

ARTICLE V.

EXCURSION FOR THE IDENTIFICATION OF PELLA.

By E. Robinson, Professor at New York.

We left Nâblus on the 13th of May, 1852, and proceeded by way of Tâllûza, the ancient Tirza, for some years the residence of the kings of Israel. Thence we came to Tûbâs, the ancient Thebez; at the siege of which Abimelech met his death. We encamped for the night at Teyâsir, somewhat nearer to the Ghôr. The next morning we followed down Wady Mâlih; stopping to ascend to the Kûsr Mâlih, a ruined fortress hitherto unknown; and issuing upon the Ghôr, proceeded to the brow of the lower Jordan valley; where we came upon the slight remains of Sâkût, the ancient Succoth. Turning back north-west, we reached an encampment of the people of Tûbâs by a fountain; where we pitched our tent for the night. This was the *seventh* fountain or stream that we had fallen in with to-day; and all but two of them in the Ghôr itself. This abundance of water was quite unexpected to us; and accounts sufficiently for the superior fertility of this region.

The people of Tûbâs were here for the purpose of harvesting the noble fields of wheat, which they cultivated in the Ghôr. They were dwelling in tents and booths, with their women and children, horses and donkies, dogs and poultry; the latter, probably, that they might thrive on the scattered grain. We pitched our tent by their side, and enjoyed the lively scene. The people were kind and hospitable.

In the course of the afternoon, Dr. Smith was able to make an arrangement with two young Sheikhs of the party here encamped, to take us on an excursion, for a day, beyond the Jordan. They were vigorous, active and intelligent young men, and agreed to accompany us for forty piastres each. We accordingly laid our plan to go to Kefr Abîl, supposing we should naturally ascend along Wady Yâbis, and so could search for Jabesh-Gilead; and then return direct to Beisân, visiting on the way the ruins called Tûbûkat Fahil, described by Irby and Mangles. The main point was to ascertain, if possible, the distance

between those ruins and Jabesh-Gilead; and thus determine whether the former are the remains of Pella; since, according to Eusebius and Jerome, Jabesh was six Roman miles distant from Pella on the way to Gerasa.¹—At our invitation Mr. Van de Velde concluded to accompany us. His armed horseman decided not to go; lest, if anything adverse should occur, he might be censured for going beyond the limits of his district, the province of Nâblus. He was left, therefore, to accompany the muleteers to Beisân, there to await the return of our party.²

Saturday, May 15th. We rose at half past two o'clock, expecting to start at four o'clock; but some delay on the part of the guide, who was to take the muleteers to Beisân, made it 4.20 before we set off. Our Sheikhs were well mounted, and in high spirits. Our course was about E. by S. towards a ford a little north of Sâkût; and at 4.50 we came to Tell Ridghah in the plain, with a few old foundations upon it. At its foot, on the north, is a pleasant fountain, and a Wely called Sheikh Sâlim, with a few huts around. As we advanced, the rays of the morning sun began to gild the tops of the mountains of Gilboa, behind us. At 5.25 we crossed a large brook, coming from a fountain in the plain called ed-Deir. Our path lay, as yesterday, for the most part, through a tall and rank growth of grass, wild oats, thistles, and other herbage. We came at 5.30 to the brow of the lower Jordan valley, here perhaps a hundred and fifty feet above the river; and began immediately to descend along a small Wady.

We now crossed the narrow alluvial plain forming the bottom of the valley; which our guides said was never overflowed. In it are two former channels of the river, now full of tamarisks (Tûrfa), the most common tree just here; and through these channels the river still sends its waters in the rainy season. It thus appears, that the river sometimes changes its bed; and that the islands in its stream are variable. At 5.50 we reached the bank of the river at the ford, which proved to be over a long narrow island. The western and smaller channel was crossed without difficulty, though the stream was very rapid. The

¹ Onomast. arts. *Asiroth, Jabis Galaad.*

² Circumstances render it proper to say here, that Mr. Van de Velde simply accompanied us, at our invitation. He had nothing whatever to do, either with the plan, the arrangement, the expense, or the results of the excursion.

island is of considerable extent, alluvial, with an exceedingly rich soil, covered with tall grass and the rankest vegetation. The many tamarisks upon it were full of birds; and here, for the first time this year, I heard the song of the nightingale.

