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REMARKS BY THE REV. CANON TRISTRAM, D.D., LL.D., F.R.S.

CANAAN, ANCIENT AND MODERN, WITH REFERENCE TO THE LIGHT THROWN BY RECENT RESEARCH ON THE MOVEMENTS OF THE HITTITES.—A casual observer might go through the land of Canaan, from Dan to Beersheba, and see not a vestige that could recall the story of a buried past beyond the epoch of the struggles of the Crusades. But take the spade and turn up the soil that hardly hides the form and outline of some buried monument of man's former industry, and then listen round the camp-fire to the stories and traditions of the simple fellaheen, the natives of the district,—light soon dawns on many an obscure allusion of history. Some name, last written down, perhaps, in the Doomsday Book of Joshua, and never since recurring in the registers of the nation, strikes the ear, and imparts freshness and reality to what might have seemed a musty record, as it comes from the lips of an untaught peasant, to whom that name has come down from his fathers through the lapse of four thousand years. Thus, as the eye of the Bible student looks on Palestine to-day, he clothes the narratives of the past with the surroundings of the present. Now, the first glimpse which history gives of the land of Canaan is to be found in the story of the wanderings of Abraham and the pastoral patriarchs.

What the land must then have appeared to the travellers from the East we may infer from examining the fragments, scarcely touched by the profane hands of the builder or the colonist, which remain in the eastern parts of the country in Gilead and Bashan. From Damascus to Egypt there are but two towns of any importance,—Es, Salt (Ramoath-gilead) and Kirak, the ancient Kir, or Kir Moab. These and a few villages comprise the whole settled population. No terraces scarp the hill-sides. Only here and there are the open plains disturbed by the plough. Scattered timber, more park-like than forest, clothes the mountain in irregular clumps from base to summit. The date palm still waves in the Jordan valley, on the east side. The Balm-of-Gilead, the arbutus, sweet bay, and oleaster, cover the lower ranges. Above them, as we ascend, we find the olive; higher up the evergreen oak or ilex, then the Turkey oak; while clumps of pine, about identical with the Scotch fir, crown the summit of Gilead. In the open glades the nomad Arab pitches his black tent, while his flocks and herds, camels, sheep, and goats, with a few horned cattle, depasture the neighbourhood, and disturb the gazelles and deer which at other times browse unmolested. The only cultivated land consists of unfenced patches round the towns and villages.

Such must have been the character and such the inhabitants of western Canaan when Abram first pitched in the plain of Shechem. Fair indeed, and lovely, must that *land of promise* have looked to the eyes of the pilgrims just come from the bare and monotonous plains of Mesopotamia, as they threaded its labyrinth of well-wooded hills and narrow

valleys with their purling brooks, and camped among the exuberant verdure of the moist plains. We find but few traces of towns or cities at that early epoch,—only Shechem and Hebron in Canaan proper. A dense population cultivated the seething tropical valley of the Jordan, and the shores of the Dead Sea. Phœnicians and Philistines fringed the coast-line with their settlements, but these did not touch the Canaanite who was then in the land. The Canaanites were scarcely yet an organised nation, like their neighbours. They seem to have been rather a collection of village communities who recognised the supremacy of the Hittite invaders. The country was not lawless. It was the highway of the great commercial route or caravan road between the empires of Chaldæa and Egypt, and the few allusions in Scripture point to industrious and peaceful communities. Such certainly were Shechem and Hebron.

Recent research has cast a flood of light on the movements of the Hittites who then ruled at Hebron; and we know from Egyptian records that, not long before the time of Abram, they had pushed from Northern Syria, halted for some little time at Hebron, and then moved on to Egypt, where they established for some generations the dynasty of the Hyksos or shepherd kings. Hence the significance of that passing remark in Numbers xiii. 22: "Now Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt." Zoan was the capital of the Hyksos dynasty, and the Hittites had paused seven years at Hebron before making their further advance. Through this country Midianite traders could conduct their caravans of precious merchandise without danger. The pastoral chieftain from beyond the Euphrates could lead his flocks where he would, so long as he refrained from interfering with the wells, the earliest kind of real property in history; for cultivation had not yet extended beyond the environs of the few settlements. That land was of considerable value, is shown by the purchase of the burying-ground of Machpelah from Ephron,—the first legal conveyance recorded in history.

Very different was the state of Canaan four hundred and fifty years later, when conquered by Joshua. The population must have increased enormously. The whole country was thickly studded with walled towns. Places which, like Bethel, had been but a name in the days of Abraham, were now considerable cities. Scripture gives but one incidental hint of the changes which had occurred meanwhile. Hebron and Kirjath-Sepher, which had been Hittite in the time of the patriarchs, were now Amorite, and the name of the latter changed to Debir; while in Joshua's time, the Hittites were found in the mountains. The Egyptian annals explain this. A century before the Exodus, the Shepherd, or Hyksos, dynasty having been overthrown, Thothmes III., and after him Rameses II., prosecuted great campaigns against the Hittites, invading Canaan and Syria, driving their hereditary foes out of Hebron, and overrunning the country as far as the Euphrates, but making no permanent conquests.

