

follow our future proceedings with interest, and wish us a successful termination to our labours. (Applause.)

On the motion of the Rev. Canon CRANE, seconded by the Rev. W. F. BIRCH, the thanks of the meeting were accorded to Lieutenant Conder for his address; and a similar compliment having been paid to the Dean for presiding, the meeting separated.

THE AMERICAN EXPEDITION.

THE following letters from the Rev. Selah Merrill are reprinted from the *Athenæum* by the kind permission of the proprietors. It will be remembered that Captain Warren has anticipated much of their work at Theilthatha, Rukleh, and other places in the Lebanon.

November 5th, 1875.

The friends of Palestine Exploration in England may be interested in some account of our reconnoissance survey of the Hauran, which we have just completed. It will be impossible, however, in a single letter, to give more than an outline of our operations. We had with us twenty-three baggage animals and nine horses. Then we had eight muleteers, six servants, including two cooks and a table boy, and two assistants and interpreters from the college in Beirut. Besides the four gentlemen who comprised the exploring party proper, there were with us three others, two gentlemen from Beirut, one an excellent botanist, and the other an excellent marksman, and our photographer. No person unacquainted with the facts can realise the difficulties to be overcome in order to secure good photographs in the Syrian deserts, especially in the summer. All green things are burned up, the air is full of fine dust, the sun is intensely hot, and the sky, of course, is affected accordingly. Both instrument and chemicals are often injured or ruined. Ordinary rules and laws cannot be followed; and the skill and patience of the artist are constantly taxed to their utmost even to produce any work at all. Then the difficulty of obtaining pure water is another serious drawback. We often carried water eight and ten and even sixteen miles for our photographer to use. But notwithstanding the obstacles to be overcome, we have been remarkably successful. We have brought away as trophies from the desert considerably over one hundred photographs of temples, churches, theatres, towers, castles, and other ruins, which, for the most part, have never before been visited by a photographer. Our small plates are nine and a half by twelve inches, and our larger ones are twelve by sixteen inches. The collection, we hope, will prove to be one of great interest and value.

We left Abeih, whither hundreds from Beirut had fled to escape the cholera, on the 2nd of September, and passing over some of the Lebanon mountains, camped at Keir Nebrakh. The next day we passed over the last Lebanon range, and down into the valley of the Litany or Leontes, which we crossed, and camped at Jub Jenin. That day our photographer

went by another route, and took photographs of a fine grove of cedars which had never been photographed. We went next over a low foot-range of Anti-Lebanon, and camped at Rasheiya. The same day I went with the photographer to Thellthatha, or Nebi Safa, as it is sometimes called, a place to the south, in the same range just mentioned, and photographed one of the famous Hermon temples which still exists there. We went north the same night, and joined our camp at Rasheiya. Leaving our camp here, we went in an easterly and north-easterly direction to Rukleh, where there are a number of inscriptions and the remains of two temples, one of which possesses some features of unusual interest. We took several photographs here, and also squeezes of the inscriptions, and returned to our camp in Rasheiya. The next day we went to the top of Jebel esh Sheikh, and while the engineers took bearings and made observations, I, with the help of our guide and a fine glass, made notes of the places and points of interest that can be seen from this wonderful observatory of nature. What appear from the distance to be mere patches of snow, we found, on reaching the summit, were great fields and drifts of it. The thermometer showed 36 degrees in the snow, and 72 in the atmosphere. This was on the 7th of September. The water which flowed in little streams from these snow banks was cold and refreshing. That night we went down the side of Hermon to Shiba, a place in the mountains a little to the east and south of Hashbeiya, which our camp had reached by the direct route. Here we found most excellent water gushing in full-grown streams from the foot of the mountain. From here we went over some of the lower or southern ranges of Hermon, past Medjel esh Shems, to Baniyas, where we camped and spent several days. We took a number of photographs in this region, including the castle Subeibeh, the famous oak grove of Hazor, the fountain of the Jordan at Baniyas, the other fountain at Tell el Kadi, and two or three besides. We then went to Lake Phiala, and made a thorough geological examination of that most interesting volcanic region, including Tell el Achmar, an extinct crater, two or three miles to the south of the lake, and took a panoramic view of the lake itself, and then went on to Medjel esh Shems, where we camped.