The eastern channel was twice as broad, and deeper, with a swift stream; the ford being on a bar, over which the water breaks into a rift or rapid. Here there was some need of preparation; our saddle-bags were taken before us; shoes and stockings were stripped off, and pantaloons rolled above the knees. We thus got over very well. The water came up high on our horses' sides; it was quite warm, and had a bluish tinge.

At 6.20 everything was again in order, and we were off; our Sheikhs telling us, for our comfort, that at the ford near Beisân the water was still deeper. We immediately began to rise along the high and steep bank of the lower valley, under which the river here flows; and soon came out upon the more elevated Ghôr above, which is here narrow, and at first dry and desert. We struck across it obliquely, about E. by N., towards the mouth of Wady Yâbis, as it issues from the mountains. At 6.30 we crossed the road leading from Beisân to 'Abu 'Obeida and es-Sâit; being that travelled by Burckhardt. Nearer the hills the surface of the ground is lower, and a small fountain with a marsh and a brook, gives occasion for a fertile tract. Looking back, a single horseman was seen in the plain, apparently following us; but our guides paid no regard to him.

At 6.45 we reached the foot of the first hills; and, as we began to rise a little, found ourselves suddenly surrounded by twenty or thirty armed men. They proved to be Fellâhîn from Fârah, a village higher up in the mountain. The people of that village cultivate the arable ground at the mouth of Wady Yâbis; and were now here encamped in booths to gather in the harvest. Along with the other inhabitants of Jebel 'Ajlûn, they had recently combined to prevent Muhammed Pasha from enforcing the conscription; and they had now been watching us, thinking we might perhaps be coming from the government on a like errand. They were acquainted with our Sheikhs; and finding all right, they took us to their encampment just by, on the south bank of Wady Yâbis. Their booths stood on the site of a small ruined village; and, like our friends from Tûbâs, on the other side of Jordan, they formed quite a colony, having brought with them

all their households, including dogs and chickens. They invited us to breakfast, which we declined; but our guides accepted, and made their repast on bread, *leben*, and oil. Afterwards coffee was brought, of which we all partook. Here we got sight of the singular Tell of Beisân, to which all our bearings for that place refer.

Five minutes from the encampment brought us to the bottom of Wady Yûbis, which we reached at 7.40; it has a stream of the finest water, and a mill. Our guides were about to proceed up this valley; and so we had expected and desired; but a man at work in the fields told them the way to Kefr Abl lay up along another Wady. So we turned more north, and began to ascend by a smaller Wady, called Raud Abu Khûraz; along the northern side of which our way went on winding and climbing steep grassy hills, one after another. At 8.05, a small ruin, called el-Kurkumeh, was pointed out on the south of Wady Yâbis, on a small green plain sown with wheat. At 8.30 the hills became higher and greener; and oak trees began to appear, the oaks of Bashan (Arab. *Mellâl*), scattered here like orchards upon the hills, much like the olive-trees on the west of the Jordan.

At length, at 8.55, we came out upon a prominent point, affording an extensive view over the whole northern Ghôr, from Kûrn Sûrtabeh to the lake of Tiberias. Here, far below us, the eye took in the opening of Wady Fân'a between the ridge of Sûrtabeh and the opposite lower point el-Makhrûd; Kûsr el-Mâlih, and the Wadys Mâlih, Khushneh and Kûbôsh, as they left the western hills and extended to the Jordan; the picturesque mountains of Gilboa; while, looking up the broad valley of Jezreel, Carmel, and then Tabor came into view. A large portion of the lake was visible, in its southern and western parts. It was a noble prospect; and I rejoiced in being thus able to survey the whole Ghôr on the north of Kûrn Sûrtabeh, as fully as I before had viewed the portion on the south of that mountain. The day was fine, and the atmosphere perfectly clear.

This height proved to be the brow of the first plateau of the mountain. Setting off again at 9.10, we continued to ascend quite gradually over a gentle slope, through a beautiful region of country. The fields were covered with a noble crop of wheat; than which we had seen none heavier or better. It was not yet ripe for the harvest. The land not thus occupied, was

covered with splendid pasturage. The orchards of oak were now more frequent. At 9.25, we saw the inhabited village of Helâweh about two miles distant, south of Wady Yâbis, bearing S. 50 E. At 9.40 Kûl'at er-Rûbûd came in sight in the south-east, still high above us; it is also known as Kûl'at Ibn Fureih. At 10 o'clock we were in sight of Kefr Abil; and here another less prominent brow afforded us still a wide prospect.

