

The Valley of Michmash, Bethel, Ai, Spring in Philistia, Lachish, Ascalon, Galilee. The Safed attack. Customs, language, and probable origin of the Fellahs. Arabs, Jews, Russian Pilgrims and German Colonists. Fertility and Future of Palestine.

In an appendix will be published a complete list of the cities and towns mentioned in the Bible, with the identifications which have been proposed.

The illustrations, all from drawings made by the author in Palestine, or from new photographs, and chiefly of scenes never before figured, consist of six full-page and about thirty half-page woodcuts, engraved by Mr. Edward Whymper.

Those subscribers who wish to avail themselves of the privilege of obtaining the book at reduced price are requested to forward their names to the Secretary as soon as possible.

Although the work is issued by the Committee, it must be understood that the opinions expressed are those of the author, and that the Committee do not, in publishing the book, sanction or adopt Lieut. Conder's views.

THE ROSE OF SHARON.

Mrs. Finn writes, with reference to Lieut. Conder's note on this subject (*Quarterly Statement*, Jan., 1878, p. 46) : "During our seventeen years' residence in Palestine I had many opportunities of seeing roses growing in the Holy Land, both cultivated and wild. I have a wild dog-rose gathered in Lebanon. I saw another growing and in blossom on the roadside between Nablûs and Jerusalem. Roses have been also cultivated in Palestine for a very long period, and they thrive well. The Hebrew word may well mean the Rose. It signifies, as does its cognate Arabic, the root of a bulbous plant. The flower of a rose is like a bulb in the way its petals are folded over each other. Hence the name applied to both."

THE STONE OF BETHPHAGE.

I.

(Abridged from a paper published in the *Revue Archéologique*, Dec., 1877, by M. Clermont Ganneau.)

I HAVE received from the Frère Lièvin certain documents and drawings relating to an important discovery lately made near Jerusalem. They describe a Crusaders' monument, interesting both as regards the history of Western art in the East, and as illustrating the topography of Jerusalem. Frère Lièvin was fortunate in obtaining the valuable assistance of Captain Guillemot, to whose pen we owe the drawings here engraved. Farther on will also be found a notice drawn up by Captain Guillemot on the monument, its origin and destination, in support of which I shall have a few remarks to offer. The drawings are the more valuable because the monument has greatly suffered since

the clearing out. I heard, for instance, in October, that a part of the inscription painted on the western side fell off shortly after it was copied.

The excavations undertaken with a view to clear out the monument met with every kind of obstacle from the natives until the intervention of Reouf Pacha, who has rendered a great service to science in this matter—one which ought not to be forgotten, and which leads us to count on him for the future as an enlightened protector and patron of archaeological research.

The following is the text of Captain Guillemot's report :—

" On leaving the Convent of Carmelites on the Mount of Olives to go to Bethany, the path to the east follows the contour of the south side of the mountain. After a gentle descent of about five hundred metres it turns abruptly to the south, passing over a natural ridge, which unites the Mount of Olives with that of Bethany.



" When you are arrived at the middle of the ridge, turn to the east, the Dead Sea is visible in the distance ; behind you, on the west, is the group of sanctuaries, the Ascension, the Pater Noster, and the Credo ; on the north, at the left, you are overlooked by the new constructions of the Russian Archimandrite ; the road of Bethany, on the right, runs to the south, and if you advance a few steps you are on the spot where the most ancient traditions place Bethphage.

" Some time in the spring of the present year a *fellah* of Jebel Tur, digging on this spot in the hope of finding building stones, struck upon a polished block, upon which, on clearing away the earth, he found paintings and characters. In the hope of backsheesh he ran to his neighbours the Russians ; these, however, preoccupied with the coming war, told him to cover all up and leave it for the present.

" For centuries past the Franciscans have been accustomed to celebrate

every year the Feast of Saint Magdalene at Bethany; on their return they halt at Bethphage in order to recite the Gospel of Palm Sunday. During the ceremony of this year (July 23, 1877) an assistant perceived certain letters on the *stèle*, which had been imperfectly covered over, and clearing away a portion of it, found a Latin inscription in Roman characters. The father in charge of the sacred places, recognising at once the importance of this discovery, instructed Frère Lièvin to com-



mence excavations as soon as possible; to take notes of and to copy accurately everything that should be found.

