

THE JAULÂN.

A.—INTRODUCTION.

THE Jaulân and Gaulanitis are names for one and the same tract of country in the middle of the now Turkish province of Syria. In the west, bordered by the Jordan fissure, it forms at the same time a part of the so-called East Jordan land, or Eastern Palestine. The Old Testament speaks of a place in Bashan, in the jurisdiction of the Manasseh tribe, called Golan (Deut. iv. 43), which in Joshua xx. 8, is mentioned as a free city, and in 1 Chron. vi. 71, as a Levite city. This probably answers to the present Sahem ej-Jaulân in Western Haurân.* Josephus (1 Wars, iv. 4) calls the place Golan, and the surrounding country Gaulanitis.

After the death of Herod the Great it must have been given over to the Tetrarch Philip, and was at

* Comp. Schumacher, 'Across the Jordan,' p. 91.

this time in its most flourishing period : a large number of towns covered the middle and northern part of the western slope, which, though stony, was well watered and rich in pasture land. Some of these, as Seleucia, Sogane, and Gamala, were turned into fortifications according to Josephus (2 Wars, xx. 6). The discovery of various extensive ruins, which preserve their Roman names at the present day, place the former prosperity of these towns beyond doubt.

The remains of many of these old ruins, as will be seen by the following description, are of undoubted Jewish character ; and their architectural characteristics prove that the Jewish capability could make itself freely felt even near Roman superiority.

During the Byzantine dominion over Gaulanitis, Harit V. el-'Araj (530-572), called by the Romans Aretas, and the most distinguished of the Ghassanidic Phylarchs, was placed by Justinian at the head of all the Arabian tribes in the Byzantine jurisdiction, which comprehended Haurân and Damascus, as well as the bank of Jordan, and therefore the Jaulân and the Belka.

Already earlier, under the predecessors of that Prince, viz., 'Amr I. (248-263) I. (248-263), Jabala I. (330-360), Ma'ura, the spouse of Harit's II. (360-373), the Christians had founded settlements in the East Jordan land, and especially monasteries, which at that

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time were more frequently established in what is now called the Haurân than in the Jaulân. But owing to the invasion of Syria by the Persian king, Chosroes II., in 616, Christianity suffered a relapse, and this, coupled with the sect-hatred and party feeling of the Patriarchs of Constantinople, prepared the ground for the new teaching and sovereignty of Islam. The probably Persian name, Telestan, applied to the northern part of the country, is a memorial of the conquest of the Jaulân by Chosroes.

After the sanguinary defeat of the Byzantines at the River Yarmuk (634), in the southern extremity of the Jaulân, this land, with the whole of Syria, fell into the hands of the Arabs, who, however, have only perpetuated themselves here by monuments of mean architecture, although they may have kept the country itself at its highest state of existing culture. Nevertheless, internal dissensions amongst the Moslem rulers added to the perpetual changes of succession, produced a retarding influence on the quiet progress of development, and when the armies of the Crusaders entered Syria they found a country whose decay had already commenced.

In Baldwin II.'s reign (1118), the sway of the Cross was again extended over the Jaulân. Whether the numberless crosses and Christian emblems which are found upon the ruins of the Jaulân date from the time of the Frankish rule, or that of the earlier Christian

period, is difficult to determine ; they may probably be ascribed partly to one and partly to the other, as they appear in Nu'aran, one of the cities mentioned in the history of the Crusades ('Ritter, Erdk.' xvi. p. 169), and also in proximity to el-Ahmediyeh, near the name Ioxctin (Justinian?). From the decline of the Christian sovereignty in the Jaulân, and its reconquest by the Moslems, down to modern times, there is little to relate.

Through invasions of the Mamelukes and Mongolians in Syria the country seems to have sunk lower and lower, and to have become in time the favourite resting-place of the nomadic Bedawîn tribes, who had no interest in the preservation of buildings, or the guarding of firmly established abodes, whilst in the plundering and subjection of the few remaining settlements they found their pleasure and advantage. In the year 1518 the Osman Sultan Selim I. took Syria, and therewith also the Jaulân, from the Mamelukes, and bound it to the Turkish kingdom, to which it has belonged till the present day.

