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ARTICLE I.

NOTES OF A TOUR FROM DAMASCUS TO BA'ALBEK AND
HUMS.

WITH TOPOGRAPHICAL OBSERVATIONS ON THE NORTHERN SECTION OF
ANTILEBANON.

By Rev. J. L. Porter, Missionary at Damascus.

DURING the early part of the present summer (1853), I had intended making a mission tour to the town of Hums, and the Jacobite villages around it; but was prevented from fulfilling my purpose by the pressure of duties in this city. A short interval of leisure occurred after our return from our summer residence at Blúdân; and Mr. Barnett and myself resolved to employ this time in visiting the Christians of Hums, by some of whom our presence and instructions were earnestly sought. We proposed to include in our tour such Christian villages as lay in the line of our route; and, that as large a number as possible might be embraced without waste of time, we determined to cross the mountains direct to Ba'albek, and follow the road by Râs, Hurmûl and Ribleh; and then return, if possible, by way of Sûdûd; or, if that should prove impracticable, by the great caravan road to Hasya and Nebk. This latter was the road we were finally obliged to follow.

Tuesday, October 11th. We left Bâb Tûma (Thomas' Gate) at 12 o'clock, and, after half an hour's ride in a northerly direction

among the gardens and orchards of Damascus, we crossed the canal Yezid and entered the open plain beyond. At 1 o'clock we passed through the large village of Burzeh, at the entrance of the wild ravine of Ma'raba. Twelve minutes beyond, we commenced to ascend the low ridge of barren hills that here bounds the plain. We followed the course of an ancient road, now passing through deep cuttings in the white chalky cliffs, and now scrambling up long flights of stairs hewn in the hard limestone. At 1.40 we gained the summit; and here again I enjoyed a prospect which for richness and beauty is not surpassed, if equalled, in Syria. The scene was the same I had gazed on exactly twelve months before; but many of its features had become more familiar to me by visits paid them during the interval. The group of the Tellûl was there on the eastern horizon; but I could now distinguish along their base the dim outlines of the three singular ruins called the Diâra. Far away, south by east, were the mountains of Haurân; and I could now distinctly recognize the lofty conical peaks of Kuleib and Tell Abn-Tumeis, overtopping all others; while, in the plain to the north of this range, I could see the ruin-crowned Tell el-Khale-diyeh. The bearings of these I noted, testing the accuracy of the compass by measuring their relative angles with the sextant. These bearings are important as determining the relative positions of the city and plain of Damascus, and the mountain range of the Haurân.

From this spot we descended the hill diagonally in a course N. 20 W., and in fourteen minutes reached the plain of Sahra. We then turned N. 25 E., leaving the large village of Tell, with its luxuriant orchards and vineyards, some distance to the left. In half an hour more we left the road we had followed in our former journey to Saidanâya, that we might keep further along the Sahra, and obtain a view of its north-eastern extremity to the foot of Jebel Tinlyeh. The ground was now undulating, the spurs from the two ranges on the right and left here meeting and interlacing. Our course was north-east; and, after some time, on surmounting a rising ground, we got a fine view of this section of the Sahra. It is considerably depressed, and a large portion of it is cultivated. In one hour more we reached the summit of the second ridge of hills, which is at this place much lower than at the point where we crossed it on our former journey. It retains, however, the same characteristic features

towards the south-east — a shelving slope surmounted by a lofty wall of naked rock. The road is ancient, and is hewn deeply in the cliff. We observed a little further eastward a large excavated chamber, now used as a chapel, and dedicated to some saint. On reaching the summit, I saw, at twenty minutes distance, in the plain below, the little village of Ma'rûneh; and about forty minutes N. by E., Hafeiyer. These are the only villages eastward of Tell, in the plain of Sahra. The general aspect of this region during the autumn is bleak and desolate in the extreme. The mountain sides are either naked white rock, or loose gravel composed of fragments of flint and limestone. The plains, as seen from the distance, are no less barren looking than the mountain sides. Not a tree or shrub or particle of verdure relieves the painful whiteness of the parched soil; save, here and there, where an ancient olive or a half-decayed mulberry stands lonely and deserted, like the last tree of the forest; or where a little group of walnut and poplar trees clusters round a fountain in some secluded dell. The land, however, is not so barren as it seems. Vines grow luxuriantly where the hand of industry plants and tends them; and the blasted looking soil yields a crop of wheat or barley which amply repays the labor of the peasant. Even here, there are extensive vineyards; but it requires a close examination to identify them at this season; for no sooner is the fruit removed, than vast flocks of hungry goats are turned loose among them, and then soon divest them of every leaf, and tendril, and sappy branch. The expense and trouble of pruning is thus saved, and the poor goats are kept from starvation.

The battlemented cliffs of Saidanâya were now before us, on the side of the opposite rugged mountain range; and the gardens of Ma'arra, about half way to it, lay a little to the right in the plain below. We descended the easy slope, through fine fields, and reached Ma'arra in half an hour. From this we rode across the fertile plain among extensive vineyards to the foot of the opposite hills, where a few minutes ascent brought us to the base of the rock on which stands the convent of Saidanâya, thirty minutes from the former village.

The date of the foundation of this convent I am unable to ascertain from any good authority. One of the officiating priests told me it was erected 1340 years ago, in the time of the Emperor Justinian. It so happens, however, that Justinian did not

ascend the throne till fifteen years after that time. Maundrell also states that it was founded and endowed during the reign of this emperor. Whether this be the case or not, it is unquestionably of high antiquity; and I would suppose prior to the time of the Muhammedan conquest. Some of the excavated tombs in the sides of the rock have Greek inscriptions.

We spent the evening on the spacious terrace, in interesting conversation with some Greek Christians. This place is a favorite resort for the members of the Eastern church in the city of Damascus. Enervated by the long continued heats of summer, and wasted it may be with fever and dysentery, they wend their way to this mountain sanctuary. The fresh bracing air, and the vigorous exercise on the hill-sides, often infuse new health and vigor into the exhausted frame; and the happy change is piously ascribed to the miraculous intervention of the Virgin, the tutelary deity of the place. Forty nuns now occupy this convent. The prioress is appointed by the Greek patriarch of Damascus, and subject immediately to his jurisdiction.

Wednesday, Oct. 12th. This morning I attended the service in the church. It was the festival of Saint Gregorius; and, after various prayers to the Virgin and several elevations of the host, we were treated to a most wonderful story about Gregory himself, taken from the "Lives of the Saints." After a second glance at the works of art that adorn the walls of this building, I went to make a more minute examination of the square tower-like structure I had formerly seen. It stands on a platform composed of three tiers of large hewn stones, arranged so as to form steps all round, similar to the base of the monument at Hurmûl. The building itself is a perfect square of $29\frac{1}{2}$ feet on each side, and 26 feet high. It is somewhat remarkable, that these are exactly the dimensions of the lower story of the monument referred to. The interior is vaulted, the arches resting on massive pillars of solid masonry at the corners. In the centre of one of these is a narrow winding staircase leading to the top. The whole building is simple and chaste. The stones are large and well-hewn, and the workmanship is evidently of the Roman age. It is now fitted up as a chapel, and dedicated to St. Peter. I think it probable that it was originally intended for a tomb, and that sarcophagi were laid between the heavy square columns.

We engaged a guide to conduct us over the great mountain chain to Ba'albek. This we found a work of some difficulty;

since the intervening country, and, indeed, the whole northern chain of Antilebanon, is the great stronghold of the house of Harfûsh, the hereditary Emirs of Ba'albek; and these, since the rebellion of the Metâwely in 1850, are outlawed, and rebels against the government. Several of them have been captured, some have been killed in battle, and a few caught by intrigue; but still the present head of the princely house, the Emir Sulimân, defies the government, maintains a guard of a hundred horse, and is the actual governor of the district of Ba'albek. Many of his followers live by plunder; and the flocks, and even the grain and houses of the surrounding villages, suffer from their depredations. Fortunately for us, the Emir, though outlawed by the Sultan, is a kind of English protégé, as indeed are most rebels now-a-days. We had, therefore, nothing to fear; and at last succeeded in persuading our Christian guide, that we would protect him if he would point out the way.

We left the convent at 8 o'clock, and, passing through the village, followed a path running in a north-western direction up the rocky side of Jebel Shurabin. We first crossed a rugged spur that projects from the mountain towards the south, and descended into a deep valley parallel to it, the bottom of which we reached at 8.20. The small village of Telfita was now about half an hour on our left, on the opposite slope of a *basom* in the mountain range, into which the Wady we had entered falls. The whole mountain sides around are cultivated in patches, between the rocks and cliffs. The ruins of several small chapels crown the lower peaks of the mountain on the right; while on its summit stands the old convent of *Mar Shurabin*, i. e. St. Cherubim! These, I presume, are the convents with which Berghaus has so profusely ornamented his map in this place. It is scarcely necessary to state, that these, with all the villages around, are there inserted at random.

At 8.50 we reached a lofty brow from which the view was so commanding that I remained a short time to make observations. From this point I took the following bearings: Saidanâya, S. 25 E.; Jebel Tintyeh, S. 69 E.; Wely Naser above Salahiyeh, S. 17 W.; Menin, S. 29 W.; and Hermon, S. 63½ W. I was thus enabled, by connecting these with bearings formerly taken, to cover with a network of triangles the whole south-eastern portion of the Antilebanon chain; as well as the great plain at its

base. All this district, with its peaks and ridges, and valleys and plains, was now spread before me like a map.

Starting at 8.57 we reached the summit of this mountain ridge in nine minutes. The features of this place, and the formation of the ridges, are somewhat different from what I had been led to conjecture during my former visit. In the upper part of the vale of Helbôn, near the fountain, begin two lofty mountain ranges, divided by a narrow but deep and wild glen. In looking up this glen from the summit of a neighboring peak, it appeared to run away far to the north-east. The southern range of these two, I had observed to run unbroken from Helbôn to Shurabtn; and the other I had likewise observed to run unbroken towards Ma'lûla. On passing round the base of Shurabtn, on my former journey to Ma'lûla, I had seen a valley running up between these two ridges, in which is situated the village of Renkûa. I therefore naturally concluded that this was a continuation of the same valley that commenced at Helbôn. Now, however, I found that this valley is not continuous; and that the two ridges unite behind Saidanâya, and form one broad chain, bounding the highest plateau on the south-west.

We now rode down a little valley that led us in twenty minutes by a gentle descent into the broad undulating plateau; and continuing in the same course (N. 25 W.) seven minutes more, we struck the road from Telfita at the little fountain of Sureir. This is the most direct road from Damascus to Ba'albek. Its course from the city is by Burzeh through the ravine to Ma'raba; thence up the vale to Tell and Mentn, and then direct to Telfita and Jubb Sureir where we now stood. Around this place there is a considerable amount of cultivation. The soil is in general light and gravelly; but, being abundantly watered by the rains and snows of winter, it is not unproductive. The elevation of this plain I would suppose to be about 4500 feet above the sea.

Our path was now due north for twenty-two minutes. The mountains on the left were about one hour distant; and the guide pointed out to me the entrance into the deep Wady Hureiry, which runs from this plain to the village of the same name, near the banks of the Barada at Sûk. The main chain rose up before us like a huge wall. The summits are of nearly uniform elevation, from the lofty peak above Blûdân to two others of almost equal altitude in the parallel of Yabrûd and Ba'albek.

