

aqueducts from a distance and by the careful retention of the rain-water by damming the valleys. Beersheba, at the lower end of this tract, boasts, however, of wells, accounted for by the subterranean river of which I have spoken; the landscape sinking in great steps from Hebron to the desert on the edge of which Beersheba stands, and thus bringing the water near the surface. North of Jerusalem, the country steadily improves; the central district, once the home of Ephraim, being delightfully green even over the round hill-tops, and the ancient Samaria equally so. The hill country, as a whole, may be called temperate in climate, in contrast to Jericho, where the harvest is a month earlier; but from the Scorpion Steps, on the south edge of Samaria, one sees a shining cloud high in the northern sky, and learns, presently, that it is the glittering of the snow on the summits of Lebanon. Thus, in a very few miles, the Hebrew saw the Tropics, the Temperate zone, and the Arctic, so that the sacred writers, tho living in a country not larger than Yorkshire or Wales, could draw images from so wide an experience of nature as fits Scripture for natives of all regions of the earth.

The plain of Esdraelon, which separates the Carmel range from the hills of Galilee, is a grand expanse of richly fertile volcanic soil, which must have supported a vast population in the time of Christ, but now lies almost uninhabited. The rains from the hills on both sides, flooding the narrow channels of springs and seaming the whole plain with new hollows, soon turn the wide surface into a quagmire; a change realized by Barak, when he rushed down from Tabor on Sisera's chariots, after a storm, knowing that they could not maneuver in the soft soil, and must fall a helpless prey to his footmen. North of Esdraelon rise the hills of Galilee, gray at first, but steadily greener as one goes north. Nazareth lies three miles from the plain, amid bare, rounded chalk-hills; its white, flat-roofed little houses stretching down the slope of one of them, to a little valley where are the fountain to which Jesus must often have come with his mother, and the threshing-floor of the village, in the open air.

Trees are everywhere in Palestine conspicuous by their absence, for the word translated "forest" in the Old Testament means simply the scrub, or "*w'aar*," with which the hills are in some parts covered, tho even this is unknown over most of the country. Nor are there such trees in any part as we see in America or Europe; the ilex, the carob, the mulberry, the olive, the sycamore, and the fig-tree, being nearly all one meets. Palms do not bear fruit north of Gaza, but there are a few in Jerusalem, and near Nazareth there are some palm groves, while beyond Palestine they abound in the neighborhood of Beirut.

The fertility of Galilee kept its population at home, just as the barrenness of Judea scattered its people to distant lands, while the free mountain air, and the remoteness of the Temple, with its shadow