We came to Kefr Abil at 10.10; a mean village, without a trace of antiquity. It stands near the eastern part of the first plateau, not far from the next line of steep ascent; from which it is separated by an open cultivated Wady, running south at the foot of the higher slope to Wady Yâbis. We found the village nearly deserted. When Muhammed Pasha recently came to take soldiers, the people all fled; and now, having seen us Franks approaching at a distance, they had done the same. None showed themselves till it was known who we were. They were, however, not far off, and soon returned, while some came from other villages to inquire our object. The people seemed to be much the same in character with those on the other side of Jordan. We judged the village to be not much less than two thousand feet above the river. Three other villages were in sight a little higher up, Beit Idis, Kefr 'Awân, and Judeita.

In the higher ridge, towards the south south-east, and hardly a mile distant, we could see a deep glen, by which the Yâbis issues from that ridge, and then sweeps off more to the south, beyond a rather high hill in the south of Kefr Abil. In that glen, it was said, are the ruins of a town called el-Maklûb, as having been "overturned;" but there are no columns. Further west, on the south side of the Wady Yâbis, beyond the high hill just mentioned, and on a similar hill, we were told of another ruin called ed-Deir, having in it columns, and situated on the road leading from Beisân to Helâweh and Jerash. We could hear of no other ruins in the vicinity, and of no place whatever bearing the name of Yâbis. That name now exists only as applied to the Wady.

Our main object in this excursion to Kefr Abil was to search for the site of Jabesh Gilead; in the hope of thus finding a definite point, from which to determine the position of Pella. In this we found ourselves partially disappointed; since it was not now in our power, for want of time, to visit the above sites of ruins. Had we possessed all this information beforehand,

our proper course would have been to have ascended by Wady Yâbis to ed-Deir and Maklûb, and thence have taken the direct route to Tûbukât Fahil and Beisân. We might even now have visited these sites of ruins, had we known all the circumstances; but a long route was before us to Beisân through an unknown region; our guides were eager to return; and we now found that they knew nothing of Tûbukât Fahil.

It is difficult to arrive at any very certain conclusion in such a case, solely upon the testimony of Arabs; yet there seems here to be little reason for doubt, that the ruin ed-Deir corresponds to the site of *Jabesh-Gilead*. The name ed-Deir (signifying "a convent"), is often given to ruins of which the Arabs can make nothing else, while the existence of columns, and the position upon the road from Beisân to Jerash, are circumstances of great weight. The distance, too, of six miles from Pella, as specified by Eusebius, and Jerome, seems more applicable to ed-Deir than to Maklûb.¹

Jabesh-Gilead is first mentioned in the book of Judges,² as the only city which did not join in the war against the tribe of Benjamin; for which reason the inhabitants were destroyed, and their daughters given as wives to the surviving Benjamites. Afterwards, when the city was besieged by Nahash, king of the Ammonites, Saul hastened to its rescue.³ It was probably in grateful remembrance of this deliverance, that later, when the bodies of Saul and his three sons, after the slaughter of Gilboa, were fastened by the Philistines to the walls of Bethshean, the inhabitants of Jabesh-Gilead "went all night" and carried the bodies away to their own city, and there burned them and buried their bones.⁴ For this they received the thanks of David, who afterwards removed the bones.⁵ Jabesh is not further mentioned in Scripture; but it still existed in the days of Eusebius and Jerome, whose testimony is cited above. But from that time onwards until now, no traveller had ever sought for its site. An ocular examination is still needed; may we not hope that it will not be long delayed?

¹ Onomast. art. *Jabis Galaad*, "Nunc est vicus trans Jordanem in sexto milario civitatis Pellae super montem euntibus Gerasam." See also art. *Asiroth*.

² Judg. 21: 8. Jos. Antt. 5. 2. 11 *Ἰάβιθ*.

³ 1 Sam. 11: 1-11. Jos. Antt. 6. 5. 1 *Ἰάβιθ*.

⁴ 1 Sam. 31: 8-14. Jos. Antt. 6. 14. 8 *Ἰάβιθ*.

⁵ 2 Sam. 2: 4-7. 21: 12-14.