After following a course N. 25 W. for twenty minutes, we again resumed our former direction, and forty-five minutes after reached the foot of the mountains. The western part of the plateau is here stony and barren. Great numbers of prickly shrubs grow up among the rocks and loose stones; and a belt along the base of the mountain is covered with the dwarf oak and wild plum. As we rode across this plain we were somewhat surprised to see large quantities of wild flowers of every color; the crocus being the most abundant. In the spring season, the mountains, plains and valleys of this land, are everywhere carpeted with flowers of the brightest hues. Anemones, convolvulus, iris, crocus, and many other species, are seen mingled together in rich profusion; but never before had I observed so many in the autumn.

From this place, at the entrance of a little valley, we had a full view of the plateau; and could distinctly see the gorge leading into the plain of Yabrûd and Nebk, far away to the east. Its general form is rhomboidal, the acute angles being on the south-west and north-east. The long mountain chain on the south-east side runs unbroken (as seen from this place) from its commencement to the glen at Yabrûd. The mountains on the south-west are loftier but less regular in form. These cannot be regarded as a chain, but as the terminations of the broad irregular side ridges that run from the valley of the Barada to this plateau. The course of the main chain of Antilebanon is from south-west to north-east; while the terminations of these side ridges form a line running towards the other in a direction N. 30 E.

The whole of this district, including the plateau and the mountains and plain about Saidanâya, is called 'Asâl, or Jubbet 'Asâl, from the village 'Asâl el-Werd; the gardens of which we could see about two hours distant in the same line with the village and gorge of Yabrûd. About the same distance off, but more to the eastward, I could see the ruined Wely called Reish, and beyond it a quarter of an hour, the guide informed me, is the village Haush — I suppose the Haush 'Arab mentioned in Dr. Smith's lists. These I understand are the only inhabited villages in the plateau. There is a small one in ruins near the southern end, called Aukek, which gives its name to that section of the plain.

At 11.15 we again mounted and rode up the little Wady Haurât, and after crossing a low ridge entered another Wady much deeper; course N. 55 W. At 11.30 we entered a third,

after passing over a rocky ledge. The scenery now was very grand. Lofty naked cliffs crowned the rugged mountain range on the left; and the slopes on both sides were scantily covered with forests of the ilex, the wild plum, and the hawthorn. The scene was wild and desolate in the extreme. No living thing was within view, save a few eagles soaring round the jagged cliffs far above us. It is a fitting abode for the bandit and the outlaw; and one of us had just given expression to this thought, when a shrill cry from the mountain's side rung in our ears. It was answered by another from the opposite peak; but still no human being was in sight. We concluded, at once, that some of the Metawely spies were giving notice of our approach, and we deemed it necessary to be on our guard. After crossing a rising ground, a horseman, with a single attendant, was seen approaching from the tangled wood in front; and the voices of many others could be heard around. We pressed on, however; gave the ordinary salutation to the strangers; and, after crossing diagonally a broad wooded valley, we commenced the ascent of the mountain at 11.55. All the valleys here run nearly parallel to the main chain, having only a slight inclination to the east. The ridges on the south-east of us were now almost as lofty as those opposite, and their features and scenery were of the same character, being bold and rugged, and not bare and rounded like those more to the south. The whole strata was hitherto calcareous limestone; but now the sandstone appeared cropping up over it; while the oak began to give way to the pine and the juniper.

At 12.10 we reached the summit of a rocky ridge, from which the entrance of Wady Haurât bore S. 65 E. After crossing a narrow and deep ravine, we entered a little fertile plain. We were now in the very heart of the mountains. Their loftiest peaks raised their heads around us; while the deep dark glens led away down eastward, showing that the watershed was still before us. A ledge of rocks cropping up from the plain attracted my attention; its features, color and general appearance struck me at once as resembling red syenite. On riding to the spot, however, I found that it was only the top of a limestone ledge, which had been thrown up by volcanic action, and discolored at the same time. The dusky basalt appeared beside it in dense masses, while small boulders of the same rock covered this part of the plain. At 12.40 we reached the fine fountain called 'Ayûn ed-Dûra.

Here we reclined on the grassy banks of the little fountain to eat our noonday meal. Vast flocks of small birds hovered round; we had disturbed them in their favorite haunt, and they now waited impatiently till we should again leave them in quiet possession. A few hawks, however, gliding around, or poised motionless high overhead, showed that we were not the only disturbers of this little feathered throng. One or two solitary vultures were perched gloomy and sorrowful-like on neighboring cliffs; and around them eagles swept in graceful circles. This place, in fact, seems to be the chosen retreat of the whole feathered tribes that frequent these mountains. Beasts, also, have evidently visited it in no small numbers. There the wild boar has turned up the fresh turf in search of his food; and here at our feet are the broad tracks of the bear that lately stooped to drink at the bubbling fountain. Antilebanon is but thinly peopled by man; but the lower animals, both birds and beasts, inhabit it in vast numbers. The multitude of eagles is almost incredible. They may be seen every day in large flocks, sweeping gracefully round some towering cliff, or circling high in the air over their prey. On one occasion, when I had fallen asleep on one of the loftiest peaks of these mountains, I was suddenly roused by a strange sound, as if a whirlwind was sweeping through the old juniper trees around me. On looking up I saw *twenty-four* huge eagles dashing through the air, and most of them within pistol shot. Vultures are also numerous; and hawks are found in almost endless variety. A species of daw, very much resembling the jackdaw of England, frequents the higher districts. Partridges abound in every part, and snipes and woodcocks wherever there is water. Of beasts the bear is the largest. He is rather low, but long and powerfully made, and of a dull brown color. The wolf, the hyena, the jackal, and the hare, are also met with. A species of panther, I have been told, is found on Hermon; but I have never seen any of them.

At 1.15 we left the fountain, and rode up the mountain side over strata of basalt. In ten minutes we reached the summit of the great central ridge, and the water-shed. Here, as I stood looking along the line of mountains north-eastward, I had on my left the abrupt and broken descent to the valley of Ma'rabân; from whence, more to the southward, the deep Wady Yahfûfeh cuts through a side ridge on its way to the Bukâ'a. This great plain,

level as a lake, with the towering summits of Lebanon beyond, forms a glorious picture from this elevation. On my right I could look over jagged cliffs, and broken mountains to the broad plateau of 'Asâl. The entrance of the little Wady el-Haurât was visible, bearing S. 55 E.; and this marks precisely the general line of our route from the plain to the summit. The whole scene was one of wild and stern grandeur, such as is scarcely equalled in these mountains. The steep and rugged descent on the west is deeply furrowed by rocky ravines; while on the east are mountain ridges and towering peaks, here and there covered with the oak, the pine, and the juniper. The elevation at this spot I judged, from a comparison with other places, to be about 6000 feet. It is, however, somewhat lower than the average height of this part of Antilebanon.

We now rode for a few minutes along the summit of the ridge, passing the head of a deep and fine vale that runs down eastward toward 'Asâl, and then commenced our western descent by an easy path that runs diagonally N. 10 W. The mountain summits now rose on our right, the sides having a steep but uniform slope from our path upward; while close on our left were the heads of numerous wild ravines. At 1.35 we reached a little meadow, with several small fountains; the water from which runs down a deep glen into Wady Ma'rabûn, entering it some distance north of the village. This place is called the Merûj, and here is the highest source of the Nahr Yahfûfeh, one of the tributaries of the Litâny. Fifteen minutes after, we passed a very small fountain of pure water, called 'Ain Hil-Jerâbek. This is a favorite resort of the shepherds, who are great epicures in water. Its name is not uncommon in these mountains. It signifies "The fountain of the opening of the Knapsack." All the shepherds have a little sack of skin which they carry, strapped like a soldier's knapsack, upon their back. In this they keep their scanty fare; and, when they reach a spring of pure water, they unloose it, and eat their meals with a relish, which those alone can realize who breathe the pure mountain air, and are braced by vigorous exercise. Often have I sat beside the bubbling fountain in the midst of these simple and wild-looking shepherds of Antilebanon, and told them tales of other lands, that to them were stranger far than any story of the "Thousand and One Nights." I have seen their flocks gathered around them in one dense mass, and I

have been not a little astonished and pleased to observe that this mingling gave rise to no confusion. Each shepherd, when he has finished his repast, or when the time of rest is over, rises from his place and walks away, calling to his sheep or goats in a peculiar way, and immediately his own flock separate themselves from the throng and follow him. The other shepherds do so too, and each flock follows its own master. How beautifully illustrative of the words of our Saviour: "He calleth his own sheep by name and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow: for they know not the voice of strangers." John 10: 4, 5.

A few minutes after we passed another small fountain; and at 2.5 crossed over a high ledge of naked limestone rocks that runs down toward the Bukâ'a between two deep ravines. The mountain side on our right now rose up almost a sheer precipice. The rocks and glens around were covered with forests of the juniper and ilex. These glens were like yawning gulfs in the mountain side; their sides in many places being walls of naked white rock, which contrasts well with the sombre foliage in the depths below. After riding for a quarter of an hour in a course N. 10 E., we turned suddenly to the N. W., and rode down a difficult zigzag path toward the valley of Ma'rabûn, and reached the little fountain of Benaiyeh near the head of the Wady at 2.50. Here we spent five minutes in watering our horses, and examining the ruins of a small temple that crowns a little Tell in the middle of the valley. There is nothing remarkable about these ruins. It is somewhat singular, however, that along the road which runs from Ba'albek to Zebedâny through this valley, there are four similar structures. On one of these, below the village of Blûdân, is a fragment of a Greek inscription. Another, near Ma'rabûn, had a portico of massive columns, the shafts of which are still seen scattered over the meadow.

The country around was now quite familiar to me. I had passed this spot only a few months before, when returning from Beirût and the Cedars to Blûdân. From this fountain a good road runs down the valley to the village of Ma'rabûn in a direction nearly south-west. The little stream, gathered from the Merûj, and many other deep Wadys, falls into this valley. The village is

built on the summit of a rocky Tell at the base of the mountains, which rise up over it in beetling cliffs. At the village, the Wady is of considerable breadth, having a beautiful expanse of meadow, over which the walnut and other fruit trees are disposed in tasteful groups. From the western base of the Tell on which the village stands, copious fountains burst forth. Their united waters run down the vale, at first south-west for twenty minutes, and then gradually turning westward for twelve minutes more, sweeping along in a narrow bed, they are spanned by an ancient bridge. Just below this bridge, the stream from Sürghâya, whose source is (S. by W.) at the village of the same name, joins that from Ma'rabûn. The rivulet thus formed enters the winding Wady Yahsafêh, cutting its way through the lofty side range of hills; enters the Bukâ'a north of the little village of Mâsy; and then runs toward the centre of the plain in a course N. 82 W., passing the villages of 'Aly en-Nahry, Reyâk and Haush Hâla. The distance from 'Ain el-Benaiyeh to Ma'rabûn is one hour, forty-two minutes; thence to the bridge, thirty-two minutes; thence to Sürghâya (S. 25 W.) twenty-eight minutes; thence to 'Ain Hauwar (S. 40 W.) forty-five minutes; and thence to Zebedâny (S. W.) one hour. The Wady Ma'rabûn, and the plains of Sürghâya and Zebedâny, are all in one line, running along the western side of the central ridge of Antilebanon, from south-west to north-east.

