FOREIGN CORRESPONDENCE

SKETCHES OF EASTERN TRAVEL.

NO. III.

From Cairo to Jerusalem—By Rail to Ismailia—Through the Suez Canal to Port Said—By the Red Sea to Jaffa—The Valley of Ajalon—Arrival at Jerusalem.

[Communicated for the Phila. Evening Bulletin.]

CAIRO, HOTEL DU NIL, Friday Evening, March 4th, 1870.—I mailed No. 2 here this morning, and not knowing what opportunity there may be for writing then we shall be here, I'begin again without delay. We have enjoyed our week at Cairo very much, in spite of the fleas, the filth, and the astounding amount of squalid misery that abounds in the place. Of the food that we have here we cannot complain. The table is very clean, and the things well cooked. But as we go through the streets and see the markets or provision shops, I wonder how it is possible for us to eat anything here. The thing that I enjoy most are the oranges. They are perfectly delicious. At home I never care about them, and hardly eat one in a year. But here I am ready to eat them at all times. I enjoy them, and they agree with me. It may be, I must admit, that one thing which adds to my enjoyment of them is the perfect assurance I have that when the skin is removed I am eating something clean.

Last night we had a thunder storm, with lightning and heavy rain. This is something very unusual here. Is only the second time they have had rain in a year. Of course it produced a great commotion. The effect of the rain on the condition of the streets is inconceivable. They have no preparation for rain. It is an element that has never been taken in account in constructing the city. Pipes, or gutters, or water-courses of any kind, are things unknown. Of course, when rain does come it has to dispose of itself the best way it can. There being no conveyance for it, it has a leaving off, as rain is wont to do in a Christian land, there is nothing left for it to do but to be round loose in a general way, spending its energies in converting the streets—all innocent of a single foot of solid pavement of any kind—into enormous pools of dirty water, mud-puddles and quagmires of such depth and extent as would have answered honest John Bunyan admirably as the model for his "Slough of Despond." We had to go to the banker's this morning, and so had a good opportunity of witnessing the effect of the rain. It was impossible to walk. The streets leading to the banker's were too narrow and crooked for carriages. The only alternative was to go on donkeys. So we each mounted a donkey, and with Ben Hassan as our leader we rode single file in procession through the main streets. The inevitable donkey-boy was in his place at the tail of the beast, going in many places knee-deep through the mud. I found that this, my second donkey, bore the name of "Billy Barlow." One of our company had the misfortune of riding on "Yankee Doodle." I went along very cautiously, in mortal fear lest something should give way, and I might find myself deposited in more than a sitting-bath in one of the many deep puddles through which we waded. However, as such misfortunes befell us. We accomplished our destination and returned to our hotel without meeting with any adventure.

SUEZ, ON THE RED SEA, Sunday Evening, March 6th, 1870.—We left Cairo yesterday morning between nine and ten o'clock, and arrived here about the same hour in the evening, having occupied twelve hours in accomplishing 120 miles. This was owing to the many delays and stoppages on the way. The first part of our course lay through the valley of the Nile, in all the luxuriance of its fertility. We left the latter part through the sandy desert, in all the wild and rugged sternness of its unrelieved barrenness and desolation. I had had great interest to see, from the fact that we were going over the very track which the Israelites traversed when Moses led them out of Egypt. The feet of that mighty host trod these same sandy plains, and the same desolate hills looked down on them in their slow march as on us in our rapid flight. And the shadow of that mysterious cloud which led them had moved majestically along this path.

The town of Suez is a place of recent growth. It has sprung up in connection with the new canal, near the mouth of which it stands, at the entrance into the western branch of the Red Sea. The commerce of England and of Europe generally with India and the East will all pass along this route, and this must give importance to every stopping-place.

We assembled service, this morning, in a little chapel connected with our hotel. A Scotch Presbyterian is stationed here, who conducted the service, and gave us an excellent, and suggestive sermon on the character and conversion of Manasseh, the wicked King of Israel.

