

near En Rimmon (*Umm er Rümāmîn*), in connection with which it is mentioned. Vandeveldt has confused this site with that of the Rock Etam, and places Lehi at the modern *Lekiyeh*, which does not contain the Hebrew guttural Cheth.

LETTER FROM REV. SELAH MERRILL.

(Reprinted, by kind permission, from the *Athenæum*.)

Beirut, Syria, June 28, 1876.

My last expedition east of the Jordan occupied eighty-one days, ending with the 5th of May, and I devoted more than half this time to the valley and foot-hills lying immediately east of the river, and between the Lake of Tiberias and the Dead Sea. Between the Lake of Tiberias and the Jabbok the region is one of great fertility, and not the unproductive desert that it is usually represented to be. The Yarmuk, on the north, is a large river; and the Jabbok, on the south, is a river of respectable size. Between these no less than eleven living streams, more than half of which can be called large ones, flow down from the hills to water the plain. Canals carry the water from these streams in all directions, and irrigate the vast wheat-fields which are the pride of the valley. The valley is from three or four miles to about six miles in width. In the valley itself there are no ruins; but it is an interesting fact that there is a ruin in every case just at the point where these streams leave the foot of the hills. On my map I have marked thirteen such ruins, several of which appear to have been places of wealth and importance. These towns were practically in the valley, but in many cases just off from the great thoroughfare leading from north to south, and so situated that, while they had a good head of water in the fountain or stream behind them, they had spread out before them the fertile plain, with its marvellously winding river, beyond which the western hills rose in grandeur. The region, however, on the east side of the river, from the Jabbok south as far as Wady Nimrîn, is of an entirely different character, being desolate and barren, owing to the fact that there are no fountains or streams flowing down upon it from the hills. From the Wady Nimrîn to the Dead Sea the plain is fertile again, since Wadies Shaib, Kefrein, and Hesban send down an abundant supply of water.

I made diligent search in the region of Wady Yabis for the site of Jabesh Gilead. I examined every ruin and all the prominent hill-tops, and am confident that the name "Jabesh" is not preserved except in the name of the wady itself. Robinson passed hastily through this section, and had his attention called to a ruin bearing the name of Ed Deir, situated on the south side of Wady Yabis, where there are some important remains; but he did not visit the place, and probably was not aware that it is perched upon an eminence very difficult of access,

and quite off from the road leading from Pella to Gerash, on which Eusebius states that Jabesh Gilead stood, at a distance of six Roman miles from Pella. I am quite sure that Robinson would have seen the impropriety of suggesting this as the site of Jabesh Gilead, if he had visited the place itself. On the road leading over the hills from Pella to Gerash, at a distance of one hour and forty minutes from Pella, are the remains of a large and very ancient town, bearing the name of Miryamîn. This is the only important ruin in that immediate section, and the distance corresponds well with that given by Eusebins. In Saul's time (1 Sam. xi.) there was a great battle at Jabesh Gilead, in which the Ammonites were beaten; and about Miryamîn there is abundance of room for an army to operate, which is not true of Ed Deir. Miryamîn commands a view of Jebel esh Sheikh, Safed, Tabor, Khaukab, all the northern part of the Lake of Tiberias, and a great deal of the Jordan valley and the hills of Ephraim and Judah beyond; while in the east Kulot er Rubud presents an imposing appearance. A number of angles were taken from Ed Deir and Miryamîn, and also from every other important ruin or point visited.

I am surprised that Robinson's map should place Kurkama on the north of Wady Yabis, while his text states that it is on the south side. He did not, however, visit the place. Murray's map also places it on the north. At the mouth of Wady Yabis there are ruins called Mazabil. These are on the south side. Following the road from here in a south-easterly direction, we first climb some hills, and then come out on to a large plateau, in the centre of which, a little less than one hour from Mazabil, are the ruins of Kurkama. The situation is a fine one, with broad fields about it, and the ruins indicate that this place was once a large and important city or town. I do not know what ancient name "Kurkama" may be a corruption of; but a Karkor is missing, near which the remnant of the Midianite host, under Zebah and Zalmunna, was encamped when it was overtaken by Gideon (Judges viii.); and it would seem to have been near the Succoth region, which lies immediately north of the Jabbok, for the men of Succoth were afraid to give food to Gideon's men, lest they should bring upon themselves the vengeance of the Midianites, in case the Hebrew captain was unsuccessful against them.