At 3.15 we again started, and in fifteen minutes struck the regular road on the west side of the valley. We now crossed a low ridge which forms the water-shed between the Wady Ma'rabûn and the Wady Sibât, and rode down a steep slope to the bottom of the latter, which we reached at 3.35. The scenery here is very grand. Lofty mountains rise up on each side, crowned with perpendicular cliffs of naked rock. The sides are covered with shattered fragments of limestone, among which spring up the wild plum and dwarf oak. Immediately above this pass, Wady Sibât turns to the north-east, and thus, when seen from a little distance, seems to be a continuation of Wady Ma'rabûn. It continues its course making a deep furrow, or rather division, in the mountain chain to near its northern extremity. The great defect of the maps hitherto published, is, that they represent the central chain of Antilebanon as lying on the western side of the plains of Zebedâny and Sürghâya, and running thence northward in an unbroken line. Such is far from

being the case; for the main chain is on the *east* side of those plains. The other is only a side range, which is cut through by the Wady Yahfûfeh, and then again by the Wady Sibât. At this place it may be considered as joining the great chain; for, though a deep Wady runs up between them, yet it is not so broad as to constitute them two distinct ranges. The loftiest ridge of Antilebanon is very regular in its course. A line drawn north-east by compass, from the summit of Hermon to the plain of Hums, would fall along its highest summits.

About twenty minutes above this pass is the little village of Sha'eibeh, on the brow of the hill. The Wady Sibât enters the Bukâ'a about half an hour south of the village of Bereitân. We now continued our route, skirting the cliff on our right, and gradually ascending almost at right angles to the line of the Wady, so as to pass round the basin-like depression on the western side of the pass. We followed the same course from 'Ain el-Benaiyeh till we reached the angle of this depression at 3.48; and then turned down the right bank of the Wady (N. 60 W.), and followed a winding path that led us gradually away from it over naked rocky slopes. At 4.20 we turned suddenly to the right and rode straight toward Ba'albek, N. 10 E. In twelve minutes we passed a deep ravine, that runs down past the village of Taiyibeh, and enters the Bukâ'a at the southern end of the low range of hills, that extend from Ba'albek to that village. A few minutes afterward we passed on the right of a ruined village with the foundations of a little temple or castle in the centre of it. Here are traces of an ancient road, and at several other points between this and Ma'râbûn I observed remains of it. This, I have no doubt, was in former times the line of the great thoroughfare between the cities of Ba'albek, Abila and Damascus. It is not longer than the way by Neby Shit, and it is much better and more level. There are no rocky hills to cross, and no difficult and narrow defiles to wind through. At 5.13 we had 'Ain Burday on our left; and fifteen minutes after we entered among the ruins of Ba'albek.

With the history and character of the splendid ruins that adorn this ancient city, I have here nothing to do. My object now is to delineate the geographical features of Antilebanon, and the adjoining districts; and to direct attention to such objects of interest in common with these mountains, as are but little known, or as have been but imperfectly described. — From

Ba'albek to Ribleh I give but an outline of my notes, confining myself almost exclusively to geographical features.

Thursday, Oct. 13th. We left the city at 7.40, passing over heaps of ruins near one of the ancient gates. Our course was N. 60 W., over a stony plain. In twenty-five minutes we entered among little swelling hills. I here observed, on closely examining the great chain of Antilebanon, that it is, in *this parallel*, composed of three distinct ridges divided by valleys. That on the west is lowest, and is separated from the others by the Wady Sibât, above mentioned. The central ridge here appears for the first time, rising over the former; and soon increases in altitude as it runs northward, until it becomes the main range. The eastern is the loftiest of all *toward the south*; but it decreases in altitude from this point northward. In it are three peaks, in the parallel of Ba'albek, almost equal in height to any in the whole chain. The mountains are not regular in form; and, when viewed only from the plain, the general features above referred to are not so distinctly marked, or so easily discerned. The division made in the ridge by the Wadys Ma'rabûn and Sibât, I first observed from the lofty peak near Blâdân; and afterwards saw it more distinctly from the summit of the mountain at the Cedars.

At 8.15, on crossing some high ground, we turned N. 36 E.; but ten minutes after resumed our former course; and, at 8.43, dismounted beside the ruins of the old temple at Nahleh. It is beautifully situated on the southern bank of a deep ravine, in the bottom of which, just below the projecting cliff on which it stands, is a fine fountain. The glen cuts deeply into the mountains; and looks like a great fissure in this part of the plain. I here observed, on the north-east of Nahleh, a lofty mountain standing out from the main ridge, and divided from it by a deep valley, which is drained into Wady Nahleh. This I found to be the commencement of a side range that extends from this place, parallel to the other, to the extremity of the chain near Jâsieh, or more commonly Jûsy.

We left at 9.5, and after ascending the steep bank continued in our former course, skirting a stony Tell, the beginning of a low ridge that runs as far as Yûnin. In a quarter of an hour we turned gradually round its base to N. 23 E., and rode along the narrow valley between it and the southern spur of the lofty mountain above mentioned. At 9.35 I observed opposite me on

the brow of this hill, to the right, ruins composed of large hewn stones, that appeared to be the remains of some ancient structure. Seventeen minutes after, we reached Yūnīn, situated on the right bank of a little glen that descends from near the summit of the mountain behind. A large stream of water flows down it, and the meadows and gardens below are in consequence covered with verdure. A little canal is conducted along its right bank, far away to the northward, to irrigate the higher portions of the plain. Deir el-Ahmar bears from this place N. 64 W.

There is an upper and more direct road from Yūnīn to Lebweh; but we took that further down in the plain, in order to avoid the deep ravines and rocky spurs that here descend from the mountains. Our route was now N. 10 W. along the side of the little canal. At 10.37, forty-five minutes after leaving the village, on surmounting a rising ground, I obtained an extensive view northward, and here saw for the first time the monument of Hurmūl, far away on the horizon, bearing N. 30 E. Deir el-Ahmar bears from this spot N. 77 W.; and Sha'ad, a small village on the west side of the plain, N. 35 W. Turning N. 25 E. we now rode over a stony plain that slopes down gently to the foot of Lebanon. At 11.20 I observed, ten minutes distant on the left, a few houses on the side of a low Tell, and, further down, a verdant meadow with little groups of trees; and a few minutes after, we crossed a shallow Wady with a little stream of water, and some fields of maize. These were the only signs of cultivation on this dreary spot. At 12 o'clock we turned directly toward the village of 'Ain, now distinctly seen crowning one of the spurs of Antilebanon. A few minutes after, we crossed a deep ravine, that cuts through the side ridge of Antilebanon, and runs in a winding course across the plain to the opposite mountains. At 12.55 we reached the village of Lebweh. The ruins of the ancient city cover a little Tell in the centre of the vale, about ten minutes below the great fountain. Little now remains but heaps of rubbish, among which a broken shaft and disfigured capital are here and there seen. The foundations and lower walls of some important structure, probably a temple, still stand on the north brow of the Tell. A few miserable huts have been constructed amid the ruins by the modern inhabitants. The sides of the vale are covered with the richest vegetation, and verdant meadows and corn-fields are seen further

down, where it expands into a little plain. Two small ancient canals are led off from the fountain, one on each bank; and their waters abundantly irrigate the soil. Another canal of great size is conducted along the slope of the hill, round which it sweeps below 'Ain and Fikeh, to water the gardens and fields of Kâ'a. The river runs down the valley in a direction north by west to the foot of Lebanon, along which it winds in a deep and narrow channel to the great fountain near Hurmûl, called Neb'a el 'Asy.

At 1.15 we again mounted our horses, crossed the stream and the two canals on the right bank, and continued in a straight course to 'Ain. At 1.40 we had a small Wely, surrounded by some houses and gardens, ten minutes on our right. Ascending a gentle slope we reached the village at two o'clock. I observed some ancient tombs hewn in the rock as we approached; but these were the only evidences of antiquity I could anywhere perceive. This certainly cannot be the place mentioned in Scripture as west of Riblah; for the bearing of the latter from it is much nearer north than east. Passing through the village and its gardens, we rode on between a little range of Tells and the main range of Antilebanon; and in twenty-seven minutes reached the summit of an elevated spur that here connects them, and from it had a commanding view of the great plain far southward. 'Ain and Lebweh were in the same line bearing S. 50 W. Looking northward, there at our feet was the deep and picturesque glen on the right bank of which is built the little village of Fikeh. The bottom of this glen is filled with the dense foliage of the numerous orchards and vineyards, whose deep verdure forms a fine contrast with the white cliffs that tower over them. A steep winding path brought us in ten minutes to the gardens; through these we winded for a time, and then ascending diagonally the opposite bank, entered Fikeh in five minutes more. We now crossed another ridge, and in twenty-five minutes entered the village of Râs Ba'albek. Passing over heaps of ancient ruins, in the midst of which stands an old church with a stone roof, we went to the convent. This is situated a few hundred paces above the village, near the entrance to a sublime gorge in the mountains.

Here we took up our abode for the night. We found its only occupants to be the superior and the priest of the village. We were received with great kindness, but were not very fortunate

in the selection of our new acquaintances. In the priest we soon recognized the brother of a man, who had only a short time previously been imprisoned for breaking open and plundering Mr. Barnett's house in Damascus. The superior was evidently a shrewd man of the world, if not a very profound theologian, or an over strict moralist. After a long and rather noisy dispute with a group of villagers about a vineyard and flock of sheep which he possessed, he assailed one of our servants on the subject of religion. Here, however, he did not feel himself quite so much at home; and was far behind his antagonist in knowledge of the Scriptures. Passage after passage was quoted by Jirjis; text after text was hurled at the heads of pictures, images and saints. The poor priest, when he found the statements and commands of the Old Testament against him, thought to finish it by a *coup de main*, and so denied its authority altogether! He now appealed to the New Testament; but here it was worse and worse. When at last he was completely silenced, he jumped up in a rage and asked his opponent, if he would dare to broach his heresy within the very convent walls? His anger was soon over, however; and the disgrace of such a defeat in the presence of his parishioners seemed to affect him but little. Soon after, poor man! to supply the place of a better spirit, which he thought, I suppose, had deserted him, he pulled out his brandy bottle, and after liberal potations, lay down perfectly satisfied with himself and all the world. Such is a specimen of the ministers of God, so-called, in this unfortunate land.

