

## THE STANDING STILL OF THE SUN UPON GIBEON.

By Rev. W. F. BIRCH, M.A.

THE notion (Ecclus. xlvi, 4) that there "was one day as long as two" is topographically unnecessary and Biblically gratuitous. Let it be tested.

(1) From Gilgal, by Gibeon to Makkedah (Mem. II) is not quite 50 miles, with an ascent of 3,100 feet, and descent of 2,000 feet. Picked men could easily cover the distance in 24 hours. Joshua went up all night to Gibeon, about 20 miles. By early dawn he had swooped upon the unsuspecting Amorites. These made no stand anywhere (Josh. x, 8), but fled towards Beth-horon, butchered like sheep by the pursuing Israelites. Meanwhile a black mass of clouds was driving up from the sea. As he looked down the famous pass of Beth-horon, the over-spreading darkness seemed to Joshua to favour the escape of the fugitives. Under this persuasion he said, "Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon: and thou, Moon, in the valley of Aijalon." The sun's appearing near Gibeon shows that it was still early. Joshua had no need to ask for *time*—what he wanted was *light*, while the nearing storm presaged a sun going down "while it was yet day" (Jer. xv, 9). Elijah's prayer gathered heaven's blackness; Joshua's voice now fissured it, so that for Israel neither sun nor moon were obscured at all the whole day. The storm, indeed, discharged its crushing hail upon the flying Amorites, and the wheeling clouds poured incessant destruction upon them as far as Azekah; yet Israel remained unscathed, as in Egypt and during the disaster at Nob (*Quarterly Statement*, 1891, p. 314). More time was not needed; for the hardy ancestors of warriors who afterwards fought at Gibeon, pursued to Ammah and came to Hebron at break of day, were well able to cap a forced march of 18 miles by a slaughter spread over 24 miles, and to complete both within 24 hours. Ben-Sirach ought not to decoy us into foolishly making nimble men creep over 24 miles of victorious ground at the rate of one mile, still less of two-thirds of a mile, per hour. Yet this is inevitable if "one day was as long as two."

(2) In the Bible, as elsewhere, apparent movement is described

as real movement, *e.g.*, "the sun went down." Many are familiar with the misleading appearance of the full moon rushing behind a cloud, when really the cloud passes over the moon. Further in the Bible the sun is said "to go down," when it disappears for the day, *e.g.* (Jer. xv, 9), "Her sun is gone down, while it was yet day," and Amos viii, 9, "I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day." This parallelism shows that "going down" simply implies "disappearing for the day." How otherwise could the sun go *down* at *noon*? "Standing still" is apparently the opposite to "going up" (1 Sam. xiv, 9), and "going down" (Josh. x, 13). So in this passage the words, "And the sun stood still and the moon stayed," simply mean, according to the Biblical usage, that, in the tempest, the black clouds never obscured the disk of the sun or the moon; or, more briefly, that the sun, instead of apparently rushing behind the clouds, "stayed in the midst of heaven and hastened not to go down about a whole day." As with the hail and darkness in Egypt, so now the Lord fought for Israel in sending and guiding the storm, for destruction to the Amorites, but for safety and light to Israel, but not by any unnecessary and useless prolongation of one day into two.

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By the Rev. Canon DALTON, C.M.G.

WE have all been reading with very great interest and admiration vol. i of M. Clermont-Ganneau's "Archæological Researches in Palestine in 1873-4," the most recent and, from some points of view, one of the most valuable and suggestive publications ever issued by the Palestine Exploration Fund, replete as is its every page with scholarly and trustworthy information. There are two minor points referred to in that work on which I should much like to venture to ask his further opinion.

The first regards the large plate opposite p. 144, which represents "a capital of white marble in one of the minarets of the Haram esh-Sherif at Jerusalem." M. Clermont-Ganneau does "not think that one can see in it anything else than the