kind that mere science cannot justify, there is nothing so hard to maintain nowadays as a pure Theism. Agnosticism, or a species of Monism, which regards the supreme power of the universe as something alien to man and regardless of him—a power which, if we are to attribute to it any purpose, is working towards some end very remote from man's life—seems to be the creed to which science is leading those who take her for their only guide. We must believe that this is a passing phase of thought; but, while it lasts, what would become of the world were it not for the influence of Jesus Christ? Across the long centuries He speaks to us of the Father, and manifests Himself as the expression of the Father's heart. He tells us things so great and so precious that, when we have discovered their value, we cannot live without them. While science has been speaking of the grim struggle for existence, an agelong welter of greed and pain, out of which all that we call progress emerges, Christ has been telling us that underneath are the everlasting arms, and over all the eternal love. It is a supernatural message, yet it is the message without which all that we now know of the natural world would drive us to despair.

The Red Sea Passage of the Exodus.

By J. HARVEY (Late Inspector of Schools, Punjab.)

ANY serious consideration of the way in which the Almighty brought about the miracle of the Red Sea passage of the Exodus, so far from meriting the character of audacious, may be undertaken with the consciousness of its procedure being perfectly legitimate, inasmuch as the physical means employed are actually given us in the details of the sacred narrative. But, as a study of the application of these means cannot be said to be satisfactory without some knowledge of where the place of passage could have been, it will be best to begin with determin-

ing that point first, as far as Scripture, backed by the testimony of modern local investigation, can tell us.

If, therefore, there is an appearance of reiteration in the present article of what is already well known to many of our readers, it may be excused as being consistent with the inquiry as a whole, and as a prefatory epitome to the examination of the phenomenal aspect of the story. As it is also quite possible that all the reasons we shall adduce of the probable site of the passage may not have been brought together before into one homogeneous whole for the effectual vindication of the truth of the narrative, we feel we are justified in inviting attention to them first.