Friday, Oct. 14th. Accompanied by a guide, I went forth at the earliest dawn, to ascend the Tell on the north side of the convent; and thus obtain a good panoramic view of the northern base of Antilebanon, the vale of the Orontes, and the great plain of Hums. I was amply repaid for my morning's toil, in the magnificent prospect I here enjoyed. Standing amid the crumbling ruins of an old convent, and resting my compass on the tottering wall, I took careful bearings of the many important places within the range of vision, correcting them for the sake of greater accuracy with the sextant. On my right ran the base of Antilebanon in a course N. 47 E. to the point where it finally sinks into the plain. In this line, some thirteen miles distant, I could see the towers and wide-spreading ruins of Jûsy, and about an hour below them the large village of Zerrâ'a N. 39 E. Far away on the distant horizon, the

first rays of the sun lighted up the castle hill of Hums, N. 32½ E. The lake, too, was there like a sheet of burnished gold, covering an arc of ten degrees from N. 27 E. westward; and far beyond it were the dim outlines of the Kurún Hamah, two mountains called by this name near that town. The village of Ká'a lay in the plain an hour and a half distant (N. 34 E.); and the waters of the great canal from Lebweh covered the fields around it with verdure. And there (N. 2 E.) stood the strange monument of Hurmül, all solitary in the midst of a desert. The range of hills which commences, as we have stated, a little to the north of Nahleh, extends to this place and continues its course to the extremity of the mountain chain. Its direction is uniform the whole way, being nearly N. E. The high spurs, however, which run out at 'Ain, Ftkeh and Rás, together with the little Tella, give the mountains the appearance of bending at this point more eastward. But the fact is, that the main ridge maintains a straight course to its termination. To the south of Rás Ba'albek, the mountains are bolder and the scenery more interesting, than towards the north. Lofty peaks spring up at intervals with jagged sides, and between them are wild and deep ravines. In many places, too, they are scantily covered with forests of oak. But from Rás northward, they are bare, bleak, and completely destitute of verdure. Steep gravelly slopes run up from the desolate plain to the rounded summits.

As it was our desire this day to visit the fountain of the 'Asy, the monument of Hurmül and the ruins of Júsy, before proceeding for the night to Ribleh, we selected an active guide to take us by the most direct routes to the several places. We mounted our horses at 8.5, and riding over heaps of ruins, the only memorials of some ancient but forgotten city, we reached the fountain in a few minutes. We now rode through some gardens, and then emerged on the open plain. In half an hour we crossed the great canal, which runs from hence to Ká'a, and turns several mills on its course. I saw, a little above this canal, the track of another and apparently more ancient one. The plain is here barren and stony, sloping down to the brink of the chasm, that runs along the very base of Lebanon. Our course was about N. 25 W., direct towards the great fountain, the direction of which the guide pointed out, and marked by a white path that descends to it from the mountain side opposite.

At 9.45 we reached a small ruined village on the brow of the glen, called Khirbet el-Hyât. Descending the steep bank, we arrived in ten minutes more at the side of a deep pool, in which there is a large spring. Here we dismounted, and passing round it, scrambled over a rocky ledge, and reached the brow of a conglomerate cliff, looking over which we saw the whole waters of this fine fountain bursting forth from beneath it into the bed of the little stream. The united waters did not seem to me much more copious than the Barada below Fjeh. It is difficult, however, to judge of the volume of a river near such a fountain. The water bursts forth with such force, and flows with such rapidity, that the river is much larger in reality than it appears. The breadth of the stream is about fifteen yards; the bed is rocky, the banks on each side precipitous, and the course very tortuous. Having examined the fountain, we ascended the right bank and proceeded along it a few hundred yards, till we came near to the excavated convent of Deir Mâr Marôn. It is wholly hewn out of the solid rock of the cliff, and its rooms are said to be numerous and spacious. It was now, however, filled with sheep and goats, and several savage dogs kept guard over them, so that we did not attempt to enter. The river from Lebweh on approaching this fountain, flows nearly due north in a winding channel. The side range of Lebanon rises abruptly from the bed of the river, and is furrowed by Wadys whose sides have an easy and pretty uniform slope. These Wadys do not run at right angles to the course of the range, but descend diagonally, inclining considerably to the north-east.

At 10.20 we started from the side of the fountain, and ascending the bank, proceeded in a straight course to the monument of Hurmûl, S. 10 E. The whole plain is here undulating. A line of low swelling hills runs along parallel to the bed of the river; and on the summit of one of the highest of these stands the monument. The channel in which the 'Asy flows is here deep and tortuous. Its course across the plain cannot be seen, till one stands on the very brow of the Wady. As I approached the monument I was much disappointed in its apparent dimensions. It did not seem more than thirty feet high; and when I observed two foxes taking refuge behind some loose stones near its summit, I fancied I would soon dislodge them. But when I reached its base, and drew up my horse beneath its shadow, all disappointment vanished. I cannot account for this

strange delusion. We reached it at 11.5, exactly three quarters of an hour after leaving the fountain. Time was now precious. We did not know the distance of Jâsy, or how long we might wish to stay examining its ruins. But still I could not leave this spot without sketching the monument and its bas-reliefs, and taking bearings of the many important places in view. This is one of the best defined points for making a survey of the plain and banks and course of the 'Asy. Having completed my sketch, I planted my compass on the base of the pillar and proceeded to make observations. The following are the principal bearings taken: KA'a, S. 56 E.; Jâsy (old), N. 86 E.; Zerrâ'a, N. 66 E.; Ribleh, N. 60 E.; Tell Neby Mendan, N. 37 E.; Hurmal village, N. 37 W. The river flows toward Ribleh in a winding course, making a slight curve to the northward. There is a considerable bend in it about an hour and a half from the monument; where, after running for some time south-east, it turns suddenly to the north. At this bend a canal is led from it across the plain to the modern village of Jâsy. This canal appears to be ancient. It is now choked up, and rendered useless. My attention was arrested by observing the blue summit of a far distant mountain, which greatly resembled Hermon. I could not, however, be certain that it was that mountain. It bore S. 34½ W.

While I was thus occupied, Mr. Barnett was busily engaged in making *fac-similes* of the marks and cuttings found on the lower part of the monument. When I had finished my work I joined him; and very soon became convinced that none of the marks were ever intended to form parts of inscriptions. Most of them are of very recent date, though a few are unquestionably of considerable antiquity; but not of the age of the structure itself. It is somewhat remarkable, that the same characters are found repeated in different places, and in different connections, and are arranged as if intended to represent *words*. But still the total want of order or regularity, combined with the fact that they are all within the reach of those standing on the base—that up so far, the whole surface is covered with them, while above the reach of man not a single mark of any kind can be seen—this, I say, is ample evidence that all these scratches are the work of peasants, shepherds, or idle Arabs. The Arabs are a curious race in this respect; if they see a heap of stones they will assuredly put one on the top of it; if they

see a number of rags tied to an old tree, they will not pass till one has been separated from their own stock, and hung up among its brethren; and I presume it is the very same reasons that prompt them to make these marks. If you ask them why they do these things, their answer will always be something like the following: "Perhaps it's a *Wedy*; or perhaps it's a *blessing*; I don't know; but there must be good in it or nobody would do it."

That there were once inscriptions on this monument I have little doubt. It is not at all probable that such a structure would be erected without some inscribed record of its object or age. A minute examination of the fallen stones might amply repay the trouble and expense, by bringing to light some incident or epoch in the history of this land. The bas-reliefs on the three sides which still remain standing, are better executed than I had expected to find them. True, they have not the freedom and boldness of Grecian or Roman sculpture; yet they are far superior to many of those that have been brought forth by Layard from the fallen palaces of Nineveh. On one side is represented an elephant standing in the centre, with a bear rampant, *alias* dancing, in front; while a bull is apparently about to charge him from behind. On another side are two stags with large horns, one standing, and the other *couchant*, as heralds would say. On the third side is a wild boar attacked by two dogs; two huge spears appear sticking in his sides. The monument stands on a pedestal composed of three layers of basalt, retreating like steps, each layer about two feet high. It is divided into three stories—one being a cube of solid masonry 29½ feet in the side, and about 26 feet high, with pilasters at the corners supporting a plain cornice. The bas-reliefs are on the upper part of this story. The second story is rather smaller, and has two pilasters on each side, besides those at the angles. The third is a pyramid. In the whole are forty layers of stones; and each being about two feet high, the height of the structure is about eighty feet.

Such is the monument of Hurmül as it now stands in the midst of this desert plain. Its origin and its history I leave to antiquarians, without even venturing a guess as to either.

At 12.20 we were again in the saddle, and turned our horses' heads to Jûsy, whose towers we could see far away across the arid plain, at the foot of the mountains. We had been warned to be on our guard against the 'Omûr, a powerful and warlike

tribe of Arabs, that had lately pitched their tents among the mountains south of Ká'a and Júsy; but, as we now saw the vast plain clear before us, and were besides well mounted, we resolved to neglect warnings, and visit this ancient city. We at first leaned a little to the right, to avoid a stony basalt Tell; but, after passing it, rode straight to our destination. Nothing could be imagined more dreary and desolate than this undulating plain around the Kamú'a. Fragments of basalt, limestone and flint are thickly strewn over it; and the whole appears as if it had been exposed for years to the action of intense heat. The stunted shrubs look as if they were charred, and there is now no sign of other vegetation. Yet I have no doubt, that in early spring it would present another aspect, after being watered by the winter rains. It is the scorching rays of the sun acting upon the black basalt strata, that give it its present blasted look. There was no path, and we found it dreary enough marching over these broad fields of stones.

At 1.10 we had the village of Ká'a about half an hour on our right. There is a large building like an ancient fortress, a short distance below it. It may, however, have been one of those great Kháns which we find, now in ruins, on all the principal thoroughfares of Syria. In twenty-five minutes more we crossed one of the branches of the great canal that is led from the fountain of Lebweh; there was now no water in it; but there were evidences that it had only been conducted in some other course a few hours previously. A few minutes after, we entered a tract of fine soil, well cultivated and abundantly watered. The change was as sudden as it was remarkable, from the desert we had just left behind. The border was as clearly marked as a sea line; on the one side the arid flinty plain, on the other the rich alluvial soil. Is this a natural distinction, or is it the result of cultivation? I am inclined to think it is partly owing to both. This fertile tract continued for three quarters of an hour, when the blasted stony plain again commences. At 2.45 we had on our left a small ruined village, and at three o'clock reached Júsy.

As we reached the spot where we were persuaded the ruins stood, we felt disappointed and surprised to observe only one or two diminutive towers; but, on advancing a few hundred yards further, we found that the rest had been concealed by their position. A shallow Wady here descends from the mountains, and in this stood the ancient city. The ruins of Júsy are situated

about a quarter of a mile from the base of Antilebanon. The western ridge of these mountains is cut through by a deep ravine just above the village of KA'a; and from it to another above Jâsy, they retreat a little, forming a kind of bosom. Beyond the latter place, they run out somewhat further into the plain; and thus these ruins, as seen from the Tell at Râs, appeared in a line with the base of the mountains. Seldom have I seen a place so completely desolate; and never have I seen ruins of such extent so totally devoid of interest. Their present desolation is no doubt owing to the want of water. The city was supplied wholly by reservoirs in the form of large wells with small circular openings. Great numbers of these are found among the ruins and in the plain around. They were filled by the winter rains, or perhaps by the streams from the mountains during the rainy season. The ruins are, as nearly as I could estimate, about two miles and a half in circumference. There are no signs now remaining of architectural beauty, or great wealth. The principal building is a square castle 132 yards on each side, having flanking towers at the angles. One of the gates is still standing; it is low, and has a square top; the whole is surrounded by a deep moulding. The walls are built of large stones, and the workmanship appears to be of the later Roman period. It resembles in form and design the citadel or castle I had formerly seen at the ruined city near Maksâra, on the plain of Damascus; but the workmanship is inferior, and there are in it no remains of columns. Four square towers, of much inferior workmanship and later date, are the only other buildings that remain. Over the doorway of one of the latter there is a cross in relief. Large heaps of rubbish appear on every side, composed of hewn stones and the *debris* of fallen buildings. The foundations of large houses, and even the lines of the ancient rectangular streets, can in places be traced; but it appears as if the stones had been removed for the construction of some other places; probably of the extensive structures of the modern Jâsy. These ruins are called *old Jâsy*, to distinguish them from the other.

