

LETTER XXXIV.

SEA OF GALILEE—SOURCES OF THE JORDAN.

AS we left the crumbling walls of Tiberias we rode along the western shore of the Sea of Galilee, to find our tents pitched within a few yards of its blue waters. We did not long delay our plunge into the lake. At the foot of the barren hills which tower above, it bears some strong resemblance to the Dead Sea. Some profess to find its waters slightly salty, but none of us were of that opinion. There is but little motion of the waters on the beach, and this is perhaps almost wholly due to the winds. Pebbles and shells abound, and can be seen for some distance out, as the water is comparatively shallow for several feet. In fact, the Sea of Galilee is in no place over one hundred and sixty feet deep. Its length is sixteen and a half miles, while its greatest width is seven and a half miles. Its form is not quite oval, and by a slight stretch of the imagination one may see in its outline the shape of a harp. This was its original name, Lake of Chinnereth, or Lake of the Harp.

From almost any point on its banks one may get a tolerable view of the whole, and although the surrounding hills are comparatively treeless, and, save the towns of Magdala and Tiberias, its once populous shores are entirely deserted, while only two or three fishing-boats lie upon its waters, still the gen-

eral view is rather pleasant. It cannot be strictly called beautiful. It doubtless was so once, when cities and villages lined its shores and its surface was white with sails, while all the land, being in a high state of cultivation, was by turns green and golden with sowing and harvest. But the great curse which fell upon the people of Capernaum, and of Bethsaida, and of Chorazin, fell no less upon their cities and plains. The Sea of Galilee alone remains of all that former beauty and glory. The increased beauty which it had from its surroundings has been destroyed. It is almost a lake in a desert, save where the Plain of Gennesaret on the north is green with life, but it is pleasing still, even if only by way of contrast.

Look at the picture as we see it from our tent-door. Opposite rise the hills of Hauran, down some of whose steep sides the herd of swine ran violently into the sea. Here and there on their summits is seen one or more houses of some small village of Bedouins, who make it unsafe for travelers to venture across unless in considerable numbers. At our extreme right is the opening in the hills through which the Jordan hurries on in its deep valley to the Sea of Death. Between us and this extreme southern point lie the ruins of old Tiberias, a more desirable site for the city having been found higher up on the western shore of the lake. A white dome, covering the warm baths near the beach, is the only object, except ruins and barren hills, which meets the eye in that direction. Turning to the left we see the dilapidated walls of Tiberias, with the ruins of the old Roman castle near the city, and a few small boats anchored or beached in front of the town. Beyond Tiberias lay all the memorable scenes of our Lord's ministry on this lake. Magdala, the town of Mary Magdalene, now a small village, the ruins of Bethsaida and of Capernaum, the Plain of Gennesaret

between the two, and farther away the ruins of Chorazin, are all there on our left.

While we watch the moon and stars mirrored in its placid waters we may well recall that these shores witnessed most of our Lord's greatest works, as well as nearly all of his public ministry. Perhaps less than six months of his life, after Jesus was baptized, were spent away from the immediate vicinity of the Sea of Galilee. Near here he preached the Sermon on the Mount. Here he healed the centurion's servant and the nobleman's son. Here he restored to health Peter's wife's mother, and the woman with an issue of blood, and the sick of the palsy lying on a bed. Here he raised to life Jairus's daughter. Here he cast out, in the very synagogue, an unclean spirit. Near here he fed the five thousand, and at another time four thousand. He walked on these very waters, and, rising from slumber, he hushed with a word the mad tempest that swept the lake. In fact, when driven from Nazareth and afraid to live in Jerusalem, where they always sought his life, he came and dwelt on these shores in Capernaum, thereafter called "his own city." Here, too, after his resurrection, he appeared unto the disciples and restored fallen and repentant Peter.

We were up before the sun on the morning of April 19, and after another bath in the lake we entered a fishing-boat which we had engaged the night before for a sail to Capernaum and Bethsaida. This was one of the four boats now found on the Sea of Galilee, which once, doubtless, numbered hundreds. Josephus would lead us to believe that many of them were of great size and beauty. Ours was rowed by eight men, and was perhaps less than eighteen feet long and four feet wide. Part of the way the wind was favorable, when we could use our sail, but for the most part we were dependent on the oars. We spent some four hours on the lake, during which

time we could form a good idea of the life of Andrew, Peter, James, and John, the fishermen apostles.

