

THE ROCK OF ETAM AND THE CAVE OF ADULLAM.

I.—By the Rev. W. F. BIRCH, M.A.

It is pleasant to observe that neither Professor Ganneau (p. 80) nor Lieut.-Colonel Conder (p. 82) offers any objection topographically to these places. The instance of Deir Dosi (Theodosius) cited by the former suffices to show that Chariton is not to be suspected merely because the term *Mar Khureitun* is not now in use. My suspicion, however, that the hermit who lived near (or in) the Cave of Etam (Chor Etam) acquired the name of Chariton from his residence still lingers. Some mystery seems to hang over this ascetic. Apparently he is not thought worthy of a place in Smith's "Dictionary of Christian Biography." Some say he founded two Lauras, others one. In Ritter's note on Khureitun reference is made to a life of Chariton in "Acta Sanctorum" (September 28th, p. 615). If the hermit of Etam previously had a different name I shall be satisfied that we have been imposed upon as to Chariton. Perhaps some reader will kindly search the "Acta" and report.

Eureka.—The reference is wrong. Let me give the story briefly from Sosius, *Vita Charitonis* :—

Chariton hailed from Iconium. During a persecution he was asked his name and religion. The former question he passed (I suppose) as impertinent; to the latter he answered "Christian." After being repeatedly tortured, short of killing point, lest he could not be tortured further, he was released. Off he went to the Holy City. In a narrow place, a day's march from Jericho, he fell among thieves, was robbed, bound, and led into a cave, the brigands' den. They started after more game, while Chariton prayed. A serpent coming in, drained a jar of wine and filled it instead with venom. The robbers return thirsty, swallow the venom as wine, and fall dead. Chariton's bonds fall off; he gets for himself the robbers' treasure, and erects a Laura, turning the den of thieves into a Church. Harassed by visitors he flits, and builds a second Laura near Jericho; harassed again, he flits again, and builds a third Laura (in Wady Khureitun) about 2 miles from Tekoa. He is harassed yet a third time. Happily he had learnt that there was a certain cave (the Cave of Adullam) situate in a precipitous and craggy mountain, and not far distant from this (last) holy Laura, which (cave) to this day (says Sosius) is called *Cremastus*, i.e., the suspended cave, for no one is able to reach it without ladders. Here the illustrious man makes his abode. After a long time, when he was too old to minister to himself, and too holy to be served by others ("*petra rursus non virgâ percussa sed precatatione aquam emittit*"), on his praying, from one side of the cave immediately there gushes out the coldest and purest water, which remains (or flows) to this day, not assuaging thirst only, but also being a perfect proof of the saintliness of Chariton.

Why the coyness of Chariton as to his name? I can see that the hermit who dwelt in the Cave of Etam (Chor Etam) might well be nicknamed after his abode; but until some explanation is offered, I fail to see (1) how, while *Aitán* may represent Etam (Names and Places in O. Test.), neither *Eitám*, nor *Aytán*, nor *Eitán* (as variously spelt) may represent Etam; and (2) why *Khur* (Arabic) cannot come from the Hebrew *Chor*. Ritter gives "*Chareitun* or *Khureitun*." Let me hope that before long the Cave of Khureitun will once more be known as the Cave of Adullam, and the gorge as the Cleft of the Rock Etam.

II.—By the Rev. J. E. HANAUER.

Having read, with great interest, the Rev. W. F. Birch's paper on the "Rock of Etam and the Cave of Adullam" in the *Quarterly Statement* for October, 1895, and also his series of articles on "Hiding Places in Canaan, the Rock of Rimmon," &c., &c., I would, in the following, briefly call his attention and that of such of your readers as may be interested in the subject, to the fact that there exists, not so far away from Samson's country as is the Wady Khureitun, but at the distance of little more than a mile or two from his birthplace, Zorah, and yet within the boundaries of the territory of the tribe of Judah, amongst the mighty crags overhanging the gorge of Wady Ismain on the north, a gigantic rock or סלע *sel'a*, in which there is a remarkable fortified cavern or natural stronghold, which (as is proved by the existence of a small building—perhaps once a chapel—in its mouth, mosaic pavements, cisterns, and the remains of a massive masonry frontage wall, which, in the days when recluses and hermits swarmed in this country, screened and rendered it a veritable "Megaspilion" on a small scale), was at one time used, like the Cave at Khureitun, as a "laura," or the headquarters of a community of ascetics.¹ In 1890 I had the honour of forwarding you, along with

¹ Though I have, as yet, not succeeded in discovering any record referring to this laura, yet in its immediate surroundings there is a circumstance that indicates that, unlike the "anachoretēs," who, choosing a hermit life in the wilderness, professed to spend the whole of their time in meditation and prayer, whilst they lived upon the alms of the faithful and whatever else they could find, the inmates of the cœnobium at 'Arāk Ismain were not only "religious," but also "industrious." (Neander, "Kirchengeschichte," Band II, Abtheilung 2, pp. 356-360.) Clinging to the declivity of the 'Arāk, below though far down beneath the great cave, is a grove of very ancient olive trees. That these were originally planted and tended by the monks is proved by the fact that the trees are still considered sacred. They now belong to the "wakf" of the Sheikh Ismain, whose shrine is in the valley. The fellahin in the neighbouring villages have a wholesome dread of incurring the saint's wrath by stealing either wood or olives from this interesting grove, which is sadly neglected. An Artúf peasant very gravely told me that some years ago