The question naturally arises: Can these ruins be identified? The name at present given to it is as old as the time of Abulfeda; and must also have been applied to it considerably before his period. There was then not only a town or village, but a district of that name. This district would appear from him to

have been north of Salemtyeh, as he thus writes: "The district of Jûsieh, and the district of Salemtyeh, and the district of Lebanon, even until it extends to the district of Küstäl, between Hams and Damascus." This, however, must be a mistake, for in another place he remarks that the monument of Hurmül and the 'Ain of the 'Asy are between Jûsieh and RAs. (Tab. Syr. p. 27 and 160.) I am rather of opinion, however, that Abulfeda makes reference to the *modern* Jûsy, and not to these ruins. There are here no marks of this city having been inhabited by Mohammedans, or since their conquest of Syria. There is not a vestige of Saracene architecture in the place. There is not a mosque, nor a minaret, nor a place for prayer; and there can be little doubt, that had there ever been any, they would have been spared until at least all others had been completely destroyed. The modern Jûsy is only half an hour distant, and in it are important buildings which appeared to me from the place where I viewed them, to be of Saracenic origin and ancient date. Here, too, is a large mosque and a noble minaret still standing, though the place is deserted.

This is a city such as might be erected at the command of some monarch; but could never attain importance of itself, or from the advantages of its position. In fact, it could never have existed at all, except during the period when this land was densely populated. It has no supply of water; it is encompassed by an arid, stony and desert plain; while on the banks of the river, a few miles below, are most eligible sites for cities. In this respect, then, we might naturally ascribe its origin to some of those Grecian monarchs of Syria, who appear to have had a mania for architecture. But the present ruins are not of so early a date; and, so far as we could see, there is not a single inscription among them. It has been conjectured that this is the *Laodicea Scabiosa* of Ptolemy (Geog. VI 15), or the *Λαοδικεα ερημη Αβαση* of the ancient coins, and referred to by Strabo as standing near or at the northern end of Antilebanon. But if that *Laodicea* was identical with the *Laudicia* on the Itinerary of Antonine, as I think it was, then the position of Jûsy does not at all agree with the distances there given. It is there represented as only eighteen miles from Hums or Emesa, while it is sixty-four from Ba'albek or Heliopolis. But, from a careful computation, I have found that Jûsy is twenty-five miles from Hums, and only about thirty-seven from Ba'albek. Therefore, if the

Itinerary be correct, Jûsy cannot be identified with the ancient *Laodicea*.

From this place I took the following bearings: Zerrâ'a and Kuseir, N. 6 E.; modern Jûsy, N. 9 W.; Ribleh, N. 28 W.

We left the ruins at 3.30, and at four o'clock had modern Jûsy a few minutes on our right. Here are also ruins of considerable extent. A tall minaret is the most conspicuous object. The soil here is fertile, and the canal from the 'Asy, above mentioned, could easily be made to bring abundant water for irrigation; but the Arabs appear determined that it shall remain waste. Ibrahim Pasha built it up, and planted in it a little colony of peasants; but, when his government was overthrown by western intervention, and the wild desert hordes no longer feared his strong hand, Jûsy was soon laid waste again. Last year a wealthy Christian of Hums farmed it, and brought a little colony from Sûdad, the great seat of the Jacobites. But the Arabs again came and quarrelled with the new occupiers. One of the former was killed, and the villagers, to escape a bloody revenge, were forced to desert their newly erected homes. Continuing our course across a fine plain we reached Ribleh at 4.35.

Ribleh is now a wretched village of some forty houses, standing on the right bank of the Orontes. The banks of the river are here low, and a plain of great fertility stretches away on every side. In Ribleh, the only remains of antiquity are the foundations of a square tower constructed of large hewn stones. The Sheikh informed us, however, that in the gardens and fields around, the traces of ancient buildings of considerable extent are found beneath the soil. The glory of Ribleh is gone; but one can still see that a more suitable situation for the head quarters of a large army could nowhere in northern Syria be selected. The rich plain, the salubrious air, the abundant waters, and the ready access by easy and open roads to every part of the country, all show that the kings of Babylon and Egypt, whose armies encamped here, were well acquainted with the land, and perfectly capable of taking advantage of its resources.

From Ribleh, Tell Neby Mindan bears N. 5 W. This bearing is important as fixing the course of the 'Asy. El-Kuseir, N. 33½ E.; Zerrâ'a, S. 86 E. The ridge of Antilebanon gradually decreases in altitude beyond Jûsy; but before it terminates there is a very singular pass, which cuts off its northern end, leaving a group of hills about an hour in length completely isolated. The

road through this pass is in a line with Ribleh, and bears S. 78 E. This road, if continued in a straight line, would pass over the plain about two miles north of Hasya. The mountains of Lebanon run out in a point toward the lake, and their termination bears from hence N. 35 W.

Saturday, Oct. 16th. We started this morning from Ribleh at 6.7, glad to effect our escape from the myriads of fleas that had assailed us during the night. The king of the fleas is said to dwell at Tiberias; if this be so, he must also have a summer residence and a large establishment at Ribleh. Our course was now north-east, along the winding banks of the 'Asy. A busy pastoral scene here presented itself to our view. The black tents of the Arabs lined the borders of the stream. Thousands of sheep and goats, filling the air with their bleatings, were going forth to pasture; each flock led along by its own shepherd. They followed him, for they knew his voice. Vast herds of camels had already wandered off to some distance; the old ones were solemnly browsing amid the luxuriant herbage, while the young were trying to convert their awkward and ungainly motions into something like play. Peasants, too, were seen in the fields turning up the soil with primitive-looking ploughs, and urging on their teams of oxen with patriarchal goads. It was just such a scene as one might have witnessed in the same spot three thousand years ago. It was such pictures as these, that the prophets of God were familiar with in ancient days; and from such they drew those beautiful and striking figures we now read and admire in their writings.

At 6.30 we crossed the first tributary of the 'Asy, by a deep and difficult ford. This stream flows from a fine fountain at the village of Zerrá'a, three quarters of an hour on our right. It runs across the flat and rich plain in a sluggish course, and falls into the 'Asy a few yards below the ford. The 'Asy here turns N. by W., toward the high Tell called Neby Mindan. Our road was in a straight line along its right bank. The river winds gracefully through the plain, and is lined with the rankest vegetation. Hundreds of water fowl float upon its surface, or stalk along the water's edge. The nimble duck and melancholy heron are seen at almost every step; while stately storks wander over the neighboring fields. At seven o'clock we had the large village of Kuseir half an hour on our right, in the midst of a naked but fertile plain. Fifteen minutes after, I observed a little island

in the stream; a large mill is built upon it, and a fine bridge spans the right channel. At 8.13 we passed the Tell Neby Mindan; it is situated on the left bank of the river, about fifteen minutes from our road. It is evidently artificial, and resembles many others found in this region, and in the various plains of Syria. A small village and a white-domed Wely stand upon its summit; and I could plainly see extensive ruins scattered along its base. I was anxious to visit it, but the desire of reaching Hums at an early hour prevented me. I had been informed at the village of Ribleh, that a large tributary falls into the Orontes beside this Tell. I tried to distinguish the precise point of junction; but was not able, owing to the reeds and tall grass that covered the banks and the plain around. It appeared, however, from the nature of the ground, that the Tell and ruins occupy the angle above the junction. This tributary flows from a large fountain called 'Ain et-Tannûr, nearly an hour distant from the Tell.

After a delay of seven minutes, occupied in examining the Tell with my glass, and in taking bearings of Kuseir (S. 38 E.), and Kul'at el-Husan (N. 38 W.) which I had seen for some time on the brow of the mountain in the distance, I continued my journey. Five minutes afterward we had on our left the small village Arjûn; and in twenty minutes more I saw on the opposite side of the river a considerable village, with what appeared to be ancient ruins around it. I got its name from an Arab woman whose utterance was none of the most distinct, but I thought it was Um el-Adâm. About ten minutes on our right I now noticed a very singular rectangular mound, hollow in the centre, and surrounded by a dyke of earth of uniform height along the sides, but elevated at the corners. It struck me at once as being an ancient entrenched camp. As seen from the road, it appears to be square, with the sides from two to three hundred yards in length. At 8.45 I saw Kefr Mûsa on the left bank of the river, and opposite to it a smaller village in ruins. At 8.57 we reached a large artificial Tell on the left of the road, and I ascended it to gain a view of the southern end of the lake and the *deboûché* of the river. From this spot the line of our route from Tell Neby Mindan bore S. 25 W.; the upper end of the lake N. 33 W.; and Hums N. 55 E. The lake was now spread out before me. The river falls into it at its south-western angle, about twenty-five minutes from this Tell. The

castle of Husn is not visible from this place, on account of the swell in the plain beyond the lake. Towards the west appears a broad opening, between the mountains of Lebanon, and the Ansartyeh range; which must have been regarded not only as a conspicuous landmark, but an important pass in every age of Syrian history. This is the natural outlet of the great plains of Hums and Hamah.

Descending the Tell we rode at a quick pace after our servants along the beautiful plain. We soon overtook them, and at 9.20 reached the little village of Kefr 'Ady. The margin of the lake is here about ten minutes distant; and a little island, with a lofty Tell in it, lies about fifteen minutes from the shore. At 9.45 we saw on our left a high artificial mound on the margin of the water; and ten minutes after passed a little to the right of Shaumeriyeh. The lake was now close to the road; but the shore being greatly indented, the distance is very various. At 10.25 we reached the small village of Kuseib, situated on a little mound whose base is washed by the waves. Thus far our road had been pretty nearly in the direction of Hums, and from this place the main road runs direct over the swelling plain to the city. After a delay of ten minutes we turned to the left, round the south-eastern angle of the lake, where we had the village of Kattineh a few minutes on our right, and beyond it Mubarekeh. In fifteen minutes we reached a lofty Tell close to the eastern shore; and from its summit had a commanding view of the lake, and the country round. From this place Tell Neby Mindan bears S. W.; the island S. 70 W., and Hums N. 68 E. The whole country to the south and east of the lake is one vast plain, thinly inhabited, but of great fertility. On the north side, the ground rises in an easy swell. It seems rugged and covered with loose stones, all of trap rock. The trap formation also extends southward to near the base of Antilebanon.