We first rowed from our camping-ground a mile or more to the town of Tiberias, where our boat stopped to take in supplies for the day, and the long fishing-net which had been laid upon the projecting walls to dry. Our ride was but incidental to the day's fishing, so that we could see the usual habits of these Galilean fishermen. Four men at a time, under the command of the head boatman, rowed the boat, while all frequently joined in a song, usually of the responsive sort. There was ample room in the bottom of the boat, where such as were wearied might sleep, a privilege of which one at least availed himself. The fishermen were rather above the average of the people generally, and seemed to be of the indifferent kind, not so anxious for the Napoleon for which they agreed to take us as to be much disposed to interfere with the day's work.

The sea was quite smooth, but a strong wind sweeping down from the steep hills which rose above us would have made its waters dash us hither and thither. The storms on these inland seas are said to be even worse than on the ocean. The peril of the disciples, when Jesus came walking on the water, was their inability to land and the danger of being dashed upon the rocks, for we are told that when Jesus entered the ship "immediately they were at the land." Doubtless, also, out toward the middle of the lake one of those fierce cyclones, so common now, threatened to destroy their boat, when the disciples awoke our Lord, sleeping at the bottom of the boat, with, "Master, carest thou not that we perish? And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm." "And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What

manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

We rowed probably not less than ten miles before reaching Tell Hum, the supposed site of Capernaum. On the west shore we saw occasional ruins, remains of villages which no one has been able to identify. Magdala, a small town of perhaps sixty houses, is the only inhabited place on the coast, save Tiberias, which has a population of three thousand. Kahn Minyeh comes next, supposed by some to be the Capernaum of the Scriptures, and by others the Bethsaida; while between these ruins and Tell Hum stretches the Plain of Gennesaret, a fertile tract some six miles long and five wide, with ruins near the coast, as well as a mill and two houses, called by the natives Bethsaida.

Stepping out on the large basaltic rocks which lined the shore at Tell Hum, we pressed our way through weeds and thistles as high as our heads, and came first upon the ruins of a building whose thick stone-walls were still standing. Evidently more substantial than an ordinary dwelling, it was doubtless a public building of some sort, and yet defying our ability to say what. From its walls we looked on every side for other ruins, and could see only mounds and weeds. The white limestone of the very walls on which we stood were black with mold and moisture, and the whole place seemed taken by the luxuriant weeds. Pressing on through these, we came upon some splendid ruins, only about fifty yards from the first. These seemed to belong to an old church of considerable dimensions. There were the remains of large columns with well-executed Corinthian capitals, and from their age some have conjectured that they belonged to the synagogue built in Capernaum by the Roman centurion whose servant Christ healed. Those versed in different styles of architecture discover some ruins near these

to be more recent, and suppose them to belong to a Christian church erected about the seventh century on the site of Peter's house. These were all the ruins which we found. Houses built of blocks of basalt picked up from the shore were still standing, but untenanted. They had once been occupied by the farmers who cultivated the rich Plain of Gennesaret, but have long been deserted. They are so overgrown with weeds that we only found them when we were right upon them. In fact, what was once a populous city, and admitted by all to have been either Capernaum or Bethsaida, is now a heap of ruins, most of which are under the earth and all covered by thick, rank weeds. Where once our Lord talked to thousands not a soul is now to be found. The awful solitude of the place is only occasionally broken by the traveler who here repeats Christ's words, "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida!" "And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell." These very cities have so suffered with their inhabitants that even their sites are beyond identification. They have all become heaps. Chorazin is supposed to have stood where there is now a mass of ruins some distance back on the hill from Tell Hum. The Arab name, Kerazeh, is the principal means of its identification. Yet these were all respectable cities, and swarming with people, who came out by thousands to hear Christ preach and to see his miracles.