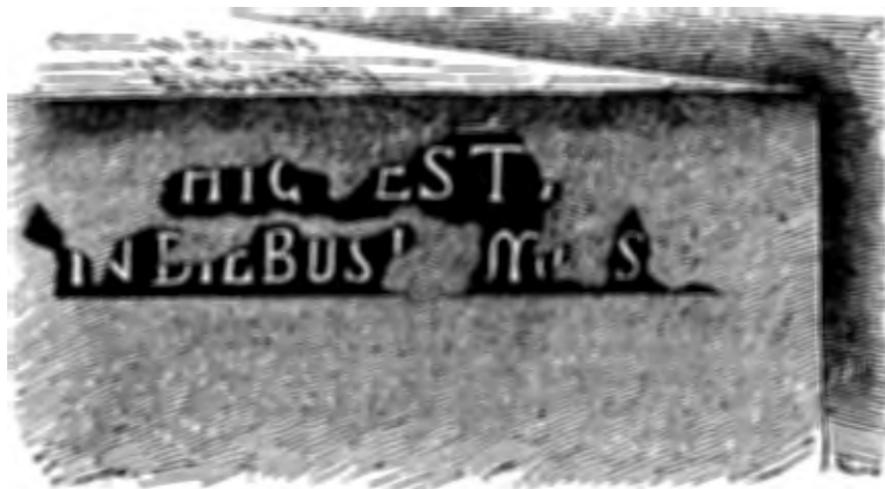
"Shortly after, Frère Lièvin, having with him a small band of workmen armed with pickaxe and spade, brought me to the Mount of Olives and asked for my assistance. The moment our work was commenced the cupidity of the *fellahin* began to raise difficulties. Every resident of Jebel Tur pretended immediately to be the sole proprietor of this spot, hitherto neglected; and, to crown all, the villagers of Bethany declared



that the place belonged to their territory. I had, however, time to make notes of two fragments of inscription and a sketch of the north side of the fresco, representing the master of the castle according to the two disciples permission to carry away the ass and the foal.

"Next day, when I came back to compare my finished drawing with the original and to study the details, the excavations had been completely filled up and again partly cleared out. Happily, the part which I then wanted was not hidden.

"Next day, the same trouble; there was only the western face which remained partly uncovered. It was possible, however, to draw the figures bearing palms and hardly visible which stand on the right and left of the niche. Two days afterwards the whole was completely covered over; not even the top of the stone was visible.



"These proceedings resulted from disputes between the *fellahin*, some of them wanting the excavations to proceed in the hope of getting back-sheesh, and the others filling them up, as fast as made, out of jealousy.

"Things being in this position, Frère Lièvin had recourse to the Pacha, who immediately accorded us his protection. Orders were given by his excellency to the chiefs of the villages of Bethany and Jebel Tur; a soldier was placed on guard over the excavations, and we were enabled to continue our labours in peace.

"The fresco which I had, happily, copied carefully had been seriously damaged by the pickaxes and by the continual friction with stones and earth; several letters of the inscription had disappeared. I made haste to note all that remained; it was fortunate that I did so, because shortly afterwards an unknown hand destroyed in our absence the greater part of the rest.

"The *stèle* measures 1·30 metres (4ft. 3·18in.) in its greatest length; in breadth it is 1·13 metres (3ft. 8·49in.) at the northern end, and 1·06 metres (or 3ft. 5·63in.) at the southern end. The height at the northern end is irregular, and averages one metre (3ft. 3·37in.). At the southern end it is 0·90 metres (2ft. 11·4in.). It is constructed of the rock on which it stands, a porous limestone, lying in irregular strata, with alternate soft and hard beds.

"The monolith has not been separated from the rock of which it forms part, except on the four faces.

"At first sight the monument would be taken for an altar, or even for a tomb. But there exist no traces of the steps and other accessories to an altar. As regards the second, there is no sign of any opening. The white stucco which covers it is still solid in certain places. The paintings are finely executed and of a striking character. Nevertheless, the inscriptions leave no doubt as to the origin of this decoration.