We rode hence to the end of the great dam at the north-eastern extremity of the lake, which is only a few minutes distant. We walked along its summit to near the tower at the opposite side. This is unquestionably a work of high antiquity, and was intended to raise the water of the river to such an elevation, as would enable the people to conduct it in canals over the plain around Hums, for the purposes of irrigation. Some of these canals are still perfect and carry the water to the gardens and fields; but the greater number are neglected and in ruins. The

embankment is from four to five hundred yards in length; but in no place exceeds twelve or fourteen feet in height. It appears to have been built and rebuilt almost times without number. Specimens of the workmanship of every nation, that has in its period ruled over these plains, may here be seen; from the proud successors of Alexander, and the enterprising procurators of Rome, down to the petty Pashas of modern Turkey. A small half-ruined tower stands at the northern end of the dam; perhaps intended to guard it against the wanton aggressions of the Arabs. From this place the river flows through a broad but shallow vale to a point some distance north of Hums. Ten minutes below the dam, on the left bank, is the little village of Suddeh; and farther down are Haddeh and Rubeiyeh.

At 11.30 we again mounted, and struck across the plain through fine fields to the main road, which we reached in a quarter of an hour. This road is excellent, and the plain around can scarcely be surpassed for fertility. At twelve o'clock we saw Nukeireh, about twenty minutes distant on our right, and beside it an artificial mound. Half an hour further Keft 'Aya stood on the same side and about equally distant. In a few minutes further we passed close to a lofty Tell on the left of the road; a little to the east of it stands the small village called Wely Bab 'Omar. At 1.15 we entered the gate of Hums.

The town of Hums is situated in the midst of a vast plain, that extends in some places till it meets the horizon. One of my first spare moments during my brief stay was employed in ascending the castle hill, and examining minutely the whole region within the range of vision. I was accompanied by a Greek priest called Esa, reputed one of the most learned men in Hums, and Sulimán 'Awad, a member of the ancient Jacobite church, intimately acquainted with the whole surrounding country, and noted for his intelligence and veracity. Adjusting my compass on a fragment of the ancient castle wall, I now examined in succession the several sections of the country in sight, beginning at the north. On this side the plain extends unbroken to a group of four hills, the two centre ones of which are called Kurún Hamah, the Horns of Hamah. The valley between them in which the town is built bears N. 13 E. On the road to it, two hours and a half distant, is a Tell with ruins and a village called Biseh. A little eastward are seen the blue

summits of a far distant mountain range, where, according to Sulimân, are many villages, the houses of which are all built of stone, similar to those found in the Hauran. This is in the district of Selemya, or Salemyeh as it is written by Abulfeda. In a line with the termination of this range eastward is the village of Deir Ba'laba, some forty minutes distant, N. 39 E. Abrineh, about an hour off, bears N. 17 E.; and Zeidân, forty minutes distant, S. 80 E. In a line with the latter, on the horizon, begins a range of hills that runs away to the south; they are called *Jebel esh-Shumariyeh*. Feirûzeh, a small village forty minutes distant, bears S. 51 E.; and Meskeny, two hours, S. 16 E. The Damascus road runs in nearly a straight line to Hasya, S. 4 W.; it has only a slight curve to the west. On the south-east is seen the mountain range that bounds the broad valley of Kur-yetein; and on the south another lower range crosses the plain between Hasya and Kâra, running eastward toward Sûlûd. The eastern base of the great chain of Antilebanon is marked by a line extending S. 7 W.; and the western, by one running S. 37 W. In this range is a lofty conical peak, about two hours distant from its extremity, which forms a very conspicuous object from every part of this plain; it is called *Jebel Hallmeh*. The monument of Hurmûl is distinctly seen near the centre of the opening into the Bukâ'a, S. 42½ W. Tell Neby Mindan bears S. 52 W. Between Lebanon and the Ansariyeh mountains is a broad plain; but the view in this direction is shut in by the elevation of the ground westward of the lake; so that even the castle of el-Husn cannot be seen. The lake of Hums, or of *Kedes*, as it is also called, is a fine sheet of water. Its dimensions, however, have been greatly exaggerated. By careful bearings and calculations I have ascertained that its extreme length is six geographical miles and its greatest breadth about half that number. The dam is six miles distant from Hums, S. W. This lake is in a great measure, if not altogether artificial, and the bed of the stream before it was made was near the southern border. Along the banks of the river opposite the town are the gardens of Hums, celebrated for their beauty and for the abundance of their fruits.

Such was the wide panorama that was spread out before me as I stood amid the ruins of this old castle, — an unbroken plain extending for many hours on every side, without a hill to vary the monotony, and without a single tree save the little group in

the gardens of the city. The villages only occur at long intervals, and there is no other sign of human habitation. Turkish rapacity and misrule have contributed to depopulate and lay waste one of the fairest portions of Syria; and the few inhabitants that still remain can only manage to drag out a life of poverty and toil, by paying "black mail" to Arab chiefs and exorbitant taxes to Turkish Pashas. Almost the only objects of interest in an antiquarian point of view, in this whole region, are the artificial mounds that meet the eye in every direction; but which are found in greatest number along the banks of the 'Asy. They are regular in form, generally resembling truncated cones; varying in height from fifty to two hundred and fifty feet, with a circumference in proportion. The sides and summits are covered with loose whitish gravel, like the *debris* of some vast structure, that had been originally made up of bricks and small stones united by cement. These mounds are also found in the Buká'a and plain of Damascus. Villages either inhabited or in ruins are generally built upon, or beside them; and fountains or large wells are always seen near those that are at a distance from the river's bank. In every respect similar to these are the mounds described by Layard and others as existing on the plains of the ancient Assyria; and I have no doubt but that the origin of them all may be traced to the same people. At the Tell es-Salahiyeh, one of the largest of these mounds on the plains of Damascus, I found an Assyrian bas-relief; and, at a place where its side had been in part carried away by the waters of the Barada, the layers of brick are still visible.

The mound on which the castle of Hums stands is of this character. I did not measure it; but estimated its diameter at 300 yards, and its height at 200 feet. It was formerly encompassed by a deep ditch, now in part filled up with rubbish from the town. Its sloping sides were paved with small square blocks of basalt, forming an excellent escarpment; portions of this still remain, but by far the greater part has been carried off to pave the streets of the town. On the summit of the scarp was a lofty rampart or wall of great strength; the facing being of large limestone blocks, and the centre, rubble embedded in cement. Not a fragment of the castle itself now remains. And the only buildings standing are a few portions of the exterior flanking towers on the northern wall; these are principally

of Saracenic origin. The whole summit of the Tell is covered with heaps of rubbish, mixed with which I observed several large fragments of red and gray granite columns, the remains, no doubt, of some once stately temple. Underneath the rubbish are numerous large vaulted chambers, formerly used as magazines and stores for the garrison. A subterranean passage seems to have connected the castle on the summit with the town at the base of the hill; it is now in a great measure filled up, but the priest pointed out to me an opening at the foot of the mound leading into it. A modern Wely with a white dome stands on the summit of the Tell, and is a conspicuous object for many miles round.

The town of Hums is on the northern side of the castle. It is said to contain 20,000 inhabitants, of whom 7000 are Christians, chiefly of the Greek church. There is here also a small community of the ancient Syrian or Jacobite church. These are a singular and interesting people. They have not the cringing subdued look of the other Christians; they are independent in spirit, and bold and resolute in their conduct. They are all originally from the village of Sūdūd, and are thence called Sūdūdtyeh. Ninety years ago not a single Jacobite was found save in that little village; while now they number 6000 souls, and colonies from them occupy entirely the villages of Zeidān, Meskinah, Feirdzy, Furtaka and Kuseib; and others have settled in Kuseir, and in Hamah. This sect is thus rapidly increasing, while almost all the others are rapidly diminishing; and this is all the more remarkable, as their homes are with one or two exceptions on the very outskirts of civilization.

Hums is one of the cleanest and most regular towns I have seen in Syria. The streets are in general well paved with square blocks of basalt; and the walls of the houses are of the same material, so that there is not consequently such an accumulation of mud and dust as is found in Damascus. No buildings of ancient origin are now standing; but large hewn stones, and fragments of columns of granite, basalt, and limestone, are seen scattered in great profusion through the various parts of the town, and testify to its antiquity and former architectural beauty. Walls of modern date encompass the town, with the exception of the side next the castle, but they are only fit for repelling a sudden incursion of wild Arabs. On the N. W. side of the town, beside the barracks, are the foundations of

ancient baths; and here I observed some squares of fine Mosaic pavement. Hums is celebrated among the Muslims as containing the tombs of some of the earliest friends and companions of their prophet. The most honored of these is that of the renowned Khaled ibn el-Walid, the greatest general of the first ages of Islâm. I saw several fragments of Greek inscriptions in the walls and various parts of the streets, but none of them are of any historical importance.

It was our wish to proceed from Hums to Süüd; but this district being constantly exposed to the incursions of plundering parties from the Arab tribes, cannot be traversed in safety except with a strong escort, or in the company of a caravan. It so happened that no caravan left during our allotted time, and we were, consequently, obliged to return to Damascus by the direct route.

Tuesday, Oct. 18th. At 11.30 we left the gate of Hums, and skirting the castle hill, proceeded along the great caravan road southward. Our friends accompanied us for some distance, and then took an affectionate farewell; uttering many prayers for our safety. Near the city the plain is well cultivated; but, after a few miles, cultivation is only in patches, and it soon disappears altogether. Here is a rich plain reaching to the horizon eastward, and many miles westward, totally desolate and forsaken. The road is excellent and we passed over it at a rapid pace; for there was nothing to be seen, and much to be feared. At 1.3 we had on our left the small village of Shinshâr, built within the walls of an old Khân. The inhabitants can thus resist sudden incursions of plundering Arabs, and guard their flocks from thieves by night. At 2.7 we reached Shemsin, another old caravansary inhabited by a few families. The people came out around us here with as much surprise in their faces, as if we had descended from the clouds. The idea of four solitary horsemen thus travelling along such a road at such a time, was more than they could comprehend. From this place I saw Hasya, S. 5 E.; and turning to the west could also see the Tell Neby Mindan, N. 85 W.; and the castle of el-Husn. Along the whole eastern horizon the plain now spread out like a sea, without a hill or mountain, or solitary object to break the naked uniformity. After a delay of twelve minutes we again set out, and at 2.50 had the first swell of Antilebanon rising out of the plain half an hour on our right. Here were some singular looking pits near the road, which are said to have been made by the Arabs, as hiding places in which

to lie in wait for travellers and small caravans. We had been warned of the great danger we were exposed to in travelling alone along this dreary and unguarded road; and we now saw how easily a plundering band of Arabs on their fleet mares could intercept and strip us. Just as we crossed a gentle swell, we saw a party of horsemen away on the right near the foot of the hills, marching at a quick pace. They almost immediately varied their course and turned eastward, as if about to cross our path or intercept us; but they were still so distant that we could neither tell their number nor appearance. After a few minutes they disappeared in a little Wady. Seeing an isolated tower on the road in front, we pressed on our horses to reach it, if possible, ere the party should come up, that we might thus have a place in which to defend ourselves in case of attack. After an anxious half hour we reached at last the brow of the Wady; but we looked in vain for our supposed foes. In a few minutes, however, I observed a single horseman, away to the right and considerably behind us; while on a rising ground far beyond, the others soon appeared going up the mountain side. This is a land where every man fears his fellow. These were no doubt a party of peasants or peaceful village elders going to some place in the plain of Hums; but seeing our party they dreaded an attack, and by a stratagem escaped, as they supposed, imminent danger. We crossed the Wady and reached the little tower at four o'clock. Beside it is a reservoir, near which is a stone with a long and beautiful Arabic inscription. From this place we looked directly through the singular pass in the mountain range referred to above; a straight line, therefore, drawn from hence to Bibleh would run through it. In twenty-five minutes more we rode into Hasya. We were thus only four hours and forty-two minutes travelling; but this represents a distance of about twenty geographical miles.