Having made up our minds with regret to go direct from Kefr Abil to Beisân, we computed, that, if the remains at Tûbûkat Fahil were those of Pella, the distance could not be much less than six Roman miles; and, therefore, we might expect to reach the spot in a time varying from an hour and a half to two hours. Setting off at 11.16, we struck down a deep ravine on the north of the road by which we came, on a general course about north-west, and kept along in the ravine, shut out from all view, until, at 12.10, it turned more to the left, and we ascended the steep hill on the right, reaching the top at 12.15. Here we passed into another valley on the same general course, and followed it down till it also turned to the left, when we again turned up the ridge on the right, and were on its top at 12.35. Still ascending a gradual slope, there was on our left at 12.45, a higher point with the appearance of ruins upon it. Our guides hesitated, but at last said this was Tûbûkat Fahil. We went to the top, and had a wide prospect; but found no ruins.

Starting again at 1.15, we descended continually and rapidly over open grassy hills. At 1.30 we were on what seemed to be the last brow or promontory towards the Ghôr. Below, on our left, on a low mound in a nook among these higher hills, we now saw, hardly a mile distant (S. 35 W.), a site of ruins, which our guides knew only as el-Jerm. We were at this time just an hour and three quarters from Kefr Abil, and this distance accorded well with Pella; but the ignorance of our Sheikhs, who were ever hurrying on, and the apparent insignificance of the ruins as here seen, led us to keep on our way and descend the hill. Here, however, we could hold out no longer; and, at 1.40, turned short off to the left, followed by only one of the guides, through a narrow plain covered with rich fields of ripe wheat. Crossing a ravine in the plain, we came in fifteen minutes to the ruins of Fahil; for so the name was given to us by the people on the spot.

The low flat Tell or mound on which the principal ruins are situated, looks out westward upon the narrow plain, which also runs up on the north side, between it and the projecting hill from which we had descended. On the south is a ravine, and beyond it the narrow plain extends somewhat further. Behind are the higher hills, which shut down and enclose the spot. One singular Tell is on the south-east quarter, just by the low neck which joins the mound to the hills back; it looks

almost as if cut away by art in order to form an acropolis for the city. Directly under its south-western base is the head of the ravine, which runs off south-west; and just there, in its head, is a large and noble fountain, which sends off a mill-stream down the valley. This latter was now almost a marsh, overgrown with tamarisks and oleanders. The fountain is called Jerm-el-Mauz; and the valley breaks down, as Wady Mauz, to the bottom of the Ghôr and the Jordan, half an hour south of the ford to Beisân.¹ We could now understand the ignorance of our guides as to the name Fahil.²

The whole narrow plain, as we afterwards saw, which thus lies west of the ruins and along the hills, is in the nature of a high plateau or terrace, standing out in front of the hills, several hundred feet above the valley of the Jordan below. Hence the name Tûbûkat Fahil, signifying "Terrace of Fahil." It is cultivated by the people of Kefr 'Awân; and needs little, if any, irrigation. The tract through which we descended is also theirs; but is too rugged to admit of much tillage.

As we approached from the north, there were in the low plain and on our left, numerous foundations with many broken columns. Ascending the mound of the city from the east, we came at once to the remains of a building, of which the portal was broken down and scattered around; within were three granite columns. Before it lay a sculptured slab of limestone, having the name ΘΩΜΑΣ (Thomas) rudely inscribed upon it; apparently a later scrawl. The edifice may have been a temple, or perhaps a church. The surface of the hill is a level area of four or five acres in extent, covered with the foundations of houses, and with heaps of hewn stones intermingled with fragments of columns. We saw no bevelled stones. On the southern side, the descent towards the ravine is quite steep, and here the houses seemed to have been built on terraces one above another, quite to the bottom. The fountain is under the south-east quarter; and near it are still standing two columns, as of a small temple. Towards the west, also, in the plain, we saw foundations and ruins; showing that the city covered a large extent of ground. We noticed no traces of city walls.

¹ Burckhardt, *Travels in Syria*, p. 345. From Wady Mauz to Wady Yâbis is three quarters of an hour; *ibid.*

² Buckingham heard both names: Tûbûkat Fahil and Jerm-el-Mauz; *Travels among the Arab Tribes*, p. 10, 138.

