

CHAPTER LVI.

From Nazareth to the Sea of Galilee by Way of Cana.

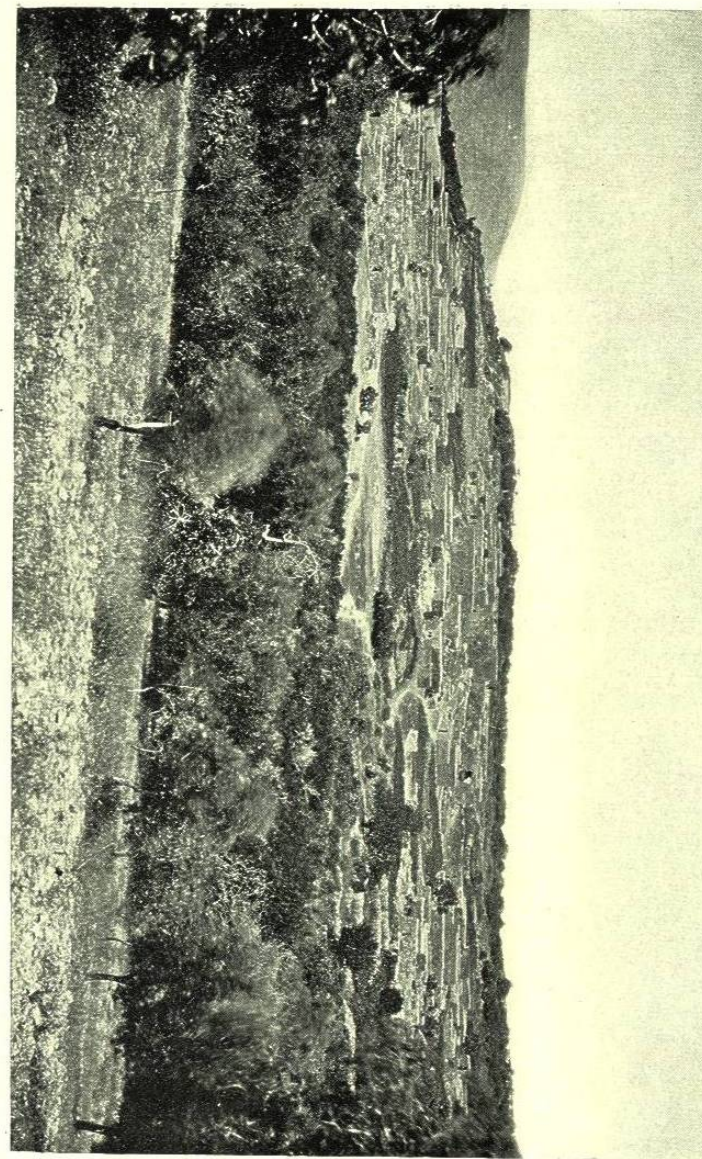
Kefr-Kenna—Mount of Beatitudes—First View of the Sea of Galilee—Tiberias—Description of the Sea—History of the Town—Grave of Maimonides—Two Protestant Services on Sunday—The Protestant Mission in Tiberias.

ON leaving Nazareth we set out for Cana of Galilee, whose modern name is Kefr-Kenna. Passing by Mary's Well, in about an hour and a half we reached the village. Before doing so we passed the birthplace of the prophet Jonah, a genuine tradition with scriptural support. It is also one of the places which claim his tomb. Here is his supposed sepulcher on the hill, and visible at a considerable distance.

Is Kefr-Kenna the original Cana? For a long time there was no dispute upon the point. Every marriage ceremony recalls the fact that Christ performed his first miracle here, and at a wedding. This was the native place of Nathanael, "an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile." Christ was here when he spoke the word which healed the nobleman's son who was sick at Capernaum; and here the nobleman exhibited a faith which made his name immortal, and forever an example and encouragement to all Christians.

Dr. Robinson denies that this is the site, and locates it at Cana-El-Jaeliel, about nine miles from Nazareth. Other critics, having considered all that Drs. Robinson and Porter have to offer, believe the claims to be about equally balanced.