We then pushed east into the desert, and what some have really found to be the land of danger, but from which we escaped unharmed. We crossed Nukr Sasa, which geologically and in other respects is a very interesting section, and camped at Sasa on a delightfully fresh and green grass-plot between two branches of the Jennani. The small tell on which Sasa stands is an extinct crater. From here we pushed east to Musmeh, the Phaeno of the Romans, situated in the north end of the Leja. Here is a beautiful temple, one of the best preserved in the Hauran, which we photographed; we also photographed a section of the interior, in order to show the architecture. The Leja I shall not attempt in this outline to describe; but it seems to me that more travellers, especially if they are scientific men, ought to visit this largest and most wonderful lava bed in the world. Then the number of ruined towns

which are found in the Leja, the Trachonitis of the New Testament and the Argob of the Old, is perfectly surprising. We went down the western border of the Leja and camped at Zara (or Zora, or Edra), a place of great antiquity, and important now for its ruins and inscriptions. We passed on then in a south-easterly direction through Ed Dur and several other ruined towns, and camped at Kirateh (or Kurrasseh), a place entirely uninhabited, but where we found a fountain of excellent water, full of fish. There is another Kirateh a little to the north of Zara: the two must not be confounded. I found some exceedingly curious and interesting ruins, formed of very large unhewn stones, on the tops of some of the hills about this place, of which I shall give an account with drawings in my Report. From here we went on to Kunawat, the Kenath of the Bible, and camped and took a number of photograprs there, and of places in the vicinity, and also copied many inscriptions. I always had with me Waddington's invaluable work. My practice was to verify his copy, and to copy and take squeezes only of such as he had not seen. At Suleim, a little to the north-west of Kunawat, is one of the most beautiful temples in the East. We photographed this, and also two temples at Atil. Kunawat is remarkable for its situation as the centre of a populous and wealthy district. Six or eight cities or towns were clustered about it within a distance of two hours' walk, most of which were within sight from its temple-roofs and towers. Among them Sia, twenty-five minutes to the east and south, was a beautiful place, and intimately connected, as its inscriptions (both Greek and Aramaic) show, with the history of Herod the Great. Our next camping-place was at Suweideh, where we also took photographs. We then went on by way of 'Are to Salchad, and photographed the splendid castle there. This castle forms a fine landmark, seen for many miles from the north, west, and south. As we found no good water here, we turned back on the route we had come about one hour, to Aiyin, an uninhabited place, where there was a fine fountain and some very peculiar ruins. From there we went on south-west through Kerioth to Bozrah (or Bostra), and camped and spent several days, including Sunday, September 26th. Here the churches, theatre, columns, castle, old bevelled stones, streets, gates, triumphal arches, and reservoirs, not to speak of the inscriptions, are all wonderful, and I will undertake to describe them in due time. Here also we enlarged and enriched our collection of photographs.

Leaving our camp here we went sixteen miles to the south-west into the genuine desert, to visit the ruins of Um el Jemal, which some suppose to be the Beth Gamul of the Bible. Burckhardt, Buckingham, Porter, Wetzstein, and other distinguished travellers have looked out from the castle at Salchad, or from that at Bozrah,* on to this dark mass of ruins with longing eyes; but although two or more of these made the

* I did not myself see the ruins of Um el Jemal from the castle at Bozrah, and make this statement on the testimony of others. But there are so many piles of ruins on the plain, that one might easily be mistaken and think he had seen Um el Jemal when he had not.

attempt, they did not succeed in reaching them. Mr. Cyril Graham and Mr. Waddington were the only Europeans who had visited the place previous to ourselves. The ruins of this *unwalled* town cannot here be described, but I may say that they are very instructive even to those who are tolerably familiar with Hauran and Syrian ruins as they exist in other places. Two or three photographs were taken here. We went next from Bozrah north-west in the direction of Der'at (Edrei or Adra'a) to Jisre esh Shirk, and camped; and then on to Dor'at itself, and turned south and camped at Remtheh, an important place, on the pilgrim road from Damascus to Mecca. Through all this region we were obliged to guard our camp at night ourselves. We found we could not trust our men for this, because they would invariably go to sleep, with the most perfect indifference to danger imaginable. It was while on guard at Remtheh that one of our party, Mr. T., took a severe cold, which brought on a fever and nearly cost him his life. We found here only miserable water. The people had good water in their cisterns, but they would neither give it nor sell it to us; and had it not been for some Turkish soldiers there, who gave us some from the garrison supplies when they learned our need, we might have fared worse than we did. The next day we had a long, tedious journey to Jerash, where we arrived on the 1st of October. That day the thermometer was 87 degrees in the shade at noon, and we were entirely without water, either for men or animals, until near night, when we were almost within sight of Jerash. We came then upon a spring of cool, fresh water, which was worth more to us at that moment than a gold mine would have been. As for our animals, they were perfectly wild and unmanageable until they had quenched their thirst.

