

GALILEE.

THIS name, which binds together so many of the richest and most holy memories of our race, means by itself nothing but Ring, Circuit, District.¹ In so general a sense it was applicable anywhere ; as, for example, to the district east of Jerusalem, which is called by Ezekiel *the Eastern Galilee*, or to *the Galilees of the Jordan*, or to *the Galilees of the Philistines*.² How it came to be the peculiar title of one district, and take rank among the most significant names of the world, was as follows. Gelil ha-Gôim,—*Ring or Region of the Gentiles*, a phrase analogous to the German “Heidenmark,” was applied to the northern border of Israel, which was pressed and permeated from three sides by foreign tribes. Thence the name gradually spread, till by Isaiah’s time it was as far south as the Lake of Gennesaret, —till by the time of the Maccabees it had reached the plain of Esdraelon, and covered the whole of the most northerly of the three provinces into which, after the Exile, the land west of Jordan was divided. The specification of *the Gentiles* was usually dropped, but the definite article, as throughout the Old and New Testaments, was retained. It was, we can understand, particularly pleasing to the

¹ גליל, Gālîl, as the easily slipping letters testify, means anything that can roll or is round (cf. Gk. *κυλινδρον*), like balls, cylinders, or rings (Esth. i. 6 ; Cant. v. 14) ; or the leaf of a door turning on its hinge (1 Kings vi. 34).

² But in all these cases it was the feminine. הגליליה הקרמנה, the region to the east of Jerusalem (Ezek. xlvi. 8). Plural גלילות הירדן, the circles of Jordan (Josh. xxii. 10, 11) ; cf. “links of Forth.” גלילות פלישת (Joel iv. 4), circles of the Philistines (cf. Josh. xiii. 2).

patriotism of her proud inhabitants, to call their famous and beautiful province, *The Galilee, The Region*.¹

The natural boundaries of Galilee are obvious. South, the Plain of Esdraelon (and we have seen why this frontier should be the southern and not the northern edge of the plain²); north, the great gorge of the Leontes, cutting off Lebanon; east, the valley of the Jordan and the Lake of Gennesaret; and west, the narrow Phœnician coast. This region coincides pretty closely with the territories of four tribes—Issachar, Zebulun, Asher, and Naphtali. But the sea-coast, claimed for Zebulun and Asher, never belonged either to them or to the province of Galilee: it was always Gentile. On the other hand, owing to the weakness of the Samaritans, Carmel was reckoned to Galilee when it was not in the hands of the men of Tyre;³ and the eastern shores of Gennesaret also fell within the province.⁴ Exclusive of these two additions, Galilee measured about fifty miles north to south, and from twenty-five to thirty-five east and west. The area was only about 1,600 square miles, or that of a larger English shire.

From the intricacy of its highlands, the map of Galilee seems at first impossible to arrange to the eye. But with a little care the ruling features are distinguished, and the whole province falls into four divisions. There is the Jordan Valley with its two lakes—that singular chasm, which runs

¹ הַגָּלִיל (Josh. xx. 7, xxi. 32; 1 Chron. vi. 61). אֶרֶץ הַגָּלִיל (1 Kings ix. 11). גָּלִיל הַגּוֹיִם (Isa. viii. 23). In 2 Kings xv. 29, אֶרֶץ-הַגָּלִילָה, it is not the feminine form, but the masculine, with הַ paragog., that is used. The feminine גָּלִילָה is not applied in Hebrew to Galilee (for its uses see previous note). But the LXX. render הַגָּלִיל ἡ Γαλιλαία. In Isa. viii. 23 (LXX. and Eng. ix. 1) Γαλιλαία τῶν ἐθνῶν. In the Apocrypha it is Γαλιλαία Ἀλλόφυλων (cf. 1 Macc. v. 15, etc.). The definite article is omitted only in 1 Macc. x. 30. And so in the N.T. it is ἡ Γαλιλαία, the definite article being omitted only twice.

² EXPOSITOR for November, 1892.

³ Josephus, III. *Bell. Jud.*, iii. 1.

