

NARRATIVE OF A JOURNEY FROM ROME TO JERUSALEM.¹

(*Continued from p. 143.*)

CHAPTER X.

Notes on Divers Places.

ACCORDING to the Chaldaeans and Nestorians, who declare it to have been situated in Mesopotamia, the home of Abraham is called Orai by the Syriac-speaking peoples and Raa by the Arabs²; and this city, as I was informed by an attendant of the Patriarch of the Nestorians (a people living in Mesopotamia and beyond as far as the Tigris and Nineveh), is distant a five days' journey from the Syrian city of Aleppo. By these people Mesopotamia is called Bethnaraim. The aforesaid Patriarch came to Rome in 1552 to do homage to the Roman Pope.³

Capernaum is a town lying on the shore of the Sea of Galilee below Minim, otherwise Bethsaida; and, as you go from it towards Damascus, you pass Joseph's Pit,⁴ which is beside the road, on the way to the bridge of the Daughters of Jacob. This town is absolutely destroyed, in accordance with the prophecy of Christ.⁵

Shiloh, where for a long time before the building of the Temple there rested the Tabernacle of the Lord and the Ark of the Covenant, was close to the sepulchre of Samuel, five or six miles from Jerusalem

¹ Translated from a 16th-century Latin manuscript in his possession by H. C. Luke, C.M.G., B.Litt., M.A., sometime Assistant-Governor of Jerusalem.

² Urhāi, Edessa.

³ This Prelate was John Sulaqa, the first Patriarch of a continuous line of the Uniate seceders from the Nestorian Church. He was consecrated in Rome Patriarch of what now became the Chaldaean Church by Pope Julius III on the 9th April, 1553, but was murdered in 1555 in Diarbekr after his return to the East. The circumstance that our pilgrim speaks of him as apparently still living would help to date the manuscript somewhere between 1553 and 1555.

⁴ This pit, situated between Capernaum and Safed, is still shown at the Khan Jubb Yusuf.

⁵ S. Matthew xi, 23; S. Luke x, 15.

in the direction of Rama and Jaffa.¹ Gabaon² also is said to be in the neighbourhood of Rama in the Valley of the Terebinth,³ where David overcame the giant Goliath.

There are in Syria many Christians called "Christians of the Girdle," whose forbears were converted by the miracles which S. Thomas performed with the girdle given to him by the Blessed Virgin on the occasion of her assumption into Heaven.⁴

The prepuce of the Lord is said to be preserved in France in [the Church of] Our Lady of Dupini in the province of Béarn.

The Soldan or King of Alcayre [Cairo] and Babylonia ordered the destruction⁵ of the chapel of the Holy Ghost, which stood, lofty and beautiful, on Mount Zion, close by the Caenaculum. Below the latter are the sepulchres of David, Solomon and other kings of Judah. The Moors have closed it with a door of iron, and it has become one of their mosques, together with the entire monastery of Mount Zion, whence our frairs of S. Francis have been expelled.

Beneath the chapel of Mount Calvary there is another chapel, where was found the head of Adam. This lower chapel is called Golgotha, and in it lies buried Godfrey of Bouillon, the first King of Jerusalem after the capture of the Holy Land from the Saracens. Here, too, is the tomb of his nephew Baldwin the Second, King of Jerusalem.⁶ Mount Calvary is distant from the Lord's tomb

¹ The city of Shiloh is now identified with Seilun, a village a little to the north-east of Turmur 'Aya and roughly half-way between Jerusalem and Nablus; but the Crusaders and their successors were wont to identify it with Nebi Samwil (Mizpah), which contains the reputed tomb of Samuel, much venerated by Moslems.

² Gibeon.

³ The Valley of the Terebinth (Valley of Elah) is generally identified with the Wadi al-Sant (Valley of Mimosa) in the south of Palestine, between Gaza and Hebron. It has, however, been identified by some with Mizpah.

⁴ This is one of the many fantastic explanations of the term "*Christiani della cintura*," which, in fact, denoted those whom we should now designate the Arabophone laity of the Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem. The appellation "of the girdle" may have originated in the edict issued by the persecuting Khalif Mutawakil in A.D. 856, whereby Christians and Jews in his dominions were ordered to wear broad girdles of leather.

⁵ The author is probably referring to the destruction of the basilica of S. Mary of Mount Zion by the Sultan Melek al-Mu'azzam, a nephew of Saladin, in 1219.

⁶ The tombs of the Latin kings of Jerusalem, both in the Chapel of Adam and in the neighbouring vestibule of the Holy Sepulchre, were destroyed by the Orthodox after the fire of 1808.

