bottom of the valley it stretches up the hillside and over the crags and precipices as if it were part of the mountain itself. All around the scenery is wild and barren, desolate in the extreme, and the vast building with its high walls and towers and loopholes only serves to add desolation to the scene, and one is suddenly struck with surprise on beholding a human dwelling place in this wilderness.

We stood looking on for some moments in silence, gazing at the large structure which seems to slumber under the enchanter's wand. No human being could be seen far and wide. The only sound heard was the cackling of a covey of partridges on the opposite hill, but that sound only seemed to make the dread silence more audible.

We had been standing so for some time, when our reverie was disturbed by the deep and sonorous sound of a large bell inside the convent. Thus startled from our brown study, we moved on, passing the lofty tower at the N.W. Corner and directly afterwards descended to the convent gate which we found closed. Just outside the wall of the monastery we noticed a square tower which we directly recognized to be the 'Tower of the Ladies' which we had read of in descriptions of the place.

It was built by the Empress Eudoxia, during the lifetime of the singular personage by whose successor the monastery was founded.

The lady had visited the dreary solitude wishing to have an interview with St. Euthymius, but that gentleman—either very bashful or else very misanthropic—

retired further into the desert on the approach of womankind. The Empress therefore caused the above named tower to be built and lived there till by the exertions of Theoctistus, his companion, the hermit was at last prevailed upon to grant her an audience, and persuaded her to quit the doctrine of Eutychus and re-enter the unity of the Church.

This Tower of Eudoxia has since then been the place where female pilgrims are allowed to take up their abode whilst on a visit to the place, as no women are permitted to enter the convent itself.

To the shadow of this tower the ladies of our party therefore resorted, whilst such of the stronger sex as had not yet visited the place, thundered at the massive iron bound gate.

We were hailed from the tower at the N.W. Angle of the Convent, and looking up could just discern the visage of a monk who demanded our business. We told him that we had come from Jerusalem and wished to see the convent.

He then demanded the letter from the Greek Patriarch at Jerusalem, allowing us an entrance. We were unprovided with this document, as we did not wish to sleep at the place. Our interrogator then went to ask the Superior of the Convent whether we might be admitted.

After waiting some time the sound of the unbolting and unbarring was heard, the gate opened, and we entered. A flight of about fifteen steps was descended and another iron gate. Having passed this we stood in a small paved court.

A small round chapel in this court is shown to pilgrims, and said to contain the tomb of Mar Saba. We were then led into a small room furnished with a low divan all round where we were invited to rest, whilst the usual refreshments of sweetmeats, etc., were offered.

From the windows of this apartment we could see that we were directly overhanging the Kedron. A Bedouin lad had brought a few goats and sheep to drink at a tiny fountain at the bottom of the tremendous gorge. No other living creatures were to be seen. After spending some time in this chamber we were led through the convent.

A very strange place it is, and extremely difficult to describe. The cells for the monks were in some places built on narrow ledges of the precipice, and the only way to reach them was by ladders. In close proximity to these we noticed crevices where the wild rock doves and orange winged black birds built their nests in perfect security. Indeed they are so tame that at the whistle of the recluses they will descend from their resting places to take their food from their hands.

Indeed their fearlessness was to me the most pleasing thing I saw in the place. We were now led to the cavern where Mar Saba lived with his lion, to the rock hewn church of St. Nicholas, to the chapel adjoining where the skulls of those anchorites

who fell when Chosroes ravaged the place lie, and afterwards to the great Church of the Convent, a medieval structure which was restored some time ago, and where some paintings of the Byzantine school may be seen.

The wonderful palm tree of Bar Saba, the dates of which have no stones, and which are efficacious in the cure of different diseases, was next shown us, and then we visited the tomb and oratory of St. John the Damascene.

By the time we had visited all these shrines we were heartily tired of the place and felt quite sick at heart at witnessing the idolatrous and superstitious veneration with which our guide pointed out the various places and objects. We were therefore heartily glad to rejoin the rest of our party on the outside of the convent.

From the tower in the shade of which they were seated, one can overlook the whole establishment and also the savage glen which is full of deserted hermitages, such as those above described. They are of every size and shape and their number is legion.

It is said that at the commencement of the 7th century, about 4,000 of these recluses resided in the convent itself, and about 10,000 had their abode amongst the rocks, but that they were subject to the spiritual rule of the Superior of the monastery.

How much of the religious retirement they sought could be obtained when such a multitude lived together it is hard to say—as it is also hard to judge of the motives which induced so many to dwell in this solitude. But I think that we may safely believe that there were many among them who really yearned and longed for that peace which passeth all understanding, which cannot be obtained from the vain amusements and pleasures of the world; and that many who had found that “bodily exercise profiteth nothing,” may at last have had recourse to Him who invites all the weary and broken hearted to come to Him who said, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.” He is even now waiting to be gracious, and will in no wise cast out such as come to Him, and O happy thought! “No man shall pluck them out of His hand.” In the afternoon we left this neighbourhood, and reached our home some time after sundown, thoroughly tired with our excursion, and some of us protesting that they would not again visit Mar Saba in a hurry.

Here my notes on my Rambles in my Fatherland must end for the present, and I know not whether I shall e’er again take up my pen to continue them.

I have often wished to visit the middle parts of the country: Nablus, Sebaste, Nazareth, Tiberius and its Lake have not yet been visited by me, nor yet Gaza, Ain Jilly or Beersheba.

If I have ever the opportunity of having my desires fulfilled I may go on with my notes, unless I chuck the whole lot of them into the fire as worthless trash, as I have often thought of doing.

J. E. H. Oct. 7<sup>th</sup> 1874.