

pointed in the appearance of the sea. I had pictured it as a gloomy region, brooded over as by the very shadow of death; I found it that morning glittering in the sunlight, while above it hung a sky of clearest blue. But it is 1,300 feet below the level of the Mediterranean, and the pouring sun, later on in the season, must, no doubt, render its shore a dry desert of salt-coated sand.

A couple of hours' ride from the Dead Sea, through a sandy, swampy country, brought us to the bank of the Jordan, at the place which, according to Greek tradition, is the scene of our Lord's baptism. It is a lovely spot, surrounded with rich foliage of clustering trees, between which the river sweeps along in a rapid muddy current, so swift that it is dangerous to venture more than a few feet from shore. Here, annually, come thousands of pilgrims to bathe in these waters as a religious duty and privilege.

It was intensely hot when we reached the Jordan, and the sun beat down with dangerous fierceness, but a careful bathe in the cool waters, and luncheon and rest in the shadow of the trees, renewed our energies for the ride to camp. Whatever be the opinion as to the authenticity of the place, as the site of our Lord's baptism—and it is open to grave objection on the score of distance from Nazareth—there can be no doubt that here the Israelites crossed on their way from Egypt; and we now rode along in the route they must have taken across the valley to our tents, pitched on the site of their first encampment at Gilgal. It was fearfully hot and oppressive in the deep valley with its still and burning air; and the sight of our tents on a rising ground at Gilgal was a welcome one indeed.

Gilgal was, as I have said, the first camping ground of the Israelites after crossing Jordan. Here the manna which had fed them in the wilderness ceased to fall, and here they erected the twelve stones which they had brought from the bed of the Jordan when its waters were cleft for their passage. Here the first Pass-over in the Land of Promise was celebrated, and here Joshua saw the vision of the "man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand, and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come." In later times the grand assemblies of Samuel and Saul were convened here; here Saul was anointed king, and here the whole tribe of Judah assembled to welcome David after Absalom's unsuccessful revolt. Here, too, Elisha received Naaman, the Syrian, and made