THE HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY OF THE HOLY LAND.

VII. Esdraelon.

In our survey of Samaria we have already found ourselves drawn out upon the great plain of Esdraelon. The plain has come up to meet us among the Samarian hills. Carmel and Gilboa encompass it; half a dozen Samarian strongholds face each other across its southern bays. Nature has manifestly set Esdraelon in the arms of Samaria. Accordingly in O. T. times they shared for the most part the same history; in tribal days, though Esdraelon was assigned to Zebulun and Issachar, Manasseh, the keeper of the hills to the south, claimed towns upon it; in the days of the kingdom, the chariots of the Samarian kings, the footsteps of the Samarian prophets, traversed Esdraelon from Carmel to Jordan. But after the Exile the Samaritan Schism,—confounder of so many natural arrangements,—divorced the plain from the hills which embrace it, and Esdraelon was counted not to the province of Samaria, but to that of Galilee, the southern frontier of which was coincident with its own southern edge.[1] More interesting, however, than the connection of either north or south with Esdraelon is the separation which this great plain effects between them, the break it causes in the central range of Palestine, the clear passage it affords from the coast to the Jordan. This has given Esdraelon a history of its own.

Esdraelon is usually regarded as one plain under one name from sea to Jordan. In reality, however, it is not

[1] Josephus, II. *B. J.* iii. 4.

one but several plains, more or less divided by the remains of ridges, which once upon a time sustained across it the continuity of "the backbone of Palestine." Thus nine miles from the sea, at Tell el Kasis, the traditional site of the slaughter of Baal's priests by Elijah, a promontory of the Galilean hills shoots south to within a hundred yards of Carmel, leaving only that space for the Kishon to break through. Eight or nine miles further east at Leggun, probably the ancient Megiddo, low ridges run out from both north and south, as if they once met, and again leave Kishon but a narrow pass. And once more, between Jezreel and a spot west of Shunem, about twenty-four miles from the coast, there is a sudden fall of level eastwards, which visibly separates Esdraelon proper from the narrower valley that slopes towards Jordan and is perhaps evidence of a former connection between Gilboa and Moreh. It should be added, that to north and south of the plain the geological formation is the same.

Now if we overlook the rising ground at Leggun, which is not very prominent, we get, upon this great break across Palestine, three divisions—to the west the maritime plain of Acre, bounded by the low hills at Tell el Kasis; in the centre a large inland plain; and upon the east running down from it to Jordan the long valley between Gilboa and Moreh. Of these the Central Plain lies as much athwart, as in a line with, the other two, spreading to north and south with a breadth equal to its length. In shape the Central Plain is a triangle. The southern side or base is twenty miles from Tell el Kasis by the foot of Carmel and the lower Samarian hills, south-east to Genin. The other two sides are equal, fifteen miles each: the northern being the base of the Nazareth hills from Tell el Kasis to the angle between them and Tabor, the eastern a line from Tabor to Genin. This last side is not so bounded by hills as the other two, but has three breaks across it eastward—one between Tabor

and Moreh, a mere bay of the plain, with a narrow wady down to the Jordan: one between Moreh and Gilboa, the long valley, already mentioned, to the Jordan at Bethshan: and one between Gilboa and the hills about Genin, also a bay of the plain, but without any issue to Jordan. The general level of the Central Plain is 200 feet above the sea-line, but from that the valley Jordanwards sinks gently in twelve miles to 400 feet below the sea, at Bethshan, where it drops over a high bank into the Jordan valley.

This disposition of the land, with all that it has meant in history, is best seen from Jezreel.

As you stand upon that last headland of Gilboa, 200 feet above the plain, your eye sweeps from the foot of Tabor to Genin, from Tell el Kasis to Bethshan. The great triangle is spread before you. Along the north of it the steep, brown wall of the Galilean hills, about 1,000 feet high, runs almost due west, till it breaks out and down to the feet of Carmel, in forest slopes just high enough to hide the plain of Acre and the sea. But over and past these Carmel's steady ridge, deepening in blue the while, carries the eye out to its dark promontory above the Mediterranean. From this end of Carmel the lower Samarian hills, green with bush and dotted by white villages, run south-east to the main Samarian range, and on their edge, due south from you, seven miles across the bay, Genin stands out with its minarets and palms, and the glen breaking up behind it to Dothan. The corresponding bay on the north between Moreh and Tabor, and Tabor itself are hidden. But all the rest of the plain is before you—a great expanse of loam, red and black, which in a more peaceful land would be one sea of waving wheat with island villages; but here is what its modern name implies,[1] a free, wild prairie, upon which but one or two hamlets have ventured forth from the cover of the hills, and a timid and tardy cultivation is only now seeking to

[1] Merg ibn Amir.

overtake the waste of coarse grass and the thistly herbs that camels love. There is no water visible. The Kishon itself flows in a muddy trench, unseen five yards away. Here and there a clump of trees shows where a deep well is worked to keep a little orchard green through summer; dark patches of reeds betray the bed of many a winter swamp; and the roads have no limit to their breadth, and sprawl, as if at most seasons one caravan could not follow for mud on the path of another. But these details all sink in a great sense of space, and of a level made almost absolute by the rise of hills on every side of it. It is a vast inland basin, and from it there breaks just at your feet, between Jezreel and Moreh, the valley Jordanwards, —breaks as visibly as river from lake, with a slope and almost the look of a current upon it. Away down this, between Gilboa and Moreh, Bethshan shines like a white island in the mouth of an estuary, and across the unseen depth of Jordan beyond rises the steep flat range of Gilead —a counterpart at this end of the view to the long ridge of Carmel at the other.[1]

From Jezreel you can appreciate everything in the literature and in the history of Esdraelon.