The spot was first visited by Irby and Mangles, March 12th, 1818.¹ They approached it from the west, and found there in the plain "the ruins of a square building, with a semi-circular end, which appears to have been surrounded by columns." On the hill, they speak of the ruins of a modern village. Of this we saw nothing; though it is possible, that occasional huts may have been constructed out of the scattered stones. Among the columns they discovered the three orders, Doric, Ionic and Corinthian; and at the fountain they speak of "a fine temple." Crossing the rivulet, and following a path to the southward, they came to a small plain very thickly set with herbage, and particularly the mustard-plant, reaching as high as the horses' heads; here, towards the east, were several excavations in the side of the hills, which they supposed to be the sepulchres they had heard of in this vicinity. Finding no path in this direction, they recrossed the rivulet, and descended to their former road along the Ghôr.²

Such are the ruins and the main features of Fahil; but on what grounds can the site be identified with the ancient *Pella*? In the *first* place, we know that Pella was one of the cities of the Decapolis,³ east of the Jordan on the northern border of Perea.⁴ Indeed, Pompey, proceeding from Damascus into Judea, marches by way of Pella and Scythopolis.⁵ It follows that the two cities were not far distant from each other; and Josephus several times mentions them together.⁶ We now had Beisân (Scythopolis) in view beyond the river. *Secondly*, Eusebius and Jerome inform us, that from Pella to Jabesh-Gilead was six Roman miles on the road across the mountain to Gerasa.⁷ We had now come from Kefr Abil about a mile north

¹ Travels, pp. 304, 305. [pp. 92, 93].

² As early as Feb. 1816, Buckingham, in passing this way from Nazareth to es-Salt was told of this place; but "as it was on an eminence difficult of access, we [he] did not go up to it." He again heard of it at Kefrenjy. Travels among the Arab Tribes, pp. 10, 138. — In the summer of 1842, Rev. G. Williams, searching for Pella in the vicinity, heard of these ruins; but "could not turn aside to examine them." Holy City, l. p. 201.

³ Euseb. et Hieron. Onomast. art. *Decapolis*, Plin. H. N. 5. 16. Reland, Palest. p. 203.

⁴ Jos. B. J. 3. 3. 3.

⁵ Jos. Antt. 14. 3. 4. B. J. 1. 6. 5.

⁶ Jos. Antt. 14. 4. 4. B. J. 1. 7. 7. Ib. 2. 18. 1.

⁷ Onomast. arts. *Jabis Galaad* and *Asiroth*; see above. The Onomasticon of these writers contains no further notice of Pella, except its name in the art. *Decapolis*.

of the ruin ed-Deir, on Wady Yâbis, to a point the same distance north of Fahil, in an hour and three quarters; a coincidence more than ordinarily exact. *Thirdly*, Pliny enumerating the cities of the Decapolis, speaks of Pella as "abundant in waters;"¹ and the noble fountain within the precincts still testifies to the truth of the description. *Fourthly*, the names Fahil and Pella have a strong affinity; whether we regard the former as derived merely from the Greek Pella, or as representing an earlier Aramean form which the Greeks corrupted into Pella.

After completing our examination of the remains, in view of these considerations I ventured to express to my companions on the spot the opinion, in which they concurred, that we were standing amid the ruins of the long lost and long sought Pella. It is at such moments that the traveller has his reward.

The idea, however, that these remains marked the site of Pella, was not to me a new one. True, no such idea had been suggested to the minds of Irby and Mangles, the discoverers of the ruins; and no Frank traveller had since visited the spot. But as long ago as 1839 or 1840, when preparing in Berlin the manuscript of my former *Researches*, I had by me a copy of their volume,² and was struck with the probable identity of this site of ruins with Pella. The same idea was entertained by Kiepert, who likewise used the volume in making out the maps for my work. By which one the suggestion was first made to the other, it may now be difficult to determine. At any rate, Kiepert proposed to insert the name Pella in those maps in connection with this spot. It was not done, however, because I desired that the maps should contain nothing which had not actually been verified. But in Kiepert's own later map, published in 1842, Pella was thus inserted for the first time, with a query; and from that time onwards the suggestion has been public property.³

¹ Plin. H. N. 5. 16 (18), "Pellam aquis divitem."

² From the library of the Royal Geographical Society in London, through the kindness of the then Secretary, Capt. Washington, R. N. No other copy was known to be in Berlin at that time.