The period before Thothmes was the epoch of Canaanite development; for we find, in the Egyptian records, a list of over a hundred places sub-

mitting, given in the same topographical order in which the names occur in the book of Joshua. With the exception of a few strongholds, and some remote and inaccessible districts, the Israelites occupied the walled towns and the villages built by the Canaanites, and completed the subduing or terracing of the hill-sides, which their predecessors had begun. It was this terracing which, in its ultimate results, has reduced the country to the state in which we now see it. From the density of the population, every foot of ground was valuable. The hill-sides were girdled with terraces, like flights of steps, from the base to the crest of each rounded knoll, on the top of which was perched the little town. The primeval forest everywhere disappeared, and its place was taken by the precious olive tree, the evergreen foliage of which attracted the spring showers. Along the edges of the terraces ran the little cemented channels, which conducted the rainfall to the cisterns with which the whole country is honeycombed. On each step of the terraces, corn in spring, and a second crop of vegetables in summer, were raised; while fig-trees occupied every corner, and the vine was trailed over every stone-heap. The land was utilised as it is in Malta to-day.

But, in after ages, war and neglect have done their work. We have no reason to believe that the material prosperity of the country ever suffered more than temporary checks from the wars and captivities till the final destruction of Jerusalem by Titus. Even after this, though the Jew was driven out, a considerable population remained, till the ruthless devastation and massacres by Chosroes, the Persian invader, A. D. 594, swept the land with the besom of destruction. The olive-trees—at least, those which had been spared by Titus—were cut down. With them disappeared the fertility of the land. There was no man left to repair the terraces or keep open the water-channels. Over the treeless hills the clouds in spring passed without shedding their showers, while the winter rains, descending in impetuous torrents, soon washed down the terrace embankments, and carried the earth into the valleys, leaving the rocky sides barren and bare, while the hollows were choked to a depth of many feet with rich alluvial soil. Thus by the reckless wickedness of man has God's curse been accomplished.

Yet, as after some great flood, we find in nooks and corners some waifs and strays of what existed before, stranded in the eddies of the backwater; and as the waves of successive invasions of India have stranded on the hills and in the secluded valleys the remains of the Dravidians and other earlier races, so it has been in Canaan. The Israelite indeed has utterly disappeared; for the few Jews to be found in colonies in Jerusalem and some of the towns are all immigrants who have returned since the time of the Crusades from Spain or Germany or Poland. But while the nomad population of the plains is of Arab descent from the followers of the Khalif Omar, and the fellaheen, or agricultural population of the villages is of Syrian origin, the descendants of the Christian settlers after Constantine, we find traces of the old Canaanite or Hittite in the retired mountain villages east of the central ridge, to be recognised by their somewhat Ethiopian physiognomy, and by some old heathen local customs, such as sacrificing under a sacred tree or

'grove' on the hill-top at the new moon; while in the south-east of Judea at Beit-Jibreen (or Gath) we have traces of the old Philistines in the large flat-featured race, quite distinct from any others in the land. It is interesting to note that these relics of the aboriginal races are found just in the districts which we learn, from Judges i., were never thoroughly subdued by Israel.

ORDINARY MEETING, JANUARY 17, 1887.

PROFESSOR G. G. STOKES, D.C.L., P.R.S., PRESIDENT,
IN THE CHAIR.

The Minutes of the last Meeting were read and confirmed, and the following Elections were announced :—

MEMBERS :—H. C. Corke, Esq., D.D.S., Southampton; Dr. Cynic Thomas, United States.

ASSOCIATES :—The Right Rev. the Bishop of Bombay; Rev. H. M. Anketell, Chippenham; J. G. Bourinot, Esq., M.A., LL.D., Canada; C. M. Bult, Esq., C.S., J.P., Canada; T. Barnes, Esq., D.L., J.P., Canada; Rev. W. M. Campbell, F.A.A., United States; Rev. Canon C. G. Curtis, M.A., Constantinople; Professor C. C. Everett, United States; Rev. E. A. Eardley-Wilmot, B.A.Camb., England; Col. P. A. Elphinstone, London; Rev. F. E. Freese, B.A.Oxon, Plymouth; Rev. T. B. Harvey Brooks, M.A., London; Ven. Archdeacon J. Hughes Games, D.C.L., Isle of Man; Lieut. C. W. W. Ingram, R.N., Plymouth; J. Main, Esq., F.G.S., Glasgow; Rev. Sir F. A. G. Gore Ouseley, Bart., M.A., Worcester; Rev. A. Oates, Ware; Rev. T. Roberts, M.A., R.N., H.M.S. "Téméraire"; H. Stokes, Esq., Bath; Rev. B. Waller, B.A., Southport; Rev. H. J. White, M.A., Oxon, Redhill.

HON. CORRESPONDENTS :—T. Chaplin, Esq., M.D., Hendon; Rev. G. A. Shaw, F.Z.S., Chingford.

Also the presentation of the following works, by their authors, to the Library :—

Chalk and Flint Formation. By Rev. W. B. Galloway, M.A.
Thirty-six Hours' Hunting among the Lepidoptera of Middlesex. S. T. Klein, Esq., F.R.A.S.

Local Government in Canada. J. E. Bourinot, Esq.

The Philosophy of the Supernatural. By Rev. Dr. Platt.

The Progress of a Century. G. Lawrence.

The Story of the Rocks. By Professor Vail.

Science and the Revelation of Christ. By Rev. Professor Dallinger, D.D.

A Manual of Zoology (in Samoan). Rev. T. Powell, F.L.S.

The publication of the Paper read at this Meeting is delayed.