Gideon went up by the route which certain desert tribes lying to the eastward usually took, but it is not stated how far he went. The distance, however, does not appear to have been great, since it is stated that, after the battle, he got back to Succoth before sunrise, which he could not have done had Karkor lain very far to the east. It is possible, of course, that these two names have no connexion, and the statements just made are to be regarded as suggestions merely.

In connexion with Miryamîn, I should say that on the road leading to Pella squared stones and columns are scattered for some distance, which would indicate, perhaps, that Jabesh Gilead, after its decline, furnished building materials to Pella, its prosperous rival at the foot of

the hills below. Pella, called at present Fah'l, and not "Fahil," is beautifully situated on the Jirm el Moz (pronounce o like o in rose), and has an abundant supply of water. In Kiepert's map, "1875," I notice that Pella is placed on the second stream north of the Moz; and the same is true of the map in Baedeker's new Handbook. The hills about Pella are full of tombs, some of which have only recently been opened by the Arabs living near. In these I found a couple of Christian inscriptions in Greek. In the hill just back of the town, and at a point which overhangs the wady and fountain, there are the remains of a church, and in front of the city there are the remains of what appeared to have been another church of immense size.

Some distance north of Fah'l I found a fine natural bridge spanning a deep wady. The bridge is from twenty to thirty feet wide, eighty to one hundred feet high, about seventy yards long, and the great arch is twenty-five to thirty feet in height, at the highest point. The wady runs from east to west, and the banks are very steep, and the bridge forms a striking object. West of the bridge, and at the bottom of the wady, there is a large hot sulphur spring, of 103 degs. temperature. The spring is on the north side of the wady, and about it are foundations of large squared stones, of which several tiers remain in position, and also some broken columns. Robinson and Ritter do not mention this hot spring, nor is it noticed in the valuable and scientific work of Lartet. And in the books at my command here I do not find that either the bridge or the winns have been noticed at all. Neubauer refers to a passage in the Jerusalem Talmud where the words "Hamtha of Fah'l" occur in connexion with the travels of a certain Rabbi Zeira, which he is inclined to identify with Pella, although he does not seem to be aware of the existence of any hot spring. At the mouth of Wady Zerka there was formerly one or more large hot springs, and an old man of the Arabs, whom we found there, told us that, when he was a boy, the springs were large and the water so hot that he could hardly bear to bathe in it; but in Ibrahim Pasha's time a large canal, which still exists, was dug just above the springs to carry water from the river to the plain, and since that time the springs have been worthless. The place is now a marsh, and the water merely tepid. There is a tel near by which retains the name, Tel el Hamma,—and also the level plain just above there is called Ard el Hamma. The words "el Hamma" point to the fact of hot springs. Five or six miles south of the Jabbok, near the road leading from Es Salt to Damia and Ablûs, there is a large salt spring, which, however, dries up in summer. At Tel el Hammâm, on the Shittim plain, there is another hot spring, and the ruins about the tel show that the place has been occupied by a town of considerable size. This tel is about three miles north-west of Tel er Rama, which is identified with Libias, Julias, and Beth Haram. I examined the hot sulphur springs at Callirrhoe, and brought away water for analysis. We have the direct testimony of Josephus that Herod the Great visited these springs during his last illness. There