⁴ As at this day "the whole coast district is under the administration of the Kada Tubariya."—Schumacher, *The Jaulán*, p. 103. It is the most convenient arrangement.

along the east of Galilee, sinking from Hermon's base to more than 700 feet below the level of the ocean.¹ From this valley, and corresponding roughly to its three divisions,—below the Lake of Tiberias, the lake itself, and above the lake,—three belts or strips run westward; *first*, the Plain of Esdraelon; *second*, the so-called Lower Galilee, a series of long parallel ranges, all below 1,815 feet, which, with broad valleys between them, cross from the plateau above Tiberias to the maritime plains of Haifa and Acre; and *third*, Upper Galilee,² a square plateau surrounded by hills from 2,000 to 4,000 feet. As you gaze north from the Samaritan border, these three zones rise in steps above one another to the beginnings of Lebanon; and from the north-east, over the gulf of the Jordan, the snowy head of Hermon looks down athwart them.

The controlling feature of Galilee is her relation to these great mountains. A native of the region has reflected it in a figure he gives of God's grace. *I will be as the dew unto Israel; he shall blossom as the lily, and cast forth his roots like Lebanon.*³ Galilee is literally the *casting forth of the roots of Lebanon*. As the supports of a great oak run up above ground, so the gradual hills of Galilee rise from

¹ Opposite Bethshean.

² The division between Upper and Lower Galilee is very evident on the map. It runs, roughly speaking, from the north end of the Lake of Galilee (or to the south of Safed), by the Wady Maktul leading up from the Plain of Gennesaret, thence by the level ground between Kefer Anân and ers Rameh due west towards Acre. South of this line there is no height of over 1,850 feet, the peaks run from 1,000 to 1,800, with Jebel es Sih 1,838, and Tabor 1,843. But north of this line the steep constant wall of the northern plateau rises almost immediately, and figures from 2,000 to 3,000 are frequent on the map. The Talmud marks this line of division as follows: "Upper Galilee above Kefer Hananyah, a country where sycamores are not found; Lower Galilee below Kefer Hananyah, which produces sycamores" (quoted by Neubauer, *La Géographie du Talmud*, p. 178). Kefer Hananyah is no doubt the present Kefer Anân. Josephus gives the breadth of Lower Galilee (north and south) as from Xaloth, at the roots of Tabor to Berseba, which has not been identified, but which may be the present Kh. Abu esh Sheba in the immediate neighbourhood of Kefer Anân.

³ Hosea xiv. 5.

Esdraelon and Jordan and the Phœnician coast upon that tremendous northern mountain. It is not Lebanon, however, but the opposite range of Hermon, which dominates the view. Among his own roots Lebanon is out of sight; whereas that long glistening ridge, standing aloof, always brings the eye back to itself. In the heat of summer harvesters from every field lift their hearts to Hermon's snow; and heavy dews by night they call his gift. How closely Hermon was identified with Galilee, is seen from his association with the most characteristic of the Galilæan hills: *Tabor and Hermon rejoice in Thy name.*¹

To her dependence upon Lebanon Galilee owes her water and fruitfulness, and her immense superiority in these respects over Judæa. In Galilee *when ye see a cloud rise out of the west, straightway ye say, There cometh a shower.*² But outside the rainy season, showers are here almost as few as in the rest of Palestine, whereas the waters, seen and unseen, which the westerly winds lavish on Lebanon are stored by him for Galilee's sake, and dispensed to her with unfailling regularity all round the year. They break out in the full-born rivers of the upper Jordan Valley, and the wealth of wells among all her hills. When Judæa is utterly dry they feed the streams of Gennesaret and Esdraelon. In winter the springs of Kishon burst so richly from the ground, that the Great Plain about Tabor is a quagmire; but even in summer there are fountains in Esdraelon, round which the thickets keep green; and in the glens running up to Lower Galilee the paths cross rivulets and sometimes wind round a marsh. In the long cross valleys, winter lakes last till July,³ and further north the even

¹ Psalm lxxx. 9-12. How far they believed its influence to travel may be seen from that other Psalm: "*The dew of Hermon that cometh down on the mountains of Zion*" (Psa. cxxxiii.).

