

THE LORD'S LAND.

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Mount Tabor.

WE rode westward on the shoulder of Gerizim, and descended, amid groves and babbling brooks, to the back of Nablous. The central position of Nablous (the ancient Shechem or Sychar, and the Roman Neapolis) has always made it a place of commercial importance. It stands in the midst of one of the richest sections of Palestine, and on the great thoroughfare from Jerusalem to Samaria and Damascus, and also from Gilead to the Mediterranean, and consequently it has always had both internal resources and foreign trade. The population, according to Dr. Porter, consists of about eight thousand persons, of whom five hundred are Christians, one hundred and fifty Samaritans, and about one hundred Jews, and the rest all Mahomedans.

We were early on the road next morning, and enjoyed the ride through the charming Vale of Nablous with a keen relish. Turning north-west, and crossing the western shoulder of Mount Ebal, and then threading our way through several pleasant little wadies, we came in about two hours to a summit, where we had a full view of the village of Sebustiyeh, the ancient city of Samaria. A long toilsome climb under the midday sun, and we came to the brow of the mountain overlooking what Van de Velde calls Esh Shurkiyeh, or the Plain of Ramah. We sat down by the road-side in a thrifty grove of fig-trees, and lunched. This valley is one of exceeding beauty and fertility. The hills all about it are crowned with pretty white villages, prominent among which is Ramah. Can this be the ancient Ramah, or Ramathaim-zophim, where Samuel was born? (1 Sam. i. 1.) Gradually the Plain of Ramah merged into that of Dothan, properly called Plain of Arrabeck. This valley is longer and broader, and of a richer soil, than the one above. Its greatest length is north-east and south-west, and from the hill of Dothan, looking south-west, it presents an appearance as fertile and lovely as the most luxuriant vales of England or America.

May 28. Jenin (En-Gannim, Fountain of Gardens) is at the very head of the Plain of Esdraclon, and has a commanding and beautiful location. There are at present from two thousand to three thousand inhabitants, of whom a few are Christians. The houses are of stone, and for an Arabic town of the class, it is well built. As an Israelitish city it was assigned to the Levites, and belonged to the territory of Issachar (Josh. xix. 21; xxi. 29). The ride across the Plain of Esdraclon was very pleasant. Mount Gilboa loomed up on our right all the way. From a knoll by the road side we had an extended view looking westward, and could see the noted battlefield of Megiddo, and also several little villages. We reached Jezreel (Zer'in) soon after nine a.m.: a poor, squalid village. It stands on a low hill, which is one of a series of broken spurs running north-west from the foot of Jebel Fukuah, the noted Mount Gilboa. The southern and western sides of the hill are comparatively low and smooth, but the northern and eastern are steep and rocky. Baasha and Omri, kings of Israel, had each selected a new capital, and why should not Ahab? And so, while Ahab did not abandon Samaria, he established a second capital on this site. And it was well worthy of his choice. The situation is superb. My eye swept at ease from the foot of Carmel on the north-

west, to the valley of the Jordan on the east, thus taking in the entire length of the plain, and nearly the whole breadth of Western Palestine.

From Jezreel we descended along the north-west slope of Gilboa to 'Ain Jalud, known in the Bible as the Well of Harod (Judges vii. 1), and as the "fountain which is in Jezreel" (1 Sam. xxix. 1). 'Ain Jalud is connected with at least two of the greatest known events in the history of the Israelites: the battle between Gideon and the Midianites, and that between Saul and the Philistines.

From 'Ain Jalud our course lay eastward down the Valley of Jezreel. Beisan occupies the site of the ancient Beth-shean, the Scythopolis of Christ's day. It was always a stronghold of the Philistines, and one of the few cities, as Gaza, Askalon, and others of the Mediterranean coast, which was never captured from them by the Israelites. The site of Beth-shean is just where the plain of Jezreel dips towards the plain of the Jordan. Besides the river Jalud, there are two or three other streams flowing near it. The ruins of the ancient city are very extensive, and some of them well-preserved. Over and through rich fields, some of which had not yet been reaped, we toiled, and about dusk reached our camp at Sulem, the site of the Scriptural Shunem. From the village of Sulem, well elevated on the rising ground directly under Little Hermon, or the hill Moreh (Judges vii. 1), there is a fine view looking south-west across the Plain of Esdraclon to Mount Carmel. As we rode away under the clear morning sun, by the little flourishing village, the whole simple story of the Shunammite's domestic joy and sorrow rose like a picture before me.

Continuing around the western shoulder of Little Hermon (Jebel Duh), and turning eastward, in about fifty minutes we approached the modern village of Nein (ancient Nain), perched up on a north-west projection of the mountain (Luke vii. 12 and 13). To the very tombs, which we could see in the mountain side, the funeral procession was probably on its way when Jesus met it, and His "Weep not" fell upon the stricken mother's ear. The rude village has nothing now to attract but its location and its sacred associations. In our approach to Nein we had our first view of Mount Tabor (Jebel Tur), lying to the north-east. Smooth, round, and apart, in form the segment of a circle, it rises with gentle swell from the plain. Its sides are well wooded to the very top, but at a distance the projection of the trees, as well as every other projection, is lost in the mass of unbroken green. A quick ride along the northern slopes of Little Hermon brought us to the site of Endor (Endur), where the witch lived with whom Saul had the remarkable interview the night before the ill-fated battle of Gilboa. Above the village, at the base of the cliffs which stand back of it, is a cave, in which there is a pool of water, supplied by an unceasing spring. In this cavern we sat and read the account contained in 1 Sam. xxviii. 7-25. After coming out of the cave I stood gazing at Tabor, loath to leave the spot, and ere I knew it my companions were far ahead of me, spurring over the plain. Through waving wheat, of a rankness and luxuriance surpassing any grain yet seen, and very free from tares and weeds, we galloped till we came to the little village of Deburieh, at the foot of Tabor on the west. The name of this village contains its history. It marks the supposed site to which Barak, under the direction of Deborah, gathered the hosts of Israel against Sisera, the captain of Jabin (Judges iv. 6). We turned east and began the ascent of Tabor through a narrow, stony, hot valley. In a little while we rode into a thick growth of dwarf oaks and terbinthos. The path all the way up was winding and rough, but nowhere very steep or difficult. We reached the summit in forty-five minutes. The summit is only one thousand feet above the plain, and yet from it there is a perfect survey of the whole region. Looking north are the mountains of Lebanon, tipped with snow; Mountain Hermon; the town of Safed, shining like a white speck; Kurn Hattin, the Mount of Beatitudes; eastward the Sea of Galilee (the first glimpse of it in going north), the Mountains of Baahan, the Plain of Tabor, stretching to the Sea of Tiberias, and the Valley of the Jordan just below the sea; south-east Beth-shean, and Mount Gilead; and southward, just below Endor, Fain, and Little Hermon; south-west the broad sweep of the Plain of Esdraclon, bounded by the hills of Ephraim and Mount Carmel; and westward, as through a gateway at the foot of Carmel, the great sea, and then the hills of Galilee, until the eye rests upon the heights adjacent to Nazareth. Descending from Tabor, we took the