Hasya was originally one of those great Khâns that are found at intervals along the caravan road between Damascus and Aleppo. When it became ruinous, huts were erected within its walls, and a few families of peasants found protection here while they cultivated a portion of the surrounding plain. A fine stream of water, collected by a subterranean canal, was formerly brought to it from the eastward; but, as this rendered it a favorite halting place for government troops, the people destroyed the canal in order to be freed from the exactions and insolence of these

licensed bandits. They now suffer severely from the scarcity of this necessary element, and yet they rejoice that their scheme was productive of the desired effect. The village is now the residence of one of the border chiefs, who are employed by government to protect travellers and caravans, and keep in check the wandering Arabs; and who are authorized to maintain a competent force of irregular cavalry. Muhammed es-Suidan, the present Aga, is a man of pleasing manners and considerable information; though deficient in that dignity so generally found in those hereditary chieftains. He received us with great kindness and hospitality, and showed an intense anxiety to obtain information about the various nations of Europe, their extent, population, and military force. We happened to have with us one of the admirable little compendiums of geography, lately published at the Beirut mission press; and we presented it to him. He seemed greatly pleased with the gift; and especially with the facility with which he was able to obtain the information he desired about the various nations and cities. He was appointed to his present station on the death of his uncle Saleh Aga, about two years and a half ago. The death of the latter was a fearful tragedy; though unfortunately such are too often enacted in this unhappy land. Some tribes of the Anezy had disputed with other Arabs from the northern part of Syria, and had collected a large force to war against them. Saleh Aga proceeded to their encampment with an escort of only thirty men, to endeavor to maintain peace. Owing to some imprudence on the part of his retinue, or some old feud between them and the Arabs, the latter surrounded them with a body of twelve hundred horse, and fell with headlong fury on the devoted little band. A brief but feeble resistance was made. The Aga was taken alive and hanged in a few minutes after. Twelve of his men were killed on the spot; and the remainder without an exception left wounded and bleeding on the plain. The Arabs fled, and assistance having come, the wounded men were conveyed to Hama, where in the end most of them recovered. From those very men I had a narrow escape only about a week before the occurrence of this bloody scene; having been a prisoner in their hands for two days in the desert near Palmyra.

The Aga expressed his surprise that we had come alone from Hama, and said what I had sometimes heard before: "You

English regard your lives and property as of little value." "But we saw no Arabs," was our reply. "True!" he answered, and his words are worthy of attention, "True! and you might go ten times in perfect safety, and the eleventh be shot." The road he informed us was now very unsafe. Two large tribes of the Wulid 'Aly had lately pitched their tents around the copious fountains of Kuryetein; and the 'Omâr were in the northern defiles of Antilebanon. He had received private information, he told us, that some parties of these intended to take advantage of the present unsettled state of affairs, and intercept passengers and caravans on the road. He said we could not go alone to Kâra; but as a caravan was to proceed in a few hours, we had better travel in company. I did not much like this arrangement, as it would prevent me from getting such a view of the country as I wished to obtain; but still we thought it best to follow his advice.

Hasya is situated in the plain about half an hour from the base of the mountains. The general direction of the main chain of Antilebanon from Hermon upwards is, as we have seen, N. E. The termination of the range is marked by a line running diagonally to its course from north to south, and half an hour westward of Hasya. The breadth of the mountains being considerable (about two hours) and the range being thus cut off diagonally; the end toward Hasya resembles in consequence of this, the *side* of a mountain range, and a long triangular point is formed with its apex toward the north. It is this point that is intersected by the gap between Hasya and Bibleh. At the foot of the mountains opposite Hasya are two small villages in ruins. From Hasya to Sâdûd is two and a half hours. They are separated by a swell in the plain, which is the continuation of a spur that runs out from Antilebanon near the village of Bureij. From Sâdûd to Kuryetein is about five hours. The whole district northward of a line drawn from Bibleh to Kuryetein is one vast plain, as far as the eye can see; while that southward is intersected by long parallel ranges of mountains.

At 8.50 P. M. our servants informed us the horses were ready; so bidding adieu to our kind host we mounted at once. We now found that the Aga had attached three of his horsemen to us as a guard, with instructions to keep by our sides till we entered Kâra; and not on any account to leave the caravan. The latter we found had been gone some time. Our road was

up a gentle slope in a direction S. 5 E.; the foot of the mountains being about half an hour on our right. The moon was full and shining gloriously in an unclouded sky, so that I was able to mark angles and time with as much accuracy as during the day. The general features of the country were also clearly seen; and the only difficulty I experienced was in calculating the distances of the hills and mountains we saw to the right and left. This information, however, our companions were fully competent to give. In an hour we came up with our caravan, consisting of about seventy animals, camels, mules and donkeys, accompanied by from thirty to forty men mostly armed with muskets. A few horsemen were likewise attached to it. At 10.20 we had on our right an old ruined tower; and here the ground became more broken and stony, with low white hills at intervals. We here also changed our course to south and then to S. 5 W.; and, after a dreary ride of nearly two hours over a rocky plain, we reached Bureij at 12.10. We were now considerably in advance of the caravan; and our guards requested us to wait till it came up, as the most dangerous part of the road was still before us. We accordingly sat down on an old sarcophagus beside the now barred gate. This village, like the others, was formerly a large fortified Khân, within whose crumbling walls the peasants now rest in security. Only a few weeks previously their flocks had been wholly carried off by a plundering party of the Aneay; but, after a sharp pursuit by the Aga and some forty of his followers, the robbers were overtaken, and the greater part of the sheep and goats recaptured. From this village Süüd is visible.

In half an hour the caravan came up, and we again set out, entering almost immediately a shallow Wady between low swelling hills of white limestone. Passing through this we skirted (1.30) the western side of a lofty conical peak, the commencement of a low broken range that runs away toward Süüd. Our guards enlivened the dreariness of our ride by some exciting tales of border warfare, the scenes of which were laid in the plain that now opened up before us; and just at this spot an incident occurred, which we for a few moments thought would afford us an example of such contests as our companions so graphically described. On ascending the eminence on the western slope of the hill, we observed, at once, the dark outlines of a large party appearing in front. On account of the inequality

of the ground, we were within gun-shot ere we recognised them; it was at once evident they were Arabs. The cry was suddenly raised, "Arabs! Arabs!" and in a moment every gun was seized, and the sharp tick of the locks was heard on every side. We were in front and our guards beside us. The advancing party was challenged but returned no reply, and came on at a quick pace. Again we cried, "Who comes?" and our guards presented their muskets; when fortunately at that moment a friendly answer was returned, or a volley would have been poured into them. They turned out to be Arabs from the neighborhood of Hums returning from Damascus.

We were now on the borders of a little plain almost completely encompassed by low white hills. Close on our right was an irregular and broken ascent leading to a plateau, that reaches to the foot of the main ridge of mountains. To the eastward is an opening through which the plain is drained. A group of little Tells with shelving gravelly sides rises up in front of the line of road; and we were obliged to turn to the right a little to avoid it. Skirting their base we came at 2.20 to a fine grassy meadow with two little fountains bubbling up in the centre of it. This place is called 'Ayûn el-'Alak; there are no ruins near it, so far as I could ascertain. On the south of the fountain is a low swell terminating in a conical hill, on the summit of which stands a ruined tower.

This spot is celebrated as a resort for robbers. Bands of Arabs come here mounted on their fleetest steeds, and remain quietly seated round the fountain until their pickets give notice of the approach of a caravan or band of travellers. They then bear down upon their expected prey, with almost the swiftness of eagles. Except fire-arms are abundant, resistance is worse than useless. The booty is seized; the horses' heads turned eastward; and these noble animals soon bear them far beyond the reach of pursuit. It sometimes happens, however, that a few well-directed shots turn the tide of battle. The Arabs never carry guns themselves on these occasions; the spear is their only weapon; and, when they meet with a determined band armed with a few muskets, they will rarely risk their own lives or those of their justly prized horses in a contest. During the present summer a caravan was here attacked by a party of about thirty Bedawin, who descended from a little valley on the north of the plain and dashed upon their rear. As some time

elapsed ere the Arabs came up, hasty preparations were made for defence; and, as one was attempting to lead off some camels, a well-directed shot killed his mare. Stung to madness by such resistance from a small band, they spurred their horses among the loaded animals and endeavored to spear their conductors; but just then a small party of the Aga's irregular horse was seen surmounting the hill. The Bedawin fled at once; but another shot disabled one of their horses; and this, with the two dismounted men, remained in the hands of the victors. The captured Arabs seemed more concerned about their animals than themselves. They were taken to Hasya, the wounded mare being led gently along by its owner who refused to leave its side. That night he insisted on being left with it; and it was observed that he took off his cloak, and covered with it his prized steed; while he tore up his shirt, *his only other garment*, and bandaged with the fragments the wounded limb.

After a short delay we again set out. There was nothing now to fear; and so we rode on at a quick pace; and crossing the rising ground, turned to the right, and reached Kâra in forty minutes. Kâra is a large village, with two spacious and well built Khâns. The country around is a stony undulating plain, white and barren-looking; and, with the exception of a few gardens by the side of the stream on the south, the whole is bleak and uninteresting. Kâra I have ascertained to be about eighteen geographical miles due south of Hasya.

Here we dismissed our guards, and accompanied by a single Kurdish horseman, who had requested permission to join our party, we mounted, after half an hour's rest, and set out for Nebk. The road is winding for the first hour and a half, owing to the nature of the ground. In three quarters of an hour we saw, on our left, on the summit of a little hill, a ruined tower. These towers seem to have been placed thus at intervals on commanding stations to serve as watch towers. We now turned to the left through an opening in a low range of hills; and after twenty minutes again resumed our former course. We could at this place see the trees of Deir 'Attyeh about half an hour on our left. We were now passing through a plain, in great part cultivated and perfectly level. As we rode along we were surprised and somewhat alarmed to hear repeated discharges of musketry in the direction of the last-named village. The night was far advanced; and we could not imagine any cause for

such firing, except an encounter between the villagers and the Arabs. We spurred on our horses, but could observe that the volleys became nearer, and also more regular and frequent. Ere many minutes, the sound of horses' feet was heard in the distance; and a dark figure was seen approaching. In a few seconds a cavalier drew up at gallop, and reigning up his steed directly in our path, demanded whence we came. Ere we could reply, two others joined him; and we could observe that they all had their arms ready for attack. Our first thought was, that they were some Arabs, who, having been beaten off from Deir Attyeh, were about to try whether fortune would favor them in attacking us. We soon saw, however, by the fur caps and strange accent, that they were not Bedawin; but our anxiety was not much lessened by this discovery. We did not fear the result of an attack, should they attempt it, for in numbers we had the advantage, as well as in arms. But the Kurds, as we well knew, and some of us from experience, are reckless scoundrels; and it was far from being our wish to be forced to defend ourselves against them. After a little talk, our anxiety was relieved by hearing that they were the advance guard of a troop of irregular cavalry, despatched on a private mission by the commander in chief in Damascus. We soon after learned what this mission was; and I will only say here, that in baseness and treachery it was quite characteristic of Turkish policy in Syria. Like most of such schemes, however, it proved wholly fruitless. At six o'clock we reached the gate of Nebk. Having thus been in the saddle nearly all night and part of the preceding day, without sleep and with little food, we felt somewhat exhausted. Reaching the Sheikh's house, we threw ourselves on the floor and were soon fast asleep.