² Luke xii. 54.

³ So the Plain of Buttauf was in that month still partly a lake. Conder's *Tent Work*.

autumn streams descend both water-sheds with a music unheard in southern Palestine. In fact, the difference in this respect between Galilee and Judæa is just the difference between their names—the one liquid and musical like her running waters, the other dry and dead like the fall of your horse's hoof on her blistered and muffled rock.

So much water means an exuberant fertility. We have seen what Esdraelon is, and we may leave for separate treatment the almost tropic regions of the Jordan Valley. But take lower and upper Galilee with their more temperate climate. They are almost as well-wooded as our own land. Tabor is covered with bush, and large, loose groves of forest trees. The road, which goes up from the Bay of Carmel to Nazareth, winds, as among English glades, with open groves of oak and an abundance of flowers and grass. Often, indeed, as about Nazareth, the limestone breaks out not less bare and dusty than in Judea itself, but over the most of Lower Galilee there is a profusion of bush, with scattered forest trees,—holly-oak, maple, sycamore, bay-tree, myrtle, arbutus, sumac, and others,—and in the valleys olive orchards and stretches of fat corn-land. Except for some trees like the sycamore, Upper Galilee is quite as rich. It is “an undulating tableland, arable, and everywhere tilled, with swelling hills in view all round, covered with shrubs and trees.”¹ Round Jotapata, Josephus speaks of timber being cut down for the town's defence.² Gischala was Gush-halab, Fat-soil,³ and was noted for its oil. Throughout the province olives were so abundant that a proverb ran, “It is easier to raise a legion of olives in Galilee than to bring up a child in Palestine.”⁴ Even on

¹ Robinson, *Later Researches*.

² III. *Bell. Jud.*, vii. 8, cf. vi. 2.

³ Neubauer, *Géog. du Talmud*.

⁴ *Talmud*, quoted by Neubauer, p. 180. The abundance of oil in Galilee is well illustrated in the use made of boiling oil by the defenders of Jotapata, who poured great quantities of it on the Roman soldiers (III. *Bell. Jud.*, vii. 28).

the high water-parting between Huleh and the Mediterranean the fields are fertile, while the ridges are covered with forests of small oaks. To the inhabitants of such a land, the more luxuriant vegetation of the hot plains on either side spreads its temptations in vain.

*Asher, his bread is fat,
And he yieldeth the dainties of a king.
Blessed be Asher above the children,
And let him dip his foot in oil!
O Naphtali, satisfied with favour,
And full of the blessing of the Lord.¹*

But it is luxury where luxury cannot soften. On these broad heights, open to the sunshine and the breeze, life is free and exhilarating.

Naphtali is as a hind let loose.²

This beautiful figure fully expresses the feelings that are bred by the health, the spaciousness, the high freedom, and the glorious prospects of Upper Galilee.

To so generous a land the inhabitants, during that part of her history which concerns us, responded with energy. "Their soil," says Josephus, "is universally rich and fruitful, and full of the plantations of trees of all sorts, insomuch that it invites by its fruitfulness the most slothful to take pains in its cultivation. Accordingly it is all cultivated by its inhabitants, and no part of it lies idle."³ The villages were frequent, there were many fortified towns, and the

¹ Gen. xlix. 20; Deut. xxxiii. 23, 24.

² Gen. xlix. 21. Another reading, partly suggested by the LXX., is adopted by Ewald, Dillmann, and others, *Naphtali is a slender terebinth giving forth goodly boughs*. Other ancient versions, however, support the Massoretic text; and while, as we have seen, the figure of a tree is not inapplicable to the mountains of Naphtali, that of a slender tree is quite absurd. The ordinary reading is, as shown above, beautifully expressive of a people in the position of Naphtali.

³ III. *Bell. Jud.*, iii. 2.

population was very numerous. We may not accept all that Josephus reports in these matters—he reckons a population of nearly three millions—but there are good reasons for the possibility of his high figures;¹ and in any case the province was very thickly peopled. Save in the recorded hours of our Lord's praying, the history of Galilee has no intervals of silence and loneliness; the noise of a close and busy life is always audible; and to every crisis in the Gospels and in Josephus we see crowds immediately swarm.

