

THE PRINCES' JOURNEY THROUGH THE  
HOLY LAND.

MARLBOROUGH HOUSE, Pall Mall,  
*September 6, 1882.*

THE CHAIRMAN OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE,  
PALESTINE EXPLORATION FUND.

SIR,

The Prince of Wales desires that I should forward you the accompanying report on the mosque at Hebron, which Captain Conder, R.E., has been good enough to draw up for His Royal Highness's information. His Royal Highness has great pleasure in now placing it at the service of the Committee of the Palestine Exploration Fund.

I have ventured to make a few notes of my own on Captain Conder's report, which, of course, you will take for what they are worth.

As soon as it was determined that the two Princes should visit Palestine, one of the first objects to which I turned my attention, was that their entrance to the mosque (and if possible to the cave) at Hebron should be secured. But on arrival at Jaffa, on March the 28th, I learnt from Mr. Consul Moore that the matter was by no means certain, or satisfactorily arranged.

Application had been made, by desire of the Queen, through the Foreign Office and Lord Dufferin at Constantinople, for the same facilities of access to all places of interest in Syria which were granted to H.R.H. the Prince of Wales in 1862, including that to the mosque of Hebron.

The Sultan fully concurred, and gave explicit orders to this effect, and sent one of His Majesty's personal aides-de-camp (Colonel Ahmet Aly Bey) from Constantinople to be in attendance on their Royal Highnesses during their sojourn on Ottoman territory; and consequently, by His Majesty's orders, the deference shown to the Princes by all the Pachas, Governors, and their subordinates throughout the forty days' tour in Syria, and their readiness to permit the thorough examination of every site and everything considered worth visiting, whether small or great, were constant and unvaried.

But, with the curious ignorance that seems to prevail at the Porte respecting matters of detail at a distance from Constantinople, it was pointed out that it was impracticable now to travel from Jerusalem to Hebron, as the roads were not safe, and the Pacha at Jerusalem had not a sufficient force of military at his disposal to ensure the safe conduct of the Princes thither.

The road, however, between Jerusalem and Hebron is as secure as that between any two country towns in England, and no guards whatever are required for the passage. So this excuse was at once overruled, and the

Pacha was told we were going to Hebron as ordinary travellers, and that without any escort. Subsequently, after further telegraphic communications with the Foreign Office and with Constantinople, permission was telegraphed from the Porte for the Princes to visit the mosque at Hebron, and the cave, if the Pacha at Jerusalem considered he had sufficient military at his disposal to ensure their safety from fanatics or other disturbers of the public peace, there or on the road.

His Excellency Raouf Pacha accordingly started from Jerusalem on April 2nd, with such soldiers as he considered desirable, to make preparations at Hebron for the visit of the Princes, two days afterwards.

They left the camp at Jerusalem on the morning of Tuesday, the 4th of April, and as Colonel Sir C. Wilson happened to be staying in the city, I invited him and Captain Conder to accompany our party, in order that this examination of the mosque and cave might be made as thorough as possible. We arrived in Hebron the same afternoon. Here began the series of striking contrasts between the visit of the Prince of Wales in 1862, as described by Dean Stanley in the appendix to his "Sermons in the East" (pp. 141-169), and that of His Royal Highness's two sons in 1882.

Instead of the obstacles and difficulties which Sûraya Pacha in 1862 threw in the way of the Prince of Wales, Raouf Pacha did all he could to facilitate everything for the two Princes in 1882.

Even before our tents were pitched he came at once to the camp, and explained how, during the day, he had been all over the mosque with the custodian, and that no entry to the cave could be discovered. His Excellency promised, however, that the next day's search should be as thorough as he or we could make it. Every hole and corner, every passage and door, should be opened and explored.

And in further contrast with what Sûraya Pacha stated to Dean Stanley (p. 160), "that he never thought of visiting the mosque of Hebron for any other purpose than that of snuffing the sacred air," Raouf Pacha, as a devout and strict Moslem, expressed his own earnest wish to penetrate the cave. It is impossible to speak in too high terms of the liberality of sentiment, and of the straightforwardness and courtesy shown towards the Princes and party, which distinguished Raouf Pacha throughout the whole of this visit. He said that at one point only he hoped the Princes would stop short—the destruction or removal by main force of any of the stones of the building. Their Royal Highnesses assured him they hoped this last resort for obtaining entrance to the cave would not be necessary.

At half-past six on the following morning we left the camp with Raouf Pacha on foot. The inhabitants of the town showed every sign of pleasure at the visit of the Princes, and though a file of soldiers was drawn up at the entrance to the mosque, they really only served as a guard of honour, and were not at all necessary for the protection of Their Royal Highnesses. There was no "military occupation of the town," such as described by Dean Stanley on page 153.

The hereditary guardian of the mosque, and his attendants, met us at

the door, where shoes were removed, and conducted us straight through the eastern aisle into the nave of the church. At first he appeared evidently to be anything but well disposed towards the visit, and as he threw back, with the help of his attendants, the carpet that covered the point B in Captain Conder's plan, he did so with an air of dignity, despair, and resignation, as if he thought that the end of the world had arrived. His religious feelings, though suppressed, were most manifest on his countenance; he expected, I think, we should use crowbars to raise the stones, and was greatly relieved when we passed on, not having done so. The quiet persistency with which we examined the whole of the buildings was taken, I hope, as a sign of our reverence for the sacred places in his charge, and when some of the party in the afternoon revisited the Haram, he was quite pleasant and affable. His relief was great that the cave had not been entered, though our party had seen more of the mosque and buildings than any other had done since the place passed into Moslem hands.

In the plan given by Dean Stanley, the mosque marked F, with tombs of two Moslem saints, is quite out of position. It was there inserted from memory of what is shown in the Jâwalyeh Mosque, which opens out of the passage I have marked X in Captain Conder's plan, and the other chief inaccuracy in that plan is that the shrines of Isaac and Rebecca are placed at right angles to their proper position.

On the 6th of April we left Hebron, and while riding up the rough road on the east of the town, looking back we saw, on the hillside to the southwest, low down in the valley, caves exactly similar in appearance to what Machpelah must have presented to the eyes of the patriarch in its natural state. There was a field too, and trees in it in front of the cave, that recalled the very words descriptive of Machpelah in Genesis.

His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales desires me also to forward to you the second memoir of Captain Conder, "On Points of Antiquarian Interest," newly observed by H.R.H.'s sons in Palestine and Syria.

I remain, Sir,

Yours very faithfully,

JOHN N. DALTON.

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