I. To begin with, you can enjoy that happiest sketch of a landscape and its history that was ever drawn in half a dozen lines—which occurs in the Blessing of the Tribes.[2] *Issachar*, to which the most of Esdraelon fell,

> *Issachar is a large-limbed ass,*
> *Stretching himself between the sheepfolds:*
> *For he saw a resting-place that it was good,*
> *And the land that it was pleasant.*

Such exactly is Esdraelon—a land relaxed and sprawling up among the hills to north, south and east, as you will see a

[1] This "antiphon" of Gilead and Carmel in the view from Jezreel further illustrates the remark on pp. 62, 63 of this vol. of THE EXPOSITOR.

[2] Gen. xlix.

loosened ass roll and stretch his limbs any day in the sunshine in a Syrian village yard. To the highlander looking down upon it, Esdraelon is room to stretch and lie happy. Yet the room must be paid for—the figure of the ass goes further.

> *So he bowed his shoulder to bear*
> *And became a servant under task-work.*

The inheritors of this plain never enjoyed the highland independence of Manasseh or Naphtali. Open to east and west, pleasantest stage on the highway from the Nile to the Euphrates, Esdraelon was at distant intervals the war-path or battlefield of great empires, but more regularly the prey and pasture of the Arabs who with each spring came upon it over Jordan. Even when there has been no invasion to fear, Esdraelon has still suffered: when she has not been the camp of the foreigner she has served as the farm of her neighbours. Ten years ago the peasants got rid of the Arabs of the desert, only to be bought up by Greek capitalists from Beyrout; and they say that the blackmail of the latter is worse than the blackmail of the former.

II. Another thing you see most clearly from Jezreel is the reason of the names given to the Great Plain and its offshoots. These names are two: Valley, and Plain or Opening; the former is connected with the name of Jezreel, the latter with that of Megiddo.

1. THE VALLEY OF JEZREEL. The word for Valley, 'Emeq, literally *deepening*, is a highlander's word for a valley as he looks *down* into it,[1] and is never applied to any extensive plain away from hills, but always to wide valleys running up into a mountainous country like the Vale of Elah, the Vale of Hebron, and the Vale of Ajalon.[2]

[1] Stanley, wrongly, from the sense of extension. Sinai and Palestine, Vocabulary, art. "Emek."

[2] 1 Sam. xvii. 2, 19; Gen. xxxvii. 14; Josh. x. 12. These are the only names whose sites are past doubt. There was also the vale of Siddim (Gen. xiv. 3, 8);

We should, therefore, expect the word, when associated with Jezreel, to apply not to the great Central Plain, but to the broad deep valley which descends from it to Jordan, between Moreh and Gilboa. And in fact it is so applied in the story of Gideon's campaign. There it is said that the Midianites when they passed over Jordan *pitched in the Valley of Jezreel*,[1] to the *north of the well of Harod from the hill of Moreh into the valley*;[2] and again that *the camp of Midian was in the valley beneath* Gideon, who presumably occupied like Saul the heights of Gilboa above the wells. The same identification suits the other passages where the *Valley of Jezreel* is mentioned,[3] and we conclude that in the O. T. it means only the valley down which Jezreel looks to Jordan, and not the plain across which Jezreel looks to Carmel.[4] But in later times it is this latter which is called after Jezreel—not indeed now the *Valley* of Jezreel, but *the Great Plain of Esdrelom*, or *Esdrēlon*,[5] and this name has survived to the present day, not in the local dialect, but in various Greek and Latin forms, as Stradela,[6] or Istradela,[7] Esdraelon.

2. The Plain of Megiddo. While 'Emeq means *deepening*, the word used here, Biq'ah, means *opening*. From its origin—a verb *to split*—one would naturally take it to

of Rephaim (Josh. xv. 8), probably the valley to the south-east of Jerusalem; of Achor (Josh. vii. 24), probably one of the passes from the Jordan into Benjamin, etc., etc. The LXX. render עֵמֶק by *φάραγξ*, *κοιλή*, *αὐλῶν* and even *πεδίον*. Like בקעה, עמק is applied to parts of the Jordan valley (Josh. xiii. 27). But unlike בקעה it is never extended to any plain so wide as the Euphrates, or like Esdraelon. And it is used generically like בקעה for level valley land—either ager, land that can be ploughed (Job xxxix. 10, Ps. lxv. 14 Heb.) or campus, ground for military manœuvres (Job xxxix. 21, Josh. xvii. 16).

[1] Judges vi. 33.

[2] Id. vii. 1, cf. 12.

[3] Josh. xvii. 16; Hosea i. 5.

[4] So correctly the P.E.F. Map. Ed. 1890.