The name of the country has never been altered in all its changes of rule and circumstance, and the individual sounds remained the same, only the pronunciation of the first consonant (g) has softened in the usual way, and the diphthong of the first syllable (au) is in the vulgar tongue of to-day, as formerly in the Old Testament, contracted into (o).

The following description mainly refers to the tract of land which is identical with the ancient Gaulanitis. Its boundaries are for the most part so clearly defined by nature that they have nearly always remained the same, with the exception that in the east the present demarcation is scarcely the old one, because on this side it was constantly altering according to the judgment of the existing Mutasarrif or Governor of the Haurân, and was sometimes removed further back, and again sometimes more forward, into the wide high plateau. As the surveyed map was to serve also as a plan for railway communication between 'Akka and Haifa, the sea-coast towns of Haurân and Damascus, it had the approval of the Vali, or Governor-General of Syria. So that to its author was granted the assistance of the officials belonging to the Liva of Haurân and the Kada el-Kuneitrah. He was consequently able to compare their opinion upon the orthography of the names of places with those collected in the places themselves, as well as to fix the boundaries of the district according to the testimony of the revenue officers.

The triangulation of the most important points was made by means of a theodolite. In the ground survey a water-level was used, and a Koniograph prepared by Herr D. O. Kersten, and very kindly left by him for this purpose, for which important service I must render this gentleman my best thanks.

The heights were obtained by an adjusted aneroid barometer, whilst the sea-level of the Lake of Tiberias—682·5 was considered the basis of my calculations. The divisions into degrees of length and breadth, as well as the triangulation, were finally executed and joined on to the large Map of the English Palestine Exploration Fund (Map of Western Palestine), for which triangulation I had plenty of material at my command. The scale of the map is that of the English map, viz., ‘one inch to a mile.’*

The examination of the ruins could only be done disjointedly, according as the object of the work above pointed out permitted. I cannot, therefore, unconditionally guarantee an uninterrupted completeness in the description of the ruined places with which the Jaulán is simply swarming, for in addition to this the great distrust exhibited by the natives against travellers increases the difficulties of the examination of the land. The natives from fear of new taxes took care to conceal almost everything, so that information and guides could only be reached by threats of prison, and, as a rule, the discovering of ruins had to depend entirely upon myself.

A further difficulty consists in establishing the orthography of the names, for only very few of the Bedawîn are acquainted with writing, and this always

* To accompany this work it has been reduced to the scale of $\frac{2}{3}$ of an inch to a mile.

in so imperfect a manner that one comes upon glaring mistakes at every enquiry. The only thing that remained to me—most of the official books at these ruined places being missing—was to put frequently the same questions bearing on this to the different tribes, and to settle the orthography from their answer.

Guides acquainted with the language who hang about in the towns, Tiberias and Safed for instance, I hold as having very little weight as authorities on the orthographical correctness of the names, for it is exactly these persons who, from ignorance of the country and grammar, and above all 'pour vous faire plaisir,' make assertions which by observation at the places themselves are proved incorrect. The Khâtib, or scribe of a village, is still often, in spite of his simplicity, the most trustworthy source of help.

I was also careful, in drawing up the list of names of the places, to rigidly adhere to the original nomenclature, and not to be led into error by attempts at etymology.