One other natural feature of Galilee must not be passed over. The massive limestone of her range is broken here and there by volcanic extrusions—an extinct crater, for instance, near Gischala,² dykes of basalt and scatterings of lava upon the plateau above the lake. Hot sulphur springs flow by Tiberias, and the whole province has been shaken by terrible earthquakes.³ The nature of the people was also volcanic. Josephus describes them as “ever fond of innovations, and by nature disposed to changes, and delighting in seditions.”⁴ They had an ill name for quarrelling. From among them came the chief zealots and wildest fanatics of the Roman wars. We remember two Galilæans, who wished to call down fire from heaven on those who were only discourteous to them.⁵ Yet this inner fire is an essential of manhood. It burns the meanness out of men, and can flash forth in great passions for righteousness and freedom. From first to last the Galilæans were a chivalrous and a gallant race.

¹ See those given by Dr. Selah Merrill in his valuable monograph on *Galilee in the Time of Christ*. “Bypaths of Bible Knowledge” series, London, 1891.

² Sahel-el-Gish.

³ The most recent was that in 1837, which overthrew the walls of Tiberias, and killed so large a number of the population of Safed and other towns.

⁴ *Life*, 17. Cf. *Antiq.*, XVII. x. 5, XX. vi. 1; *Bell. Jud.*, I. xvi. 5, II. xvii. 8; Tacitus, *Ann.*, xii. 54.

⁵ Luke ix. 54. Cf. Josephus, XX. *Antiq.* vi. 1.

*Zebulun was a people jeoparding their life to the death,
And Naphtali on the high places of the field.*¹

With the same desperate zeal their sons attempted the forlorn hope of breaking the Roman power. "The country," says Josephus proudly, "hath never been destitute of men of courage."² Their fidelity, often unreasoning and ill-tempered, was always sincere. "The Galilæans," according to the Talmud, "were more anxious for honour than for money—the contrary was true of Judæa."³ For this cause also our Lord chose His friends from the people; and it was *not* a Galilæan who betrayed Him.

When we turn from the physical characteristics of this province of the subterranean fires and waters to her political geography, we find influences as bold and inspiring, as those we have noted. I select three—the neighbourhood of classic scenes of Hebrew history; the great world-roads which crossed Galilee; the surrounding heathen civilisations.

I. It is often taken for granted that the Galilee of our Lord's day was a new land with an illegitimate people—without history, without traditions, without prophetic succession. The notion is inspired by such proverbs as, *Search and see, for out of Galilee cometh no prophet! Can any good come out of Nazareth?* But these utterances were due to the spitfire pride of Judæa, that had contempt for the coarse dialect of the Galilæans,⁴ and for their intercourse with the heathen. Galilee had traditions, a prophetic succession, and a history almost as splendid as Judah's own. She was not out of the way of the great scenes of famous days. Carmel, Kishon, Megiddo, Jezreel, Gilboa, Shunem, Tabor, Gilead, Bashan, the waters of Merom,

¹ Jud. v. 18.

² III. *Bell. Jud.*, iii. 2.

³ Quoted by Neubauer, *Géog. du Talm.*, 181.

⁴ The Galilæans confounded the gutturals, and were guilty of other solecisms.

Hazor, and Kadesh, were all within touch or sight. She shared with Judæa even the exploits of the Maccabees. By Gennesaret was Jonathan's march, by Merom the scene of his heroic rally, when his forces were in flight, and of his great victory; on the other side, at Ptolemais, was his treacherous capture, the beginning of his martyrdom.¹ Galilee, therefore, lived, as openly as Judæa, in face of the glories of their people. Her latent fires had everywhere visible provocation. The foot of the invader could tread no league of her soil without starting the voices of fathers who had laboured and fought for her—without reawaking promises which the greatest prophets had lavished upon her future. *As in the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun, and the land of Naphtali, so in the latter time hath he made them glorious; the way of the sea, across Jordan; Galilee of the Gentiles. The people which walked in darkness have seen a great light; dwellers in the land of darkness, on them hath the light shined.*

It is not necessary to enlarge upon the preparation which all this must have effected for the ministry of our Lord. That the Messianic tempers were stronger in Galilæan, than in any other Jewish, hearts is almost certain. While Judæa's religion had for its characteristic zeal for the law, Galilee's was distinguished by the nobler, the more potential passion of hope. Therefore it was to Galilee that Jesus came preaching that *the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand*, and it was the Galilæan patriotism which he chose to refine to diviner issues.