[5] Book of Judith I. 8, *τό μέγα πεδίον* 'Εσδρηλώμ, cf. iii. 9, iv. 6, 'Εσδρηλών, but again with *μ* in vii. 3.

[6] The *Jerusalem Itinerary*.

[7] *Bordeaux Pilgrim*, 333 A.D.

be a valley more narrow than 'Emeq, a cleft or gorge. But it is applied to broad vales like the Jordan under Hermon or at Jericho,[1] and even to the very wide valley of the Euphrates,[2] though never to table-lands or maritime plains like Sharon. The Arabic equivalent is to-day the name of the vale between the Lebanons, as well as of some other level tracts in Syria surrounded by hills.[3] A surrounding of hills seems necessary to the name Biq'ah, as if it were to be translated land *laid open*, or *lying open* in the midst of hills. And this is just what the great Central Plain of Esdraelon is, girt by hills on all sides, laid open or gaping, as it were, in the midst of the main range of Palestine.

The name of Megiddo has not survived, like that of Jezreel, to the present day, and there is controversy as to what site it represents. On the base of the central plain just opposite Jezreel is a place called Leggun—the Roman Legio, Legion. As Jezreel commands the mouth of the valley towards the Jordan, so Legio guards the mouth of the chief pass towards Sharon. It was therefore as important a site as Jezreel, and as likely to give its name to the plain. In Roman times it did so. Jerome, for whom the name Megiddo is no longer extant, calls the Great Plain Campus Legionis.[4] Moreover, the only town definitely named in the immediate neighbourhood of Megiddo—*Taanach upon the waters of Megiddo*[5]—is undoubtedly the present Tannuk, four miles from Leggun; and there even seems a trace of the name in the words the Arabs apply to

[1] Hermon, Josh. xi. 17, xii. 7; Jericho, Deut. xxxiv. 3.

[2] Ezek. iii. 22, xxxvii. 1; Gen. xi. 2.

[3] For example, the Bek'a, البقعة, or Bukei'a, البقيعة, a plain on the Belka, to the east of Salt, which we crossed in 1891 from the Jabbok. It is a high secluded vale, about 4 miles by 3, with mountains all round it. Also the Bukei'a, east of Shechem, and the Bukei'a, in Judah, above the north end of the Dead Sea.

[4] Eusebius, whom he translates, has τῷ μεγαλῷ πεδίῳ τῆς Λεγεῶνος, etc. Onomasticon, artt. Ἀρβηλά, Βαιθακάθ, Γαβαθών, etc.

[5] Judges v. 19.

Kishon, the Muqutta'. Omitting this last item, there is enough of evidence to support Robinson's identification of Leggun with Megiddo, even against a plausible rival which Major Conder has favoured in Mugedda', a site with considerable ruins at the foot of Gilboa, above the Jordan, opposite Beisan.[1] I have put in a note what seem to me sufficient answers to Major Conder's argument against Leggun, and need here only emphasize once more what is so evident as you stand at Jezreel—the equal right with Jezreel which Leggun, commanding the other great gate to the plain, has to bestow its name upon the latter, as well as the fitness of calling that great triangle, opened among the hills, the Biq'ah, or Open Ground of Megiddo.[2]

[1] Mugedda', both town and wady, are mentioned by Burckhardt, *Travels in Syria, etc.*, July 2, 1813.

[2] Major Conder's argument against Leggun, and in favour of Mugedda', as the site of Megiddo, is threefold. He says (1) that Megiddo is as often mentioned—save once—with Bethshan as with Taanach; (2) that Muqutta' is not a possible transformation of Megiddo; and (3) that the site on the Jordan valley suits the narrative of the flight of Ahaziah (2 Kings ix.) better than the site by Leggun does. On each of these points I think he fails to make out his case. Thus:—(1) The phrase, *Taanach by the waters of Megiddo*, seems to me to put the Mugedda' site out of the question; Josh. xii. 21 sets Taanach and Megiddo next to Carmel and the coast (Dor); no possible definition of locality can be taken from the order of towns in Josh. xvii. 11, where the text is manifestly corrupt, we form that in Judges i. 27, which, beginning with Bethsh'an, leaps over Gilboa to Taanach, then over Carmel to Dor, in the west, then back to Ibleam (possibly the present Bir Bela'meh, near Genin; see Black's *Joshua*, "Smaller Cambridge Bible for Schools," xvii. 11) and Megiddo. In 1 Kings iv. 12 there is another confusion: Taanach, Megiddo, Bethshan, Abelmeholah, then back to Jokneam on Carmel. In 1 Chron. vii. 29 the order is Bethshan, Taanach, Megiddo, Dor, the correct order from east to west, if Leggun be Megiddo. (2) Major Conder objects to the identification of Muqutta' with Megiddo, that the palatal *t* in the Arab name is never the equivalent of the Hebrew *d*. Yet in some cases they have been interchanged.[1] The deep *q* and the hard *g* are of course equivalents. There remains the *'ain* at the end of Muqutta' which is not in Megiddo, but this *'ain* is in Mugedda' as well, as to which Conder says that it is an equivalent of the Hebrew *n* in the form Megiddon. But it is not necessary to hold an equivalence between the modern and ancient words. Muqutta' means *ford*, and it is not impossible that Arabs should, in the case of a river, substitute it for a name so very closely resembling it in sound, of which they did not know the meaning. (3) With all deference to

[1] Cf. Wright's *Comparative Grammar*, p. 53.