Returning to our boat, we notice the oleanders which abound on the north shore of the lake. In size of leaf and flower we could see but little difference in them from our own. The whole course of the Jordan is lined with them. Some four miles east of Tell Hum the Jordan leaps, by a sort of cascade, into the lake, while its exit from the lake is no less rapid. Throughout its whole course it well de-

serves its name, Jordan, or "Descender." Did favoring winds permit we should sail over to the upper mouth of the Jordan, but we must camp to-night at Lake Merom, and our horses are already waiting at Khan Minyeh. A row of some four miles brings us to this point, which, like Tell Hum, is the probable site of either Capernaum or Bethsaida, no one can say which. At any rate, they divide the honor between them, so that visiting both places one may feel pretty confident of having stood on the site of the two most exalted and most cursed cities of the world. There are fewer ruins here than at Tell Hum, but they have the same rank vegetation to conceal them. The one thing of which we could feel assured was the Plain of Gennesaret (Mark vi. 53) stretching between the two. It was perhaps on this very plain, extending from the shore, where Christ's eye fell upon the farmer in the field. Sitting in the boat, with the multitude gathered on the shore, and perhaps watching the very action of the sower as he spoke, Jesus said, "Behold, a sower went forth to sow." The way-side, the thorns, the stony and the good ground, were doubtless all in sight. This well-watered, fertile plain, then highly cultivated, doubtless fed many thousands of people. Poorly tilled as it is to-day, it is probably the chief dependence of the human life found within ten miles of it. A large stone mill on the shore, run by one of the many springs that pour their full volume of clear water into the lake, grinds the corn for the farmers whose village of miserable houses is hidden somewhere behind the hills.

Such is the Sea of Galilee as it appeared to us. Its waters still yield abundant supplies of fish, but a few fishermen can furnish all that are needed by the less than four thousand people who dwell upon its shores. A small navy could ride upon a lake where four small fishing-boats answer all the wants

of the people. The once busiest part of all Palestine is now almost deserted. This Sea of Life has well-nigh become a Sea of Death, no less than that other sea where the populous Cities of the Plain once stood, their inhabitants reveling in sin, having forgotten God. Its shores, however, have not the barren look of those of the Dead Sea. Desolated it doubtless has been, but the papyrus, the rushes, the oleanders, the rank vegetable life of all kinds which abounds on its shores, seem to tell of the possibilities of a better life. Desolated, but not sown with salt—forsaken, but not burned with fire—the infinite mercy of Jesus may yet permit them to be peopled with souls more eager to hear his words than the unfaithful dwellers in Bethsaida, Chorazin, and Capernaum.

We disembark at Khan Minyeh, and, making our way through thorns and weeds, we reach the road to Damascus, where our horses await us. Climbing the hills, we linger for another look at the historic lake which appears before us in all its dimensions. This, of all the localities in Palestine, Olivet alone excepted, is the most sacred to the Christian. How sacred these very names! But our hearts need not the tree-crowned mountain and the silent sea to help us to commune with Christ. An angel's voice calls from each, "He is not here, he is risen;" while the believer replies:

But sweet, warm, tender, even yet,
A present help is He;
While faith has still its Olivet,
And love its Galilee.

Our road toward Lake Merom left Safed on the west. This is also a most sacred city of the modern Jews, who believe that the Messiah, after first appearing near Tiberias, will set up his kingdom at Safed. A tradition confounding it with Dothan gives the name of Joseph's Well to a cistern of

dirty water covered by an old khan. This cistern is about as suitable a place for his confinement as these hills, now covered only with blocks of basalt and limestone, were for the flocks of his brethren. Remarking on how much could be seen in a single day in a land so historic as Palestine, when a day's journey could embrace, as the day before had just done, Nazareth, Mount Tabor, Mount Hattin, and the Sea of Galilee, while the morning had included visits to Tiberias, Capernaum, and Bethsaida, as well as a few hours' ride on the Sea of Galilee, it was proposed to ascend one of the hills on this plateau to find out the range of vision from a single point. We had just lost sight of Mount Tabor and Mount Hattin—the Mount of Beatitudes—and the Sea of Galilee, while in the distance we saw Mount Hermon and the mountains of Lebanon white with snow. From the hill-top *all of these are combined in one vision*, together with the Lake of Merom, the Valley of the Jordan, and the hills of the Hauran. Surely, only Moses's view from Pisgah could have excited greater thrills of joy.