other photographs, one of the small building above mentioned. As this great cavern lay just out of the way of ordinary visitors to Palestine, it succeeded in escaping the observation of explorers till, a good many years ago, I called the special attention of Baurath von Schick to it. He had, as he informed me, seen it from a distance, and as the night was drawing on, when in 1864 he accompanied the late Dr. Zimpel on a journey made through this part of the country with the object of surveying the most practicable route for the then projected railway. It was not, however, till I had described the place *in detail* to him, and told him my reasons for believing it to be the rock Etam of Judges xv, 8-11, that he was induced to allow me the honour of guiding him to a spot from which he could get a near view of the great cave, though his age prevented him from hazarding a descent to it. This was on the 23rd or 24th of October, 1885, when he also examined the Zorah altar, a columbarium, and some other curious old remains which I had the pleasure of pointing out to him. (See "Khurbet 'Orma," *Quarterly Statement*, January, 1886, pp. 24-26.) In the "Zeitschrift" of the German "Palestina Verein" for 1887, and also in "Neueste Nachrichten aus dem Morgenlande," he describes all these things, as well as others, and also endorses my opinion, above-mentioned, about the 'Arak Ismain, and which I first ventured to broach in my paper dated November 3rd, 1885. (*Quarterly Statement*, 1886, p. 25, lines 17-20.) The 'Arak and its cave form a fastness that completely and remarkably satisfies, and *better than does that at Khureitun*, all the requirements of the Bible story. The cave is approached by descending through a crack or fissure in the very edge of the cliffs overhanging the chasm of Wady Ismain. The crack is scarcely wide enough to allow one person to squeeze through at a time. It leads down to the topmost of a long series of rudimentary steps, or small artificial foot-ledges, cut in the face of the cliff, and descending to a narrow rock terrace running along the front of the cave, and between it and the fragments of massive wall above described. On this ledge or platform, which resembles that at Khureitun, there also lie huge blocks of stone as large as those Mr. Birch describes. Blue rock pigeons have their nests in the ancient cisterns partly hewn into and partly solidly built against the precipice rising from the back of the ledge. The largest cistern has a fair-sized wild fig tree growing from its bottom, whilst bushes of terebinth, caper, carob, and rue spring from chinks in the rocky wall rising above it. Upon the platform, and also inside the smoke-blackened cave itself, which I have frequently visited, I have often picked up feathers of vultures and other large and fierce birds whose eyries are in the crevices and cracks of the rocks overhanging

a man who had dared to steal wood from here, was, a short time afterwards, found dead, together with his camel, in an empty *مافهمه* *mafhameh* or charcoal-burner's cave, into which he had retreated for shelter during a storm. It was, of course, the "wely" that drove him to his destruction, and thus punished the sacrilege of which he had been guilty.

the ledge. This fact alone would suffice to justify the title of this savage spot to the name of עֵיטָם "Etam," or "the Haunt of the Bird of Prey." Even the remark of Josephus, about Samson's "descent" to the 3,000 men of Judah, referred to by the Rev. W. F. Birch, is true to nature, for though to ascend to and storm the cave in the face of a determined defender would be impossible, yet to descend from it to the torrent-bed almost sheer down several hundred feet below, though not easy, is, as the Palestine Exploration Fund's Honorary Secretary for Palestine, the Rev. T. E. Dowling (who once tried the experiment with me), can testify, quite possible. The railway now runs alongside this torrent-bed and in full view of the cavern of the staircase leading down to it and of the vaulted structure inside it, so that every student of the Bible passing by on his way to or from the Holy City, can, as he gazes awe-struck at the frowning precipices towering so high above him, imagine the scene which Mr. Birch asks the Executive Committee's artist to depict, viz., "The shaggy Nazarite standing alone on the 'dizzy' ledge near the cave's mouth, terrible in mien, and as wild as the beetling cliffs around," &c.

At a short distance higher up the valley there are, amongst the crags, in continuation of the 'Aràk Ismain, other hermits' caves, called "Alàli el Benat." I have not visited these, but am told, by persons who have, that "one of them contains a small spring of very good water." This at once recalls the curious reference which Mr. Birch brings forward from the Alexandrian Codex of the LXX, "by the brook in the Cave of Etam."

In his German paper, Herr von Schick adduces an argument somewhat similar to Mr. Birch's, to show that the theory that the "sel'a" Etam was at Beit 'Atàb is untenable, and he also shows that the theorist is apparently dissatisfied with the identification he has proposed, "for in the *Quarterly Statement* for 1876, p. 176, and for 1883, p. 183, he searches for En Hakkore somewhere near Kesla, north-east of Artùf; for Lehi at Khurbet es Siagh: for Ramath Lehi at Khurbet Marmita, and for 'the Jawbone,' in the ravine of Ismain. By so doing," says the Baurath, "he approaches my view of the matter in this, that he considers the district round Artùf fitter for the history of Samson than that at Beit 'Atàb."

I would conclude with the remark that with the 'Aràk Ismain and its "cleft" or gorge so near the scene of other events in the Danite hero's life, it seems utterly needless to seek for the "sel'a" Etam at such a distance from the Shephelah as is Khureitun.¹

¹ The Rev. W. F. Birch's derivation of the name Khureitun is extremely ingenious but, I think, untenable. The ascetic Chariton did not have the title of *Mar* prefixed to his name because the traditional Cave of Adullam was the head-quarters of the heretical and fanatic sect of the "Origenists," who lived in deadly and long-continued feud with their "Orthodox" brethren at Mar Saba and other monasteries. I am, however, inclined to derive the name "Khureitun," or rather "Choreutün," (the diphthong "eu" pro-