

THE EXODUS

I.

GUILDFORD,

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THE interest in the land of Goshen has been steadily increasing of late, and M. Naville's discovery at Tell Mahûta, together with the late war, attracts attention to the topography of the Exodus. Having spent some weeks in this district, visiting Kantara, Ism'aïlieh, Tell Mahûta, and Tell el Kebîr, I venture to put together the ideas suggested by study on the spot.

There are two points which it is important to keep in view in treating this subject. *First*, the rate at which it would have been possible for the Israelites to travel. *Secondly*, the physical changes which must have taken place in the country since the date of the Exodus.

Rate.—It seems hardly possible to suppose that the Israelites, with women, children, flocks and herds, could, even when fleeing from their tyrants, have marched faster than the picked infantry of the British army. It is probable also that they did not at first expect to be pursued, having just found the Egyptians so anxious for their departure. It seems, therefore, reasonable to suppose that they did not go more than ten miles a day at most. The modern Arabs, when they move camp, do not generally travel more than about six miles at most in one day. It seems also important to keep clearly in mind the fact that *water* was indispensable to the very existence of the moving host, and we cannot therefore carry them into districts where only salt water could be found. They must have proceeded by caravan routes marked by wells, or else along existing arms of the Nile. The Pelusiatic branch was not then silted up, and it appeared clear to me that Wâdy Tumeilât is an old arm of the Nile. Practically we are reduced to two routes: First, that from *Sân* to Syria viâ Kantara, which is the modern caravan road; and second, that down Wâdy Tumeilât crossing by Ism'aïlieh. The discoveries and suggestions of Brugsch seem to point to the first, and the late discovery of M. Naville seems to point to the last.

Physical Features.—The experience of the Palestine survey rather leads to a rejection of the idea that great changes in fertility of oriental regions have taken place, and it is not to such conjectures that I would now refer, but to the question of the growth of the Nile delta, and the gradual advance of the Egyptian shore line. This is not a matter of conjecture at all, but of actual scientific observation, and it is one which profoundly affects the topography of the land of Goshen. Writers who assume that the shoals and sandpits of the present time existed fifteen centuries before Christ, cannot have read what has been written by engineers about the Nile. Those who wish to study this question in detail should refer to two very able articles in the "Edinburgh Review" for January, 1877, and July,

1879, called "Mediterranean Deltas," and "Brugsch's 'Egypt under the Pharaohs,'" where they will find the history of the Nile growth treated in detail, and the rather hasty theories of Brugsch considered from a practical and scientific point of view, with authorities of the soundest character duly quoted.

It is not only the Nile which has thus for many centuries been adding land to the maritime districts. The Po, the Tiber, the Rhone, the Danube, all increase in length by the growth of deltas which have been measured, and the Euphrates is equally active. In the time of Alexander the Great, the *Shatt el'Arab* had not been formed, and the mouths of the Tigris and Euphrates were a day's journey apart. The growth of the Euphrates delta goes on at the rate of a mile in seventy years, and Sir H. Rawlinson believes that formerly its rate was a mile in thirty years. Alexander founded the city Charax on the site of the present Mohammerah at a distance of only 2,000 paces from the sea, but that town was fifty miles inland in the time of Juba II, about the Christian era. In Sennacherib's time the sea ran up yet higher, for he crossed the Nar Marratum (cf. Jer. l, 21), or "salt water streams," into which Tigris and Euphrates flowed separately, when going to Naqitu or Bussorah. The modern Kornah, now 100 miles from the sea, was apparently then a seaport. The town of Uruk, or Mugheir (perhaps Ur of the Chaldees), appears to have been also once a seaport, where the fish-like Oannes appeared from the waters; and in 2000 B.C. Babylon was apparently only 150 miles from the sea, instead of 300 miles.