We spent three or four days at Jerash, and brought away over forty inscriptions and some beautiful photographs. In regard to the heat, I may add that at Jerash, as well as while on our way there, and also at Bozrah, and afterwards at Es Salt, we had many days when the thermometer showed 85, 87, and even 90 degrees in the shade. Through Jerash, from one end of the city to the other, there flows a stream of cool, fresh, living water. Here is one of the finest "water-powers" in the East. From here our sick friend was taken to Es Salt, our next camping-place, and from there, as soon as he could be moved, to Jerusalem in a palanquin, *i. e.*, a great box fastened on to long poles, and carried between two mules, one before and one behind it. At Jerusalem he was placed in the Mediterranean Hotel, under the care of Dr. Chaplin. We took photographs of Es Salt, supposed to be the Ramoth Gilead of the Bible, and several at Amman, the Rabbath Ammon of the Bible, which was our next camping-place after leaving Es Salt. From there we went to Heshbon, and visited Nebo, the peak called "Siagah," and supposed by some to be the Pisgah of Moses, Main, or the ancient Baal Meon, and several other places. We took photographs at Heshbon, and our photographer went several miles east of Heshbon, to a place called Musshatah (some distance east of Ziza, but not down on the ordinary maps), and photographed a very beautiful temple which still

exists there.* From Heshbon we went north to Arak el Emir, and photographed the ruins of the wonderful castle of Hyrcanus, and also the face of the cliff, in which the chambers, reservoirs, and stables which Josephus describes, were excavated. These "stables," in which there are accommodations for one hundred horses in a single room dug out of the solid rock, appear something like a long livery stable, when one stands at the door and looks into it, except in this case there are no partitions for stalls; but the mangers are quite perfect, and so are the rings cut in the rock by the side of each manger, where the horses were tied. From here we crossed the Jordan at Jericho, and went by way of Jerusalem and Nablous to Beirut.

It has been impossible in this outline to give any special details of our work, yet we hope it will be found that our journey has been a very successful one. The whole country has been mapped out for future operations; the bearings taken, the observations, and the various records and notes kept by the engineers, are important; and the inscriptions copied, together with the measurements taken of ancient churches, temples, theatres, and other ruins, we hope will prove interesting and valuable. The geological, botanical, geographical, and archæological features of this east-Jordan land are of the highest interest. The fertility of this region, which we commonly call a "desert," cannot be exaggerated. Its populousness and prosperity in ancient times will always remain one of the wonders of history: and an industrious and enterprising people, under a good government, could again make those broad fields, now so desolate, as productive as Egypt in her palmiest days.

UM EL JEMAL—THE BETH GAMUL OF JEREMIAH?

It has been my good fortune recently to visit the ruins of this little-known but very interesting city. Burckhardt made three attempts from as many different points to reach this place, all of which were unsuccessful. Buckingham still later was also unable to reach it. And even so recent a traveller as Wetzstein was obliged to turn back without seeing it, after he had made every preparation and had proceeded half an hour or more from Bozrah on his way thither. Dr. Porter says, "the only European who ever succeeded in reaching it is Cyril C. Graham." But the place has been visited, probably since the statement just quoted was written, by Mr. Waddington, who, however, has not described it with any detail. Besides the two gentlemen just named, I am not aware that the place has been visited by any other Europeans previous to the arrival there of our own party. Out of the path of travellers, and even of adventurous explorers, it is not strange that books on Palestine and Bible dictionaries have very little to say about it. In Jer. xlviii. 21—25, where it is said that "judgment is come upon the plain country," a list of eleven cities is given, and among them are mentioned "Beth Gamul, Beth Meon, Kerioth, and Bozrah." "Judgment is come," it is said, "upon all the cities of the land of Moab, far or near." The phrase

* See Dr. Tristram's "Land of Moab."

“far or near” may prove a significant hint towards determining the question whether or not this site corresponds with the Beth Gamul of Jeremiah. The sites and ruins of Kerieth and Bozrah, which places I have also recently visited, are supposed, by some, to be well known; and it is argued, with good reason, that Beth Gamul must be in the same region. And Um el Jemal, or “Mother of the Camel,” may, it is thought, represent the Hebrew Beth Gamul, or “House of the Camel.”

From the castle at Salchad, and some say from that at Bozrah also, one can see a pile of ruins far away to the south-west, a dark mass resting upon the treeless plain. They lie about sixteen miles from Bozrah. They are at present uninhabited, there being no water there that we could find, although there is a large reservoir in the centre of the town, and I counted as many as four smaller ones in different parts of the city. There is evidence that the place contains also large cisterns, one such at least I saw, in which may be water. These it would be interesting to examine. The roof of the one that I looked into was supported by five Roman arches.