"But is it only a restoration? At what period was the stone cut? That is a question impossible to answer. Those who thus ornamented it must have had no doubt that formerly the rock stood out above the level of the soil, presenting a sort of rustic seat, and that our Lord may have sat upon it on a certain memorable day.

"*The Resurrection of Lazarus*.—The choice of the south side for this painting, which faces Bethany, and the subject, that of the permission to take the ass and the foal, makes me think that the west part, facing Jerusalem, must have represented the triumphant entry of our Lord into the Holy City. The figures which can still be seen bearing palms, on the two sides of the niche, are in favour of this hypothesis.

"This painting is much superior to the others. I believe, however, that it is by the same hand.

"On the façade of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre there is a Resurrection of Lazarus carved in the prolongation of the lintel. It is in great measure identical with that of Bethphage. Did the painter copy the sculptor? Perhaps while studying the vigorous bas-relief he may have acquired a more perfect understanding of the line and of light and shade. I am happy in having been able to copy this composition in time. At present it is greatly damaged; wet fingers have been passed over the figures, and have effaced them; many of them have quite disappeared.

"The fresco on the other side appears to be the blessing of the restoration of this little sanctuary. The notch which is observed in the upper part, about the middle, may have been to hide a defect in the stone.

"On clearing away the earth from our excavations we came upon a circular construction of a much more ancient appearance than the decoration of the *stèle*. The disposition and arrangement of the materials have nothing in common with Crusaders' work. Besides, at two metres from the circumference we found the fragment of a column standing still upright upon its base. Is this the first and most ancient

sanctuary, which those who restored the monument were unable to repair in its original grandeur? More complete examination of the place is required to prove the point.

"In any case, we ascertained that the *stèle* itself was in the centre of the circular space.*

"Near the monument lie a number of cisterns, some in ruins, some covered over and still in use. Their depth and size, and the fact that they are gathered together over a narrow space, their acknowledged antiquity, all go to prove that there once existed an important village in this place. Two of the reservoirs are in ruins; two others serve as watering-places for cattle. A small rocky ravine which used to feed these cisterns separates them towards the west from a mamelon which may very well be the site of Bethphage. I have seen on the ground broken pillars, fragments of marble pavement, an enormous quantity of broken Jewish pottery, and mosaic cubes of all colours, all of which have been brought to light by the cultivation of the soil.

"I one day met the proprietor on the spot at the moment when he was taking out of the ground a stone evidently once part of an aqueduct, and evidently of great age. I asked him if he found many things like it. He replied, 'You see all this place; I cannot dig anywhere without finding walls.' Then he added, 'There was formerly a city on this spot.' That, indeed, is the opinion of the whole country.