Turning again to the Nile, there is ample evidence of the growth of the Delta. Herodotus believed (ii, 5) that when Memphis was founded, thirty centuries before the Exodus, all Egypt except the Theban Nome was a marsh, and that none of those parts which afterwards existed below Lake Moeris (near Memphis) were then above water. This seems to agree with the derivation of the name Memphis, which some authorities translate "good harbour," though it is now 120 miles inland. It must be remembered that Sâh, or Zoan, eighty miles north-east of Memphis, existed already in the time of the 6th Dynasty, or about ten centuries before Abraham. Thus, instead of a bulging delta, the original Nile mouth at the dawn of history would seem to have been in a deep gulf, which has been ever since filling up with the fertile soil brought down from the Abyssinian highlands.

A few details of the Nile growth may be quoted. It should be noticed that Ptolemy does not show any part of Egypt further north than 31° north latitude, which is about the latitude of Zoan. The writer in the "Edinburgh Review" also recognises the artificial straight channels of the Phatmic and Bolbitic mouths far inland, believing that in the time of Herodotus (or eleven centuries after the Exodus) these mouths were only sixty geographical miles north of the bifurcation of the river. Herodotus (ii, 11) says that if the Nile had flowed into the Red Sea nothing could have prevented its being entirely filled up by the mud brought down by the river, and he says also distinctly that the Delta was formerly a bay of

the Mediterranean. He was not aware of the silting up of the Pelusiac mouth, which we now see to be a final result of the Nile mud, and it is probable that another mouth existed near Ism'aïlieh, belonging to an arm now represented by Wâdy Tumeilât, which even in Necho's time (600 B.C.) had ceased to exist and was replaced by his canal, still running parallel to the modern Sweet Water Canal on the south side. The Suez isthmus must have been partly formed by the mud brought down this arm; and the lakes Balah and Timsah, with the Bitter Lakes, are perhaps the survivals of the old arm of the Red Sea, which now extends only to Suez. The Suez Canal, in fact, is only a feeble human effort to counteract the mighty natural action of the great river of Egypt.

From the "Edinburgh Review" (Jan., 1877) we gather the following facts. The littoral current carries the Nile mud eastwards to the Syrian coast, where it assists in forming the sand dunes. There is no scour from Lake Menzaleh or from Port Said, and the dredging alone keeps open the canal mouth, 721,000 cubic yards having been dredged in 1875. The currents depend mainly on the wind, and the prevailing wind blows from the north-west. The Damietta mouth and the projecting coast east of Port Said have, according to Sir H. Rawlinson, the strongest currents, and the coast-line was here advancing at the rate of three-quarters of a mile between 1856 and 1875. The shore of the Pelusiac bay is advancing seawards at the rate of thirty-three yards per annum.

The observations of the well-known engineer, Mr. Fowler, in the service of the Khedive, are the most valuable we possess. The solid matter brought down in a year by the Nile is sixty-two millions of tons at least; the muddy colour of the sea at high Nile can be traced ten leagues from shore, and the soundings taken by Admiral Spratt between El Arish and Abu Kîr bay give depths of only fourteen to twenty fathoms at a distance of twenty miles from shore. The actual encroachment of the shore at Port Said between 1868 and 1873 was at the rate of fifty-six yards per annum, and the gradual historic growth of the Delta is placed at about half that rate. These are but a few of the remarkable observations collected in this paper, but in face of such facts Mr. Greville Chester's statement seems rather unsatisfactory. He admits the growth west of the hillock called *El Gelseh*, but says, "I am convinced by personal observation that such processes are not in operation at the present time to the east of that point." Mr. Chester has evidently not fully appreciated the stupendous character of the action of the Nile and the results of recent surveys. His proposal to stop the action at the precise point which suits his theory rather reminds us of King Canute's chair on the seashore, when we compare it with the surveys and soundings of engineers and Admiralty charts, for Admiral Spratt's chart shows the current to run as far even as Gaza.