In this town the children raised a cry which reminded us of the "Howadji" which we had heard so often in Egypt: "Hadji! Hadji!" With this cry they ran after the traveler, offering water and expecting a gratuity. In the Greek church they pretend to have one of the waterpots that were filled when Jesus turned the water into wine. Such pots have been shown all along, and the only thing probable is that from the



Cana.

unchanging customs of the country it may reasonably be inferred that the original pots were of this kind.

Passing on, the Horns of Hattin, a hill with two peaks, appeared. Its peculiar shape makes it very deceiving as to height. It is believed by many to be the Mount of Beatitudes; that here the Sermon on the Mount was preached, and the five thousand were fed. The Crusaders first affirmed it to be the spot, and it wonderfully agrees with the Bible narrative.

Near where we then were the last great struggle of the Crusaders took place, eight hundred and six years ago.

It was not far from the Horns of Hattin that the Knights Templars, with the Bishop of Lydda, who bore the holy cross, assembled; but they were all slain or captured by the victorious Saladin, since when, with occasional brief intervals, the sword of Mohammed has held the Holy Land.

Riding rapidly on across the plain, which gave us the best opportunity we had had since leaving Jerusalem of seeing what our horses could do, with the discovery that they were not equal to much, we began to have fine views of Hermon; the mountains of Galilee; and finally the whole Sea of Tiberias was spread out before us, a prospect very similar to that which we had after leaving the Convent of Mar Saba on our way to the Dead Sea. We continued to rise to the summit of the ridge, and then descended almost to the lake, which was more than a thousand feet below us when we had the first view of it. Our destination was Tiberias, which we reached before sunset, finding the camp already pitched along the shore to the right of the town and half a mile below it. This was Saturday evening, and where could we have had a more beautiful place for a Sabbath rest than the shores of the Sea of Galilee?

Our tents were close to the celebrated hot baths, which from ancient times have been in high repute for the cure of rheumatism and similar diseases. The reputation of Tiberias is not good in a sanitary point of view, the place being malarious, filthy, and verminous, so that travelers generally encamp at some distance from it. We were delighted with the situation chosen. Below, at a little distance, was a party of ladies and

gentlemen and children from Philadelphia, Pa., among them being two clergymen of the Protestant Episcopal Church. Their cavalcade was large, and they traveled with the greatest comfort and without haste.

Before retiring for the night we explored the little city, riding along the shore of the lake on an excellent road.

Some have gone into raptures over the charms of the Sea of Galilee, while others have disparaged it as not having any attractions which would make it noted were it not for its Scriptural associations.

My impression is that in any part of the world it would be thought charming. Though inferior to the Swiss lakes in grandeur, and to the Italian in sweetness, and without islands, yet the vivid green of the shores, the moderate height and occasional abruptness of the banks, the soft blue tint of the water, and the effects produced by the brilliancy of the sunlight and the rapid evaporation, make a picture not to be truthfully described as monotonous or otherwise than as a scene of natural interest worthy the attention of poet, artist, and lover of the beautiful.