III. Now when we have made out Leggun or Megiddo as a place of equal importance with Jezreel—each of them giving its name to the plain, as well as holding a chief gateway into it—we are ready to mark the next fact about Esdraelon which the view from Jezreel towards Megiddo renders clear. This is, that the passage which Esdraelon afforded across Palestine was not that, which seems at first the more natural, viz., from the plain of Acre by the glen through which Kishon breaks at Tell el Kasis, but that which comes over from the plain of Sharon by the pass at Megiddo. Look from Jezreel, and at once you see this to be possible. The plain of Acre is not more visible to you than the plain of Sharon; the Galilean hills intervene and rise almost as high and broad between Esdraelon and Acre as the Samarian hills do between Esdraelon and Cæsarea. Look at the way Carmel lies. You easily perceive that an army coming north by Sharon, whether it was making for the south of the lake of Galilee at Bethshan or for the north of the lake by the plateau above Tiberias, would not seek to compass the prolonged ridge of Carmel by the sea, and so enter Esdraelon from the plain of Acre, for that would be a very roundabout road; but it would cut across the Samarian hills to the south of Carmel by the easy pass which issues at Megiddo. And so in fact armies from the south always came: the Philistines, when they shirked attacking

Major Conder, I think that Megiddo at Leggun suits the story of the flight of Ahaziah far better than Mugedda' does. Let it be remembered that Jehu was driving up the valley of Jezreel from Bethshan, and that Ahaziah's flight from him was not so likely to be towards Bethshan as in an opposite direction. We do not know where the ascent of Gur was; Ibleam may be beside Genin. Overtaken and wounded here, on a path southward, which Jehu afterwards pursued to Samaria, it was natural for Ahaziah's company to seek the only other route for chariots from the plain southwards—that by the pass leading over from Leggun to Sharon. These objections against Robinson's argument being repelled, I think the case for Leggun as Megiddo rests satisfactorily on these points: (1) that it is close to Taanach; (2) that the waters of Megiddo are practically Kishon (Judges v. 19); (3) that Leggun is as likely to give its name to the plain as Jezreel is, and did so give it in the time of Jerome.

Israel on the steep flanks of Benjamin and Ephraim, and camped by the most open gateway of the hill country opposite Esdraelon;[1] Pharaoh Necho, when Josiah met him at Megiddo, and was beaten *when he met him*, and was slain, and *the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the plain of Megiddo* became a proverb in Israel;[2] the Romans, who set a great garrison in Megiddo and called it Legion; Napoleon, in 1799, who, although he was making for Acre, did not take the sea-path round Carmel, but also crossed into Esdraelon by Leggun. If any other proof were needed that in ancient times Esdraelon's connection with the coast was south, and not north, of Carmel, it might be that singular list of towns so frequently given in the O. T. —Bethshan, Taanach, Megiddo, Dor. These formed a strategical line of fortresses on the one great avenue across country,[3] but that line did not run north, but south of Carmel. Megiddo and Taanach, backed by Bethshan, were not in line with Acre or Haifa, but with Dor, the present Tanturah, a few miles to the north of Cæsarea. Nothing could be clearer than this. The break across Palestine which Esdraelon affords is a break into Sharon and not into the plain of Acre. And indeed the roads from Acre to the interior of the country, whether they made for Jordan above or below the lake, travelled then, as they do now, through the long parallel valleys of Lower Galilee. If any caravans entered Esdraelon from Acre, it was in order to seek a gateway to Samaria at Genin or to cross to Sharon by the pass of Megiddo. Few armies going north or south kept to the beach below Carmel; if those of the Ptolemies and Antiochi did so, it was because the Jews held the hills up to Carmel;

[1] Ἐσδρηλών πλησίον τῆς Δωταίας ἐστιν ἀπέναντι τοῦ πρίονος τοῦ μεγάλου τῆς Ἰουδαίας, Judith iii. 9. Also αἱ ἀναβάσεις τῆς ὀρεινῆς ὅτι δι' αὐτῶν ἦν ἡ εἴσοδος εἰς τὴν Ἰουδαίαν, iv. 6.

[2] 2 Chron. xxxv. 22; Zech. xii. 11. Hadadrimmon (LXX. ῥοῶν, a pomegranate plantation) is perhaps Rummaneh, close beside Leggun.

[3] Josh. xvii. 11; Judges i. 27; 1 Kings iv. 12; 1 Chron. vii. 29.

if Richard, in the third Crusade, did so,[1] it was because those hills were all in possession of the Saracen.

IV. We have seen the natural avenues to Esdraelon from the rest of the land. Let us now review the points at which they enter the Great Plain; for it is from these, of course, that its various campaigns were directed. The entrances are five in number, and all visible from Jezreel. Three are at the corners of the triangle: the pass of the Kishon at Tell el Kasis, the glen between Tabor and the Nazareth hills, and the valley southward behind Genin. The first of these is the way of advance from the plain of Acre[2]; Harosheth of the Gentiles, from which Sisera advanced, lies just behind it. The second is the road down from the plateau above Tiberias, and northern Galilee generally; it is commanded by Tabor, on which there was always a fortress. The third is the first of that series of passages which connect the meadows that lead up from Esdraelon to Samaria—the Anabaseis of the Hill-Country, as they are called in the Book of Judith.[3] The other two gateways to the Great Plain were, of course, Megiddo and Jezreel. Megiddo guarded the natural approach of Philistines, Egyptians, and other enemies from the south; Jezreel, that of Arabs, Midianites, Syrians of Damascus, and other enemies from the east.