The average rate of growth of the shore-line would thus seem to be about a mile in sixty years, which is less than that of Euphrates in early times, and there are no known counteracting causes. The mud must go somewhere, and as the wind is in the north-west for the greater part of

the year, most of the mud is washed along the coast eastwards, and the sea is brown with it leagues from shore. Even if we take the very late date given by Egyptologists for the Exodus (which I for one believe to be founded on the most insufficient evidence) we have an interval of thirty-two centuries between the time of Moses and our own times, which would be enough to give an increase in the shore-line of fifty miles—that is, for the formation of all that part of the Isthmus of Suez between Ism'ailieh and Port Said. No doubt we must make allowances for the deposit of the mud near the apex of the Delta, which would have been greater at first than now, and we must not forget the position and antiquity of Zoan; but even with these deductions we are left far south of the present shoal which closes Lake Menzaleh. It is impossible to travel through the dismal flats surrounding the Suez Canal, to look on the swamps and shallow waters of Menzaleh, or to examine the friable limestone deposits near Kantara, without recognising the action which has been thus going on for ages. The river pouring down its mud to the sea was met continually by the swell caused by the north-west wind. The sudden arrestation of the current caused a large precipitate of mud. A shoal thus formed at the mouth with an inland lake like Menzaleh or Mariût, and a glance at the map shows us a chain of such Serbonian bogs all along the Delta. As more soil was carried down, these gradually dried, and part of Menzaleh has dried since the canal was made. New shoals formed out at sea, new lakes were gradually enclosed and gradually dried, and all the time the isthmus was growing wider and wider, both at the north end and on the south, until the Tumeilât and Pelusiac branches of the Nile had been entirely choked with their own mud, and the Red Sea had been partly choked by the Nile—a fact which Herodotus did not suspect, as it had happened long before his time.

I have thus given pretty fully the reasons which induced me, in 1879, entirely to reject Dr. Brugsch's theory of the Exodus, and to express my disbelief in the identity of the old Serbonian bog with the lagoon near El Gelseh. No doubt a Serbonian bog existed in Roman times on this part of the coast, and the present lagoon is its successor; but the shore-line has gone seaward in places at least ten miles since then, and the ancient bog must now be dry land.

The highest land in the isthmus appears to be El Jisr, or the cutting north of Ism'ailieh; but even here there is no appearance of hard rock, and nothing to show that Africa was not, even within the time of man's habitation of the earth, a great island afterwards joined to Asia by the industrious Nile. As, however, Tell Defenneh appears to be an old Egyptian site, we should probably not be far wrong in supposing that the Mediterranean reached only to Kantara at the time of the Exodus, and that the Pelusiac Nile mouth here existed, and perhaps marshes or lakes represented by the existing lake Balah, connecting the Mediterranean with the head of the Red Sea, which might, without any extravagance, have been supposed to extend at least to the Timsah lake, where perhaps another Nile mouth yet existed, now represented by Wâdy Tumeilât. It was at Kantarah,

apparently, that the Egyptian road to Syria from Zoan crossed the line of the present canal in the time of the 19th Dynasty, and the history of the Nile deposit proves to us that, in writing about the Exodus, we have not to deal with an isthmus 100 miles wide, but with a narrow passage among marshes and lagoons between the ancient shores of the Red Sea and the Mediterranean.

I would repeat that this is not a matter of conjecture or opinion—it is one of scientific observation and historical evidence; and that, consequently, Dr. Brugsch's theory that the Israelites marched along a narrow shoal or strip of shore between the Mediterranean and the lagoon opening at Saranît, together with Mr. G. Chester's view that they went to El Gelseh, which he identifies with Mount Casius, or Canon Scarth's view that the Hebrews camped west of Tell Hîr, are all condemned by the fact that these dreary flats and dunes can be shown, by the observations of skilled engineers and surveyors, to have had no existence in the time of Moses.

In the review of Dr. Brugsch's History of Egypt above quoted in the "Edinburgh Review," these facts are dwelt upon, as well as the extraordinary improbability of the theory which makes the Israelites go out of their road, especially to travel along this dangerous boggy strip (for they were bound for Sinai, not for Syria), and which supposes that a mixed multitude with flocks and herds could have travelled forty miles in a single day along a waterless tract, and again which supposes the position of the Israelite camp to be indicated by references to places twenty or thirty miles away from each other.

