

THE LORD'S LAND.

BY REV. H. B. RIDGAWAY, D.D.

OUR anticipations of a start in the morning were doomed to disappointment. The weather was bitter cold, thermometer 41deg. in the evening, and during the night below 32deg. It snowed much of the afternoon, and all night the wind blew fiercely. Fearing our tents might be blown down by the gale, some of us arose and dressed to be prepared for the worst. We escaped without damage, but passed a comfortable night. Think of coming out of heat 80deg. in the shade into rigorous winter within a few days! This was an experience for the 19th of March, and gives an idea of the height of these mountains, and the extreme changes to which the whole region is subject.

March 20, I arose refreshed by a good night's sleep. Our mattresses from the tents were spread upon the divans, and made very comfortable beds. We were again informed we could not move.

The next morning (21st) we breakfasted early, and bade farewell to the convent. As we rode slowly off the full importance of the transaction which had here taken place more than three thousand years before, when the world was yet in comparative infancy, began to open out and to bind me to the place with a strange spell. Taking what there is every reason for thinking was the route of the children of Israel, we rode down Wady es Sheikh—the same by which our pack train had entered Sinai—till we came to Wady Suweirah. For two and a-half hours Wady es Sheikh is a broad, level plain, capable of accommodating large multitudes of people and cattle. Our way now lay northward. Winding by a rough path, Nagb Suweirah, over ledges of rock, we came out upon a rolling plain, which is the watershed between the Gulfs of Suez and Akabah. Crossing this, requiring about two hours, we came to the beginning of Wady Sa'al, which lies between the Fe'ra ranges of mountains.

The next day, being Sunday, was spent quietly. We had devotional services in the forenoon, the Rev. Mr. Dobbs preaching from Num. xxxii. 48–50, "Moses on Mount Nebo." The day was bright, and passed happily. Its hours were busied with writing, talks of home and friends, discussions on the endlessly disputed points of Rephidim, the rock in Horeb, etc., or short strolls over the wide and beautiful wady.

Early on the morning of March 23 we had the first rain since the beginning of February. We were slow in getting started. The weather was showery till noon. In about four hours we reached Erweis el Eberig (Kibroth-hattaavah), the first stopping-place of the Israelites after leaving the Desert of Sinai. Num. xxxiii. 16. Here the people complained of the dry manna and lusted for flesh, and the quails were sent. The plague broke out among them, and thousands died, hence the name, "because there they buried the people that lusted." Num. xi. 31–35. From er Sa'al we entered Wady Hebeibeh. As we emerged from this we came upon a low, wide sandy plain—Debbet er Ramlah. We were again in the sandstone formations. Thus it seems that the same formations—limestone, sandstone, and granite in parallel lines—sweep across from Egypt through this desert; and, indeed, as we afterward found, through the mountains of Edom.

At half-past five o'clock p.m. we encamped at Herimat Haggag, an immense sandstone rock rising in successive layers, on which are inscriptions in Hebrew and Arabic, and figures of animals, evidently the work of pilgrims. We had travelled from eight to nine hours, making about twenty miles, and descended one hundred feet. The atmosphere was still very chilly; indeed, we had had no really comfortable weather since entering the Sinaitic range.

We resumed the journey early in the morning. Within an hour we came to a notch or cleft in the hills, looking through which, as a gateway, a deep gorge opened before us, in the centre of which stands a lovely grove. This is 'Ain Hudhera, the Hazeroth of Scripture, the third resting-place, if Taborah (Num. xi. 3) be counted one, of Israel after leaving Mount Sinai. We sent our camels around, as they could not go through this narrow, precipitous opening, and we descended to the grove.

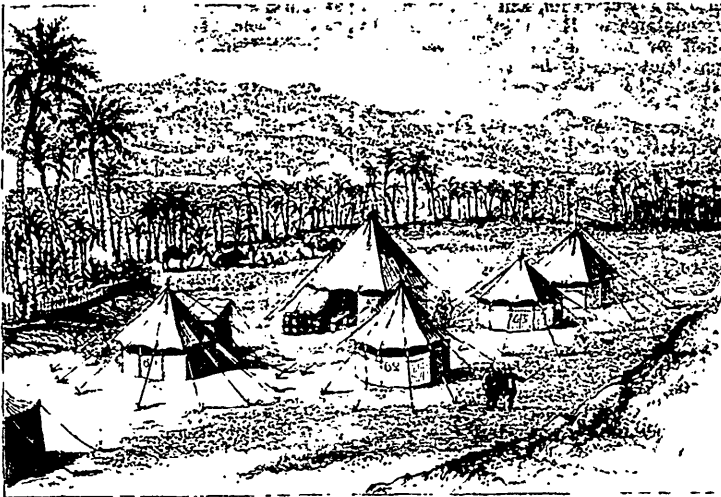
It was at Hazeroth that "Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married:" and a domestic blemish, whereby the dignity of the so recently elevated family was tainted, was, in their opinion, cause grave enough for them to question his official authority. It was a pleasant spot for Israel's encampment, this whole valley presenting, in its soft, warm enclosure, a marked contrast with the cold, rugged aspect of Er Rahah or es Sheikh, around Mount Sinai.

The name Hazeroth, now Hudhera, means inclosure; and this is one of the strongest arguments for the identification of the locality. It lies on the most natural route from Sinai to the great valley of the Arabah. It is evident, also, that tradition has long regarded this site as Hazeroth from the indications that it was once occupied by a colony of monks. The main body of the children of Israel probably followed Wady Ghazaleh to its junction with Wady Hudhera, and then turned up and encamped between the junction and the fountain above.

On moving from the junction of Wadies Hudherah and Ghazaleh we turned abruptly to the right through Wady Weter, following it in an easterly direction. About two p.m. we came to a kind of narrow gateway, where the mountains rise almost perpendicularly to a great height; from thence the valley is more confined until it runs into Wady el 'Ain.

In the morning I was up early, but somehow did not get dressed before our tent was coming down about my head. Dr. Harvey and I went on in advance. After a walk of two hours we mounted our camels. About three and a-half hours brought us in sight of the sea. The mountains of Arabia, in their dim, grey outlines, first came into view, and then the blue quiet waters of the gulf. Through a rocky pass we debouched upon a gravelly reach, at least a mile distant directly from the shore. As we rode toward the beach no sign of life was to be seen except the play of the waves—no boat, no commerce, as when the keels of Solomon and his successors cleaved these waters on their voyages hither and thither in traffic with the great Tarshish of the East. Now all was still and dead. We came at noon to 'Ain Nuweibi'a, nine hours distant from 'Ain Hudhera, where is a small spring of brackish water, a depression in the ground, some palm trees, and a few Bedawin houses.

March 26. A mist overhung the sea and clung to the sides of the Arabian hills. We passed Wady Suweirah and pitched our lunch tent close by the sea, and soon discussed our n. a



Our Camp at Akabah.