Descending now toward the rich valley watered by the sources of the Jordan, we seemed to enter a new country. Hitherto we had crossed numerous wadies, or dry beds of mountain torrents, and had passed over long stretches of barren country, but now the water-courses were all full and the fields waving with grain. This upper Valley of the Jordan, extending from Lake Merom to Cesarea Philippi, at the foot of Mount Hermon, properly drained and cultivated, ought to be the finest, as it is almost the largest, agricultural section in Palestine. Pastoral Bedouins, living in tents of black goats' hair or coarse matting, are the only farmers. The peculiar buffalo of the East, so familiar in Japan, China, Ceylon, India, and Egypt, appears here for the first time in Syria, and seems much at home among these

marshes. Every thing has a more primitive look than elsewhere in this country. Pitching our tents near some ten springs, whose united volume of water makes one of the considerable sources of the Jordan, we rode back to Lake Merom, which we had already passed a mile to our right. We found the lake to be some four miles long and three and a half miles broad, but so surrounded by marshes as to be inaccessible save by walking. It is the largest of the three or more lakes which collect all the waters from the numerous springs of this valley, and for which the Jordan is the proper and only outlet. The water is only some ten or eleven feet deep, and the whole lake has been thoroughly explored by MacGregor in his wonderful canoe, the "Rob Roy." Natives were wading out in its waters for fish, but we were unwilling to trust ourselves or our horses too near its treacherous swamps. Its chief interest, aside from its being the reservoir of the Jordan, is that near its shores Joshua fought one of his greatest battles, which settled the conquest of all Northern Palestine, as the battle of Beth-horon secured all the southern country.

We of course visited the numerous springs near which our tent was pitched on the evening of April 19. They are really one of the principal sources of the Jordan, and yet no mention is made of them in any work that I have seen. They burst out from the foot of the mountain at a village called El-Mel-laha. The volume of water is very considerable. It is used in part for running a flour-mill. This is an old stone structure, hardly distinguishable from the surrounding rocks. The water comes in through shoots on a level with the roof of the mill. It is made to strike a wheel so as to turn it horizontally, and this turns the rude mill-stones. There is no arrangement for bolting the flour, which is very coarse. The natives usually make it into thin cakes

of bread. These were probably the five loaves, enough for only one man's dinner, that Jesus multiplied for the feeding of five thousand men, besides women and children. Doubtless on this very day our eyes had unconsciously looked upon the very place somewhere near the Sea of Galilee where that miracle was performed. On some of these plains, where there was much grass, he caused the multitude to be seated in companies of fifty. A few years ago during a famine in China, when multitudes had to be fed, there was no such effective way of avoiding confusion as to divide the people into companies as our Lord did, and cause them to be seated. Durra was the grain being ground the day we were at the mill. This is very much like the seed of broom-corn or sorghum, and is used by the people for food as well as for their camels.

We daily met great caravans of camels on their way to and from Damascus. They abound throughout Syria, but seem to be less used than donkeys or oxen. The mule is much used by the well-to-do among the people. The kind in use here are as fine as any in America. It is astonishing what loads they carry. I saw one with five trunks strapped across him. Merchandise and baggage are carried almost wholly in this way. The mules are without bridles, and usually follow the lead-mule, who carries some ten or fifteen bells, besides a couple of strings of sleigh-bells. Our baggage-mule, laden with our valises, strayed from the rest one day while the muleteers stopped for lunch, and it was two hours before they missed him. At one time we were doubtful about his being recovered, but he was finally brought into the camp amid great rejoicing. He has been under watch ever since. The natives almost universally ride without bridles, and they are among the best horsemen in the world. A halter, with a motion of the hand, seems to

answer every purpose. Sometimes an iron band across the nose of the horse is substituted for the bit.

