

## LETTER XXXVI.

## FROM BAALBEC TO BEYROOT.

WE left Damascus for Baalbec on the morning of April 24. We first rode up to the top of Jebel Kaisun, where it is claimed that Mohammed stood and looked on the same vision of beauty and dared advance no farther. Descending its steep slopes by leading our horses, which felt their way along with their feet, pausing occasionally to see whether or not their shoes would hold before taking a fresh step, we at length reached the fine *diligence* road which connects Damascus and Beyroot. We could see far below us before descending the steep gorge of the Abana, green with poplar and walnut. Crossing the river on a stone bridge, in place of fording its swift current, as we could easily have done, we rode several miles on the *diligence* road, which here runs parallel with the noisy river. All the life of the country seems to be down in this valley. Irrigating streams make green fields where else there would be only sand. Little fields of wheat are, after all, the chief dependence of the people, save their olives, figs, and so-called English walnuts. Some attempts are made to grow wheat above the line of irrigation, but the farmer will not get back more than his seed.

Mount Hermon looked down upon us all day during our brief ride. This summit showed quite a snow-storm since we had passed on our way to

Damascus. We found our muleteers trying to pitch the tents at Suk Wady Barada. Despite the heavy wind they finally succeeded, but we shall not forget the cold night we spent at the foot of Anti-Lebanon. If we were to believe the Koran, we had camped near the spot where Cain killed Abel. The old name of the place is Abila, or Abilene, the same mentioned by St. Luke. Many rock tombs abound, but what interested us most was the remains of an old Roman road cut through the solid rock of the mountain. The perpendicular sides were in some cases still perfect, with the tool-marks quite plain upon them. Equally distinct were several niches and inscriptions, which latter declared that the road was built in the time of the Roman emperors Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus, or about the middle of the second century. We were glad to see some of the work of the greatest road-builders of the world. Roman roads doubtless contributed their part toward the early and rapid spread of Christianity. As Dr. Schaff well said in a recent sermon, "God had three chosen people, the Jew, the Greek, and the Roman." From one came the Messiah, from another the language in which the Gospels were written and the truth most widely proclaimed, while to the Romans we owe the system of laws and the means of transit which secured for the apostles a speedy and wide hearing. Christianity then planted in many parts of the Lebanon along this very ancient road, though losing much of its early simplicity, has never ceased to maintain some sort of existence.

We passed the next day along a fertile valley through which a tributary of the Abana flows. The town of Zebedani is located here, but the numerous orchards well-nigh concealed it. It has a considerable Christian population. The principal thing that interested us was the number of gates to different



fields and orchards, an evident recognition of the laws of *meum et tuum*. We camped at night at Surghaya, the snows of Hermon and Lebanon both visible from our tent-door, while just above us the peaks of Anti-Lebanon were still white, tempting us to a deceitful ascent to reach the snow line. Near our tent was a wine-press, but recently used. It was a rectangular wall of stone, with a stone floor, and divided into two equal parts. In here the rich clusters of grapes were thrown to be trodden by human feet, while the purple tide ran through grooves into pits, or cisterns, a couple of yards distant. The whole affair was very rude. Large quantities of the refuse stems and skins, after having been thus trodden under foot, were thrown one side to rot. A building near by seemed provided with a furnace and caldron, as if the juice of the grape might be boiled before it was ready for use. The rude stone press reminded us of One who "trode the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with him." Flocks of goats and kids were led past our tents by youthful shepherds, each of whom had a different call, to which his flock quickly responded. The shepherds appeared to be unconcerned, as if to say, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me;" but "a stranger will they not follow," "for they know not the voice of strangers."

We lunched the next day in the portico of the Temple of the Sun, at Baalbec. At certain points in our ride we commanded fine views at once of both Hermon and Lebanon. Our route lay mostly over the Anti-Lebanon mountains or through deep gorges by rushing mountain-streams. There were no solitudes too wild to remain uninhabited, provided only there was water there. As we approached Baalbec the six immense columns, over sixty feet high, the remains of a vast temple, appeared in sight. But before we could ride on for a closer view