But we usually overlook that Galilee was vindicated also in the affections of the Jews themselves. It is one of the most singular revolutions, even in Jewish history, that the province, which through so many centuries Judæa had contemned as profane and heretical, should succeed Judæa as the sanctuary of the race and the home of their theo-

¹ 1 Macc. ix.

logical schools—that to-day Galilee should have as many holy places as Judæa, and Safed and Tiberias be revered along with Hebron and Jerusalem. The transference can be traced, geographically, by the movements of the Sanhedrim. After the defeat of the last Jewish revolt at Bethsur, the Sanhedrim migrated north from Jabneh in the Philistine plain to Osheh just north of Carmel, and thence gradually eastward across Lower Galilee to Shaphram, to Beth She'arim, to Sepphoris—nay to the unclean and cursed Tiberias itself. Here the last Sanhedrim sat, and the Mishna was edited. You see the tomb of Maimonides in Tiberias, and most of the towns of Lower and some of those of Upper Galilee have a name as the scenes of the residence or of the martyrdom of famous Rabbis. It is curious to observe in the Talmud the reflection of a state of society in Galilee of the third century more strict in many respects than that of Judæa. But, in the history of Israel, the last is ever becoming the first.¹

II. The next great features of Galilee are her Roads. This garden of the Lord is crossed by many of the world's most famous highways. Judæa, we saw, was on the road to nowhere, Galilee is covered with roads to everywhere—roads from the harbours of the Phœnician coast to Samaria, Gilead, the Hauran and Damascus; roads from Sharon to the valley of the Jordan; roads from the sea to the desert; roads from Egypt to Assyria. The passage of these was not confined to Esdraelon and the Jordan Valley. They ran over Lower Galilee by its long parallel valleys, and even crossed the high plateau of Upper Galilee on the shortest direction from Tyre and Sidon to Damascus.

¹ For the above details see Neubauer, *Géog. du Talmud*, 177-233. A most valuable picture of Galilee, but he draws too much on the Talmud's picture of Galilee for illustration of the very different state of affairs in our Lord's time. The towns mentioned above will all be found on the last map of the P. E. F. Osheh is Khurbet Husheh, and Shaphram Shefa 'Amr only two miles away. Beth She'arim has not been identified.

A review of these highways will immensely enhance our appreciation of Galilee's history. They can be traced by the current lines of traffic, by the great khans or caravan-serais which still exist, in use or in ruin, and by the remains of Roman pavements.

From the earliest times to the present a great thoroughfare has connected Damascus with the sea. Its direction, of course, has varied from age to age according to political circumstances. The port of Damascus was sometimes Aleppo, sometimes Beyrout, sometimes Sidon, or Tyre, sometimes Acca with Haifa. But between the three first of these and Damascus rises the double range of Lebanon; the roads have twice over to climb many thousands of feet. To Tyre again the road must cross the heights of Naphtali from Baniyas or Hasbeya, on the present tourist tracks over the buttresses of Hermon. Acca alone is the natural port for Damascus, and the nearest ways to Acca run through Lower Galilee. Leaving Damascus, the highway kept to the south of Hermon upon the level region of Ituræa,¹ and crossed the Jordan midway between the Lakes of Merom and Gennesaret at the present Bridge of the Daughters of Jacob. Thence it climbed to the Khan, now called "of the Pit of Joseph," and divided. One branch held west past Safed, by the line of valley between Lower and Upper Galilee, and came down by the present Wady Waziyeh upon Acca.² Another branch went south to the Lake of Gennesaret at Khan Minyeh—one of the possible sites for Capernaum—and there forked again. One prong bent up the Plain of Gennesaret and the present Wady Rubadiyeh to rejoin the direct western branch at Rameh.³ Another left the Plain of Gennesaret up the famous Wady el Hamam by Arbela⁴ to the plateau above Tiberias, and

¹ The present Jedur, by S'asa and el Kuneitra.