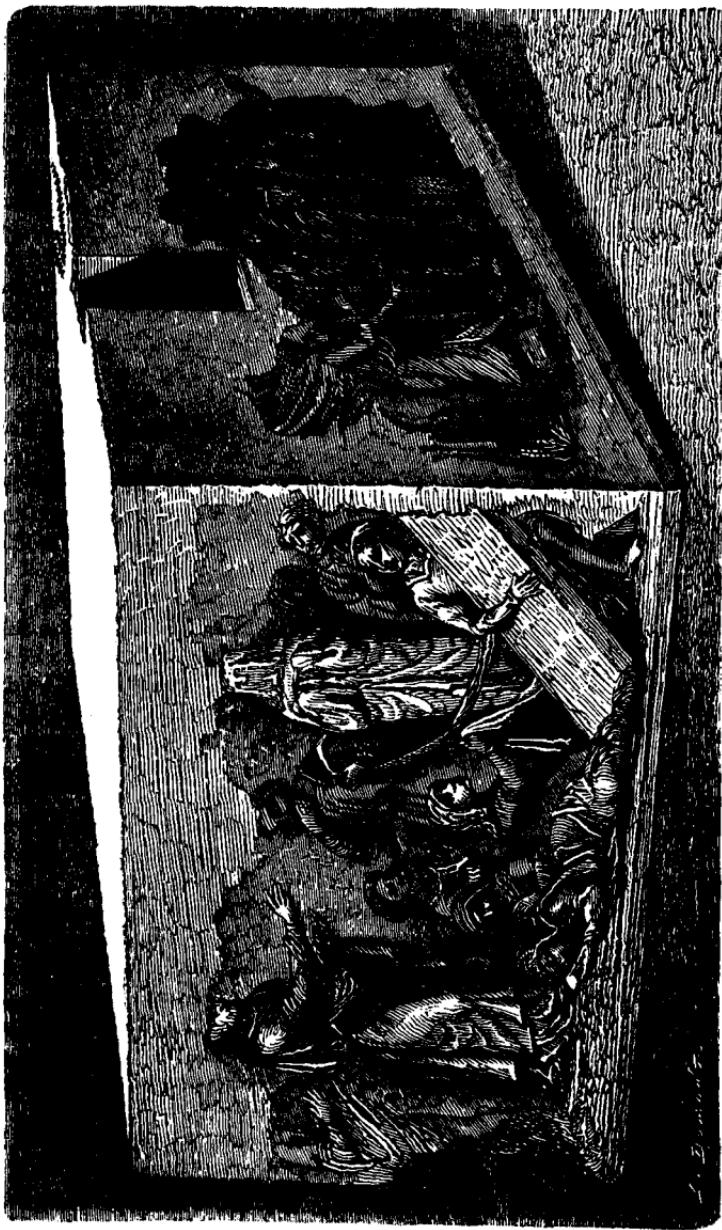
"It does not seem to me possible that Bethphage could have been placed on the side of a road which, shut in to right and left by two hills, is a mere gulf for the west wind, so terrible in this country. The old cities in the vicinity are all built on slopes which incline to the south-east. Now this mamelon near the cisterns has a similar inclination.

"Again let us turn to the sacred narrative. The Saviour came from Jericho towards Jerusalem; He had passed Bethany, and passed over the ground broken by the hills which separate the valleys of Bethany and Bethphage. 'Go,' He said to His disciples, 'to the village over against you' (Matt. xxi. 2). Now the road has not been changed, since it could have passed no other way than over the narrow ridge to join the Mount of Olives. If, then, the village was on the road, why send the disciples, since the Lord would pass it Himself? And if we look at the plan, we may be sure that the disciples, to make a short cut, descended the valley to climb the mamelon of Bethphage, while our Lord, with the rest of His disciples, continued to follow the road in the direction of the Mount of Olives, and there waited the return of the disciples.

"And to the faithful this stone would be that on which Jesus rested by the wayside and when He mounted the ass."

To this report M. Clermont Ganneau appends several pages of valuable comment. He points out that the niche shown in the drawing may, as Captain Guillemot suggests, have been carved on the stone originally, and in order to hide some defect; or it may have been cut by a *fellah* of more modern days to receive a beam for some construction of his

* See Lieut. Kitchener's Report and Plan, p. 61.



own. The inscription he ascribes, as beyond doubt, to the twelfth century. On one of the faces occurs the name of Bernard Witard. There appears in the Cartulary of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre the name of Johanne Guitard (= Witard). Probably Bernard belonged to this family, and defrayed the expenses of the monument.

As regards the constructions found round the *stèle*, M. Ganneau is of opinion, in which Lieut. Kitchener's observations (see plan, p. 61) support him, that the wall was not actually circular, but apsidal, and part of a church, and he calls attention to the importance of proving that the church was built before the stone was painted. His own discovery of the *taille mediævale* (*Quarterly Statement*, April, 1874) may be applied here.

As regards Captain Guillemot's suggestion that the stone may have been regarded as that on which our Lord rested, M. Ganneau brings direct proof that such was the case. He quotes Theodoricus de Locus Sanctis (A.D. 1072) :—“*Milliaro ab Hierosolymis Bethania, ubi domus Simonis leprosi, Lazari et ejus sororum Mariæ et Marthæ erat, distat, ubi Dominus sœpe hospitari solebat. Sita est autem Bethania juxta vallum Oliveti, montem à parte orientali terminantem. A Bethania ergo in die palmarum dilectissimus dominus noster Jesus Christus præcedens et Bethphage veniens, qui locus inter Bethaniam et montem Oliveti medius est, ubi etiam honesta capella in ipsius honore est fabricata binos ad adducendum asinam et pullum misit discipulos, et stans super lapidem grandem qui in ista capella manifeste videtur, et asino insidens per montem Oliveti Hierosolymam properavit cui turba multa in descensu montis ipsius obviam processit.*”—Tobler's edit. p. 52.