108 feet, and 18 steps lead from the floor of the church up to Calvary, where the Cross was set up in the rock. The place is marked by the following inscription in Greek letters and in the Greek tongue : *Deus principium nostrum ante secula operatus est salutem in medio terrae.*

In the direction of Bethlehem is the House of Evil Counsel, where Judas sold Christ and the Scribes and Pharisees decided upon His death. Here Solomon was anointed king by order of David. Two miles from Jerusalem towards Bethlehem the star appeared to the Magi, and the tomb of Rachel lies one mile from Bethlehem. The principal church of Bethlehem was built by S. Helena and was called the Church of S. Mary.

Ascalon, one of the five cities of the Philistines, is situated by the shore of the Mediterranean above Gaza, and was the birthplace of Herod the Ascalonite.¹ Here is found in abundance [the vegetable] of the onion family called shallot, for shallots take their name from the city of Ascalon.²

In the direction of the Jordan valley, two miles after leaving Jericho on the right hand, is reached Mount Quarantana, where Jesus Christ fasted for forty days and forty nights and was tempted of the Devil. On it there now stands a chapel with an altar. It is believed that Abraham inhabited this mountain for a long time, because the people are wont to call it the Garden of Abraham. At the foot of the mountain is the Fountain or Stream of Elisha, which was once salt ; but Elisha, having cast salt into it and offered prayer, changed it into sweet water.³ From this mountain we turned back to Jericho, which is distant from the Jordan about five miles. On the bank of the river we saw the place, still having traces of an ancient church, where Jesus entered it to be baptized by John. A mile before reaching this place we beheld the Church of S. John ; and on the farther bank of the Jordan is another church, where Christ was wont to preach and to baptize.

About two or three miles from the place where Christ was baptized lies the Dead Sea or Sea of Sodom and Gomorrha, into which the Jordan runs its course. This sea receives nothing alive ; it is always

¹ Herod the Great.

² It is interesting to find here this perfectly correct piece of etymology. The word " shallot " is a corruption of Escallion, which was the Norman-French form of the name Ascalon used by the Crusaders.

³ 2 Kings xxi.

steamy and it renders sterile the land surrounding it, which once was a renowned and most fertile valley. It is 22 leagues long and six leagues across, but has no outlet. Beyond the lake, to the east, is the Pillar of Salt, which was once Lot's wife.¹ This region is the land of Moab, whence Moses surveyed the Promised Land and where he died. At the southern end of this Sea is the wilderness in which the children of Israel wandered for so many years. It is said that S. John the Baptist was decapitated at Malharonta² and was buried in the city of Sebaste, which in antiquity was called Samaria. Ten miles from Sebaste is Jenin of the tribe of Manasseh, where Jesus healed the ten lepers³; and four miles thence, more or less, is Naim, situated on the slopes and at the foot of Mount Endor, which is about two miles from the region of Mount Tabor.

It is said that Simon the Canaanite and Nathanael were born in Cana of Galilee, which lies at a distance from Nazareth of from four to five miles; this is the place where Jesus turned the water into wine. Saphor⁴ is distant from Nazareth five miles or rather more, and is the birthplace of Joachim and Anna, the parents of the Blessed Virgin. The house of the Blessed Virgin is in Nazareth, and the site of the Annunciation is hollowed out of the rock and contains three altars. Close by is the church, which was formerly the synagogue where Christ read from the book that was delivered unto Him.

On the farther shore of the Sea of Galilee, towards the mountains of Arabia, is the tomb of the blessed Job.⁵

The Carmelite friars have their origin in Mount Carmel, which is in the Holy Land near Acre or Ptolemais, between Tyre and Sidon on the one hand and Joppa on the other; here, too, is Caesarea, where the centurion was baptized by S. Peter.

The Promised Land is said to be 146 miles or 50 leagues in length from north to south, reckoning from the Lebanon, where is the city of Dan, to Beersheba and Gaza, where is its southern boundary

¹ The transformation of Lot's wife into a pillar of salt is generally associated with the Jebel 'Usdum on the western shore of the Dead Sea.

² The fortress of Macheronte beyond the Jordan, where Josephus places the Baptist's execution.

³ Luke xvii, 12.

⁴ Sepphoris, the modern Saffurieh.

