

THE ROUTE OF THE EXODUS.

By J. D. CRACE, F.S.A.

MR. TRUMPER'S article in the *Q.S.* of January last (pp. 22-29) deserves careful attention. The subject, which deals with the question of the point at which the Israelites crossed the Red Sea, has attracted many scholars, and will probably attract many more; but the enquiry has now more facts to work from. Not the least helpful is the recent identification of Pithom with Tel el-Maskhuteh, west of Ismailyeh.¹ But the most important definite addition to our knowledge during the last half-century, bearing upon the problem, is the fact that the Red Sea certainly extended northward, within historic times, as far at least as the Bitter Lakes. This knowledge is largely due to the formation of the Suez Canal, both to the careful Surveys which it necessitated and to the sections which its construction revealed; to which must be added the publicity induced to a locality previously almost unvisited.

But I think that the sketch map which accompanies Mr. Trumper's article fails, in one important respect, to give the support to the text which it might have done. In this map the assumed extension northward from Suez is shown by the dotted line as more or less of one width. Now, writing with the excellent map before me, which was produced by the Engineers of the Canal from their own Survey, I think that this was not the case; but that from Suez to the Lakes the sea extension must have been limited in average width to approximately that of the smaller Bitter Lake, which itself would then doubtless have been wider than now.

This narrower tideway would, of course, lend itself more easily to be checked by a strong wind, and would be every way more favourable to Mr. Trumper's suggestion. As to the actual place of

¹ See *The Egypt of the Hebrews*, by Prof. A. H. Sayce, p. 43.

crossing, I should be inclined to come rather further south on the west side, and to select a point between the two lakes, where a small peninsula of land projects north-east towards the same point on the eastern shore (No. 4), from which Mr. Trumper starts the Israelites' southern march.

There is a passage in the memoir of Antoninus Martyr which seems to bear on the general question. Describing his own journey (*circa* A.D. 560–570), he says (Cap. XLI): “and there is a small city named Clysma, whither also ships come from India. At that part of the sea where they (the Israelites) crossed over, a gulf reaches out from the main sea, and runs in for many miles, *for the tide rises and falls*. When the tide falls, all the marks of the army of Pharaoh, and even the tracks of his chariot-wheels, appear, but all the arms seem to have been turned into stone.”²

Without paying heed to the last amazing example of credulity, we have here two definite assertions: (1) that he recognized this “gulf” as a part of the sea, *because* the tide rose and fell, inferring that it might otherwise be doubtful; (2) that, when the tide fell, the actual bottom was exposed to view at the part which was at that time pointed out as the site of crossing. It seems to me that had he here been alluding to the Gulf of Suez itself, no doubt as to its being part of the sea could have occurred to him, for it is obviously “the sea.” But for the much narrower extension north of Suez it would be a more probable doubt or question. Moreover, he speaks of this gulf “reaching out from the main sea”—“at that part where they crossed over,” and where the tide exposes the bottom.

With regard to the subject of “the crossing of the Red Sea,” no more useful summary of published evidence and suggestions can readily be met with than the late Dr. Driver's note in the Cambridge Bible (see *The Book of Exodus*, Cambridge University Press, 1911, pp. 121–128). In this note the whole matter is very fully and fairly discussed.

As, however, I had the opportunity in December, 1868, of following the whole course of the Canal from Suez, when the southern portion was being excavated by pick and spade, and the Bitter Lakes were dry depressions in an arid desert, it may be of some use to mention here some items of personal observation at that time:—

² See *Palestine Pilgrims' Text*, Vol. II.

Firstly, the existence of quantities of sea-shells, often lying in ridges and unbroken, upon the former beaches of the Bitter Lakes. It is impossible to attribute these to a very remote age.

Secondly, is the important fact that where the Canal was being cut by spade, like a railway cutting, between Suez and the smaller lake, strata of salt, of various thicknesses, alternating with layers of dark earth, and sometimes of broken rock, were exposed in section. These earth-layers also varied in thickness. It is probable that some record as to these strata may be preserved in the offices of the Canal Company, for the Engineers on the spot were keenly interested.

The general outcome of this evidence is that the extension of the Gulf of Suez existed at *various periods*, and for long epochs of time; but also, that long intervals occurred during which communication with the sea was cut off.

The various levels at which the strata occur seem to preclude the idea that the interruptions were solely due to drifting sand; nor can one suppose that each of these extensions had the same northern limit. Some doubtless included Lake Timsah, but I am disposed to the opinion that, at some period within the Christian era, Lake Timsah was fed from the Pelusiac branch of the Nile, and thus acquired "crocodiles" and their name.

THE IMMOVABLE EAST.

By PHILIP J. BALDENSPERGER.

(Continued from Q.S., 1915, p. 22.)

Clothes and Fashions.

THE preacher (Eccl. ix, 8) says "Let thy garments be always white," and the Arabic proverb completes this by saying "Eat what you desire, but clothe yourself as it pleases others," كل ما تشتهي، *Kul mā tashtahī nafsak, wa-ilbis mā yaliq al-nās*