³ Ritter also fully assumes the identity of these ruins with those of Pella; Erdk. XV. ii. pp. 1023-28, Berlin, 1851. In our former lists the name Kefr Abil was wrongly given *Kefr Bil*; and in this form that name was compared with Pella; Bibl. Res. Vol. III. App. p. 165. This supposed Kefr Bil, Ritter confounds with "the ruins of a modern village," spoken of by Irby and Mangles at Fahil; and thence argues the identity of the latter with Pella. His position

A writer of the fifth century tells us, that Pella was also called *Bátia*.¹ A much later assertion affirms, that the city was built, or at least inhabited, by Macedonian veterans from the armies of Alexander the Great, who settled down here under his successors in the kingdom of Syria; and hence the name Pella, in honor of the Macedonian Pella.² In support of this idea it is alleged, that Pella was one of the cities destroyed by the fanatical Jews under Alexander Jannæus, because the inhabitants refused to conform to the Jewish rites and customs; showing that these inhabitants were heathen and foreigners.³ Whether all this, however, is anything more than a modern hypothesis to account for the name Pella, may be doubtful.⁴ But, however all this may be, we learn from Polybius that Antiochus the Great of Syria, after getting possession of Mount Tabor and other places, in the year 218 B. C. crossed the Jordan and captured Pella, Kamân, and Gephrous.⁵ The more important notices given by Josephus, have already been referred to. Pella, with other cities, was taken by Pompey from the Jews, and restored by him to their own inhabitants.⁶ Afterwards Pella became the head of a toparchy.⁷

The name Pella does not occur in Scripture; but the city is celebrated in ecclesiastical annals as the place whither the Christians of Jerusalem withdrew before the siege and destruction of the Holy City by Titus. Eusebius relates their removal, and that it was done in consequence of a divine admonition.⁸ The time of their return is nowhere specified.⁹ From the coins

is right; but is built upon erroneous premises. — On the same authority of Irby and Mangles, Mr. Williams also "is disposed to think that Pella must be looked for in this locality;" Holy City, first edition, London, 1845, p. 127.

¹ Steph. Byzant. *Πέλλα πόλις κοίτης Συρίας ἢ Βοΐπας λεγομένη.*

² Adrichomius, p. 92. Bonfrere in Onomast. ed. Cleric. p. 129. Ritter, XV. ii. pp. 1025, 1027. — I do not find this idea broached much, if any, before the time of Adrichomius, in the sixteenth century.

³ Jos. Antt. 13. 15. 4. B. J. 1. 4. 8. Ibid. 2. 18. 1.

⁴ Yet Strabo relates, that Apamea on the Orontes (now Kul'at Mudik) was sometimes called Pella under the earlier Syrian kings, because many of the Macedonian veterans dwelt there; Strab. 16. 2. 10. p. 752.

⁵ Polyb. 5. 70. 12.

⁶ Jos. Antt. 14. 4. 4. B. J. 3. 7. 7.

⁷ Jos. B. J. 3. 3. 3.

⁸ Eusebius H. E. 3. 5. *κατὰ τινα προφητῶν τοῖς αὐτοῖσι θαύματος δι' ἀποκαλίψαι δούλην πρὸ τοῦ πολέμου.* The same is affirmed by Epiphanius, who alone speaks of their return; de Mensuris. et P'ond. 15. p. 171, ed. Petav.

⁹ Comp. Bibl. Res. II. p. 10.

of Pella, it appears that the city continued to flourish under the reign of Heliogabalus, A. D. 217-222;¹ and the language of Eusebius and Jerome, more than a century later, seems to imply that Pella was not then deserted.² Indeed, it is enumerated among the episcopal cities of the second Palestine, along with Scythopolis; and the names of three of its bishops are recorded between A. D. 449 and 536.³ The city would seem, therefore, to have remained nearly, and perhaps quite, to the time of the Muhammedan conquest.

Leaving Pella at 2.10, we returned northwards to the point where we had turned off from the road. Reaching this at 2.25, we kept on our course about north-west; and in five minutes were at the brow of the steep descent from the *Tübükah* or terrace. As we descended, a small Wady, called Abu Seiyâd, was on the right. The whole descent is not less than some six hundred feet; we reached the bottom at 2.40. The declivity hence to the river, to which we came at 3.10, is gradual, without any high bank. There are strictly three fording-places leading to Beisân; we had come to the middle one. One of our Sheikhs, throwing off his light garments, waded in, and found the water deep, and the bottom bad, because of many and large stones. Another ford is considerably further up the stream. We now turned down the river, about S. S. W., and came in fifteen minutes (at 3.35), to the lower ford, called *Tümra*. A low Tell and Wely are on the opposite side, a third of a mile below, called Sheikh Daûd.⁴ The same guide again waded through, and gave a favorable report. The two Sheikhs rode through first; the current was strong, and the water came up high on the horses' sides, and to the tops of their tails behind. We now made our arrangements for crossing, as in the morning. Sheikh Kasim, who had shown himself by far the most courteous and obliging, proposed to wade and lead our horses through one by one. To this we gladly assented, and so came safely over; with a slight wetting of some of the saddle-bags, but without injury to anything. The ford, both here and above, lay across

¹ Eckhel Doctr. Nummor. III. p. 350. Mionnet Méd. Antiques V. p. 329. Supp. VIII. p. 32.