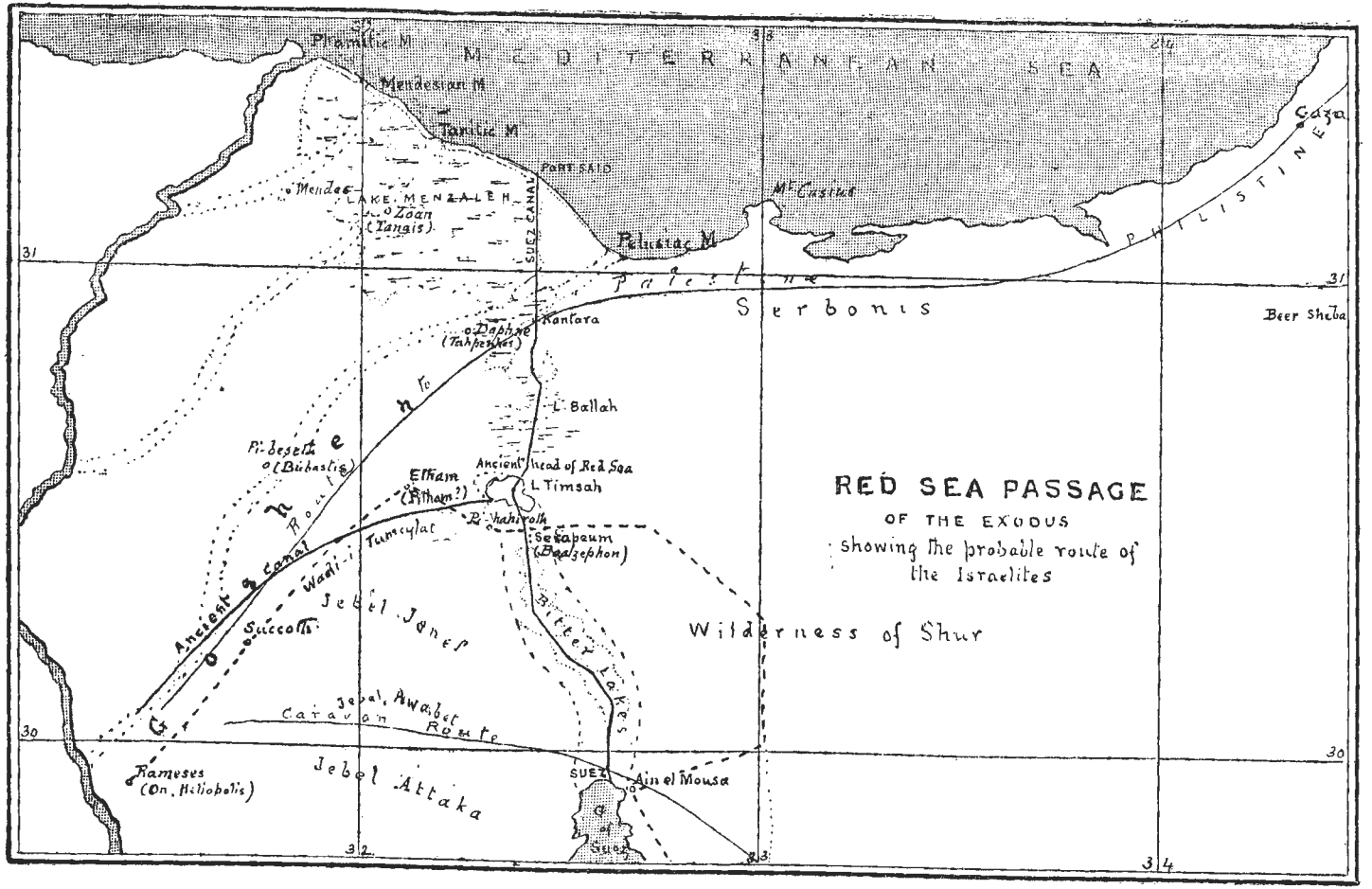
In no period of history, perhaps, since the occurrence of this remarkable event, has the attention of students of Holy Writ been more attracted to the question of the whereabouts of the passage than from the latter part of the last century. The facility of communication with our Eastern Empire through Egypt, afforded by the opening of its main highway, the Suez Canal, has brought the subject into such practical consideration, and offered so many means of testing its accuracy from Scripture, that, although the exact position of the place of passage cannot be said to have been absolutely determined, there is no reasonable doubt of its having been narrowed down to about the middle of this great modern highway—so much so that we can fairly assert that it must have been somewhere within a space of half a dozen miles or so, lying about halfway between the thirtieth and thirty-first parallels of latitude. To many of our readers who have not followed the steps by which such a location has been arrived at, the assertion of its being nowhere in the present Red Sea may appear startling, and may savour of an attempt to controvert the truth. But truth, after all, is not easily controverted, though its vindication, where misconceived, is, we must admit, a matter of some difficulty. There are also those to whom the discovery of the impossibility of the passage having been made anywhere in the Red Sea as it now is, has afforded a basis of incredulity in the fact of the event having

taken place at all; but it is unfortunate that the sceptic should almost invariably allow his views, misconceived, in all good conscience, to be governed by modern investigation, instead of subordinating external to internal evidence as an accessory to the truth. Thus, it will be seen that we at once take up our position as upholders of the truth of Scripture as it is given us in its undesigned simplicity; and if modern investigation and discovery should at any time sow the suspicion that all is not as we implicitly believed, the safer course is, we submit, to pause before we allow that suspicion to take root, and rather devote our earnest attention again to the original for enlightenment on the facts. The wondrous story before us is a remarkable instance of how Scripture not only boldly challenges opposition, but actually makes use of apparently adverse argument to prove its truth as an accessory after the fact.