By the light of such facts as have been collected by engineers, who were not thinking of the Exodus at all, we may now proceed to study the topography of the episode; but in our present state of knowledge concerning ancient Egypt it is not possible to treat the question with that amount of definition which we have attained to in Palestine, through the labours of the Exploration Society. I would, however, here put together a few notes as to Goshen, Rameses, Pithom, Etham, Succoth, Pi-ha-khiroth, Migdol, Baal-Zephon, the Yam Soph, and Marah, which may perhaps be useful to those interested in the subject.¹

Goshen.—The district of Goshen, or the "pastoral land," which Dr. Beke once placed in the Sinaitic peninsula, has been defined with tolerable precision (see "Handbook to the Bible," pp. 245–6) as being that part of the Delta which extends south of *Sân*, or Zoan, to the desert of hard sand and gravel south of the Sweet Water Canal. It included the Plain of Zoan (Ps. lxxviii, 11), and the LXX version speaks of Gesen of Arabia, thus apparently identifying Goshen with the Egyptian Arabian Nome, which

¹ I have not here referred to the theories of Josephus and the Septuagint as to the Exodus, in order not to confuse the question; for these later writers seem to understand a march from Heliopolis, near Cairo, which is quite impossible on account of distance. As they lived thirteen or fifteen centuries after Moses, their opinions are not of much importance.

agrees with the meaning of the two words. The capital of the Arabian Nome was called Gosem, and is identified by Brugsch ("Egypt under the Pharaohs," ii, 339) as the later Phacussa, the name of which survives in the ruin of Fakûs, about half way between Sân and Tell el Kebîr.

Colonel Tulloch suggested to me that the district round Kassasin, which is now desert, was once irrigated and fertile. There is no doubt that the fertility of Wâdy Tumeilât is rapidly decreasing, and it [is] probable that the fertile strip here existing along the course of the Sweet Water Canal was once much broader and less sandy. I could, however, see nothing which led to the supposition that the higher ground about Kassasin, Tell el Kebir, and northwards to Salahyeh, was ever anything but a desert. It consists of hard sand covered with rounded pebbles.

This, however, is a question of degree only, for rich pastures must have existed along the Tumeilât and Pelusiac branches, and the Israelite shepherds no doubt wandered along the valley by which the British army advanced in 1882.

Rameses.—This city, which has wandered from Heliopolis, near Cairo, to Tell Mahûta, near Ism'ailieh, has apparently been brought to anchor by Brugsch at Sân, or Zoan. Zoan is found to have existed in the time of the 6th Dynasty, but Brugsch finds it to have been called Pi Ramessu by Rameses II. The identification is not by any means complete, because the land of Raameses is mentioned in the Bible long before the Exodus (Gen. xlvii, 11-27), and the identification can hardly be reconciled with M. Naville's identification of Succoth at Tell Mahûta. One of the chief arguments in favour of the date proposed by Egyptologists for the Exodus is founded on the mention of Rameses as the starting-point (Exod. xii, 37, Num. xxxiii, 5), but the earliest mention of the land of Rameses in Genesis destroys much of the force of the argument, for no critic has as yet proposed to make the descent of Jacob into Egypt as late as the time of Miamun, the founder of Pi Ramessu. Mr. Poole has shown that the name Rameses was given to a prince before the time of Rameses I, and the worship of Ra—the midday sun—from whom the name Ra-meses, or "Servant of Ra," is derived, is very ancient in Egypt. It does not, therefore, appear to be quite certain that the Rameses of Exodus is Zoan, although the wording of the Psalm (lxxviii, 11) favours such a view.

Pithom (Exod. i, 11), that is, Pi-Tum, the city of Tum, the rising sun, was the second store city built by the Israelites, but it is not mentioned in the account of the Exodus, unless we suppose it to be Etham, which philologically would not be impossible. Herodotus knew of a Patumos which might very well be Pithom, near the canal from Bubastis to the Red Sea—that is, in or near Wâdy Tumeilât (ii, 158), and he calls it the Arabian city. The Antonine Itinerary, in the second century A.D., places Thou, or Thoum, fifty Roman miles from Heliopolis, and forty-eight from Pelusium. Both these notices would agree very fairly with M. Naville's discovery of Pithom at Tell Mahûta, where Linant placed Rameses, and where General Willis's headquarters and the Guards' brigade were posted until shortly before

the Tell el Kebir battle. The time of my visit was not favourable to archæological purposes, but there were plain indications in the great sand mounds of works more ancient and formidable than those of Arabi's troops, and Necho's canal still exists as a fetid ditch south of the so-called Sweet Water Canal.