This afternoon we took a walk along the western shore of the sea, to satisfy ourselves of the locality of the scene of the stupendous deliverance wrought for Israel by the putting forth of the arm of Omnipotence. There is no difficulty in tracing the course they must have taken. There is a range of high mountains on the western side of the sea, but at some distance from the shore. The Israelites passed round the head of the sea, on the western side, between the mountains and the sea. It was here that Pharaoh and his host came to sight, in hot pursuit. A few miles further on there is a pass in the mountains leading back to Egypt. The design of Pharaoh, evidently was to press them closely in this direction, and drive them back again to their house of bondage. But then came the dark cloud between him and them—the path opened up for them through the sea—with Israel's escape, and the sudden overthrow of the pursuers and the flower of his kingdom. O, there was something uncommonly grand and impressive to stand beneath the shadow of Israel's God, dark mountains, which were actual witnesses of that stupendous event, and on one of whose peaks doubtless stood with his outstretched rod while the waters opened and the ransomed people passed over, and there to read the chapter in Exodus which describes the scene, as well as the song of Moses which commemorates it! I should never forget this afternoon and its impressions!

This evening, we had worship again in the chapel, with the service of the Church of England, by the Scotch missionary, and a good practical sermon by Mr. Cl——, from the words: "Martha was careful, and troubled about many things."

PORT SAID, Tuesday Morning, March 8.—We tried to get a boat to Port Said, to bring us here all the way through the canal; but there was none to be had—so we left Suez yesterday morning, by rail for Ismailia, which is the half-way station. Landing there at noon, yesterday, in connection with a company of seven Philadelphians, whom we met at Suez, we chartered a nice little steamer, and came the rest of the way through this famous canal, which has carried the commerce of Africa into an island, by uniting together the Mediterranean and the Red Sea. It is a stupendous work—one of the wonders of the age. It is destined to revolutionize the commerce of the world, by making Egypt the highway of the nations. It seems to be working changes as great in the lines of trade as in those of trade. They say here there has been more rain since the canal opened than for fifty years past. It would be a curious thing if the passage of this large body of water through the desert, and the introduction of the telegraph wires should so affect the atmosphere, in these parts as to cause frequent rains. The effect of these would be to change the character of the country, and turn these barren wastes into fertile plains. We were greatly interested in the canal as we passed through. It is indeed a stupendous triumph of engineering skill over some of the greatest obstacles that nature can present to the march of improvement. It was ten o'clock at night before our arrival. We had a beautiful sunset, and then a splendid moonlight evening. The sky was clear as crystal, and the stars shone out with a brilliancy that was fascinating, while the phosphorescence of the water in the wake of the vessel made it seem as though we were ploughing our way through an illuminated sea.

This is a new settlement, called into existence by the canal. It looks more like what Atlantic City was a few years ago than anything I have seen. We expect to leave here this afternoon for Jaffa. The steamer arrived this morning which is to take us there.

JAFFA, Wednesday Morning, March 9.—We left Port Said by the steamer at five o'clock yesterday afternoon, and had a most beautiful night for our sail. We came within sight of Jaffa about five o'clock this morning. The ground as we rising gloriously over the hills of Judea as we skirted along the coast of what was once the land of the Philistines. Our steamer came to anchor off the town of Jaffa, about half a mile from the shore. There is no harbor here, and it is only in calm weather, such as we now have, that passengers can land here. When the sea is rough and the wind strong, they are obliged to go on to Beyrout. We landed safely, however, and now stopping at the American Hotel, in the settlement, just outside the town, occupied by the colony from New England. The company have come to grief, and broken up. I have just been to visit the principal celebrity of the place, which is "the house of Simon the tanner, by the sea-side," being the house where Peter prayed and had his vision of the great sheet let down from heaven. The house is now in charge of a venerable-looking Turk, who acts the part of showman to visitors, and lives on the gratuities thus received. He assured us that it is the identical house which stood here in Peter's days. It certainly looks substantial enough to have resisted the action of Time's corroding tooth. It is built of solid stone, with an arched roof, and is taken on a rock rising out of the sea. I came here with the determination not to indulge a skeptical spirit, but to receive the current tradition, in a general way, as actual verities. So I looked on the terraced roof of the reputed house of Simon the tanner as the real place of Peter's prayer and vision. I plucked a leaf and a little flower that were growing in a crack of the roof, and shall inclose them as mementoes of the visit. We have just made an agreement with a dragoman to take us up to Jerusalem, and on our journey through the land of Israel. His name is Ali Solyman. He has excellent certificates from parties who have traveled with him, and we hope to find him efficient and reliable. He is to take us at the rate of 25 shillings sterling a day for each of the party. This includes every expense of the journey, and we are certainly reasonable enough, "we are now getting ready for our departure, and as the baggage has to be sent on ahead, I must put up my writing materials for the present.