We left our camp on Monday morning, Sept. 27, at five o'clock, and proceeded to the castle in Bozrah; for the officer in command, Ibrahim Effendi, proposed, as he had never visited the place, and was very much interested in antiquities, to accompany us with some soldiers. Fortunately the morning, and the whole day, as it proved, were quite cool, so that our ten hours and forty minutes in the saddle were less tedious than they might otherwise have been. We were in all twenty men, well mounted, and well armed. Besides the animals we rode, we had three extra ones for photographic apparatus, water, and other baggage. About two miles outside of Bozrah we came upon a large encampment of Bedouin of over one hundred long black tents; and, judging by the deafening howl, there were three or four dogs to every tent. There were several hundred camels scattered about in groups; and there was evidently excitement of some kind, for men were shouting and running in all directions. Some of them ran up to our soldiers, and told of a heavy robbery that had been committed during the night, and of the great loss they had suffered in cattle and camels. Our soldiers gave chase in the direction indicated by these men; and it was a fine sight to see them, with such of the Bedouin as were mounted, dashing over the plain in their efforts to discover the robbers. These, however, had done their work too near morning, or else had taken more than they could manage, and had fled, leaving the camels, or most of them, to return at leisure to their masters. I counted in a single string one hundred and fifty camels, thus making their way back. During the next hour or two we saw as many as half a dozen groups of camels, at different places on the plain, that had passed through the experience of being stolen the night previous. Three miles south of Bozrah we struck the perpetual desert, the region of desolation. Not that the soil is barren, but in all this wide and naturally fertile district no man dare plough, or plant, or build. Here is land as level as any prairie, and as rich as any in the world, with stones enough upon it to serve for building purposes, lying

idle and useless. One can easily picture it cut up into hundreds of fine farms, and covered with dwellings and orchards and gardens, and all the marks of civilised and skilful husbandry. Yet this desert shows signs of former cultivation, for the stones in many parts have at some time been gathered into long rows, evidently to serve as boundaries for fields. The plain is covered with a small shrub which resembles the sage bush. Then the crocus appeared in many places; and the contrast between the barren burnt surface of the plain and these beautiful flowers was very striking. On the way we passed several ruins, the names of which we could not learn; and the same was true of our return, as we came most of the way by a different route. There are scores of these ruined towns scattered about this plain awaiting the careful explorer. Far in the north-east the fortress, Al Salchad, loomed up a magnificent object on the horizon, commanding a view of all this wide plain to the north, east, south, and west. I noticed that the common barn-swallows were very abundant; and we also saw during the day ten or more gazelles, to some of which our men gave chase, but without success.

We reached Um el Jemal after a ride of about five hours. The ruins do not abound in columns and temples like those of Kunawat or Jerash, still they are imposing, and make a peculiar impression upon one because they stand alone in the desert. They are remarkable, in the first place, from the fact that they present only two prominent styles of architecture, namely, Roman and Christian, and not half a dozen, as is so often the case in other places. They are remarkable again because they afford a good example of an *unwalled* town. Indeed, in this respect they are very instructive. The dwellings and buildings were not huddled together. Then there has been no building and rebuilding on the tops of former buildings, according to later oriental style. The open spaces about the houses were large, and the streets were broad. At least two avenues ran through the city from north to south, one of which was one hundred feet wide, and the other nearly one hundred and fifty feet. Nothing appears crowded. Everywhere there is a sense of roominess. It must have been a city noted for broad streets, spacious avenues, large courts, fine gardens, promenades, and the like. Consequently it would be a cool city, and no doubt delightful as a place of residence. Then, again, the houses, which were built of stone, are not only the finest, but the best preserved of any that I have seen in the Hauran, or in all the country east of the Jordan. They were built on a generous scale. Some of them were three and even four stories high. I noticed that eleven and twelve feet was a common height for the ceiling on the first floor, and ten feet on the second, and in two or more cases the height of the ceiling on the third floor was also ten feet. The doors of the rooms were, as a rule, seven and a half and eight feet high in the second story as well as the first. The rooms were not small but spacious, that is, spacious for private houses. A number of those that I measured were ten feet by twenty-five, or twelve feet by twenty-four. There were, of course, both larger and smaller rooms than these. A common style of building seems to have been a group of houses with a large open space