⁵ The place referred to by the pilgrim is the Monastery of Job (Deir Ayyub, near Sheikh Sa'ad in the Hauran).

with Egypt. Its breadth from east to west, that is to say, from the mountains of Arabia beyond Jordan to the Mediterranean, is 80 miles or some 27 leagues. But in my opinion its length is greater than they say. The mountain, or the desert place, in which Christ performed the miracle of the five loaves and the two fishes, is near the Sea of Galilee, not more than two miles distant; and through this place we passed when going to Otaim or Dothaim¹ and Caphet. Otaim is one mile away from this Sea and has [groves of] citrons and lemons, and you pass it going to and returning from Jerusalem. Half a mile from the said Sea is the castle of Magdala. Those coming from Minim, which is otherwise called Bethsaida,² on their way to Jerusalem go this way after passing several perennial springs. There are still a few houses here, and in former days the place contained handsome buildings. Here was the castle of Magdala, the castle of S. Magdalen, who is called Magdalene from this place.

On the summit, or almost on the summit, of Mount Thabor, and on the one side, are three churches, almost in ruins, where Christ was transfigured. And at the foot of the mountain there is the chapel [marking the place] where Christ charged the Apostles that they should tell no man what things they had seen.

CHAPTER XI.

Mount Sinai.

JOURNEY FROM THE HOLY LAND TO MOUNT SINAI OR S. KATHARINE.

In Gaza or Gazarah, which is the last town of the Philistines and is close to the borders of the Holy Land and Egypt, is still shown the house of Samson.³ This city is the point of departure for Mount Sinai, where is the body of S. Katharine; and here must be procured the necessaries for the journey, such as food and camels, for the path lies across a dry and sandy desert, taking 17 days or more to be traversed, and the water (in skins) and the other requisites for the journey have to be loaded on to the camels. After a day's

¹ See above.

² The author evidently accepts, from the fact that he gives "Minim" as the other name of Bethsaida, the identification of the latter place with Khan Minieh.

³ His reputed tomb is shown even now in one of the mosques of Gaza.

journey in this desert there appears in sight the place where the prophet Elijah slept under a juniper tree and, being touched by an angel, beheld beside him a cake baked on the coals. Having eaten this cake and being strengthened thereby, he travelled forty days until he reached Mount Horeb, which is Mount Sinai.¹ After seven days in the said desert we came to many caves and hovels of the wild Arabs, who go about naked except for the private parts. These people, with their women and children, live entirely on the milk of camels and sheep and on dates. After ten days in the desert we found a large well, from which two camels transferred the water by means of a wheel into a large jar. [This jar is used] for the watering of the caravans or streams of camels which frequently pass this way with Moors travelling to Mecca² to visit the body of their — — Mahomet. At times there pass ten thousand camels, and sometimes even twenty thousand, and occasionally yet more, laden with water and many other requirements of the pilgrims to Mecca. After thirteen days there began to appear the great mountain range, whose summit is Mount Sinai; and there we crossed a large valley enclosed by high mountains and red rock, which almost dazzles one's sight. Descending this valley, there appears on the right the Red Sea. Not far from here is the monastery of S. Katharine, situated at the foot of Mount Sinai, which is otherwise called Horeb. This monastery is bounded on the east and south by red and barren hills, but not on the north, for here there is a fairly large garden almost square in shape and about two crossbow-shots [in length and breadth], planted with many trees, vines, figs, pomegranates, almonds, citrons and other plants of this nature. Through the middle of it runs a stream of living water, which irrigates the entire garden. This monastery is surrounded by a wall like a castle and is about one mile in circuit. It has two gates, made of iron on account of those Arabs who dwell in the desert, and on account of wild beasts, so that no harm may come to the Greek monks who dwell there. The monastery contains all the necessaries [of life] and includes many excellent dwellings occupied by forty Greek monks, men of approved and holy life, as it should be. It is said that these men eat no meat and drink no wine except on high feast days. Within the monastery is the church of S. Katharine, virgin and martyr, a most beautiful

¹ 1 Kings xix, 4-8.

² The Egyptian pilgrimage route across the northern end of the peninsula.

building with three naves and sixteen columns of marble, eight on either side. On the high altar is the tomb of S. Katharine, in which her body is to be seen, and at the foot of the tomb is a silver opening through which trickles a certain blackish liquid resembling oil, which is very efficacious in the case of many diseases and is collected by the pilgrims. To the church is attached a plenary indulgence. Behind the high altar is the spot where Moses saw the Lord in the burning bush, which was not consumed. Monks and pilgrims, entering here, remove their shoes in remembrance of the words which God spoke to Moses in the third chapter of Exodus: *Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, etc.*¹ The Greeks call this place Bezeliel, which means "in the shadow of God."