Succoth.—M. Naville also identifies the same site with Succoth, the Egyptian Thuku. The Nome of Thuku was the eighth, and Pithom was its capital; it is the later Sethroite nome, the capital of which was Herculopolis Parva, according to Brugsch (ii, 340). This connection of Pithom and Succoth induces Brugsch to place Pithom north of the modern Kantarah, in order to agree with his theory of the Exodus. If Pithom and Succoth be identical, the latter is the Semitic or Hyksos name, meaning "tents."

Etham, according to Brugsch, is to be identified with an Egyptian Khetam, or "fortress," of which there appear to have been several. It may be objected that the Hebrew does not contain the guttural of the Egyptian, and the new site for Succoth will certainly not agree with the theory of Brugsch. The Khetam to which he refers is represented as a fortress astride a river, close to a city called Tabenet, or Dapeneh, which he supposes to be the Daphnai of Herodotus (ii, 30) near Pelusium, which is identified with the present Tell Defenneh, some twenty miles south-east of Zoan. Khetam of Menephtah is, however, mentioned in papyri of the 19th Dynasty as in the "land of Sukot," near Pitom, and "the lakes" of Pitom. It does not appear to be by any means certain that this is the Khetam of the land of Zal (or Zoan) which opened its gates to Rameses Miamun, whence he marched north through the desert to attack the Hittites; and Brugsch himself tells us that there were several such Khetams.

A good deal of stress has been laid by Brugsch on an Egyptian account of a journey in pursuit of runaway slaves in the time of Seti-II ("Egypt under the Pharaohs," ii, 132). The writer starts from Zoan and reaches Thuku on the following day, and on the fourth he arrives at a certain Khetam, or "fortress," lying south of the former, north of which is a Migdol of King Seti. There is a curious parallelism of names, but there is no real identification deducible from this document with respect to the Exodus route, for, as we have seen, there were several Khetams, and there seem to have been also several Migdols, while the word Khetam is not of necessity the Hebrew Etham.

Migdol—"the tower"—is, like Succoth, a Semitic name, and the nomenclature of the eastern part of the Delta was in great part Semitic, for it was here that the Semitic Hyksos lived for five centuries, until expelled by the great 18th Dynasty. A Magdolum, twelve miles from Pelusium, on the route leading to the Serapeum, is mentioned in the Antonine Itinerary, which would be a little north of Kantarah. There was a Migdol of Seti, the name of which, according to Brugsch, was Samut, in the land of Hazian, and this he places at Tell Samût, near Kantarah, identifying the land of Hazian with the later Casius, near the Serbonian bog ("Egypt under the Pharaohs," i, 207). Samût is supposed to have been the Egyptian,

and Migdol the Semitic name of this site ; but we may note that Migdol is a name which, in hieroglyphic character, would not easily be distinguished from Miktor.

The Migdol of the Exodus (Exod. xiv, 2) was apparently near the sea (Yam Soph), and the Israelite camp was between the two. I noticed with great interest on the Staff Map of Egypt a Bir Mejdol marked north-east of Ism'aïlieh. This may perhaps indicate the site of another Migdol, and the vicinity might with advantage be explored.

Pi-ha-Khiroth.—This is rendered by Brugsch (ii, 363) "entrance to the gulfs," but the public should be warned that Renouf has devoted a long and learned paper, printed in the "Transactions of the Biblical Archæological Society" (November 7th, 1882), to this word, and that he has shown pretty conclusively that Dr. Brugsch's word Khiroth does not exist. Thus we fall back on the two earlier derivations given by Gesenius and other authorities, that from the Hebrew meaning "mouth of caverns," and that from the Coptic signifying "place of sedge." It is curious that the name of *Tell el Hîr* does not seem to have been connected by Brugsch with *Khiroth*, though it seems radically to represent the Hebrew. In the LXX the word *επαλωος* ("farms," or "pastures") appears to represent Pi-ha-Khiroth. This would agree very well with the fact that the Israelites encamped at this spot, where they would have found pasture for their cattle. Brugsch makes Tell el Hîr to be the Hyksos Avaris, but if we take the Pi to be the same Egyptian prefix found in Pi Ramessu and Pithom, there is perhaps no reason why Pi-ha-Khiroth may not be the same as Avaris or Hawar.