² Schumacher, *P. E. F. Quart. Statem.*, 1889, pp. 79, 80.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Modern Irbid. See 1 Macc. ix.

thence passing the great Khan or market, now called et Tuggar "of the merchants," defiled between Tabor and the Nazareth hills upon Esdraelon, which it crossed to Megiddo, on the way to Sharon, to Philistia, to Egypt. A third branch from Khan Minyeh continued due south by the Lake and Tiberias to Bethshean, from which the traveller might either ascend Esdraelon and rejoin the straight route to Egypt, or go up through Samaria to Jerusalem, or down Jordan to Jericho. But at Bethshean, or a little to the north of it, there came across Jordan another great road from Damascus. It had traversed the level Hauran, and come down into the valley of the Jordan, by Aphek¹ or by Gamala, and it went over to the Mediterranean either by Esdraelon or up the Wady Feggas to the plateau above the Lake, and thence by the cross valley past Cana and Sepphoris to Acca. This was also the way over Galilee from Gilead and the Decapolis.²

The Great West Road from Damascus to the Mediterranean, in one or other of its branches, was the famous *Way of the Sea*. It was probably so called by Isaiah when he heard along it the grievous march of the Assyrian armies, *by way of the sea, over Jordan, Galilee of the nations*. I say probably, for the phrase is ambiguous in both its terms; it is doubtful whether *the sea* is Gennesaret or the Mediterranean, and whether *the way* be really a road or only a direction. If the two latter alternatives be taken, the phrase means no more than westward—a rendering suitable to the context.³ However this be, later generations

¹ The present Fik.

² In Roman times there were two bridges, one just below the lake, the other the present Gisir el-Mugamia.

³ Isa. viii. 22 (Eng. version ix. 1) *וַיֵּלֶךְ הַיָּם* *The Way of the Sea*. (1) The usual interpretation is that Gennesaret is meant (*יַם־כַּנְזַרְת*, Num. xxxiv. 11) and *the way of the sea*, along with the following words *עַבְרַת הַיַּרְדֵּן*, *over Jordan*, is taken to mean a district to the east of the Lake of Galilee. But the tribes mentioned—Zebulun and Naphtali—had their territories to the west of Jordan: and *עַבְרַת הַיַּרְדֵּן* is applicable to either side of the river. The march of the

applied Isaiah's words to the great caravan route between Damascus and the sea, and throughout the Middle Ages it was known as the "Via Maris." The Romans paved it and took taxes from its traffic; at one of its tolls, in Capernaum, Matthew *sat at the receipt of custom*. It was then the great route of trade with the Far East. From the eleventh to the fourteenth centuries the products of India coming via Baghdad and Damascus, were carried along it to the Venetian and Genoese agencies in Acca and thence distributed through Europe.¹ The commerce of Damascus has at present an easier way to Beyrout by the splendid Alpine road which the French engineers built across the Lebanons; but the Via Maris is still used for the considerable exports on camel-back of grain from the Hauran.²

The Great South Road, the road for Egypt, which diverged from the Via Maris at the Lake of Galilee, was equally used for traffic and for war from the days of the patriarchs down to our own. One afternoon in 1891, while we were resting in the dale at the foot of Tabor, three

Assyrians, which is here described, swept westward. But (2) does *way* mean an actual *highway*? I am inclined to think that it means no more than direction, and that we ought to take יָם־הַיַּם־הַיְּבֵרִית, or sea, in its general sense of the West, so that the phrase in analogy to יָם־הַיַּם־הַיְּבֵרִית (Ezek. viii. 5, xxi. 2, xl. 6) would mean simply *westward*. In that case it would be equivalent to the phrase יָפֶה יַעֲבֹר הַיַּרְדֵּן (Josh. v. 1, etc.), *across the Jordan westwards*. It is true, however, that in these last cases the particle of *direction towards* is used; whereas in our verse *sea* is used in the genitive case with the definite article, a construction that would point to its being the title of a real road rather than the description of a direction. If that be so, it is more probable that the Mediterranean—the goal of the road—would give its name to the latter, than that the Lake of Gennesaret, along which only one of the road's branches passed, would do so.