After seeing the monastery you ascend Mount Sinai, where the Lord gave the Law unto Moses on two tables of stone. The climb is difficult, and for the greater part you mount by steps, and the ascent is about two miles.² On the summit is the Chapel of Elijah, where Elijah fasted forty days and forty nights, and here is the very place where the Lord gave the Law unto Moses. Having come down from this mountain we made the ascent to Mount Katharine,³ whither the angels carried the Saint's body from Alexandria and deposited it on the summit. Here it remained unknown to all for 300 years, when its presence was [miraculously] revealed to the Bishop of Alexandria. It was then transferred to its present resting-place, so that the monks [who had established themselves around it] might have a more suitable refuge. This is the highest mountain in Arabia, and there are to be seen on it traces of an ancient chapel dedicated to S. Katharine. From its summit there are visible the Red Sea, Egypt, and parts of Arabia; and here, too, is to be obtained a plenary indulgence.

In the year 1431 the Soldan of Babylonia or Alcaire took the monastery away from the Christians, together with all their properties there as well as their revenues in Cairo, Gaza, and Jerusalem, leaving them nothing beyond their property in Damascus. He even built a mosque in the monastery and maintained it for two years, after

¹ Visitors must still remove their shoes before entering the Chapel of the Burning Bush.

² The pilgrimage steps are about three thousand in number and probably date from the 6th or 7th century.

³ Jebel Katerin, 8,536 feet high.

which the Christians re-purchased it for three thousand ducats. Nevertheless, the Soldan retained for himself nearly all the revenues ; and the monastery, which once supported two hundred monks, has now only the forty Arabs who guard the place and a similar number of monks.

CHAPTER XII.

Egypt and the Return Journey.

Having seen all these things, we proceeded towards Cairo or Babylon,¹ which is in Egypt. After four days we perceived the Red Sea and the mountains of Ethiopia, and soon afterwards there appeared in sight the place where Moses crossed the Red Sea with his people. Not far from here is the valley of Elim with the several springs, which Moses made to appear by striking the ground seven times with his stick ; here, also, is the bitter spring which Moses rendered sweet.² We next passed Matharea with its garden of the balsam which has no like elsewhere in the world ; this spot is distant four miles from Cairo. The garden is about a stone's-throw square and is enclosed within a high wall.³ Inside it is a spring where they say that the Virgin washed the Infant Jesus and His little swaddling clothes ; its waters irrigate the aforesaid garden. Near this spring they have dug two other wells, whence water is drawn by two buffaloes ; but from noon of Saturday until the dawn of Monday these animals refuse to draw water despite the goading of sticks. The balsam is cultivated here by Christians, and they say that, if infidels cultivate it, it will not give the same essence. The leaf of the balsam resembles that of rue, and the plant grows to a height of three feet from the ground. At a certain time of the year these plants are threshed in the sun with a sharp piece of bone to extract the precious oil, which is held in such repute by the Soldan (or Turk) that he maintains several guards in this place. It is believed that the balsam was brought here by Cleopatra from the Holy Land, to wit, from the

¹ Old Cairo, the site of which was called Babylon by the Greeks.

² Exod. xv, 25.

³ The village of Matarieh, near Heliopolis and actually six miles from Cairo. Adjoining the Garden of Balsam described by the pilgrim is now a chapel belonging to the Jesuits.

vineyard of Engedi,¹ where it was planted by Solomon, who had obtained it from the Queen of Sheba. This vineyard lies between Jerusalem and the Dead Sea, being five or six miles from the latter and visible from Bethlehem. Others, on the other hand, declare that the little balsam seedlings sprang up from the ground after the Virgin Mary had washed the clothes of the Infant Jesus in the spring of Matharea; and, although no ancient writer declares this to be the case, God has done many things more marvellous than this. In this garden of balsam, where is the spring, is obtained a plenary indulgence, because the Virgin Mary is said to have been present here.

A fine and pleasant road leads from the garden of balsam to Cairo, and is bordered by fields, from among which rises the new Babylon.² This town forms together with Cairo³ practically one city, the two being separated from one another by only half a mile. It is a very great city, perhaps as much as thirty-three miles in circumference, and amply supplied with merchandise and merchants. It is so densely populated that the streets are almost impassable except for those on horseback. There are, they say, about 30,000 Christians who have renounced their faith, and the city is also inhabited by Moors, Turks, and Christians of various sects. It possesses 30,000 horses and mules, of whom 16,000 are employed in taking water from the Nile and in distributing it throughout the city. There are 60,000 riding asses, 3,000 windmills, 14,000 mosques and shrines and 40 Christian Churches. There are 14,000 bazaars⁴ and streets set apart for the buying and selling of merchandise.