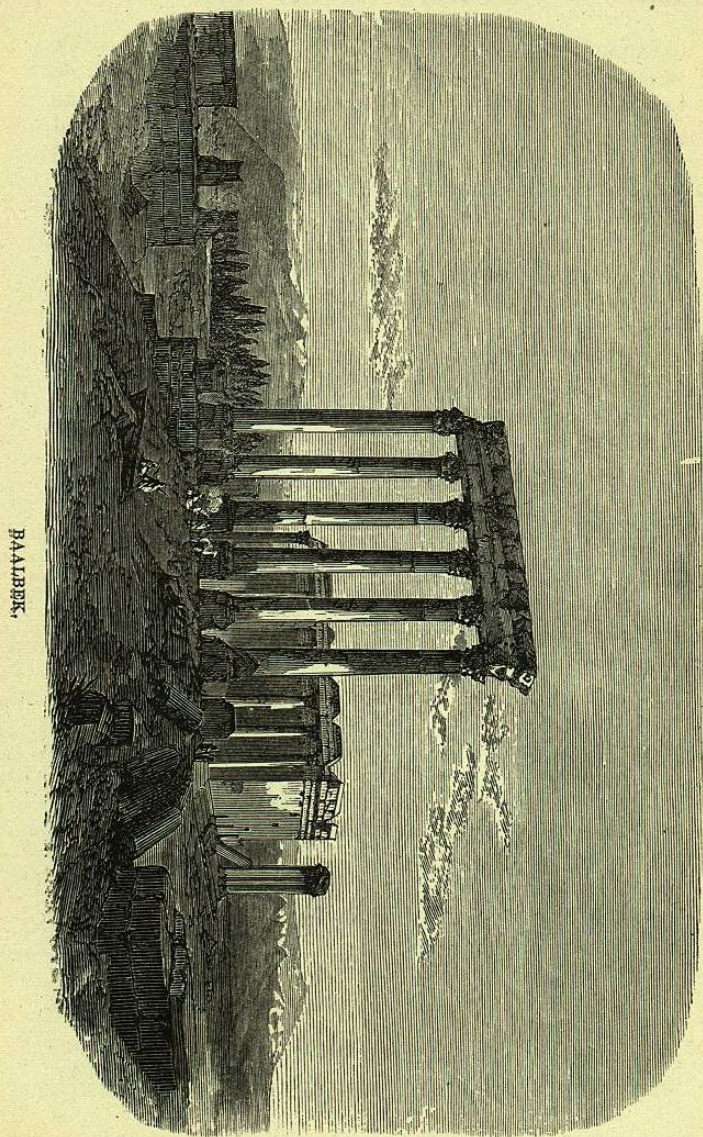
we stopped at the quarry on the way, whence the huge stones were taken. A monster still lay in the quarry. It was seventy-one feet long and fourteen feet high. Remove the tongues, and it was as long as about five or six two-horse wagons in a line, as wide as one lengthwise, and as tall as one on the top of another, with several feet to spare. Yet such stones as this, weighing fully one thousand five hundred tons, had been taken nearly a mile, and lifted to their places in the wall of the temple. We had seen no such monster anywhere in the world. Yet they were preparing to remove this, too, as was evident from small rectangular holes cut in it at different points, the better to handle it; while all that remained was to loosen it from the native rock beneath.

We hastened from the quarry to the Acropolis itself, but we were not disappointed. There, in the outer wall of the temple, were three immense stones, only a little shorter than the monster in the quarry, all fully sixty-two feet long and thirteen feet high, and raised to their places in the wall nineteen feet above the ground. When? By whom? How? No satisfactory answer can be given. At least as early as the seventh century, and most probably by Antoninus Pius, as a temple to Jupiter, the massive structure went up; but how these great stones were handled is a greater mystery than the building of the pyramids. It would almost seem as if the Romans had taxed their powers to the utmost in getting those monsters in position, and durst not attempt a fourth a trifle larger. At any rate, for some cause the fourth remained in the quarry, and the temple was called the "Trilithon," or the "Three Stone Temple." What it is now may give only an imperfect idea of what it once was before it was shattered by earthquakes or its material used for building churches or mosques, and the whole premises changed into a fortress.



Our entrance to the inclosure was on horseback through a long vaulted chamber running the whole length of the court. The original design of this long passage, so well constructed and ornamented with sculptured faces and figures, none of us could conjecture. A better idea of the vast temple-inclosure may be given by going a few yards to the right of where we started to enter it. Here are the remains of a large portico, the spaces between the columns afterward filled up to serve as the walls of the fort. Standing in the portico we saw the fine entrance-court, which we entered by stooping until we passed through one of these doors, now much reduced in size. The court is one hundred and forty-seven by one hundred and twenty-three yards, and is all inclosed by the great wall, the inside of which is made of elaborately-carved stone arranged in different kinds of chambers, some rectangular, some semicircular, and all furnished with niches and pilasters. Beyond the court stood the great temple, which consisted of two rows of nineteen columns each, with ten columns at each end, the whole forming one vast rectangular, roofless structure, where worship was paid to all the gods. These columns were sixty feet high and seven and a half feet in diameter. Only six now remain of the fifty-eight original ones; and only nine were standing a hundred years ago. These are liable to fall with the first earthquake shock, even if they do not quicker succumb to the vandal Arabs who have dug into them after the iron clamps which hold the stones together. The bases and parts of the columns of the row parallel to these are now built into the wall of the fort.

Nowhere in the heathen world have we found any temple which could compare with this great structure which the Romans built at Baalbec, or Heliopolis, as the city was formerly called. After-



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ward a Christian *basilica*, or church, was built within the entrance-court, but none of these great columns were disturbed in its erection. Other than Christian hands are responsible for their destruction. A mosque was also erected in another part of the inclosure. But military necessity seems to have done more than religious zeal in the new uses to which the old material was put.

The Temple of the Sun, built about the same time as this great temple, has had a much better fate. Rows of great columns, which belonged to the four porticoes on the different sides of the building, have in some cases fallen and brought with them the stone roof, but the walls of the temple itself remain entire. It seems to be doubtful whether this building also was ever roofed. If so, it was perhaps done during its use as a Christian church, and, being of a later date, the roof was no such part of the original building as that its disappearance would leave traces of its existence. Smaller than the great temple within the same inclosure, the stone-work is yet finer. The sun, which looked in upon these offerings of his worshipers, saw only the best work of the best workmen. In the stone ceiling of the portico were cut in bass-relief life-size figures of gods and emperors. The columns which support this roof are over forty-six feet high, so that the figures appear rather small as seen from the floor. The door-posts of the entrance to the temple are large stones with carvings of vines and garlands and *genii*. There are no windows in the temple. All the light that enters comes from above, so that the sun's worshipers must needs have been compelled to lift up their eyes, if not their hearts, as they made their offerings.

Both of these buildings, as well as a considerable fort, and the remains of the *basilica* and the mosque, are situated within the outer wall of the temple-