² Onomast. arts. *Asiroth, Decapolis, Jabis Galaad.*

³ Reland Palest. pp. 215. 226. Le Quien Oriens Christ. III. col. 697. — Bitter has apparently overlooked these notices; Erdk. XV. ii. p. 1028.

⁴ Mentioned also by Irby and Mangles, p. 304 [92].

a bar in the stream, on the brow of a rapid, as in the morning. The river was deeper and broader, measuring one hundred and forty feet in width.¹

We started again at 4.05; and at 4.10 reached the top of the high bank of the lower valley. Looking back, we had here a fine view of the *Tībūkah*, a vast "terrace" built up against the eastern hills, with a narrow but fertile plain on the top, and falling off suddenly and steeply to the Ghôr below. It seems to be the only one of the kind. At 4.20 we crossed a fine brook, said to come from the fountains at Beisân. The whole plain was now so full of fountains and rivulets, as to be in some places almost a marsh. It was everywhere fertile and well watered; in some parts cultivated, but mostly neglected. As we passed on, Mount Hermon was seen up the Ghôr, as if at its head, towering in majesty. All the way we had before us the black Tell of Beisân, rising alone in the distance, near the north side of the broad opening of the valley of Jezreel. At 5.05, we came to the foot of the declivity by which the plain of that valley drops down to the level of the Ghôr; and at 5.20 reached the village situated just on the brow of that declivity. We ascended along a full stream of water, which came tumbling down the descent, having a dark tinge and an odor of sulphur. Here we met apparently all the neat cattle of the village, some two hundred in number. Our tent was pitched in a breezy spot, near water, on the south of the village, and we were right glad to take possession of it.

We could hardly have had a more favorable day for our excursion across the Ghôr and Jordan. A fine north-west wind prevailed the whole day, with a pure and brilliant atmosphere; so that the rays of the sun were at no time oppressive. It was our hardest day's labor in Palestine; having been at work for thirteen hours, mostly in the saddle.

Our Sheikhs returned to the tents of their people. We paid to each his forty piastres, and added twenty more as a *bakhshish*, mostly to Kasim, who had shown himself the most obliging. Such was the special cost of identifying Pella.

Sunday, May 16th. The day of rest and devotion was gratifying to us all. The weather was warm, but not oppressive. Swarms of flies annoyed us, probably occasioned by the

¹ Irby and Mangles crossed here. "We measured the breadth, and found it to be one hundred and forty feet." — *Travels*, p. 304 [92].

vicinity of so many cattle. We were a good deal interrupted by visits from the Sûkr Arabs, who have possession of the Ghôr. The village was full of them. Our servants said there were not less than fifty horsemen there, living for the time upon the inhabitants. Several of them called upon us, and sat long beneath our tent. I had been using my pocket-knife, and laid it for a moment by my side, on the foot of the bed near the door. It disappeared; and has probably served a Bedawy as a memorial of his visit to the Franks.

In the course of the day we strolled out in various directions. I tried to trace the upward course of some of the streams; and in the afternoon we visited the Tell and adjacent ruins, half a mile north of the village.

ARTICLE VI.

CHRISTMAS AND THE SATURNALIA.

By Rev. Joseph P. Thompson, New York.

In a former Article, we intimated the resemblance of the Christmas festival at Rome to the Saturnalia of the old Pagan city.¹ The recent recurrence of Christmas, and the growing consideration of this festival among communions of the Reformed and Puritan families, may give interest to the inquiry: how far that resemblance can be traced in authentic history. We would not be understood to object to a religious observance of even the conjectural anniversary of the birth of Christ, by any who regard such observance as a means of edification; though to exalt the birth-day of Christ, seems rather to degrade Christ himself to the level of heroes and benefactors whose memory mankind are accustomed to honor upon their natal days. In comparison with the spirit of Christ, with his life, his doctrine, his works, his sufferings, his death — which should be had in daily remembrance — the special remembrance of the day of his birth, is of the least

¹ Vol. XI. p. 825.