

and the Jordan valley. We were following the line of the retreat of the vanquished Canaanites, as they fled from Gibeon, chased by Joshua and the victorious Israelites; and here it was in this steep descent between the Upper and Lower Bethoron, as they are still distinguished, that their rout was increased, and their destruction consummated by the miraculous storm of hail-stones; while "the sun stood still and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies" (Johna x. 10-14.) The valley of Ajalon, mentioned in this passage, may very possibly have been the ancient name of Wady Suleiman, derived from the town of Ajalon, the site of which is still marked by the village Yalo, situated on the southern side of this large valley, about four miles south of the Lower Bethoron.

The distance between the two Bethorons we found to be an hour, by a steep and rugged road. In neither of these villages could we discover any traces of ancient ruins; but about half-way between the two we passed on a hill very considerable remains of an ancient town, for which we could find no name. Descending still, but less steeply, from Beit-Ur et-Thata, we had before us a fine view of the plain of Philistia, extending north and south as far as the eye could reach, bounded towards the west by the blue waters of the Mediterranean. Immediately below us, where the numerous valleys expanded into the plain, many villages embosomed in their depths or perched on rocky knolls on their sides, looked pretty and pleasant enough in the distance, but did not invite the nearer acquaintance of one who had become familiar with the domestic habits of the villagers. On our right was a large valley, only inferior to Wady Suleiman on our left, named Wady Bâdrâs (Peter's valley), a name which it derives from a synonymous village, situated not far from Lydda, which I am anxious to identify with the ancient and renowned Sharon. (the Sarona of the Acts,) a name which all modern endeavours have failed to recover among the numerous villages with which the valley is studded. My theory is, that its ancient name was changed in Christian times to that which it now bears, in compliment to the great Apostle, or rather in commemoration of that miracle for which he had made this neighbourhood illustrious (Acts ix. 36.)

Having reached the plain, and proceeding in a direction almost due west, we soon passed on our left the village of Jimzu, the ancient Gimzo (2 Chron. xxviii. 18,) one of the cities in "the low country," occupied by the Philistines in the days of King Abaz. We saw near our path on the left a large cistern, and chambers excavated in the rock. At half-past four we came to a large well, where a yoke of oxen were engaged in raising water, in a large skin attached to a rope, which worked over a wheel at the well's mouth, and was then drawn by the oxen to its full length, equal to the depth of the well, which Dr. Robinson had found to be 180 feet. About half-way between Jimzu and Lydda we passed the village of Danial (Daniel) on our left, and had a good view of Ramleh, across the plain in the same direction, denominated by the tower of the forty martyrs, a conspicuous object for many miles round.

I must not mention Ramleh without recording a happy conjecture of a Russian traveller, which I have not seen elsewhere noticed, assigning to this place a more venerable antiquity even than is claimed for it by ecclesiastical tradition. General Noroff imagines the name to be a corruption, or rather a contraction, of Ramath-Lehi, the place signified by Samson's slaughter of the Philistines with the jaw-bone of an ass. This is a place to argue the question, but I think it highly

probable that the palace of Ab-el-Melik Ibn-Merwan,—which we know occupied this site before he founded his new town, in the early part of the eighth century,—was itself built in the vicinity of a more ancient city, whose old name, unintelligible to the Arabs, but easily convertible into a very appropriate and descriptive appellation (Ramleh i. e. sand.) may still be discovered under the sandy veil that now conceals it. Nor can I think the arguments against its identity with the Arimathia of Joseph (St. John xix. 38) at all conclusive.

The direct road between Jaffa and Jerusalem, most frequently taken by pilgrims and travellers, passes through Ramleh, and I had become quite familiar with this route in several visits to the coast. It ascends from the plain to the hill country, just south of the ruins of 'Amwas, which mark the site of the Emmaus of Josephus, converted into Nicopolis by the Romans, and passing up the rugged Wady Aly crosses the watershed a little above Kuriet el-'Enab, otherwise named Abu Qâsh, from a robber sheikh of that name. The village, with its ruined and desecrated, but still picturesque, little church, is reputed by the Greeks to be the Emmaus of St. Luke; and not only does its distance from Jerusalem correspond with that stated by the evangelist, but the tradition is further authenticated by the name of Colonia, which still cleaves to a village on the left of the road, about half way between this and Jerusalem, which undoubtedly marks the site of the military colony which Josephus also informs us was founded by Vespasian in the district of that Emmaus "which was from Jerusalem threescore furlongs" (St. Luke xxiv. 13.)