It has been the writer's experience to have been several times backward and forward over the place of passage—wherever it was—as few can pass up or down the rock-bound Gulf of Suez in broad daylight without recalling the exodus of the Israelites. Everyone seems to want to know, when he sees the rugged mountains of the Eastern peninsula, which peak is that of Sinai, and in no part of the voyage from India are ship's officers so plied with questions, perhaps, as in this interesting gulf; for it is naturally presumed that, as they are familiar with the coast they must be the best persons to give evidence about places on it. And as far as Mount Sinai is concerned, there seems to be no doubt that craggy peak cannot be first seen except at a point considerably north of its latitude, and then only continues in sight during the time the vessel takes to travel four or five miles. But, when asked where they think the Israelites could have crossed, they are either sceptical over the occurrence having taken place at all or else suggest a point somewhat south of the latitude of Mount Sinai. And to many of their questioners their dictum, one way or the other, seems to be accepted as conclusive, for obvious reasons. The western shore of the Gulf of Suez is either so precipitous, or is composed

of mountain spurs and ravines coming right down to the water's edge, that the idea of a host encamping on it is altogether unreasonable. But, even if it could be, by any stretch of imagination, conceived, the very idea of the pursuit by a host of war-chariots over the mountains behind must finally dispel the illusion. As for the suggestion, based, as far as we can understand, on some sailor's yarn, of the place of passage being south of the latitude of Sinai—because, forsooth, a moderately wide valley straggles tortuously down to the shore there—the Biblical account, fortunately, shows us that this cannot be correct; for if it were, the Israelites would have made the passage directly into the mountainous region of Sin, and have been within a march, or two at most, of Mount Sinai itself; whereas we are told they went first, after the crossing, into the wilderness of Shur (Exod. xv. 12), a sandy region devoid of mountains, and took ten marches to reach Mount Sinai. Scripture, therefore, repudiates any crossing of the Red Sea into the wilderness of Sin, and as this wilderness commences from the head of the present gulf, the conclusion is that the Red Sea, as it now is, could not have been crossed at all.

But there is a still stronger proof of this in the simple statement of the narrative (Exod. xiii. 17, 18) of how God led the Israelites on their journey—viz., "When Pharaoh let the people go, God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near . . . but God led the people about through the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea." From these words we learn (*a*) that the shortest way to Canaan from where the Israelites left Egypt was through the land of the Philistines—*i.e.*, by the usual Mediterranean route, and not the Red Sea Wilderness route; (*b*) that God did not lead them this shortest way, but by the roundabout wilderness route. If, therefore, the Israelites had crossed the present Gulf of Suez or Red Sea, their shortest way to Canaan would have been through the wilderness of Sin—*i.e.*, the wilderness of the Red Sea—and their longest viâ the land of the Philistines. In modern language, they could not have crossed the Red Sea anywhere



RED SEA PASSAGE

OF THE EXODUS

showing the probable route of the Israelites

south of the thirtieth parallel of latitude, as in that case their shortest and most direct way to Canaan would have been through the wilderness of Sin, which God intended should be their longest and most roundabout way. Now, this leads us to another definite conclusion, and that is that in order to go the roundabout way through the wilderness of Sin or Red Sea by first crossing into the wilderness of Shur, they must have originally started on their journey along the shortest way, and been deflected from it subsequently. This is precisely what we are told was done; but the argument may not satisfy the sceptic, who suspects us of anticipating the narrative. Let us, then, turn our attention to the identification, if possible, of the whereabouts of the land of Goshen, so as to leave no doubt about the original and later direction of route. The first mention of the name is given us in Gen. xlv. 10, where Joseph, as governor of the land of Egypt, positively promises his brethren that his father and all his belongings should dwell in the land of Goshen. The second mention is in Gen. xlvi. 28, which is very important in its relation to the third, in the following verse, and almost leaves us without doubt as to the general lie of the country; for we read there that when Jacob set out on his journey to Egypt from Beersheba (which would not be more than a couple of marches to the south-east of Gaza on the Mediterranean), "he sent Judah before him unto Joseph to direct his face unto Goshen. . . . And Joseph made ready his chariot, and went up to meet his father, to Goshen." Here we certainly gather that the very way that Jacob took to go to Egypt, or the usual Syrian route, actually passed through the land of Goshen, and that Joseph met his father after he had entered it, in response to his message. And as soon as Joseph met his father he apparently stopped his further progress with the sound advice that, as his occupation and that of his family was distasteful to the Egyptians, he had better stay with his flocks and his herds where he was, in a country peculiarly fertile and especially suitable for pasture. Now, fertility and pasture in the East presuppose the presence or neighbourhood of water, so that we