With our eyes on these five points, and remembering that they are not merely glens into neighbouring provinces, but passes to the Sea and to the Desert, gateways in the great road between the empires of Euphrates and Nile, the continents of Asia and Africa, we are ready for the arrival

[1] Geoffrey Vinsauf, *Chronicle*. Cestius also took the sea road (Joseph, II. *B. J.* xviii. The railway from the coast to Damascus will keep to the north of Carmel. It starts from Haifa, comes up the Kishon, and so over Esdraelon by Bethshan to Jordan.

[2] Though from Acre itself a more usual road lay further north across the slopes of the Galilean hills.

[3] iv. 6: *ἀναβάσεις τῆς ὀρεινῆς, ὅτι δι' αὐτῶν ἦν ἡ εἴσοδος εἰς τὴν Ἰουδαίαν.*

of those armies of all nations, whose almost ceaseless contests have rendered this plain the classic battle-ground of Scripture. Was there ever arena so simple, so regulated for the spectacle of war? Esdraelon is a great theatre, with its clearly defined stage, with its proper avenues and doors. We will still watch it from Jezreel.

V. Very significantly the first of the historical battles of Esdraelon was one in which Israel overcame not only a foreign tyrant, but the use which that tyrant made of the plain for the purpose of preventing Israel's unity. In the days of the Judges, Esdraelon divided the tribes into two: Ephraim and Manasseh on one side, with little Benjamin and the still ineffective Judah behind; upon the other Zebulun and Naphtali, with some fragments of Issachar; and the chariots of Canaan scoured the plain between. The Canaanite camp was at Harosheth, on the west of the Kishon pass, where it paralysed the two maritime tribes, Asher and Dan. Although she was a prophetess of Ephraim who summoned Israel, the spring of the revolt was found among the northern tribes; to them the leader, Barak, belonged, and this decided the place of muster, not on Gilboa, where Gideon and Saul, southern leaders, gathered their forces, but in the strong corner at Tabor, where the main road enters the plain from Northern Galilee. It is not necessary to suppose, as some have done, that Barak arranged his men high up Tabor; though Tabor, an immemorial fortress, was there to fall back upon in case of defeat. The headquarters of the muster were probably in the glen, at Tabor's foot, in the village Deburieh—perhaps a reminiscence of Deborah herself—which also in Roman times was occupied by the natives of Galilee in their revolt against the foreigner who held the Plain.[1] Here in the northern angle of Esdraelon, Barak watched till the leng-

[1] Josephus, II. *B.J.* xxi. 3, speaks of a garrison at Dabaritta, as it was called in his day, to "keep guard on the Great Plain."

thening line of his enemy's chariots drew out from the western angle at Tell el Kasis and reached opposite him, with Taanach and Megiddo behind them. They may even have turned north towards the Hebrew position. Then Barak gave them battle in a fierce highland charge: *into the valley* his thousands *rushed at his feet.* It has been supposed that with the charge a storm broke from the north, for *there was fighting from heaven,* according to the poem, and Kishon was in full flood:—

> *River Kishon swept them away,*
> *River of spates, river Kishon!*

This means that the plain must already have been in a state in which it was impossible for chariots to manœuvre. As another great feature of the battle the poem remembers the plunging of horses:—

> *Then did the horse-hoofs stamp,*
> *By reason of the plungings, the plungings of their strong ones.*

The highland footmen had it all their own way. Their charge came with such impetuosity upon a labouring and divided foe, that the latter—and this, too, shows how far Canaan had advanced across the plain—were scattered both east and west. The main flight turned back towards Harosheth, and the slaughter and the drowning must have been terrible in the narrow pass. But Sisera himself, who doubtless was in the van of his army as he led it east, fled eastward still, past Moreh, across the high land beyond, towards Kadesh—which is, as Major Conder has shown, not the ancient Kadesh on Lake Merom, but probably a town still known by that name on Bitzanaaim, above the Lake of Galilee. It is the same direction as the French military maps show the flight of the Turks to have taken in 1799, when Kleber's small squares, reinforced by Napoleon, broke up vastly superior numbers, on the same field of Sisera's discomfiture.

Barak's was a strange victory, in which highlanders had for once been helped, not hindered, by the level ground. But the victory won that day by the Plain over the Canaanites was not so great as the victory won by Israel over the Plain. Esdraelon is broad and open enough to have been a frontier between two nations; but the unselfish tribes had overcome this difference between them. What in a century or two might have yawned to an impassable gulf, they had bridged once for all by their loyalty to the Ideal of a united people and a united fatherland. And the power of that Ideal was faith in a common God. Well might Deborah open her song with the Hallelujah:—

> *For that the leaders took the lead in Israel,*
> *For that the people offered themselves willingly,*
> *Bless ye the* LORD!