Cairo, together with the whole of Egypt, is now in the hands of the Grand Turk, but formerly was in the possession of the Soldan.⁵ When it is ravaged by the plague, which it is frequently on account of the dense population and the great heat, it happens that as many as 40,000 people die in a single day. There is a church here dedicated to S. John the Baptist, which contains some of his relics.

Both the River Nile, which is as large as the Po, and the other great rivers of the country overflow their banks twice a year and irrigate all Egypt, which has no rainfall. On this account the land

¹ Song of Solomon i, 14.

² *i.e.* New Cairo.

³ *i.e.* Old Cairo.

⁴ The author uses the Spanish word *encontrades*.

⁵ The Mameluke Sultans.

of Egypt is exceedingly fertile, being thus enabled to bear two crops in the year. The Nile overflows about the middle of March and floods the land for fifteen days, after which it begins to go down ; so that by the middle of April the ground is again disclosed, bare of all vegetation. It is then that the Egyptians sow their seed, which they then cover over by hoeing. In a few days the seed puts out shoots, and by the middle of June they are able to reap. In certain parts they plough their land with oxen as we do. The Nile again swells and overflows its banks, as I have said above, in the middle of August, and in the middle of September they sow again for their second crop.

Seven miles beyond Cairo is the town of Hermopolis, in which Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, persecuted by Herod, appear to have remained for seven years ; and beyond it is the desert of the Thebaid, once inhabited by SS. Anthony and Paul, the first hermit, and many other Saints. From this city of Cairo, which is in Egypt, to the city of Gaza, which is at the beginning of the Promised Land, it is a journey of almost ten days, the greater part of it being through sandy and waterless country. If, however, you want to travel from Cairo to Alexandria, you can go up the Nile by boat and will then, after a hundred miles, reach the monastery of S. Macarius, which contains the Saint's body. Thence it is a journey of another hundred miles to Alexandria, which is situated on the shore of the Mediterranean and is the scene of the beheading of SS. Mark and Katharine. From Alexandria you can continue your journey to Damietta, which is also on the coast in the direction of the Holy Land. This is the place where the Prophet Jeremiah was stoned because he foretold their captivity to the Jews. In former days Damietta was called Thamas.¹

From Alexandria to Cyprus it is a distance of at least five hundred miles, at all events to the port of Salines. In this island we visited in Baffo,² one of its towns and ports, the prison of SS. Paul and Barnabas, and the seven cells of the seven sleepers, also known as the Maccabees,³ for SS. Paul and Barnabas frequently preached the Gospel in this island, as is related in the 13th Chapter of the Acts.

¹ The original (Coptic) name of Damietta was Tamiati.

² Paphos.

³ These sights are still shown in Paphos.

Having re-embarked, we left the Greek islands of Crete, Rhodes, Zante, Cephalonia and Corfu on our right and travelled towards the shore of Africa until we came in sight of the extremities of Calabria and Apulia and the entrance to the Adriatic, which lies between Vallona and the point of Apulia. From this channel, which is about sixty miles wide, it is some six hundred miles to Venice; and finally we came in sight of Venice itself.

(*To be concluded.*)

NOTES ON EXCAVATIONS.

PROF. SELLIN gives a provisional report of his excavations at the hill of *Balâta*, the ruins of the ancient Shechem, and $1\frac{1}{2}$ kilometres east of Nāblus. His earlier work there, published in 1914, was resumed last March, in conjunction with Prof. Praschniker, of Prague, the architect Herr Johannes, of Berlin, and the well-known Dutch scholar, Dr. Böhl, of Groningen, who also publishes an account in the *Mededeelingen* of the University of Amsterdam. From these it appears that four stages are distinguished: (1) The Canaanite, 2000–1400 B.C.; (2) the Early Israelite, 1400–900 B.C.—interrupted in 1100 through the destruction of the city by Abimelech; (3) the Later Israelite; and (4) the Samaritan—Hellenistic Age. A grave of the earliest of these periods contained a collection of bronze weapons, including a fine curved sword. Signs of both Babylonian and Egyptian influence presented themselves in the ornaments, and three clay figurines of the usual mother-goddess type showed, as Prof. Sellin remarks, how cautious one must be in dealing with negative results, seeing that, whereas previously such Astarte objects had not been found in Shechem, now three were unearthed in a small space. An Israelite domestic altar was found; it is dated, after the pottery, to the 8th or 7th century; it was 60 cm. high, 36 broad, and on the top were four bosses or knobs at the corners and a hollow in the middle for containing the offerings. Another, of about the same period, is a fine specimen, half as high again; close by were half a dozen censers, and not far off some 35 small oil-bottles. Potsherds with Aramaic lettering were found in a stratum dated—whether on independent