have Jacob and all his family placed, after passing through a desert, in a moister area. They had gone along the northern border of the sandy desert of Shur, the same waterless desert that Hagar found herself in when turned away by Sarah, her mistress, and had evidently lost her way while trying to reach the regular track leading to her native Egypt. That is to say that Jacob's journey to Egypt from Beersheba must have been by the same route as that travelled by Abraham and Isaac before him—to the same country, from the same place—but which Hagar had failed to strike through the wilderness of Shur before she and her child succumbed to thirst. Here also it is apparent that, of the two wildernesses, that of Shur was the northern, and that of Sin in the Sinaitic or Red Sea peninsula, was the southern; that the former extended, roughly speaking, between the 30° and 31° parallel of latitude, and the latter between the 28° and 30°. To go no further with the proof, it would be sufficient to say from these data that, as the children of Israel left the land of Goshen and went into the wilderness of Shur, after crossing the then Red Sea, their route must have been in a direction towards the northern wilderness. But as we are told that this was not the way they were intended to go, as far as its northern border by the land of the Philistines was concerned, the inference is inevitable that there must have been a turning-point somewhere towards the southern wilderness.

But if we must go more particularly into details, the record does not leave us without interesting material for doing so. We have said that the fertility of the land of Goshen implies that it was watered, and this implication is borne out by the command given by Pharaoh to his people (Exod. i. 22) that "every son that is born [of the Israelites] ye shall cast into the river"; and as the Israelites were not removed from the land of Goshen during this Pharaoh's time—for we are distinctly told that their country did not suffer from any of the plagues—the proximity of their country to a river is therefore indicated. Besides, there is reason for surmise that when the waters of the Nile were

polluted with blood which did not affect the Israelites, their country must have lain along a branch or two of the main river, so as to suffer no pollution. The nearest branch of the Nile to Canaan in those days was the Pelusiac, of which at present a mere depression marks the ancient course. This used to be the most eastern stream of the Nile, and the one which from its point of divergence from that river, formed so perfect a resemblance, in conjunction with the most western branch, of the inverted Greek Δ, as to be the contributory cause of the origin of the term's application. But there are indications at the present day of a canal which was made from the apex of the delta to the western end of Lake Timsah on the Suez Canal, and as this canal would have been useless without connecting two open waterways, the inference is that Lake Timsah is what used to be the head of the Red Sea, which was connected by a navigable canal with the waters of the Nile. Not only this, but the conviction is strong that there must have been before this a branch of the Nile which emptied itself into the Red Sea, making the construction of the navigable canal possible. If so, we have no difficulty in understanding the fertility of the land of Goshen up to the desert, but can also grasp how Pharaoh's command to destroy the Israelite children could have had reference to the waters of a river away from its main channel. The Red Sea channel of the Nile must therefore have pervaded the pastoral valley now known as the Wadi-el-Tumeylat.

Again, at the apex of the delta is to be found the ruins of Heliopolis, On, or Beth-shemesh, and was perhaps the same place as Rameses (certainly in its vicinity), which the Israelites of the oppression built for Pharaoh, the other treasure-city similarly built by them being Pithom. These are important to note, because as we have reason to know that the Israelites held the country of Goshen as their own during the time of the plagues, the inference is that both of these cities were in the land of Goshen—and this inference is strengthened by the use of the expression "land of Rameses" (Gen. xlvii. 11), which, according to the context, appears to be either another name for

Goshen or given to the southern district of that land. And it appears to have been the site of one of Pharaoh's palaces, if not his actual capital. It was certainly the starting-point of the Israelites on their exodus (Exod. xii. 37). The site of Pithom has been almost absolutely identified as situated a few miles west of the modern town of Ismailia, which lies on the north-west shore of Lake Timsah; and if this be so, it would fairly decide us in placing it as a frontier town of the land of Goshen. But it is told us that the second halt of the exodus was at Etham, "in the edge of the wilderness" (Exod. xiii. 20). The strong probability, therefore, is that either both places were identical or in each other's close vicinity, near the town of Ismailia and Lake Timsah.