2. The next invaders, whom Israel had to meet upon Esdraelon, were Arabs from over Jordan, *children of the East.* This time therefore they drew to battle not upon Kishon and the western watershed, but at the head of the long vale running down to Bethshan; and as Manasseh was now the heart of the defence, the muster of Israel took place not at Tabor, but at Gilboa. *Gideon and all the people that were with him pitched above the well of Harod, and the camp of Midian was to the north of him from Moreh into the Vale.* That is to say, the Midianites took up practically the same position about Shunem as the Philistines occupied before their defeat of Saul.[1] Due south across the head of the Vale is the rugged end of Gilboa—Jezreel standing off it—and on this Gideon, like Saul, drew up his men. The only wells are three, all lying in the Vale: one by Jezreel itself, one out upon the plain,

[1] It is doubtful how far the name Moreh extended eastward, but if the Beth-shittah of Jer. vii. 22 be the present Shuttah, then Moreh must be to the west of that, and is probably, as put above, the hill above Shunem, now known as Gebel Duhy.

and one close under the steep banks of Gilboa. The first and second of these lie open to the position of the Midianites, and tradition has rightly fixed on the third and largest, now called the 'Ain Galûd, as the well of Harod. It bursts, some fifteen feet broad and two deep, from the very foot of Gilboa, and mainly out of it, but fed also by the other two springs, flows a stream considerable enough to work six or seven mills. The deep bed and soft banks of this stream constitute a formidable ditch in front of the position on Gilboa, and render it possible for the defenders of the latter to hold the spring at their feet in face of an enemy on the plain: and the spring is indispensable to them, for neither to the left, right, or rear is there any other living water. Thus the conditions of the narrative in Judges vii. are all present, though it must be left to experts to say whether ten thousand men could be deployed in the course of an evening from the hill behind to the spring and the stream that flows from it. Anybody, however, can appreciate the suitability of the test which Gideon imposed on his men. The stream, which makes it possible for the occupiers of the hill to hold also the well against an enemy on the plain, forbids them to be careless in their use of the water; for they drink in face of that enemy, and the reeds and shrubs which mark its course afford ample cover for hostile ambushes. Those Israelites, therefore, who *bowed themselves down on their knees,* drinking headlong, did not appreciate their position or the foe; whereas those who merely crouched, lapping up the water with one hand, while they held their arms in the other and kept their face to the enemy, were aware of their danger, and had hearts ready against all surprise. The test in fact was a test of attitude, which, after all, both in physical and moral warfare has proved of greater value than strength or skill—attitude towards the foe and appreciation of his presence. In this case it was particularly suitable. What Gideon had in

view was a night march and the sudden surprise of a great host—tactics that might be spoiled by a few careless men. Soldiers, who behaved at the water as did the three hundred, showed just the common sense and vigilance to render such tactics successful. First, however, Gideon himself explored the ground—two miles in breadth between his men and the Arab tents; and heard, holding his breath the while, the talk of the two sentries, which revealed to him what stuff for panic Midian was. The rest is easily told. It was the middle watch—that dead of the night against which our Lord also warned His disciples.[1] The wary men, behind a leader who had made himself familiar with the ground, touched without alarm the Arab lines. They carried lights, as Syrian peasants do on windy nights,[2] in earthen pitchers, and they had horns hung upon them. They blew the horns, brake the pitchers, flashed their lights—that to the startled Arabs must have seemed the torchbearers and pointsmen of an immense host—and shouted, *The sword! for Jehovah and Gideon!* But they did not need to use the sword. Cumbered by their tents and cattle, the Midianites, as in several other instances of Arab warfare, fell into a panic, drew their swords on each other, and finally *the host fled* down the Vale *to Beth-shittah, to Ssereda* near Bethshan,[3] *unto the lip of Abelmeholah,* the deep bank over which the Vale of Jezreel falls into the valley of the Jordan, *above* the now unknown *Tabbath.*[4]

[1] Luke xii. 38.

[2] Thomson, *The Land and the Book.*

[3] 2 Chron. iv. 17, where it is described as on the plain of Jordan. It is the same as Ssartan (1 Kings vii. 46; cf. Josh. iii. 16, 1 Kings iv. 12).

[4] Major Conder, tempted by the name, has suggested the 'Ain el Gem'ain, or Well of the Two Troops, at the foot of Gilboa, near Bethshan, as the well of Harod. But in a pass which has been the scene of countless bivouacs and forays, it is futile to suppose that this name may refer to Gideon's two troops; while if, as all are agreed, Shutta represents Beth-shittah, we must suppose the Arab position and Gideon's camp to the south of it to lie west of Shutta, up the vale.

The name 'Ain Galûd is interesting. Does it come from the form given by

3. The next campaign on Esdraelon—that of the Philistines against Saul—is more difficult to understand. It is uncertain whether the narrative (1 Sam. xxviii.–xxxi.) runs in our Bibles in the proper order; and we do not know where Aphek lay.