¹ Heyd, *Die Italienischen Handelscolonien in Palästina*, quoted by Schumacher.

² A party encamped at the Bridge of the Daughters of Jacob during the harvest of 1890 gave orders to their watchman to count the camels passing the bridge laden with grain. He told them in the morning that the string of camels had not ceased all night. Those who have passed through the Hauran in harvest will understand this. I counted one evening nearly two hundred loaded camels pass our tent at Ghabghib on the Haj road.

great droves of camels, unladen, passed by. We asked the drivers, "Where from?" "Damascus." "And where are you going?" "Jaffa and Gaza; but if we do not get the camels sold there, we shall drive them down to Egypt." How ancient a succession these men were following! From Abraham's time, every year that war was not afoot on this road, have camels for sale passed down it to Egypt. Armies sometimes marched by it, as, for instance, the Syrians when Jonathan Maccabeus went out against them in the defiles by Arbela above Gennesaret.¹ But the open road by the Hauran and across the Jordan below the Lake seems to have been the more usual line of invasion. So the Syrians came in Ahab's time,² and probably also the Assyrians when they advanced by Damascus.

The Great Road of the South-east (as we may call it) from Acre across Lower Galilee to Bethshean, and over the Jordan into Gilead, was the road for Arabia. Up it have come through all ages the Midianites, the children of the East. In the Roman period it connected the Asian frontier of the Empire with the capital. Chariots, military troops, companies of officials and merchants, passed by this road, between the Greek cities east of Jordan, and Acre, called Ptolemais, the port for Rome.

Of all things in Galilee it was the sight of these immemorial roads that taught and moved me most—not because they were trodden by the patriarchs, and some of them must soon shake to the railway train, not because the chariots of Assyria and Rome have both rolled along them—but because it was up and down these roads that the immortal figures of the Parables passed—the merchantman seeking goodly pearls, the king departing to receive his kingdom, the friend on a journey, the householder arriving suddenly upon his servants, the prodigal son coming back

¹ Macc. ix. 2. So also came Saladin's army, in 1187, to the Battle of Hattin.

² 1 Kings xx., xxii.

from the far off country. The far off country! What a meaning has this frequent phrase of Christ's, when you stand in Galilee by one of her great roads—roads that so easily carried willing feet from the pious homes of Asher and Naphtali to the harlot cities of Phœnicia—roads that were in touch with Rome and with Babylon.

III. Her roads naturally carry us out upon the surroundings of Galilee. In the neighbourhood of Judæa we saw great deserts, some of which came up almost to the gates of the cities, and impressed their austerity and foreboding of judgment upon the feelings and the literature of the people. The very different temperament of the Galilæan was explained in part by his very different environment. The desert is nowhere even visible from Galilee. Instead of it, Galilee in our Lord's time had as her close and infective neighbours the half Greek land of Phœnicia, with its mines and manufactures, its open ports, its traffic with the West; the fertile Hauran, Auranitis, with its frequent cities, where the Greek language was spoken, and the pagan people worshipped their old divinities under the names of the Greek gods; and Gilead, with the Decapolis, ten cities (more or less) of stately forums, amphitheatres, and temples. We shall see the full influence of all this when we go down to the Lake of Galilee. Meantime let us remember that Galilee was not surrounded by *desert places* haunted by demoniacs, which is all that the few traces in the Gospels suggest to the imagination of most of us; but that the background and environment of this stage of our Lord's ministry was thronged and very gay,—that it was Greek in all the name can bring up to us of busy life, imposing art and sensuous religion. The effect upon the Galilæan temperament is obvious.