Thus, we see that, up to Etham—their second halt from Rameses—their marches were through the country that they had looked upon as their own. And, in reading the narrative, it strikes us as most remarkable that the whole population of the Israelites, to the number told us, should have started in a body from the southern limit of their country, and to have gone northward through it again, and the question would naturally arise, When did they assemble there in such numbers, and where was the necessity? for either the whole host must have come from there, or else the number mentioned, "six hundred thousand" (Exod. 12, 37), must have been considerably augmented by the time they reached their frontier at Etham. That they went with their flocks and herds into the wilderness there is no doubt, and that these were with them at Rameses, where Pharaoh was, is quite unlikely. The conviction is, therefore, that the able-bodied men, literally the slaves, to the number told us, set out from Rameses, with all that they had there, but picked up the bulk of their host *en route* to Etham, with their cattle and all their belongings. The intimation that this direction of route was not to be followed farther on through the land of the Philistines appears, then, to refer to the time after they had reached their second halt at Etham, and it is significant that no indication is given of a guiding column of fire or

cloud being used before this stage, as if to show us tacitly that there was no necessity for such, inasmuch as they must have been in their own country and on the well-known road to Canaan up to that point. The consternation they must have exhibited when given the command to deviate from this shortest route may therefore have been soothed by the appearance of a guiding cloud, which thenceforth never left them for forty years. But the complaining and rebellious spirit was first heard on the bank of the Red Sea, when it was ascertained that they had been caught, as it were, in a trap, and would fall an easy prey to Pharaoh and his war-chariots which were upon them. Elation gave way to depression and despair, and we can hardly wonder at it.

The reason given us why the Almighty did not wish to lead them by the shortest route—viâ the land of the Philistines—is, "lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt" (Exod. xiii. 17). It would be interesting to reflect upon what could have been the motive underlying this premeditated care of the Almighty, when we know that, in all probability, if they had gone on by the short route they would have escaped, not only the opportunity given to Pharaoh to pursue them, but also would not have been involved in hostilities with the powerful Amalekites, whom, we are told, they encountered on their tenth march from Etham, and before they reached Mount Sinai, at Rephidim. It is clear that they evidently knew of the enmity of the Philistines in some way to themselves, but how? Any depression of spirits in anticipation of a collision with the Philistines would have acted disastrously for the Israelites, for they would have retreated towards Egypt, only to fall into Pharaoh's revengeful hands, whereas they could not have anticipated either Pharaoh's pursuit or the onset of the Amalekites. Both these attacks came upon them suddenly, and with no visible means of escape from either. How, therefore, could they have been aware of the enmity of the Philistines? The answer is most instructive, as showing how Scripture itself supplies the undesigned solution. In 1 Chron. ix. 21 we read how the men of Gath slew the sons of Ephraim

because they came down to take away their cattle. This incident evidently occurred some time about Joseph's last years, or shortly after his death, and it seems to have made a great impression on the incipient Israelitish nation at the time it happened. It records either an unsuccessful cattle foray under the leadership of the sons of Ephraim against the Philistines, or, as is more probable, a defeat at the hands of freebooting Philistines on an organized rescue party, led by the sons of Ephraim, to recover their own stolen cattle. The Philistines in question had settled in the land of Goshen, and had most likely made off across the desert border with a large herd of cattle belonging to the Israelites. In any case, the party led by the sons of Ephraim, whether to foray or to rescue, was signally repulsed and its leaders slain, and it is unlikely that the chronicler would have recorded the event merely as a domestic bereavement, and not rather as a national misfortune. Centuries had elapsed, and yet the Philistine name had terrors for the Israelites which would have been well-nigh impossible had they not had some bitter experience of their enmity. They were now little more than an undisciplined mob, armed in a manner, but with no familiarity with arms, and the reason for not allowing them to be opposed by the Philistines appears to have been that they themselves were not over-confident in proceeding the short way, but followed it so far as the only one known to them. The command to turn from this preconceived route of theirs, accompanied as it was by a guiding column for the first time, may not have been so unwelcome as at first sight would appear, but must have been, though surprising, a distinct encouragement.

(*To be continued.*)