Wednesday, Oct. 19th. After a few hours' sleep and a hasty breakfast, I went to the top of a hill, on the northern slope of which Nebk is built, to get a good view of the surrounding country. From this spot I was enabled to connect my former observations of the country further south, with those made during the present tour; and thus to complete the survey of the main ridges of Antilebanon. I will here give a brief summary of the result of my observations. These minute details are no doubt wearisome; but it must be remembered, that this region is little known, and, ere it can be accurately delineated on maps, it must be minutely described. No part of Syria is without

interest. In every district Scripture names are found; and in every town, and almost every village, we still see the vestiges of some place, whose name is recorded on the page of history.

The mountain range of Ma'lûla sweeps round N. by W. some distance north of the village of Yabrûd; and runs in so as to join the foot of the great central chain. At the point where it curves, it is broken into two irregular ridges, and in the valley between them is the village of Sihil. The scenery round it is very peculiar. The mountain ridges are broken into a series of conical peaks, whose steep shelving sides are covered with white gravel, the debris of limestone rocks; and the summits crowned with cliffs that resemble in the distance the crumbling ruins of ancient castles. From the point where the curve commences, a low irregular swell runs away towards the north-east, forming the side of a plateau that extends to the foot of the great chain. Between Sihil and Kâra, a spur strikes out eastward from this ascent, dividing the lower plain. This spur is low, irregular, and almost completely barren. On the east of Nebk is a lofty line of bleak mountains, commencing, as formerly stated, near the village of Kuteifeh, and dividing the plain of Jerûd from that of 'Ain et-Tneh and Nebk; it runs on in a course about N. E. between Süüd and Kuryetein; and, afterwards turning eastward, forms the northern wall of the great plain that extends from the latter place to Tadmör. The following bearings were taken from this spot: Deir 'Attyeh, N. 30 E.; Kâra, N. 6 E.; Sihil, N. 76 W.; Yabrûd, S. 67 W.; Kûstûl and road to Damascus, S. 26 W. The distance of Nebk from Kâra is nine miles.

At 1.25 we again mounted our horses, and, passing the fine Khân, rode for some distance along the banks of a little stream brought by a canal from the plain below Yabrûd. On every side of us now were little circular structures, built of small stones and mud, resembling sheep-pens. Here was the camp of Ibrahim Pasha for a short time during his Syrian campaign. On our left was a low and bleak line of white hills, a spur from the Ma'lûla range which strikes out half an hour south of Yabrûd. After passing through extensive vineyards and fields of madder, we reached Yabrûd at 2.52.

Our route hence to Ma'lûla was the same we had pursued last year; and we rested for a few minutes at the same fountain in the glen, where we had before eaten our noonday meal.

The sun had set and the short twilight of this eastern land had given place to the gloom of night when we knocked at the convent gate of Ma'lûla. On the very same day and about the same hour, we knocked here twelve months ago. On the 19th of October, 1862, Mr. Barnett and I visited this place in company with Mr. Robson; and now, on the 19th of October, 1863, we find ourselves here again, admitted by the same deacon, and welcomed by the same jolly old friar. The same servant who then accompanied us, was with us now, and none is wanting to complete the old party, save Mr. Robson. He, however, was separated from us by broad seas, and broader lands; having returned on a visit to his native country.

Thursday, Oct. 20th. The road from Ma'lûla to Damascus, by way of Seidanâya, I had before travelled. That by way of Kuteifeh and Adhr'a I had also passed over; and I now determined to take a road between these two; crossing first the plain of 'Ain et-Tineh, and then skirting the southern extremity of the mountain range that divides this plain from that of Jerûd, pass over the Menin range into the Sahara.

Descending from the convent, we entered the gorge on the north side. This sublime pass I had formerly seen from the mountain summit; but I now found the estimate I had formed of its grandeur was far short of the reality. At first, the walls of rock on each side are low, but they soon increase in altitude until they attain an elevation of some 200 feet. The space between the cliffs is in many places not more than three, and seldom exceeds seven feet. The sides are jagged and irregular, the one being an exact impression of the other; thus showing that in former times the mountain was, by some wondrous power, rent to its foundations, and in this way opened up. About the centre of the pass, a huge mass of rock has become detached from the cliff overhead, and has fallen to near the bottom; but ere it reached it, it became wedged, and thus it now hangs threateningly overhead as one passes underneath. A descent of a few feet more would have entirely blocked up the passage. While winding through the narrow defile, I could scarce refrain from shuddering, on looking upward at the gradually narrowing opening, with its projecting angles, and apparently tottering summits. Towards the lower part the gap expands; but enormous masses of rock have fallen down, and almost fill up the cavity. On emerging, a scene of considerable beauty and gran-

deur suddenly opens in front. Close on the left is the picturesque convent of St. Thecla, built almost wholly within a large natural cave or fissure in the precipice. On the right is the village; its houses perched on the steep slope at the foot of the high ledge on which the upper convent stands; while beyond rises a cliff loftier and more rugged still, whose sides, as well as those of all the others around, are actually honey-combed with ancient sepulchral caves. In the centre is a sweet vale, clothed with the dark green foliage of the walnut and mulberry; among which broken columns and crumbling ruins may be here and there seen. A tradition exists, that this place was called *Laodicea* in ancient times; and the superior informed us, that the upper convent was 1987 years old! On being asked if there had been a convent here before the days of our Saviour, "Of course," was his learned reply.

We left the village at 9 o'clock, and rode down the vale through beautiful fields and orchards. Passing a grove of very ancient pistachio trees, we reached the village of 'Ain et-Tineh at 9.32; our course having been S. 23 E. This vale continues in the same direction to the pass in the mountain range, through which the Aleppo road runs to the plain of Kuteifeh. The inhabitants of 'Ain et-Tineh are now all Muslims; more than half of those in Ma'lûla are Muslims also; and the whole population of the little village of Bukha. Yet they all speak Syriac, and their forefathers were, some two centuries ago, members of the ancient Syrian church; and, though they have embraced the faith of Islam, yet the peculiar family names are preserved, and their marriage customs are the same as those of the communities of Hums and Sâdûd.

On leaving the village we turned to the right and followed a straight course across the plain, S. 10 W. There is here much more cultivated land than I had formerly thought. At 10.28 we reached a strip of fine land running along the base of the mountain range. Turning to the right we rode down the little plain in a straight line without any path, S. 75 W., till at 10.50 we reached a valley between a little group of hills in the plain, and the southern extremity of the mountain range on the left. Here resuming our former course, we passed the end of the mountains, among orchards of fig-trees. The great plain of Jerûd now opened up before us on the left; and that village itself, with its extensive salt marsh, was clearly seen glittering in the sun.

The gardens of Ruhaibeh and Mu'addamtyeh were also visible ; and somewhat nearer, the lofty minaret of the Khán at Kuteifeh. At 11.5 we reached a small village called Hileh, of which I had never before heard. It is built in a shallow Wady in the midst of an undulating plain. From it I took the following bearings: summit of Tintyeh, S. 22 E. ; top of Jebel Shurabm, N. 87 W.

After a delay of five minutes, we continued in the same course over a rising ground, and entered in ten minutes a fertile plain of considerable extent. Turning now to the right, S. 70 W., we followed a straight road over the plain, and then passing some low chalky hills we reached Haſr at 12.20. This village is situated on the southern slope of a beautiful and well-watered vale. The dark green foliage of the orchards that line the valley, forms a pleasing contrast to the dazzling whiteness of the swelling hills around. The water runs in a deep Wady towards the rocky ridge on the east ; but I could see no opening for it into the Sahra. From hence we rode in a course about S. 35 W., crossing diagonally a little valley that runs up the centre of the Menin range from the parallel of Bedda to the plain at Hileh. It is well cultivated, and extensive vineyards cover its sides. At one o'clock we reached the brow of the Menin range, overlooking the plain of Sahra. From this point we saw Saidanÿa away on our right, N. 75 W. ; while before us the eastern portion of the Sahra was spread out like a map. On the left, beyond it, rose the steep and naked sides of Jebel Tintyeh. Descending the slope diagonally, we reached in forty minutes the little village of Hafeiyer. Beside it is a fine fountain, the stream from which runs down a narrow valley, to the low line of hills ; there it passes by a deep gorge, and enters the plain of Damascus. It was from this stream, I believe, that the ancient aqueduct, which is now seen along the southern side of these hills, in former times derived its supply of water.

Resuming our journey at 1.48, we rode along a fine road with cultivated and tolerably fertile ground on each side. Our course was, as before, S. 25 W. ; but in twenty minutes we began to turn gradually to the left, along the side of the little Wady that descends from Ma'rúneh. Following its course, we passed through a ridge of hills, and entered a valley that runs up the centre of this lowest range to the foot of Tintyeh. Crossing this we entered a deep and wild ravine, the sides of which rise up steep and rocky on the right and left ; and, after some fifteen minutes

winding, emerged once more on the plain of Damascus. The old aqueduct is, at this point, nearly perfect. It is carried across the opening of this Wady on an embankment of hewn stones; two fine arches spanning the central part.

We now turned our horses' heads to the city. In fifteen minutes we passed the fine fountain of Kusair. Our way now led through extensive vineyards to the large village of Dûma, which we reached at 3.60. We soon after struck the Aleppo road, and entered the gates of Damascus at six o'clock.

This, I fear, is the last journey I may be privileged to make for a long season. Since my return I have been almost a prisoner in my house. When I venture abroad, I am assailed with insult and threats by the fanatical Muslims. The aggressions of Russia have roused their ancient spirit of tyranny; and it will be well if they do not wreak their vengeance on the unoffending Christians in this city. We consider it as no small grievance, that, while English fleets are contributing to support the Sultan on his tottering throne, English subjects should be exposed to the grossest abuse in the streets of one of his principal cities.

Damascus, December 24th, 1853.

ARTICLE II.

OUR SAVIOUR'S DISCOURSE IN THE SYNAGOGUE AT CAPERNAUM.

By E. P. Barrows, Professor at Andover.

Of the remarkable discourse addressed by our Lord to the Jews in the synagogue at Capernaum (John 6: 25—65), in which he exhibits himself in his personality as "the living bread which came down from heaven," and teaches that eternal life is to be received only by eating his flesh and drinking his blood, the words of the Apostle to the Corinthians: "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are