As the narrative now runs, the Philistines gather to war against Israel (xxviii. 1), and camp at Shunem, whereupon Saul gathers Israel, and camps on Gilboa (*id.* 4); the Philistines then assemble at Aphek, and Israel pitches by a fountain in Jezreel (xxix. 1); the battle is joined, and Israel flee, and are slain in mount Gilboa (xxxi. 1). This order implies that Aphek was close to Shunem, on the line of the Philistine advance on Gilboa; and accordingly it has been sought for both at Fuleh on the plain, where the Crusaders had a castle and Kleber's squares in 1799 beat back the Turks; and at Fuku'a, on Gilboa itself, on the road from Genin to Bethshan across the hill, as if the Philistines moved from Shunem to the south of Saul's position, and attacked him from the rear, and upon his own level. But neither of these sites can be proved to be Aphek.[1] Ought not Aphek, however, to come in the order of the Philistines' advance after Shunem? Probably we should rearrange the chapters of the narrative so as to put xxix.–xxx. between the second and third verses of xxviii. Then the order of events would run: the Philistine muster (xxviii.

Boha-ed-dîn (*Vita Saladinis*, p. 53), 'Ain el Jâlût, or Well of Goliath, with whose defeat by David the *Jerusalem Itinerary* connects Jezreel (see Stradela in the *Jer. Itin.*); or are Jâlût and the identification with Goliath errors due to a mishearing of Jalûd? If the latter, then Galûd has a striking resemblance to the Gilead mentioned in *v.* 3 of the narrative, for the disappearance of the letter 'Ain is marked in several cases of ancient names.

[1] It is extremely unlikely that the Philistines should move from Shunem to the present Fuleh, for the latter is farther off than Shunem from Gilboa. It is Major Conder who suggests Fuku'a. We passed over the road from Genin to Beth-shan. From the plain up to Fuku'a the road is easy for chariots, and about Fuku'a there is open ground. But the ground between that and the part of Gilboa above the 'Ain Galûd is broken by glens. Besides, there is no affinity between the names Aphek and Fuku'a.

1); their gathering to Aphek and the encampment of Israel by the fountain which is in Jezreel (xxix. 1); the Philistines' advance towards Jezreel (*id.* 11), their camp on Shunem and Israel's on Gilboa (xxviii. 4); the battle on Gilboa (xxxi. 1).[1] On this order, the uncertainties are the position of Aphek and that of the fountain which is in Jezreel. Some have placed Aphek in Sharon, at the mouth of an easy pass into Samaria, identifying it with the Aphek of the previous Philistine invasion, when the ark was taken.[2] But for many reasons this is unlikely,[3] and here it is hard to believe that Saul's advance to the plain of Esdraelon, which is given as simultaneous with the Palestine gathering at Aphek, should have taken place while the Philistines were still in Shunem, for that would have been to leave all Benjamin and Ephraim undefended to their pleasure. Saul must have *followed* the Philistines to Esdraelon; and it is almost impossible to think of him leaving Genin, the great entrance to the hill country of Israel,[4] and advancing to Gilboa till he saw the Philistines move across the plain to Shunem. In this case, while Aphek remains unknown, we might take *the fountain which is in Jezreel* to be the great fountain at Genin, 'Ain Gannim, Jezreel being intended for the whole district. That would give us a consistent story of the earlier stages of the campaign.[5]

However that may be, the rest is clear. The Philistines

[1] So Reuss, Budde, etc.

[2] 1 Sam. iv. 1.

[3] The identification of the two Apheks, and the placing of their site in Sbaron is due to Wellhausen and Robertson Smith. They also identify with it the Aphek from which the Syrians attacked Samaria (1 Kings xx. 26, etc.). But in this case, the Syrians crossing the Jordan by their great Damascus highway south of the Lake of Galilee, would march over Esdraelon, passing the most open and obvious entrance into Samaria, cross into Sharon, and there commence their attack from a far more difficult point. This is most improbable.

[4] Cf. p. 330, note 1.

[5] The only other alternative, of supposing two differing narratives, one of which assigns the Philistine muster to Aphek the other to Shunem, is not so probable.

had entered Esdraelon—doubtless by Megiddo. Had their aim been the invasion of the hill country, they would have turned south-east to Genin, and Saul would have met them there. That, instead, we find them striking north-east to Shunem, at the head of the Vale of Jezreel, proves that at least their first intention had to do with the Valley of the Jordan. Either they had come to subjugate all the low country, and so confine Israel, as the Canaanites did, to the hills, or else they merely sought to secure their caravan route to Damascus and the East, from Israel's descents upon it by the roads from Bezek to Bethshan and across Gilboa. In either case Saul must not be permitted to remain where he was, for from Gilboa he could descend with equal ease upon Esdraelon and the valley of the Jordan. They attacked him, therefore, on his superior position. Both the narrative of the battle and the great Elegy in which the defeat was mourned imply that the fighting was upon the heights of Gilboa, and yet upon ground over which cavalry and chariots might operate.[1] The Philistines could not carry Saul's position directly from Shunem, for that way the plain dips, and the deep bed of the stream intervenes and the rocks of Gilboa are steep and high. But they went round Jezreel, and attacked the promontory of the hill by the easier slopes and wadies to the south, which lead up to open ground about the village of Nuris, and directly above the 'Ain Galûd. Somewhere on these slopes they must have encountered that desperate resistance which cost Israel the life of three of the king's sons; and somewhere higher up the gigantic king himself, wounded and pressed hard by the chariots and horsemen, yet imperious to the last, commanded his own death.[2]

[1] 2 Sam. i. 7, 19, 21, 25.