around the outside, and a large open court on the inside. These courts were fifty feet by seventy-five, and sometimes much larger. Stone stairs led up on the outside of the houses facing the court to the second and third stories. Many of these are in as good condition as if they had been built but one year ago. There are no traces of the Saracens here. Nor, on the other hand, are there any decided marks of great antiquity. In the large reservoir before mentioned there are some bevelled stones. It is the fullest bevel. Very many of the stones of which the houses were built were simply split, and not faced at all; yet it should be observed that the splitting was remarkably regular. It was evidently at one time, and, I should judge, for a long time, a prominent Christian city. I found remains of what I consider to have been three Christian churches. Further examination might develop more. One of these, at least, had had a portico, and columns were lying about the front of it. In no other city east of the Jordan that I have visited do so many crosses appear on the lintels of the doors of private houses as here. Then, again, the inscriptions are by no means the least important fact connected with these ruins. I can, however, only allude to this fact at present. Mr. Waddington, whom I have already mentioned, has published several Greek and Latin inscriptions which were found here, and during my short stay I found seven inscriptions which he has not given. Aramaic inscriptions also exist here. Without deciding whether or not this is the Beth Gamul of the Bible, it is certainly a rich field for research.

I am sorry to state that the Arabs are every year carrying off the stones of this city to other places. As many as six men were at work while we were there, throwing down the walls and getting the long roof-stones, which were to be carried away on camels. Just before we reached the place we met thirty or forty camels that had started with a load of stone taken from these ruins. It is easy to see how important inscriptions may be carted off, and thus valuable historical material for ever lost. It was on account of this plundering which I saw going on that I regretted so deeply I could not remain and complete a thorough archæological examination of the ruins at once. We took two photographs of the city, and made some measurements, the details of which would probably not be of general interest. In regard to this place being identical with the Beth Gamul of Jeremiah, while I do not care to discuss the question here, I may say in a word that I see no special objection to its having been the same. The objection offered by some scholars that it is too far north, can, I think, easily be removed. The place appears to have been deserted for centuries. I should judge that the desertion was sudden and complete. There are no traces of there having been any lingering, deteriorating remnant or people, nor of any wretched subsequent inhabitants to mutilate it, as is usually the case in these large ruined cities. I noticed an interesting fact with regard to the pieces of pottery with which the surface of the ground here, as in all these ruined towns, is covered. In most cases one sees only the red pottery, but in Um el Jemal the black was the prevailing kind, and the

red decidedly the exception. There are but few places in Syria where the black pottery is made. In the first century, according to the Talmud, the black kind was considered superior to the red, and brought a much higher price in the markets; and what is also interesting in this connexion, a certain village in Galilee had a monopoly of its manufacture.

On our way home, as we had no guide and paths do not exist, we took the wrong direction, and when we had ridden five hours we did not find our Bozrah. We ascended a slight elevation, which commanded a view of a wide region. We had a choice of seven ruined cities which were in sight from where we stood; but as night was rapidly approaching, even our Effendi could not tell which Bozrah was. We made a guess, which proved to be a lucky one, and after one hour and a half hard riding in the dark we reached our camp in safety.

SELAH MERRILL.

MANUSCRIPTS OF THE HEBREW SCRIPTURES.

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THE Codex of the Hebrew Scriptures which Rabbi Aaron Ben Asher revised has recently been discovered at Aleppo, and Dr. Ginsburg, the well-known Orientalist, intends to start, in a week or two, for Syria on purpose to collate it. This celebrated MS. was originally preserved at Jerusalem; but probably when Saladin took the Holy City and put an end to the Latin Kingdom, it was removed to Egypt, where Maimonides (A.D. 1135-1204) saw it. He adopted it as his model, "because," he remarks, "I saw that there is a great confusion in all the codices which I have consulted with regard to these matters; and even the Massorites, who wrote and compiled works to show which sections are to begin new paragraphs and which not, are divided upon these matters, according to the authorities they leaned upon. I found myself necessitated to write, thus, all the sections of the Law, both those which begin new paragraphs and those which do not, as well as the forms of the accents, so that all copies might be made according to it. Now the Codex which is followed in these matters is the one well known in Egypt which contains the four-and-twenty Sacred Books, which was in Jerusalem for many years, that all the codices might be corrected after it, and *whose text all adopted, because Ben Asher corrected it and laboured over it many years, and revised it many times. It is this Codex I followed in the copy of the Law I wrote.*"

At present this important MS. is preserved in a cave under a synagogue at Aleppo, "at the entrance of which stands a chest in which are deposited crowns of the Law" (*i.e.*, Bibles written with points and accents), "and they are all adorned with flowers and blossoms in various colours drawn like chains around." At the end of the MS. is written, "This complete Bible, consisting of 24 Books, was written by R. Solomon, who was a skilful scribe, May the Spirit of God give him rest: and was punctuated and furnished with the Massora in the most proper way by the great teacher, wise, sagacious, Master of the Scribes, father of the wise, chief of the teachers, skilful in his works, prudent in his advice,