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ART. V.—A COLONY IN GILEAD.

SHORTLY after the conclusion of the Treaty of Berlin the idea occurred to Mr. Laurence Oliphant, as a friend of Turkey, that a colonizing experiment should be made in the dominions of the Sultan. By an experiment on a small scale evidence might thus be afforded to the Porte of the advantages which would attend the development of a province under conditions which should increase the revenue of the empire, add to its population and resources, secure protection of life and property, and enlist the sympathy of Europe, without at all affecting the Sultan's sovereign rights. A scheme which should bring foreign capital with it to carry it out would, probably, be favourably regarded at Constantinople; and it appeared to Mr. Oliphant that by means of a Colonization Company one of those rich and unoccupied districts which abound in Turkey might be developed with signal success. The two questions which presented themselves to the mind of Mr. Oliphant were: first, what locality should be selected for the experiment, and, secondly, what class of people should be invited to come as colonists. Mr. Oliphant's conclusions, after duly considering these points, are thus given in his own words:—

There was only one race in Europe who were rich, and who did not, therefore, need to appeal to Christian capitalists for money to carry through the whole undertaking: who were not Christians, and to whom, therefore, the objections of the Porte to the introduction of more rival Christian sects did not apply; who had never alarmed the Turkish Government by national associations, but, on the contrary, had always proved themselves most loyal and peaceable subjects of his Majesty; who were, nevertheless, strongly attached by historical association to a province of Asiatic Turkey, and to whom the inducement of once more becoming proprietors of its sacred soil might prove strong enough to tempt them to comply with the probable conditions of the Turkish Government. . . . . It was thus that I found myself, by a process of deduction, compelled to turn for the locality of the colony to Palestine, and for the colonists to the Jews. The more I examined the project from this point of view the more desirable on political grounds did it appear. . . . . That the Jews would respond to an invitation from the Sultan to return and take possession of the soil in a district of their own ancient heritage, I did not doubt. . . . . The total number of the Hebrew race to-day is between six and seven millions; in Europe, about five millions. . . . . As the area of land which I should propose in the first instance for colonization would not exceed a million, or, at the most, a million-and-a-half, of acres, it would be hard if, out of nearly 7,000,000 of people attached to it by the tradition of former possession, enough could not be found to subscribe a capital of £1,000,000, or even more, for its purchase by

settlement, and if, out of that number, a selection of emigrants could not be made, possessing sufficient capital of their own to make them desirable colonists. . . . . It is true that there are about 25,000 Jews there already; but they are, for the most part, of a mendicant class, and are deprived of that protection which they would enjoy under the auspices of a company and a charter securing them a certain amount of self-government.

In order to decide whether this scheme was a practicable one or not, Mr. Oliphant found that it would be necessary to visit the Holy Land, with the view of selecting the district and examining the local conditions. Before he set out, he communicated to the Prime Minister (Lord Beaconsfield) and Lord Salisbury the outline of his project; and he received from them the kindest encouragement and assurances of support, so far as it was possible to afford it without officially committing the Government. About the middle of February, 1879, he left England for Syria. Of his travels, researches, and diplomatic inquiries, we have an exceedingly interesting account in a recently published volume—"The Land of Gilead."[1]

In the Introduction to this volume, from which we have already quoted, Mr. Oliphant gives some information as to the results of his labours. He says:—

It is only since my return to England that I have become aware how deep and widespread is the interest which has been felt in the successful issue of an undertaking which involves such important philanthropic and political results.[2] If the preliminary stage of negotiation with the Turkish Government was not crowned with the

[1] "The Land of Gilead." By Laurence Oliphant, author of "Lord Elgin's Mission to China," &c. pp. 540. Edinburgh: Blackwood and Sons. 1880.

[2] Mr. Oliphant makes it evident that his interest in this colonization scheme is political rather than religious. He says (p. xxxii.), "It is somewhat unfortunate that so important a political and strategical question as the future of Palestine should be inseparably connected in the public mind with a favourite religious theory. The restoration of the Jews to Palestine has been so often urged upon sentimental or Scriptural grounds, that now, when it may possibly become the practical and common-sense solution of a great future difficulty, a prejudice against it exists in the minds of those who have always regarded it as a theological chimera, which it is not easy to remove. The mere accident of a measure involving most important international consequences having been advocated by a large section of the Christian community, from a purely Biblical point of view, does not necessarily impair its political value. On the contrary, its political value once estimated on its own merits and admitted, the fact that it will carry with it the sympathy and support of those who are not usually particularly well versed in foreign politics is decidedly in its favour. I would avail myself of this opportunity of observing that, so far as my own efforts are concerned, they are based upon considerations which have no connection whatever with any popular religious theory upon the subject."

success which I had anticipated, it must be remembered that I attempted it alone and comparatively unaided. So far from being discouraged, my late experience more than ever convinces me that the scheme is in all respects practicable, and that it is only necessary for the public to take it up, supported by the Government, in order to overcome the resistance which I encountered at Constantinople, and which was due to an altogether exceptional combination of adverse influences.

