

## Selections.

*Later Biblical Researches in Palestine and the Adjacent Regions: a Journal of Travels in 1852.* By E. ROBINSON, E. SMITH, and Others. Murray.

In the Holy Land Dr. Robinson's routes have been for the most part new ones; running chiefly on the outside of the country, compared with those he traversed before, though not, except on one occasion, crossing the Jordan. He travelled leisurely from Beyrout to Jerusalem in twenty-four days, through the middle of Galilee and the western hills overhanging the great maritime plain, visiting the desolate site of Josephata, and finding new arguments for placing Emmaus at a much greater distance than we are accustomed to consider it. The principal impression which his account leaves is of the great richness of the country:—

We had explored with some minuteness the middle portions of Galilee, and parts of Samaria, which as yet are little known. We were greatly struck with the richness and productiveness of these splendid plains, especially of Lower Galilee, including that of Esdræon. In these respects that region surpasses all the rest of Palestine. In the division of the country among the tribes, Judah was the largest, and took the largest territory. But broad tracts of its land were rocky and sterile, and others desert; while even its great plain along the coast was and is less fertile than those farther north. Zebulun and Issachar, apparently the smallest tribes, had the cream of Palestine; while Asher, Naphtali, further North, possessed the rich uplands and wooded hills of Galilee, still rich and abundant in tillage and pasturage.\*

He has drawn attention to certain remains, uniform in character, and scattered about Galilee, which were new to him; and in these he sees the ruins of Jewish synagogues, probably of the earlier centuries after Christ:—

\* The chief objects of interest at Keif Bir'im are the remains of two structures, which at first were to us inexplicable. One is in the north eastern part of the village, consisting of the front of a building which faced towards the south, with two rows of limestone columns before it, belonging to a portico. The front wall is of stones hewn smooth, some of them of considerable size. In the middle is a portal of good size and proportions, with sculptured side-posts and lintel, the latter having in its middle a wreath. Over this is a cornice, and then a well-formed round arch, ornamented with a sort of wreath around it. On each side of this portal is a smaller side-door, each with a cornice of different sculpture. Above each of these side-doors is a smaller window, capped with an ornamented stone. The columns of the outer or front row are mostly standing. The capitals look at first like Doric, but are formed of rings, that is, are tapered down to the shaft merely by successive smaller rings. Some still bear their architraves. The whole portico is sunk in rubbish. . . . .

The other ruin is a quarter of a mile distant in the fields north-east. The edifice was obviously similar to that above described, but all is fallen and gone, except the middle portal, with its ornamented side-posts and lintel. This last is sculptured, has the wreath in the middle, and in a long and narrow space at the bottom bears an inscription in the common Hebrew letters, or square character. But the letters are so much defaced by the weather, and the wind was so strong and cold, that we could not undertake to copy it. The first word "peace," and that only was quite distinct.

As these remains were the first of the kind that we had yet seen, and were of a style of architecture utterly unknown to us, we were at a loss for some time what to make of them. They were evidently neither Greek nor Roman. The inscription, if authentic, obviously marks both structures as of Jewish origin, and, as such, they could only have been synagogues. We were, however, not satisfied on this point until we found at Meiron the same species of architecture, in the acknowledged remains of an ancient Jewish synagogue. We afterwards found the ruins of like structures at Irbid, Tell Hum, Kedes, and perhaps other places in Galilee, all marked with the same architectural peculiarities. The size the elaborate sculptured ornament, and the splendour of these edifices, do not belong to a scattered and down-trodden people; such as the Jews have been in these regions ever since the fourth century. These costly synagogues, therefore, can be referred only to the earlier centuries of the Christian era, when Galilee was the chief seat of the Jews, and Jewish learning and schools flourished at Tiberias. All these circumstances would seem to

mark a condition of prosperity and wealth and influence among the Jews of Galilee in that age of which neither their own historians, nor any other, have given us any account."

In the neighborhood of Jerusalem he retraced some ground which he had not thoroughly examined before, in the neighborhood of Hebron, and returned to the sources of the Jordan, skirting the heights which enclose its deep valley on the west, and crossing the river for a day to identify the site of Pella, in which he seems to have succeeded; and proceeding to Hasbeyah by the plain of Gennecaret and the marshy level through which the Jordan flows into the lake. He gives an interesting account of the three great sources of the Jordan—those of Hasbeyah, of Dan, and of Cæsarea Philippi—rising in the limestone cliffs or volcanic terraces at the base of Hermon, and joining their three streams of different colors before they pour into the Lake Merom; and in ascertaining this junction Dr. Robinson has the credit of solving a problem hitherto unsolved.\* He had not visited Damascus or Baalbec in his former journey; and this deficiency is now made up. His information has been partly anticipated by the work of Mr. Porter, to whom he makes frequent reference; but Dr. Robinson's observations have a business-like completeness and method which give them a distinct character and importance, whether on new or old ground. He inserts a fuller description of the great Sanctuary of the Sun at Baalbec than travellers before him have thought of giving, who have left their readers to consult Wood and Dawkins. And he finishes with making the circuit of the range of Lebanon, and describing carefully the gorges and glens which make its western side so full of beauty. The two general points to which his observations on all this country about Lebanon and Hermon direct attention are, the abundance and beauty of the water sources and streams; and the numerous tracts, in the shape of ruined temples among mountain solitudes, or glades in the hills, or promontories over rivers—"girding about" Hermon, and surprising the traveller, among the terraces and cascades of Lebanon—of the old Syrian idolatry. And this suggests a remark which has occurred to us continually in the perusal of Dr. Robinson, who lays great stress on certain architectural peculiarities, without, as far as we can see, having any special acquaintance with the subject. Palestine has been examined very closely and competently—it is strange, considering the limited area of the country, that it must be added, nevertheless, incompletely;—in a geographical point of view. It has not yet been travelled architecturally. An examination of its various remains, by a person thoroughly and practically conversant with the true features and many fallacies of architectural evidence, is yet wanting, and is very much needed, for the trustworthiness of our knowledge.—*L. Guardian.*