[2] The above view of the battle was formed on the ground, and I am glad to find that in the main it is the same as that of so competent an observer as Principal Miller, who surveyed the ground in detail, and gives both a gradual description of the course of the fight and careful plans, that include not only

4. The rest of the historical scenes of Esdraelon, there is space only to enumerate. But perhaps the mere succession of them will impress us, more than detailed accounts could do, with the constant pageant of commerce, war and judgment, which throughout the centuries has traversed this wonderful arena. From Jezreel you see the slaughter-place of the priests of Baal; you see Jehu's ride from Bethshan to the vineyard of Naboth at your feet; you see Megiddo where Pharaoh Necho burst through upon Josiah, *and slew him as they met*; you see the enormous camp of Holofernes spreading from the hills above Genin, out to Kuamon in the plain;[1] you see the marches and counter-marches of Syrians, Egyptians and Jews in the Hasmonean days—the elephants and engines of Antiochus, the litters of Cleopatra and her ladies. Then the Romans come and plant their camps and stamp their mighty names for ever on the soil, Legio and Kastra;[2] Pompey, Mark Antony, Vespasian, Titus and Trajan pass at the head of their legions, and the men of Galilee sally forth upon them from the same nooks in the hills of Naphtali, from which their forefathers broke with Barak upon the chariots of Canaan. After the Roman war comes the Roman peace, and for a great interval of centuries Esdraelon is no more blotted by the black tents of the Bedouin; but

the contours of the ground, but what he believes to have been successive positions of the hard-pressed Israelites. Principal Miller exposes the errors in Dean Stanley's account, in which the battle is described as on the plain, and only the flight on the hills. But I think he himself is not justified in declaring from xxix. 11 that the Philistines occupied the town of Jezreel before the battle. He conceives Saul's position on Gilboa to be due to his rash designs of adding to his kingdom the whole of northern Palestine—rash, for so Saul left Benjamin and Ephraim undefended. This, however, is not certain. *The Least of all Lands*, ch. vi. Plans on 151 and 171.

[1] Judith vii. 3. Κύαμων = bean-field, has been identified with Tell Keimun at the foot of Carmel: but some think to find it at Fuleh, which also means bean. The description of Κύαμων which is opposite Esdraelon (name of plain or of city?) suits both Keimun and Fuleh.

[2] Round Carmel on the Coast.

a broad civilisation grows between her and Arabia, and Jordan is bridged, and from the Greek cities of the Decapolis, chariots and bands of soldiers, officials and provincial wits on their way to Rome, pass to the ports of Cæsarea and Ptolemais. In the fourth century Christian pilgrims arrive, and cloisters are built from Bethshan to Carmel. Three centuries of this, and then through their old channel the Desert swarms sweep back, now united by a common faith, and with the vigour of a new civilisation; you see before them the rout of the Greek army up the Vale of Jezreel. The Arabs stay, for nearly five hundred years, obliterating the past, distorting the familiar and famous names. Then the ensigns of Christendom return. Crusading castles rise—on the Plain Sapham and Faba[1] under the black and white banner of the Templars, and high up on the ridge north of Bethshan—so high and far that it is called by the Arabs Star-of-the-Wind,—Belvoir under the Red Cross of the Hospitallers. Cloisters are rebuilt, and thriving villages, for justice and shelter given them, bring their tribute to the Abbey of Mount Tabor; pilgrims throng from all lands, and the holy memories are replanted—not always on their proper sites! Once more by Bethshan the Arabs break the line of the Christian defence, and Saladin spreads his camp where Israel saw those of Midian and the Philistines; through a long hot summer the castles of the Cross yield one by one, till Belvoir holds out alone, flying the Red Cross for eighteen months over a Saracen country. Finally, after two last forlorn hopes—one of Andrew of Hungary, who carried the Cross to the top of Tabor, and was beaten down again,[2] and one of Saint Louis of France, who marched to Jordan and back—Esdraelon is closed to the arms of the West, till in 1799 Napoleon with his monstrous ambitions of an Empire on

[1] "The Bean" on the site where its Arab synonym Fuleh now stands.
[2] In the Sixth Crusade.

the Euphrates, breaks into it by Megiddo, and in three months again by the same fatal path falls back upon the first great Retreat of his career.

What a Plain it is! Upon which not only the greatest empires, races and faiths, east and west, have contended with each other, but all have come to judgment—on which from the first, with all its splendour of human battle, men have felt that *there was fighting from heaven, the stars in their courses were fighting*—on which panic has descended so mysteriously upon the best equipped and most successful armies, but the humble have been exalted to victory in the hour of their weakness—on which false faiths, equally with false defenders of the true faith, have been exposed and scattered—on which since the time of Saul wilfulness and superstition, though aided by every human excellence, have come to nought, and since Josiah's time the purest piety has not atoned for rash and mistaken zeal. The Crusaders repeat the splendid folly of the kings of Israel; and, alike under the old and the new covenant, a degenerate church suffers here her judgment at the hands of the infidel.

They go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world to gather them to the battle of the great Day of God Almighty . . . and He gathered them together unto a place called in the Hebrew tongue Har Megeddon.

GEORGE ADAM SMITH.