VALLEY OF AJALON, Thursday Morning, March 10.—We left Jaffa on Wednesday afternoon, and had a three hours ride to Ramleh, which we reached at sundown, and found our tents pitched and ready for us. The ride was a charming one. It lay through a plain country that extends for miles around Jaffa. I found it hard to realize that I was actually riding through the "Holy Land." We found a degree of fertility and cultivation above what we expected. The orange groves were most luxuriant. The trees are loaded with fruit in every stage of growth. Some are full of blossoms, and the air is redolent with the delicious perfume which they exhale. Far away beyond these cultivated fields the distant hills of Judea were full in view, presenting a fine background to the picture. The sky was bright and clear, with masses of white fleecy clouds floating through it and casting their dark shadows with the finest possible effect over the magnificent landscape. I rode along through this lovely scene with a degree of exhilaration which I feel quite at a loss to describe. The memory of my first day in Palestine will never fade away. I wish you could have seen our encampment outside the walls of Ramleh. We have three large tents, two for ourselves and one for the dragoman and his men. They are very different tents from those we used in the Adirondacks. Our tent has upright walls, six feet high, and a pole in the centre 12 feet high, from which the roof is stretched. It is in the form of a polygon, with 14 sides. It measures 14 feet inside from side to side. This makes a good-sized room. The floor is covered with rugs or carpets. There is a table in the centre, and three single-iron bedsteads around the sides. The inside is lined with figured chintz, which gives it the appearance of a nicely-papered room. Our dinner was served up soon after our arrival. It consisted of seven courses, beginning with soup and ending with coffee. It compared very favorably with any we have had at the hotels in which we have sojourned. Everything, too, was served in the nicest style. The coffee was handed to us in nice white china cups, with gilt edges, and all was in keeping with this finishing touch. Besides our dragoman we have a cook, named Samuel, who, like his master, is a Turk; and a waiter, an Italian youth, who answers to the call of Dominico, and is supposed to be a Catholic. Then we have, besides these, six attendants who have the charge of the baggage, which is conveyed, including our selves, on the backs of seven horses, six mules and five donkeys. We have no camels in our party, which I rather regret, as it would add much of an Oriental aspect to our company when in motion. This makes, altogether, quite a cavalcade when we all get under way. We slept very soundly through the first night of our camp life. We breakfasted at seven o'clock this morning, and started again between eight and nine on our way, "going up to Jerusalem." Our road ran winding about through the hills we had seen in the distance the day before. We halted for an hour or two at noon to rest and take lunch, and then kept on till the close of the afternoon, when we halted for the night in this interesting Valley. It is but a few miles from Gibeon, with whose inhabitants Joshua made his famous treaty, when he was conquering the land for Israel, and to whose aid he hastened when the five kings of Canaan came to destroy them. We are now encamped on the plain of Ajalon. The Emmaus, where Cleopas, one of the two disciples to whom the risen Saviour drew near, and talked with them on the road, lived, is supposed to be in this valley. It is a place of great interest, and we shall visit it on our way to Jerusalem. We hope to reach Jerusalem by Saturday night, and then will have three days for rest and preparation before we commence the visit. We have just made an agreement with a dragoman to take us up to Jerusalem, and on our journey through the land of Israel. His name is Ali Solyman. He has excellent certificates from parties who have traveled with him, and we hope to find him efficient and reliable. He is to take us at the rate of 25 shillings sterling a day for each of the party. This includes every expense of the journey, and we are certainly reasonable enough, "we are now getting ready for our departure, and as the baggage has to be sent on ahead, I must put up my writing materials for the present.

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