Under any circumstances, says Mr. Oliphant, the region which comprises within its limits the luxuriant pasture-lands of Jaulan, the magnificent forest-clad mountains of Gilead, the rich arable plains of Moab, and the fervid sub-tropical valley of the Jordan,[1] cannot remain much longer neglected. Will England undertake the task of developing its resources?

Mr. Oliphant's narrative is ably written, and supplies much interesting information.

In chapter ix., where appears a description of the ruins of Ammon,[2] we read as follows:—

While sitting at the door of our tent, surrounded by Circassians, two Arabs arrived with a couple of camels, each bearing a millstone. They were on their way to Heshbon from the Lejah, where the people make a special trade of millstones, the irregular surface of the basaltic trap, of which the whole region is composed, being peculiarly adapted to the purpose. They were evidently inspired with a wholesome dread of the Circassians, and seeing us on such good terms with them, encamped unpleasantly near us for protection; though if there is a difficult thing for one man to steal from another I should have said it was a millstone so large that a camel could barely stagger under it. It is an evidence of comparative civilization that Arabs should want millstones; but I afterwards met a Christian peasant from Palestine

[1] "The valley of the Jordan," writes Mr. Oliphant, "would act as an enormous hot-house for the new colony. Here might be cultivated palms, cotton, indigo, sugar, rice, sorghum, besides bananas, pineapples, yams, sweet potatoes, and other field and garden produce. Rising a little higher, the country is adapted to tobacco, maize, castor-oil, millet, flax, sesamum, melons, gourds, cumin, coriander, pomegranates, oranges, figs—and so up to the plains, where wheat, barley, beans, and lentils of various sorts, with olives and vines, would form the staple products. Gilead especially is a country of wine and oil; it is also admirably adapted to silk culture; while among its forests, carob or locust-bean, pistachio, jujube, almond, balsam, kali, and other profitable trees grow wild in great profusion." All the fruits of Southern Europe grow here to perfection; and on the more extreme elevation might be cultivated the fruits and vegetables of England. The inclusion of the Dead Sea, adds Mr. Oliphant, would furnish a vast source of wealth: 200,000 tons of chorate of potassium are annually consumed in England; and the supply is practically inexhaustible. Petroleum and bitumen also can be procured in great quantities on the shores of the Dead Sea.

[2] Canon Tristram discovered here, a few years ago, a very interesting specimen of Byzantine architecture.

who made a very good livelihood by going about grinding corn for the Arabs. The only permanent erections in the country, and they are few and far between, are occasional mills, each consisting of one very small room and a very big overshot wheel. There were three or four close to Salt, and I had seen one near Gadara; the Adwan have one near Heshbon, and there are two or three more between that place and Kerak.

We had dined off Sheikh Diab's lamb, and were just composing ourselves to sleep, when the rain, which had been threatening all day, came down in torrents. Our tent soon became a shower-bath, as it was only adapted as a shade from the sun; and we put up our umbrellas inside it in the vain attempt to keep our beds dry, as these were spread on the ground and occupied the entire limited area of the tent floor. Our efforts were perfectly futile; the water soaked in all round below, and collected in the hollow of the canvas above, which formed a sort of reservoir, requiring every few minutes to be emptied by a poke upwards with a stick, when it rushed in a cascade over the tent-side. Our servants were crowded together outside, under a waterproof sheet, and I do not think suffered so much as we did. We now regretted that we had not chosen the alternative of the fleas, and seriously considered the expediency of trying to make for a cave; but the night was pitch dark—the nearest cave was half-way up a cliff, and about a quarter of a mile off, and, even if we could find our way to it, we should be wet through by the time we got there. Moreover, it was impossible, under the circumstances, to pack up and carry our bedding without its becoming even more soaked in the process than it already was; so we put on our waterproofs, squatted under our umbrellas, and listened to the occasional grunt of the camels, with the millstones in close proximity, who seemed as much disgusted with the state of things as we were.

When day broke the weather was as bad as it was possible to be. The heavy rain was being driven by a bitterly cold wind down the valley, and there was not a break in the clouds to indicate a possible change for the better. The Zaptiehs were triumphant; they had predicted a week's rain, and their predicting was likely to be verified. The spring equinox had burst upon us prematurely, and it was useless to think of visiting Arab encampments, and living with nomads in their tents, under these circumstances. All tents are disagreeable in bad weather; but an Arab tent with one side partially open, through which the rain drives, and with vermin of all sorts seeking shelter from the wet next one's skin, is the most disagreeable of all.