Baal-Zephon ("Lord of the north," or of the "dark") is naturally to be connected with Typhon, or Tzephon, the dark Semitic enemy of Osiris. On Egyptian monuments, however, Baal-Zapuna is mentioned apparently as identical with Amon, "Lord of the North," and Brugsch suggests an identity with the later Jupiter Casius, and thus with the land of Hazion. The term Baal-Zephon might, on the other hand, be merely rendered "Ridge of the North." It is perhaps worthy of consideration, whether the name Bîrket Bâlah has any connection with this Semitic Baal, who like Set was no doubt a Hyksos divinity. Brugsch places Baal-Zephon at El Gelseh, but if this mound existed at the time of the Exodus, which could only be determined by a geological examination of the spot, it was probably as a rock in the sea, round which the shoals have since formed. If we were to accept the route proposed by Brugsch, the Israelites must have marched more than *forty miles* in a single day, which is an achievement never attained to by the picked infantry of Germany, over hard roads, and clearly impossible for a mixed multitude in the quicksands of the Gelseh shoal.

Yam Soph.—There has been a tendency among all writers, since Brugsch's theory was first published, to suppose that the Israelites crossed some part of the Mediterranean, and not, as previously supposed, over the Red Sea. It is therefore necessary to state clearly what is known as to the Yam Soph, which the Greek translators render Erythrean Sea.

The word *Soph* appears to be the Egyptian *Tufi*, and applies to the "flags" among which the ark of bullrushes was laid (Exod. ii, 2). The bullrushes were papyrus plants, but the *Suph* may have been marine plants, or seaweeds, as pointed out by Canon Tristram, for the word is again used (Jonah ii, 5) in connection with the sea, "the weeds were wrapped about my head," evidently referring to algæ. The words *Gome* and *Akhu* are those which properly refer in the Bible to papyri and river vegetation.

The Yam Soph is a term applied in a later book of the Bible (1 Kings ix, 26) to the Gulf of Akabah; but it is of more importance to our present subject to observe that Israel again camps by the Yam Soph (Num. xxxiii, 10) after leaving Elim on their way to Sinai. There is thus no escape possible from the fact that the Gulf of Suez, rather than any part of the Mediterranean, or its lagoons, is the sea intended in the account of the Exodus by the Hebrew Yam Soph, rightly paraphrased by the Greek translators as Erythrean or Red Sea.

A distinction has been drawn by some writers between the "sea" by which the Israelites encamped (Exod. xiv), and the Yam Soph. There is no doubt, however, that it was the Yam Soph in which the Egyptians were drowned, and which the Israelites crossed (Exod. xv, 4); and the distinction is not a very probable one, as the writer would perhaps have been more definite in his wording if he was speaking of two different seas.

As regards the "east wind" (Exod. xiv, 21) which divided the waters, it should also be noted that there is by no means a consensus of opinion as to the translation. The Hebrew root is קדם, which means "before," of time or place, and the meaning may perhaps be only "contrary" or "opposing." The Greek translation is "a south wind," and the Latin Vulgate has *urens*, or "burning." It is difficult to see how a due east wind, which is not generally a strong wind, can have affected either the Red Sea or the Mediterranean, which would be driven back by north and south winds respectively.

Marah.—This was the camp where bitter water was found by Israel, after three days' journey through the wilderness of Shur (Exod. xv, 22, 23), in a waterless tract. If Marah could be fixed we might have another indication of the line of passage. It is therefore worthy of notice that on the Staff Map of Egypt a *Bir Murrah* is marked, east of Ism'ailieh, and on the Asiatic side of the canal. The modern name is identical with the Hebrew Marah, "bitter," and such wells are generally very ancient. Bir Murrah is about twenty-five miles south of Kantarah, and this would represent quite a maximum three days' march for a mixed multitude who were short of water.