The snows of Hermon appeared too near to take a seven hours' ride to our next camping-ground, at Cesarea Philippi. Though our caravan moved promptly at 6 A.M. on the morning of the 20th, it was 1 P.M. before we dismounted in the olive-grove at the foot of Mount Hermon. I say our caravan, for in addition to our twelve or more horses, mules, and donkeys, two Damascene merchants and their families desired to travel with us for greater safety. The women of the party had been attending the Mohammedan festival at Jerusalem and visiting Neby Musa, or the grave of Moses, which the Moslems have, very conveniently for their pilgrims, located on the *west* side of the Jordan. A visit to the pile of rocks called Moses's grave, which we saw on our way from the Dead Sea to Mar Saba, is considered very meritorious, and is undertaken by most pilgrims who go to the Mosque of Omar. These women rode in palankeens on the backs of mules, one mule usually being responsible for three or four persons. They kept closely veiled whenever we Franks happened to be looking. They traveled with us all the way to Damascus, and afterward the merchants came to our tents to pay their respects through an interpreter, but we dared not send our compliments to their wives.

There really appeared no danger of Bedouins, but the country was full of rumors of robberies by them, and we deemed it best to use prudence and present a formidable front. Turkey exercises too little control over these lawless tribes at any time, but now that she has but a small military force in Syria there is considerable fear of incursions. All the Bedouins that we saw were of the friendly sort. We passed through an extensive village of them, their rude tents lining each side of the road. Men,

women, and children stood forth to greet us with, perhaps, their only English word, "Morning."

We crossed several rapid streams hurrying on to the Jordan. One, the Dardara, we had to cross by a stone bridge of three arches. Its course was through a deep gorge, the basaltic walls rising to the height of perhaps six hundred feet on each side. The roar of the rushing waters announced their presence some distance before we reached them. The same was true of the Leddan, or Little Jordan, the principal source of the Jordan, which bursts out from the earth in a considerable volume at the site of Dan, the frontier city of Palestine on the north. Only a hill marks this old place, and from under this hill, now overgrown with trees, the Jordan may be said to spring forth almost a full-grown river at once, although it pours its waters, with those of the other streams in the valley, into the lakes, whence they find a common outlet in the Jordan proper. At Cesarea Philippi, where we camped for the night, other such springs burst out together from the very foot of Mount Hermon and become at once a large stream, whose waters hasten in numerous cascades to the lakes which supply the Jordan. Whence come these waters? Are they from natural springs, although of most exceptional size? or, are they from the melted snows of Hermon, which find for themselves immense reservoirs in the bowels of the mountain and seek this subterranean outlet? Whatever their origin, these are the sources of the Jordan. Clear as crystal they leap from the earth, although they pour a turbid flood into the Dead Sea. Larger than Abana and Pharpar, and the largest river between the Euphrates and the Mediterranean, the Jordan waters the most historic land in the world, and has for us the deepest interest which can attach to any water save the Sea of Galilee.

Baalbec, Syria, April 27, 1877.

LETTER XXXV.

SNOWY HERMON AND HOARY DAMASCUS.

WITH the exception of one day's travel we have gone from Dan to Beer-sheba, as well as from the Jordan to the Great Sea. We did not deem it advisable to ride from Hebron to Beer-sheba, but with that aside we have seen Palestine from its southernmost to its northernmost limits. Our line of travel was that most frequented in our Lord's day and before, so that most of the historic places were within our reach. The cities of the Philistines and the place of Elijah's sacrifice on Mount Carmel we regret being unable to see; and it would have been most pleasant to cross the Jordan and look out from the mountains of Pisgah upon the land of promise. We did all, however, that it was safe to do in the present excited state of the country. Several parties were turned back from the land of Moab and the Hauran by the threatened danger from the lawless tribes, the true sons of Ishmael, who dwell on the other side of the Jordan. Even along the accustomed lines of travel in Palestine proper there was much annoyance from numerous thefts. As many as ten different parties have been robbed of watches and money during the time of our tour in the country. This, however, was perhaps mostly owing to carelessness, and to undue confidence in the soldiers who guarded the tents, and who were probably the thieves. This, at least,