Owing to the swampy river prevailing there in summer time, the Hulch marshes were not visited; therefore the already-mentioned Sogana, presumably on the west of Jaulân (Josephus, 4 Wars, i, 1), is not marked on the map. Also the small northern end of the Sharah of Jaulân, near Baniâs, which includes a part of the southern slope of Hermon, had

to remain unexamined. It may be here remarked that the ez Zawiyeh esh-Shurkiyeh of south-east Jaulân, a district inclosed by the Yarmûk, Rukkâd and 'Allân rivers, with also the neighbouring country to the east, has been already set down by me on a map, and published by the English Palestine Exploration Fund, on the scale of $\frac{3}{8}$ of an inch to a mile, in the book, 'Across the Jordan,' 1886. At my first and more superficial journey through the Jaulân and the Haurân, in December, 1883, the Nahr er-Rukkâd was pointed out to me as the boundary between the Jaulân and the Haurân; and I consequently agreed that the survey of the Jaulân should extend to Nahr er-Rukkâd in the east. Later, however, it transpired that the Nahr el-'Allân was regarded as the boundary line between the two districts. As a result of this mistake, the following report and illustrating map do not include the whole of the Jaulân. Nevertheless, recently the place Sahem ej-Jaulân, which in 1884 was in the administrative jurisdiction of the Jaulân, has again been handed over to the Haurân seat of government in Sheikh Sa'ad. Thus the extent and jurisdiction of the one district of Haurân is still not definitely settled.

As to the orography of north Jaulân, I shall limit myself to observations made on my first journey; for this district formed the basis of the researches of my honoured friend and co-traveller, Herr Dr. Fritz Noeblung, in the year 1885, and will be given in

detail in his geological description. With reference to the historical dates obtained by individual information at the places visited, in the absence of other literary testimony, I had to content myself with the use of the following works:—

Josephus, in the English Translation of William Whiston (Oxford, 1839); Ritter's 'Erdkunde,' vol. xv., which contains an abstract of the important journeys of Burckhardt and Seetzen; Gustav. Flügel's 'History of the Arabians' (Leipzig, 1864), and Baedeker's 'Palestine and Syria' (1875). I leave the reader to draw from the collected material of descriptions, &c., further conclusions upon the historic past of the places treated here.

B.—POSITION, EXTENT, LIMITS, AND ADMINISTRATION OF THE JAULÂN.

The entire area of modern Jaulân, including ez Zawiyeh esh-Shurkiyeh and Sha'rah in the north, is about 560 square miles. By the Jaulân is meant only the high plateau and a part of its declivity, viz., the north-west portion sloping from the Huleh marshes: and bounded in the west by Jordan, south-west by the Lake of Tiberias, north by the declivities of Hermon and the Wâdy el-Adjam, north-east by Jedur or Nahr er-Rukkâd, and east and south by Haurân or the Nahr el-Allân, and in the south by 'Ajlûn or the

River Yarmuk. Politically, the Jaulân forms one of the administrative districts (Kaimakâmiyeh) of the Sanjak or the Liva of Haurân (with the seat of government of a Kaimakam in el-Kuneitrah), and as such is under the Mutasarrif of the Haurân at Sheikh Sa'ad.

The Jaulân itself is divided into four districts: (1) Mu diriyyeh esh-Sharah (in the north), chief town and residence of the Mudir is Mejdel esh-Shems; (2) el-Kuneitrah (in the centre), chief town and residence of the Kaimakâmiyeh is el-Kuneitrah; (3) ez Zawiyeh el-Ghurbiyeh (south), chief town and residence of the Mukhtar is Kefr el-Ma; (4) ez-Zawiyeh esh-Shurkiyeh, (east), chief town and residence of a Mukhtar is esh-Shejarah.

The Mudîr and Mukhtar are inferior officials of the Kaimakam. The Mukhtars, properly only village magistrates, have to look after the punctual payment of the taxes, and are responsible for them. They receive no salary, and must even support the government officers whilst on their expeditions; but they are at the same time exempt from taxation, and may present an account in el-Kuneitrah for the fodder consumed by the horses of the gen-d'armes, which is discharged according to the letter of the law. The heads of the chief families of the country, the village sheikhs of Fik, Skuffiyeh, Kefr el-Ma, el-'Al, Khisfin, and esh-Shejarah, form an administrative council;