We have thus two sets of identifications to consider, belonging to two routes, one leading to Kantarah, and one to Ism'ailieh—the first being that advocated by Brugsch, and the second that noted in the valuable paper by Mr. Poole, in Smith's Bible Dictionary. These sites would be as follows:—

| (EXOD. XII, 37 ; XIII, 20 ; XIV, 2.) NORTH ROUTE. | | | SOUTH ROUTE. |
|---|------|---|-----------------------------|
| Rameses | | Sâh (or Zoan). | — |
| Pithom | | — | Tell Mahûtah. |
| Succoth | | — | Tell Mahûtah. |
| Etham | | Khetam (Tell De-fenneh). | |
| Pi-ha-hiroth | | Gelseh Hameideh (Brugsch), Tell el Hir? (C.R.C.) | — |
| Migdol | | Tell Samût (Brugsch). | Bîr Mejdal? (C.R.C.) |
| Baal-Zephon | | Gelseh (Brugsch). | — |
| Yam Soph.... | | Lagoon of Gelseh (Brugsch). | Birket Timsah. |
| Marah | | Bîr Murrah? (C.R.C.) | Bitter Lakes or 'Ayûn Mûsa. |

Such appears to be the present state of our information as to the two routes. I would not venture to express an opinion between authorities like Brugsch and Poole, but one or two notes may be added which, with the three suggestions above given as to Pi-ha-khiroth, Migdol, and Marah, may perhaps be useful in further discussion of the question.

In the first place, the Israelites started from Rameses, and journeyed to Succoth (Exod. xii, 37) apparently in one day. Now if Succoth be really Tell Mahûtah, it seems quite impossible to suppose that the Rameses of this passage is Zoan or Pi-Ramessu, which lies thirty-five miles north of Tell Mahûtah, a distance far too great for a single day's journey of a mixed multitude; the road leading, moreover, for more than half the distance over a waterless desert.

If we accept the south route we must either seek for a second Rameses, perhaps older than the time of Rameses Miamun, or we must consider merely the "land of Raamses" to be intended (Gen. xlvii, 11), a district equivalent to Goshen.

Secondly, it must be confessed that Brugsch's identifications of Etham, Migdol, Pi-ha-hiroth, and Baal-Zephon cannot be considered to be very convincing. They are no doubt possible (save the last), and agree together fairly, giving journeys of ten miles per diem as far as Etham, but afterwards becoming quite out of all possibility in distance.

Thirdly, a great deal hinges on the expression, "turn and encamp before Pi-ha-hiroth" (Exod. xiv, 2). This site cannot have been more than about twenty miles from Succoth, and ten from Etham, and the definition would suggest its close proximity to Baal-Zephon and Migdol, which Brugsch entirely neglects, placing Pi-ha-hiroth fifteen miles from his Migdol, and thirty miles from his Baal Zephon, which would be like defining Tunbridge as between London and Hastings—not a very minute topographical indication. Now the word "turn," though rendered also "turn back" by the Greek translators, appears to come from the root **ישב**, which means to

“abide” or “inhabit,” and if we were to render it “stay and encamp,” the meaning would perhaps be more accurately conveyed. This is, however, a question to be decided by a Hebrew scholar, and is only indicated here as one for examination.

The two routes thus appear each to have arguments in their favour, but the general impression which a study of the ground, and of what has been written, has made upon me, is that the southern route is the most probable. If we could find Etham near Neffsheh, and if we have a survival of the name Migdol in Bir Mejdol, then the route of the Israelites will prove to have been down Wâdy Tumeilât, from the land of Rameses, through Pithom or Succoth.