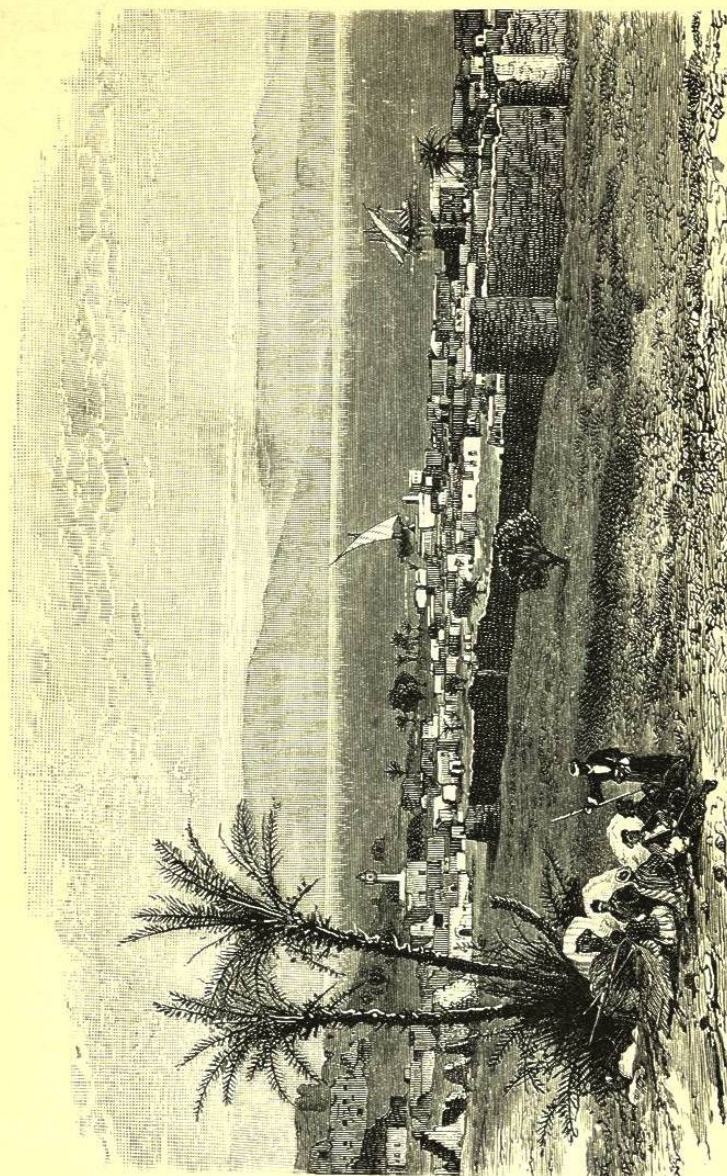
Far away uprears imposing Hermon, while mountains flanked by hills limit the horizon. Like Lake Geneva it is exposed to sudden changes, the result of the high winds which sometimes rise, and Byron's words:

"The scene is changed, and such a change!
O storm and night and darkness,
Ye are wondrous strong!"

may find illustration here. We were not fortunate enough to see a genuine storm on the lake, but the configuration explains itself to every eye familiar with the storm-generating forces latent in lakes that are in the vicinity of mountains, and from whose shores rise irregular hills.

At night the spectacle was subduing and thought-provoking. The starlit sky reflected in the absolutely smooth surface of water gave the effect of two firmaments, and it was as easy to study the heavens by looking downward as by looking into the glass of a reflecting telescope.

Less than seven miles in the widest place, not more than



Tiberias, Sea of Galilee.

twelve and a half miles long, shaped like a pear with its pointed end to the south, is this sacred sea; seven hundred feet below the level of the Mediterranean, its average depth is about one hundred and sixty feet. The surrounding region is volcanic, and earthquakes have been common. Fifty-three years ago half the population of the city lost their lives in a terrible shock which threw down the walls and many of the houses and shattered the castle.

Tiberias is supposed to have been built by Herod Antipas, in about the year 20 of the Christian era, in honor of Tiberius, the Roman emperor. The ancient city was one of the most prosperous—in fact, the chief city of Galilee. After Jerusalem was destroyed it became the center of Jewish dignity, wealth, and learning. Ruins are scattered for miles along the shore of the lake, but require an expert to explain their significance.

At the present time nearly two thirds of the population of the city are Jews. Many are from Europe, especially Poland, and belong to the sect of the Ashkenazim, though the same term is applied to Russian, Hungarian, Bohemian, Moravian, German, and Dutch Jews. The rest belong to the sect of the Sephardim—Spanish-Portuguese Jews. The Talmudists made their headquarters in this place; the two famous books of the Jews, the Mishna and the Masorah, were published here; and for centuries the Sanhedrim convened in Tiberias.

We visited the Jewish burial ground, where distinguished modern Jews are buried, especially those known as Talmudists. One name is honored both by Jews and Christians, Maimonides, who died six hundred and eighty-six years ago, a man worthy to be mentioned among scholars and philosophers of all ages. The others are buried in graves, but his body is encased in a somewhat ornate sarcophagus. A citizen gave us a tradition that when his body was brought there on camels, they went round in a circle, refusing to go away from the place where he is buried, or to carry the body farther, from which it was inferred that God miraculously indicated the site for his interment!

When we had been in camp a short time a gentleman called and announced that he was in Tiberias as a missionary of one of the Presbyterian churches in Scotland, and on finding that we