

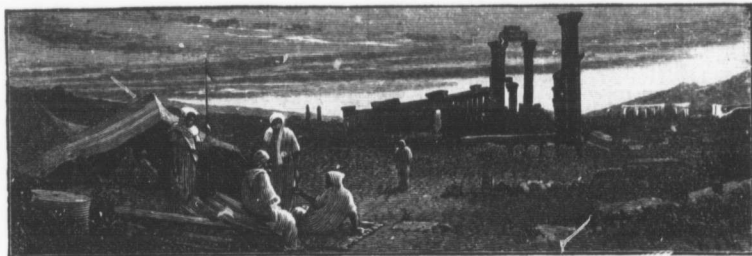
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DISTANT VIEW OF RUINS OF BAALBEC.

Baalbec.

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As we moved down the zigzag bridle path on Anti-Lebanon, a sharp turn brought us at length in view of Baalbec. There stood the six lofty columns we had so often seen in photographs and pictures, and there all around them, on the rising ground of the Acropolis, the most splendid ruins in Syria. The name of Baalbec—the city or crowded place of Baal—gives us at once an idea of its antiquity and its origin. It was originally a Phœnician city and shrine, founded in those early days of barbaric splendour and culture, of which we have been accustomed to speak as pre-historic, but the records of which are now being read to us by scholars from the long buried hieroglyphs and cuneiforms in which they have been so well kept.

Here we have a great shrine of that great god, Baal, whose cult was predominant among the early people of these fair lands, and whose name so often occurs in the Old Testament writings as the object of the rebellious worship of the favoured people of Jehovah. Baal was the sun-god, the deification of that glorious

luminary whose worship seems the most natural of all false systems; and in later times the Baalbec of the Phœnicians became the Heliopolis—the city of the Sun—of the Greeks and Romans, twin in name and in fame of Heliopolis in Egypt, with which, indeed, it seems to have been closely connected.

It is very strange, however, that no cotemporary historian gives us any record of its superb temples, and that the first mention of them is found in the writings of John Malala, of Antioch, in the seventh century of our era, who says that "Ælius Antoninus Pius built at Heliopolis in Phœnicia in Lebanon, a great temple to Jupiter, which was one of the wonders of the world." Constantine founded here a great Christian basilica, and closed up the heathen temples, and less than a century later the orgies of which they had so long been the scene, and which had been revived in the interim, came forever to an end by the determined action of Theodosius, who destroyed the heathen shrines, and converted them into Christian churches.

With the Moslem invasion, in the seventh century, came another change. Heliopolis again became known as Baalbec, and the tem-