So that in the second half of the twelfth century they showed between the Mount of Olives and Bethany the site of Bethphage and the place where Jesus had sent two of His disciples to seek the ass and the colt. There they had raised a “fair chapel”—*honesta capella*—and in this chapel was visible the stone on which our Lord stood before mounting the ass.

“This rock,” says M. Ganneau, “can be no other than this monolith, from which the surrounding rock has been carefully cut away, lovingly covered on all sides by delicate paintings, which remind one of illuminations in a precious missal rather than an ordinary fresco drawn to hide the naked stone. . . . We may remember that the Crusaders had an especial predilection for fresco painting; they covered the walls of all the churches on the sacred sites with frescoes. Many pilgrims, especially John of Wurzburg, have preserved the description of these paintings, the subjects of which, all borrowed from the Old and the New Testament, were in accordance with the traditions of each sanctuary. These paintings were accompanied by long inscriptions, generally in rhymed Latin, according to the fashion of the time. It is a pity that John of Wurzburg did not visit the place and copy the inscriptions. He mentions, however, the church of Bethphage. Several other writers of the twelfth century speak of Bethphage and its church. Scœwulf, however (A.D. 1102), speaks as if a church had not yet been erected: ‘Bethphage, ubi

Dominus præmisit discipulos ad civitatem est in monte Oliveti, sed fere nusquam appetat."

Bernard (A.D. 865) says :—" In descensu etiam de monte Oliveti ad occidentalem plagam ostenditur marmor, de quo descendit dominus super pullum asinæ."

The " western " slope of Olivet will not fit in with our *stèle*, but the fact remains that in the ninth century such a stone was shown.

M. Ganneau goes on to show that the traditional site of Bethphage was maintained up to the 17th century. He concludes his paper (*Revue Archæologique*, Dec., 1877) as follows :—" We know, therefore, beyond any doubt, the point where the Crusaders localised the episode to which the name of Bethphage is attached. The ruins noticed by M. Guillemot not far from the painted stone belong to the Bethphage so called by the Crusaders. Is this mediæval Bethphage identical with that of the Gospel? This is a question quite distinct from the first. We know how different are opinions on the site of Bethphage. According to some who rely on the Greek text of Luke xix. 29, it is placed to the east or the south-east of Bethany; others consider it as identical with the modern village of Silwan; others, again, relying on the authority of the Talmud, make Bethphage a suburb of Jerusalem. For my own part, I confess that I ask myself whether Bethphage is not simply the village of the Mount of Olives called *Kefr et-Tür*. I believe this village ancient on account of its name of *Kefr*, on account of its situation, and on account of the ancient remains that one sees there. *Kefr et-Tür* means the *Village of the Mount of Olives*; it may formerly have had a designation more personal, which is lost. Now the Gospel tells us of an ancient locality whose name has disappeared; it is Bethphage, the *Village of the Mount of Olives*.

" This hypothesis will enable us to explain and understand certain Talmudic passages, which are all clear if one admits that Bethphage marked on the East the boundary of the Sabbath zone which on every side surrounded the city. The Mount of Olives (by which we may now understand a particular point of this mount) was exactly a Sabbath-day's journey from Jerusalem. And what point could this be except the village of the mountain which occupied its principal summit and now bears its name? "

II.

LIEUTENANT KITCHENER'S REPORT.

The road from the Mount of Olives to Bethany crosses a narrow ridge of land which joins the Mount of Olives to the hill above Bethany. On this narrow strip ancient tradition placed the site Bethphage, mentioned (Matt. xxi. 1; Mark xi. 1; and Luke xix. 29) as the place where our Lord mounted the ass for his triumphal entry into Jerusalem. The remains of an ancient chapel have been uncovered, dating probably from the twelfth or thirteenth century.

In the chapel there is an almost square block of masonry or rock covered with paintings; it measures 4ft. 3in. by 3ft. 6in. by 3ft. 10in.