The *Gîsr*, or “isthmus,” north of Ism’ailieh, is about fifty feet above sea-level. It seems to be the nucleus of the isthmus, and it may have existed at the time of the Exodus, separating the Mediterranean from the Yam Soph, or “weedy sea,” a swamp formed near Ism’ailieh, where the Tumeilât branch of the river was perhaps still pouring its mud into the Red Sea. If this isthmus existed we can have no hesitation in accepting the Tumeilât route, and in discarding all ideas of a connection with the Mediterranean. If it did not, lagoons and swamps may have connected the Red Sea and Mediterranean, and the precarious crossing through these might have occurred near Kantarah, in which case it might be just possible to place Pi-ha-hiroth at Tell Hîr. It seems, on the whole, more probable that pastures near the Nile mouth not far from Ism’ailieh are intended, and that Baal-Zephon is to be sought south-east of Birket Balah.

There are two important notes to be finally considered. The first in Exodus xiii, 17, the second in Exodus xiv, 3. The first states that “God led the people about through the way of the Yam Soph,” “God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near.” The second states that “Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, they are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in.” Both these statements appear to me to favour the southern route. The way to the land of the Philistines was, without doubt, that from Zoan to Kantarah, and thence to Gaza, which is still the road to Syria, the only line which can be followed, because there are wells along it, and one which was probably not far from the Mediterranean shore at the time of the Exodus, when Zoan and Daphnai were almost seaports. This route *was* near to the Israelites in Zoan, it was the direct one to Syria, and a very possible one even if they were going to Sinai.

The second passage came vividly to my mind in advancing to Kassasin. There was wilderness on either hand, and if we could have been driven from the Sweet Water Canal we should indeed have been “entangled in the land,” shut in as we were in the desert. The mixed host, if it went out along Wâdy Tumeilât by a branch perhaps of the Nile, *were* going by the way of the Yam Soph. They had their enemies behind, or perhaps north-west of them, and a forced march from Pi-Ramessu and Salahiyyeh would have enabled the Egyptians to seize the head of the gulf, as then existing at Ism’ailieh, and to drive the poor fugitives into the sea which was in

front of them ; for the chariots and chariot horses (wrongly rendered horsemen) of Pharaoh could have covered the ground at least twice as fast as the women, children, flocks and herds of Israel.

As we went up the canal we witnessed an Exodus which had something in common with that of Israel. The poor peasants of Port Said and Ism'ailieh had been taught to expect every sort of outrage from the ferocious Franjis. Even when they learned the humanity of the English they were still (as they assured me) "only afraid of the booms," or cannon shot. The women, with great bundles on their heads, their blue robes tucked up, their babies hung behind them in their veils ; aged men helped by their sons ; the family property on a little donkey ; the weeping children and the hungry-looking men, recalled strangely the idea of that motley host which accompanied the armed men of Israel ; and the slow progress of the departing Fellahin, even though left quite uninjured by our troops, gave a practical example of the impossibility of Brugsch's theory of a forty mile march. With the chariots of Pharaoh dashing over the pebbly desert to the north, or down the valley behind ; with sand dunes covered only with dry tussocks of grass to north and south, with the swampy river-mouth in front and the sea to the right, the yellow hills of the wilderness beyond the sea, the dry wind from the north-east burning their lips, what position could have been humanly more hopeless than that of the children of Israel when Moses "stretched out his hand over the sea ?"

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II.

WHEN one has read Mr. Scarth's pleasing paper (*Quarterly Statement*, October, 1882) on the "Route of the Exodus," has one arrived at any probable conclusion as to that route ? I think not. The suggestion is, doubtless, a novelty—that the course of the Israelites from the encampment near Migdol was *westward*. Naturally, therefore, the question may be asked, Where would they be supposed to be going ? Such a course is neither the "way of the wilderness," nor that road to Palestine which is called "the way of the land of the Philistines." So much light is being thrown gradually on this not unimportant biblical subject, that one almost wishes a sort of standard might be set up—a literary Nilometer—to show how far we had safely got in our investigations from time to time.

As one reads, for instance, Herr Brugsch's essay on "The Exodus and the Egyptian Monuments" (1874), and Mr. Greville Chester's paper (1880), one thinks such antagonists can never come to terms. The addenda and notes to either production show how little space of real difference lies between the two historians.

Now there are very reasonable geographical boundaries to the subject, viz., "Ramses" and "the wilderness of Sin." There are boundaries also in *time* for the passage between these two places,—“and all the congrega-