From their position, Heshbon lay about sixteen miles to the south-west, while Salt was the same distance to the north-west. They decided to return with all speed; so, leaving servants and baggage to follow, off they started at a gallop:—

Our way led across undulating plains, waving with luxuriant herbage: here and there we came across wheat-fields planted by the Arabs. Once or twice we passed heaps of stones which indicated the site of a ruined village; one of these was Jubeihat, the ancient

Jogbehah; and another, Fuheis. Then we came into wooded wadies, where they begin to break the high plateau, and form gorges which descend to the Valley of the Jordan, just above the Dead Sea. We could see little of the country, for the rain was pelting in our faces. The wind sweeping over these elevated plains was bitterly cold, and the weather was altogether much more like what one would expect in the Highlands of Scotland in November than on the plains of Moab in April—for we were now on the northern verge of that country. From here southward those plains extended from which the Moabites drove the giant race that occupied them in primitive times; thus coming into possession of one of the richest and most fertile plateaux in the world, and which stretched from the border of Gilead for about fifty miles southward. From the northern and finest section of this region, usually called, *par excellence*, "the land of Moab," they were driven out by the Amorites, and their northern frontier then became the Arnon, while their more circumscribed area, the home of Ruth, seems to have been known as the "field of Moab." The Reubenites took possession of the "land of Moab," to the north of the Arnon: this is the land which is now included in the modern Belka, and which affords, without doubt, the finest territory for agricultural and pastoral purposes in the whole of Palestine, while it is the only province where there are no legal occupiers of the soil and no settled population.

The country became more broken and hilly as we approached Salt, and about an hour before arriving at that town we joined the road by which we had left it two days before, and, making a steep descent into the Wady Shaib, we reached it, dripping wet, about mid-day.

In Salt they were storm-stayed several days. They congratulated themselves on being in a comfortable house instead of under goat-hair tents. And here they heard for the first time of a settler in Moab—Abou Jabr, a Protestant Syrian—who could have given them much valuable information. Abou Jabr, it appears, has a farm about two hours' distant from Ammon:—

He farms about sixty *feddans*—in other words, an area of land which sixty yoke of oxen could plough in a day—for which he pays the Government an amount equivalent to £20 sterling a-year as his tithe. He has no title-deeds or other proof of legal possession; but seems to take as much land as he likes, securing himself from aggression from the Arabs by payment of a certain proportion of his crops; they acting the part of landlord, and reserving to themselves the right of quartering themselves upon him *ad libitum*. He stores his grain away in the large underground vaults which were used for the same purpose in ages gone by, and either sells it at Jerusalem, transporting it there himself on his own camels, or to travelling merchants, who come and buy it of him. His agricultural operations are already so successful that he is enabled yearly largely to increase his property, and in spite of the exactions of the Arabs he has succeeded in accumulating great wealth. He employs as labourers *fellahins*, or peasants, from Western Palestine, to whom he gives one-fourth of his crop in return for their labours.

That Abou Jabr should have been able to build him a house, and to live in it unmolested, in the heart of the Beni Sukhr Arabs, and distant a day's journey from Salt, is a fact of some significance. Mr. Oliphant points to it as an evidence of the rapid strides which the country is making towards order and good government. At present, excepting the inhabitants of the town of Salt, Abou Jabr is the only man in the whole province of the Belka, who lives in a house.

In chapter x., treating on the fertility of Gilead, Mr. Oliphant gives a map, showing the proposed railways and the site of the proposed colony. He quotes Canon Tristram—"Topography of the Holy Land," p. 312—as to the luxuriant exuberance of Gilead;[1] and he complains that this rich and luxuriant country should be only sparsely inhabited by a wandering population, possessing no legal title whatever to the soil. The Rev. Mr. Neil, a Protestant clergyman formerly resident in Jerusalem, is quoted as one of the many authorities showing that farming even to the west of the Jordan is a really profitable occupation. Lieutenant Conder, R.E., late on the Palestine Exploration service, who warmly advocates the establishment of a Jewish colony in Palestine, and the employment of *fellahin* labour, did not examine the lands to the east of the Jordan; but of Western Palestine he says that "the hills might be covered with vines and the valleys run with oil, the plains might be yellow with corn and the harbours full of ships, but for the greedy pasha and the unjust judge."

ART. VI.—REMINISCENCES BY THOMAS CARLYLE.[2]

"THOU dear father." "Thou dear good father! 'Man's chief end,' my father could have answered from the depths of his soul, 'is to glorify God and enjoy *Him* for ever.' By this light he walked, choosing his path, fitting prudence to principle with wonderful skill and manliness; through 'the ruins of a falling era,' not once missing his footing. . . . . Every morning and every evening, for perhaps sixty years, he had prayed to

[1] Mr. Oliphant refers his readers to Canon Tristram's book, "The Land of Moab" (published by Mr. Murray in 1873), a deeply interesting work, which in many respects is unique. Canon Tristram is now, while we write, paying another visit to the land of Moab; and we shall receive, it may be hoped, some further information concerning that region.

[2] "Reminiscences by Thomas Carlyle," edited by James Anthony Froude. Two volumes. Longmans, Green & Co. 1881.