are no ruins of any kind at Callirrhoe to show that it was ever a place of resort, and, besides, these springs are very difficult of access; and it has always been a matter of wonder to me how a person in Herod's condition, suffering as he was, and near to death, could possibly make the journey to Callirrhoe, which, in the very best times, must have been fatiguing even to people in health. And I have found a statement, although I cannot now give my authority for it, but think it is from Ptolemy, to the effect that the springs at Callirrhoe were often confounded with those at Libias, or Livias. While it seems impossible that Herod should have been removed to Callirrhoe, it is very reasonable that he should have visited Livias (the spring, as I have said, is at Tel el Hammam), which is in the plain opposite Jericho, and a little less than three hours distant from the Jordan, and which was doubtless a very pleasant resort for invalids. I made a careful examination of the hot springs at el Hamma, or, as they are generally called, the hot springs of Gadara. This, I judge, was the finest resort in Syria. The little plain on the banks of the Yarmuk, where they are found, is about a mile long by three-fourths of a mile wide, and two-thirds of this space is covered with ruins. The building material was the hard black basalt. One of the attractions of the place was a beautiful theatre, of which I made a plan, as I did of the whole valley. The books report the number of springs here as high as eight or ten; but there are only four, and a very large one three miles up the valley to the east, at M'Khaibeh, making in all five. The largest of the el Hamma springs is sixty yards in length by twenty in breadth, and the average depth is about six feet. The temperature is 103 degs. The hottest spring is 115 degs. Two of these springs combine and flow in one channel to the river, while the largest spring just mentioned flows to the river in a channel of its own. The amount of water flowing in these two channels combined, I estimate to be equal to one stream twenty-one feet wide and twenty inches deep, with a rapid current. The temperature of the large spring at M'Khaibeh is 112 degs., and the volume of water flowing from it is equal to that from the three springs at el Hamma combined. Three mills are run by water at over 100 degs. temperature; and, while the millers have to endure the terrible smell of sulphur, they can, on the other hand, congratulate themselves that their wheels will not be blocked by ice in the winter. M'Khaibeh, which I have just mentioned, is a tropical paradise. I counted there as many as eighteen different tropical trees and shrubs, and above the tangled mass of trees and vines and vegetation there rise at least two hundred graceful palms, the whole forming a splendid sight to look down upon from the neighbouring hills, such as can be found nowhere else in Syria. Special attention was paid to the singular mixture of basaltic and limestone formations in the valley of the Yarmuk (which the Arabs call Maradira, and not "Mandhûr"), but I cannot speak of those at present. Gadara is at the top of the mountains south of the hot springs, and about three miles distant from them. Its situation is commanding, and the spectators

from the upper seats of the westernmost of its two theatres could enjoy one of the finest prospects in Palestine. Five great fortresses were in sight, besides the whole country, rich in cities and villages, from Hermon almost to Jericho; and at their very feet the Sea of Galilee, covered, as it then was, with vessels, and surrounded with life. The splendid view from this point is worthy of being described with great minuteness of detail. What remains of Gadara shows that it was a place of elegance and wealth. Josephus speaks of the villas about it; and at one place, three miles a little south of east from the city, near a large cistern, I dug down and found a beautiful tessellated pavement. Four miles east of Gadara, on the road leading to Capitolias (now Beit er Ras), was a temple, and the foundations and some portions of the columns which remain show that it was a structure of more than ordinary size and magnificence. Between this temple and the city itself the way was lined with tombs. In prosperous times this city of the dead, with its elegant and costly sepulchres, must have been one of the attractions of the place, as well as its temples and theatres, and wonderful prospect, and its hot baths at the foot of the mountain below it. Here at Gadara, after the destruction of Jerusalem, the Jews had a flourishing school, and the Rabbis used to visit the springs, and walk for recreation along the shaded banks of the river. The far-famed springs at Tiberias are insignificant in size in comparison with those at el Hamma, and it seems a pity that the delightful waters of the latter should flow on for ever without being enjoyed by those who would appreciate and be benefited by them. It may be well to give a list of the hot sulphur springs in the Jordan valley. They are at Tiberias, at Gadara, at Wady Hammet, Abu Dhableh, north of Pella, at the mouth of Wady Zerka (not the mouth of the river itself, for the mouth of the river is fully eight miles from the mouth of the wady), at Tel el Hammam, near Livias, in the Shittim plain, and at Callirrhoe. The latter, indeed, is not in the Jordan valley, but it is appropriately mentioned in connexion with the series on the east side of the river. Those at Tiberias and Callirrhoe are the hottest, while those at Callirrhoe and Gadara send forth the greatest volume of water.

SELAH MERRILL.

THE SHAPE OF THE MOABITE STONE.

THE Rev. F. A. Klein writing to the *Athenæum* (Aug. 12, 1876) on the finding and destruction of this monument, insists that the stone was rounded at the lower end. The restoration by M. Clermont Ganneau (*i.e.*, the photographer of the Fund), from his own squeeze, shows it square. Mr. Klein says, however:—

“I have seen it repeated again and again in the *Athenæum*, and books and pamphlets, probably on the authority of the statements in the *Athenæum*, that the Moabite Stone was *square* at the lower end, and not oblong, though I had plainly stated that it was *not so*.