These then are the influences which geography reveals bearing upon Galilee. Before we go down to the Lake,

let us focus them upon the one town away from the Lake, which is of supreme interest to us—Nazareth.

Nazareth is usually represented as a secluded and obscure village. Many writers on the life of our Lord have emphasised this, holding it to be proved by the silence of the Gospels concerning His childhood and youth. But the use of a vision of the Holy land is that it fills the silences of the Holy Book, and from it we receive a very different idea of the early life of our Lord than has been generally current among us.¹

The position of Nazareth is familiar to all. The village lies on the farthest south of the ranges of Lower Galilee, and on the southern edge of this, just above the Plain of Esdraelon. You cannot see from it the surrounding country, for it rests in a wide basin in the hills; but the moment you climb to the edge of this basin, which is everywhere within the limit of the village boys' playground, what a view you get! Esdraelon lies before you, with its twenty battle fields—the scenes of Barak's and of Gideon's victories, the scenes of Saul's and Josiah's defeats, the scenes of struggles for freedom in the glorious days of the Maccabees. There is Naboth's vineyard and the field of Jehu's revenge upon Jezebel; there is Shunem and the house of Elisha; there Carmel and the place of Elijah's sacrifice. To the East the Valley of Jordan, with the long range of Gilead; to the West the radiance of the Great Sea, with the ships of Tarshish and the promise of the Isles. You see thirty miles in three directions. It is a map of Old Testament history.

But equally rich was the present life on which the eyes of the boy Jesus looked out. Across Esdraelon, opposite to Nazareth, there emerged from the Samaritan hills the road from Jerusalem, thronged annually with pilgrims,

¹ It is a great merit of Dr. Merrill's monograph on Galilee, that it has disproved this error in detail.

and the road from Egypt with its merchants going up and down. The Midianite caravans could be watched for miles coming up from the fords of Jordan; and, as we have seen, the caravans from Damascus wound round the foot of the hill on which Nazareth stands. Or if the village boys climbed the northern edge of their home, there was another road almost within sight, where the companies were still more brilliant—that direct highway between Acre and the Decapolis, along which legions marched, and princes swept with their retinues, and all sorts of travellers from all countries went to and fro. The Roman ranks, the Roman eagles, the wealth of noblemen's litters and equipages cannot have been strange to the eyes of the boys of Nazareth, especially after their twelfth year, when they went up to Jerusalem, or visited with their fathers famous Rabbis, who came down from Jerusalem, peripatetic among the provinces. Nor can it have been the eye only which was stirred. For all the rumour of the Empire entered Palestine close to Nazareth—the news from Rome, about the Emperor's health,¹ about the changing influence of the great statesmen, about the prospects at court of Herod, or of the Jews; about Cæsar's last order concerning the tribute, or whether the policy of the Procurator would be sustained. Many Galilæan families must have had relatives in Rome; Jews would come back to this countryside to tell of the life of the world's capital. Moreover, the scandals of the Herods buzzed up and down these roads; pedlars carried them, and the peripatetic Rabbis would moralise upon them. And the customs, too, of the neighbouring Gentiles,—their loose living, their sensuous worship, their absorption in business,² the hopelessness of the inscriptions on their tombs, multitudes of which were readable (as some

¹ As in the days when Vespasian was encamped in Galilee. See both Josephus and Tacitus.

² Matt. vi. 32.

are still) on the roads round Galilee—all this would furnish endless talk in Nazareth, both among men and boys.

Here then He grew up and suffered temptation, Who was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. The perfect example of His purity and patience was achieved—not easily as behind a wide fence which shut the world out—but amid rumour and scandal and every provocation to unlawful curiosity and premature ambition. A vision of all the kingdoms of the world was as possible from Nazareth as from the Mount of Temptation. The pressure and problems of the world outside God's people must have been felt by the youth of Nazareth as by few others; yet the scenes of prophetic missions to it—Elijah's and Elisha's—were also within sight.¹ But the chief lesson which Nazareth has for us is the possibility of a pure home and a spotless youth in the very face of the evil world.

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¹ Luke iv. 25 ff.