This last road is certainly that by which the crusaders approached Jerusalem, while that by which we had come appears to have been the more frequented in ancient times, as it was by way of Bethoron that the prefect Cestius both advanced to invest Jerusalem, at the outbreak of the Jewish war, and effected his disastrous retreat, with such terrible loss, after his panic-struck army had raised the siege. We wished also to believe that we were following the route of the great Apostle and his escort, when sent by Claudius Lysias, by night from Jerusalem, by Antipatris, to Caesarea (Acts xxiii. 23-33.) But there is another ancient military road from the coast farther north, by Jifna and Tibnah, through Wady Bolat, by which Titus marched to besiege Jerusalem.

Arrived at Lydda at five P.M. We devoted forty minutes to the exploration of this very ancient site of Lod, a city of the Benjamites, built by Shamed, the son of Elpaal (1 Chron. viii. 12,) standing in the midst of verdant orchards, wearing a more imposing appearance at a distance than it justifies on a closer examination; for its elegant minaret, tapering up from groves of palm-trees, proves to be little better than a mouldering ruin, surrounded by wretched hovels half choked with sand, and teeming with filthy Ludds abounding in blind men; I never saw so many in any other part of Palestine; the consequence, probably, of the clouds of fine sand driven by the wind over these wide-spread plains (the fruitful source also of Ophthalmia in Egypt,) although the villagers ascribed it to the abundance of the palms, and too free indulgence in the date!

The Church of St. George, even in its ruin and desolation, has a special interest for the English archaeologist, as it not only presents a very early specimen of pointed architecture, precisely corresponding with that of our own transition period at the close of the twelfth century, but probably owes its origin to Richard Cœur-de-Lion, who is said to have stipulated with his generous enemy Saladin in A. D. 1192, for the restoration of this

church, which the Moslems had levelled with the ground on the approach of the crusaders in the preceding year. The semicircular apse still stands, close to which on the south one of the nave arches, still perfect, pointed and of exquisite proportions, supported by clustered shafts, with foliated capitals, bears witness to the successor of that church, which was erected into a cathedral by the first crusaders immediately on their occupation of the country. The ground plan of the church may still be traced. It consisted of a nave, 36 feet wide, with lateral naves of 21 feet each; the length cannot be so easily determined, as a large mosque has been formed out of the west end of the nave. Precisely in the place where the altar must have stood is a ruined altar-tomb, where the head of St. George is said to have been deposited when his mangled body was dispersed to the four winds by the infidels. This story was repeated to me by the native Greek priest, who showed us over the ruins, and then conducted us to the poor church where the divine offices are now celebrated. What a melancholy contrast to the noble pile at its side—still so stately in its ruin! A small, dark, mean room, with all its furniture and ornaments utterly wretched and poverty-stricken—a faithful type of the degraded and depressed condition of the worshippers, who number about one hundred among the 2,000 inhabitants of Lydda.

Taking leave of the Priest at 5.40, we proceeded on our way through the unvaried plain of Sharon, along the very path trod by St. Peter on his mission from Lydda to Joppa, to awaken Tabitha from the sleep of death (Acts ix. 36-41.) The distance is about nine miles, and we reached the outskirts of the town at 8.10, where a garden-house had been placed at my disposal, through the kindness of a friend at Jerusalem. Our baggage, however, which we had sent by the direct road, had not arrived, and our party had got scattered on the road, so that it was late before we got settled in our quarters; and when we fancied that we were so, a small episode with a centipede, and another with a scorpion, kept us in an unenviable state of excitement during great part of the night.

(To be continued.)

SUBSCRIPTIONS RECEIVED TO OCT. 15.

To No. 12, Vol. 7.—Rev. G. M., New Carlisle.
To END Vol. 6.—Rev. W. L., Manvers.

THE Canadian Ecclesiastical Gazette

IS PUBLISHED TWICE A MONTH,
BY HENRY ROWSELL, TORONTO

TERMS OF SUBSCRIPTION:

7s. 6d. per annum; from which a discount of 2s. 6d. is allowed if remitted (postage free) within one month from commencement of the volume, after which time no discount can be allowed.

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