## BERMUDA, BY A FIELD OFFICER.\*

For the geographical space they occupy, or the historical events with which they have been connected, "the still-vex'd Bermoothes" have had their full share of attention. If Shakespeare did not, as the "Field-Officer" maintains he did not, lay the scene of "The Tempest" there, he certainly had the group in his mind's eye; and Waller and Andrew Marvell have celebrated the Somers Isles in verse; and Bishop Berkeley expatiated on their beauties in prose; and Moore has made them memorable by his poetry and his residence. Yet of the three hundred and sixty-five isles or islets of which the group consists, only some half a dozen are sufficiently large to be habitable; they form a chain of about twenty-four miles in length, and are connected together by bridges or ferries; their breadth varies from three hundred yards to a mile and a half. The climate is favourable to production if there were but the soil. Wheat can be grown; the crops of barley and tobacco are good; sugar and coffee can be raised, and are as curiosities; but the staple production for export is or was arrowroot. The population ranges at about 8000; the imports in 1855 were £162,000, and the exports £41,000—a discrepancy explained by the fact that the Dockyard, convict establishment, &c., cost this country annually upwards of £200,000. The importance of the islands as a military and naval station is undoubted; less, proba-

\* Dr. Thomson and Mr. Stanley were unaware of this junction of the three streams.

† It is strange, for instance, that with intelligent and inquisitive Americans at Hasbeyah and Damascus, not to speak of other travellers, it should have been left for Robinson to make out the junction of the Jordan streams above the Lake of Merom.

\* *Bermuda, a Colony, a Fortress, and a Prison; or Eighteen Months in the Somers Islands.* (With Map and Illustrations.) By a Field Officer. Published by Longman & Co.

bly, for their actual use than for the mischief they would be in the hands of America, which has always since the first outbreak of the Revolutionary war had her eye upon them. What return this country gains for the outlay, is not so clear, and we speak with reference to the defence of the islands. The position of the group is within a few degrees of the Tropics—in the same latitude as Madeira. The climate is course hot in most summers, though bearable; but from December to June it is one of the finest in the world. Were it but as close to England as it is to America, the Field Officer thinks it would be a favorite resort for invalids. Great changes, however, must first be made in the accommodation and mode of living, which are those of the West Indies in a colder climate. Besides the want of hotels and other appliances to comfort, there are very few houses with chimneys except in the kitchens. Yet fires must be desirable in the winter: on the 1st of June last year, the officers of the mess at Ireland Island had a fire lighted for dinner,—an exception, probably, but exceptional weather overtakes invalids. In the Bermudas, there are no hurricanes proper, but they are yet "the still vexed Bermoothes": gales sweep over them, and from the narrow width of the land, and the absence of elevation, must blow with terrible violence—enough to blow you into the sea.

The Field Officer who gives a pleasant though somewhat general account of this group, as "a Colony, Fortress and a Prison," passed eighteen months there on duty in 1855-'56; but he appears to have visited the islands before, and to have some knowledge of the West Indies. He gives a good description of the group, both land and water—for the mainland is so surrounded by islets and rocks that it is fenced off from the Atlantic; together with an account of the soil, climate and natural productions. There are a rapid resume of the history of the Colony, some sketches of its present social state, a criticism on the condition of its defences, and an account of the convicts, with some observations on the systems past and to come; for it seems the dissatisfaction at home has caused new instructions to be issued with the last arrivals, giving less discretion and enforcing greater stringency. All these things are touched in the easy style of a man of the world, but somewhat superficially, and occasionally with the prejudices of a "practical" man.

The chief utility of the Bermudas would be in case of a war with America, when as a station it would command the entire range of the Atlantic seaboard from Boston to the mouths of the Mississippi and furnish a rendezvous for retreating cruisers. To America its value would be greater. Not only would the place be a defence instead of a means of attack, but it would command the track of all the West India trade, and besides a naval station would become a perfect hornet's nest of privateers. That the importance of the place is not overlooked by our authorities, is shewn by the fact, that during the late difference with America the Bermudas were on two distinct occasions the rendezvous of a fleet. This, however, could not be permanently done without losing the advantage of the ships as cruisers. The land fortifications are either of old date or neglected.

St. George's is well fortified. It is defended by about ninety guns; but they are of a calibre unsuited to the times we live in.

Castle Harbor should no longer be suffered to remain in its present state. From Bermuda inwards it cannot be entered by sailing boats drawing more than five feet of water; but ships of large burden can enter it from the south-east, with a little care and a good pilot. And as there are no forts to guard the entrance, that side of the Bermudas may be considered quite defenceless. Some suggest the filling up of Castle Harbor; but that measure would be both difficult and expensive. It would be, moreover, cruel, for in tempestuous weather, vessels sometimes take refuge there. The alternative is to fortify the entrance. A couple of batteries of eighty-four, or even of sixty-eight pounders, on some of the little islands near the mouth of the harbor would be sufficient to render impassable a channel already difficult of access.

Then to revert to the defences of the islands. We have 200 guns of insufficient calibre, defending a place which almost any military nation would deem worthy of 1000 pieces of artillery. Even 200 more would go far to render it impregnable while provisions lasted; or two or three more martello towers would do much. It is a mistake, however, to suppose, as some do, that a few gun-boats would supply every deficiency. They could not prevent a surprise; for it would be by no means easy, even in moderate weather, to carry these boats round to the weak points which might be