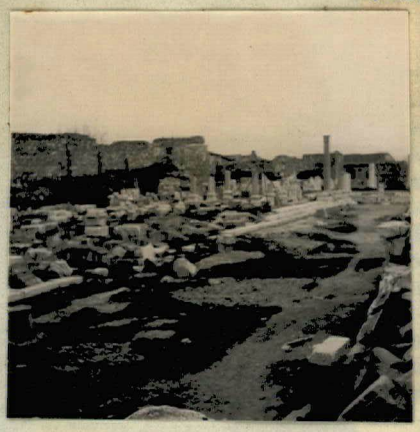
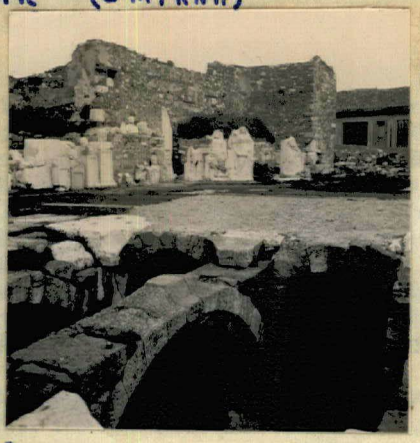
Western Turkey-in-Asia, with our visits to Smyrna - Ephesus - Sardis - and Philadelphia.

IZMIR - (SMYRNA)





The Agora

The Park, in which is a new museum containing relics from Ephesus,

A Sarcophagus (Carved Coffin) in the Museum.

Pergama, over which we had flown ←

and Sardis.

IZMIR

Along the water-front were British naval vessels on exercises and dozens of local trading boats.

The Road to Ephesus

The Valley out of Izmir.

The Tomb of St. John

The main street of Seljuk
(The station of Ephesus)

The
TEMPLE of DIANA
at Ephesus.

The marsh from
St. John's Tomb, ...

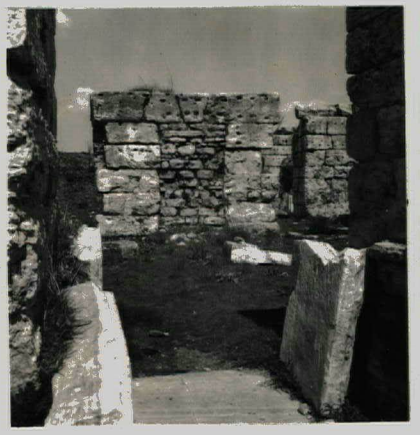
... and the converse view.

The marsh which was the Temple.

A turtle
on a rock
was the
only sign
of life.

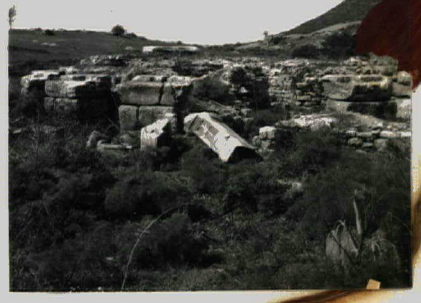
EPHESUS

The Approach



The Gymnasium

View from the Theatre to where the harbour was until it silted up.



The Tomb of St. Luke, with a poppy from it. The poppy was blessed by a Greek Orthodox priest.

PAUL'S SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY

The site of the Church at Sardis and at Philadelphia ↓

←

and at Antioch ↓

ANTIOCH in PISIDIA

KONYA (ICONIUM)

The twin peaks of St. Stephen and St. Theckla at Iconium (now Konya) →

Student's
Voucher
for
Half-price Tickets

The Village near the site of Derbe through which the train passes.

The site of LYSTRA

The site of DERBE.

T. C.
İZMİR VALİLİĞİ
Millî Eğitim Müdürlüğü
Sayı:..................

D. Denizyolları
~~D. Denizyolları Acenteliğine~~ İzmir

Seyahat için ~~Yazvazadı dolayısile~~ Adana'ya gidecek olan
Edinburg Üniver okulu öğrencilerinden
İAn J. S. Balfour elindeki belgeye
göre düşük tarifeden istifadesi gerektir.

İzmir . M. Eğ. Md.

Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Damga Pulu 15 — Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Damga Pulu 15
1953

TARSUS.

ISKENDERUN

The Geography of Palestine.

TUESDAY, 24th MARCH.

I woke at 0730, and wrote a huge bundle of post-cards to various friends and relations. One of the reasons for doing it at this point was that we had some Turkish money over, and didn't want to lose on the exchange into Arabian currency; I was going to write in a day or two, and this was a good chance to kill two birds. I was still writing them at breakfast, a good one of fried eggs on toast in the same restaurant as last night. Then we dashed over to the Post Office, just opposite the Hotel, and got them in just as the collection was being lifted. Then we spent the rest of our livres in the shops, and said good-bye to the Atlantick Hotel.

Before we set off over the hills, perhaps a rough scetch of the geography of Palestine as a whole is essential to understanding the journey. The battered map opposite was my constant companion, and has worn its travels well. As it shows, the land is divided into four parallel belts, from north to south.

(i) The coastal plain, coloured green on the map, lies along the Mediterranean. It is broad in the south, but narrows northwards and at the top can scarcely be separated in many places; Mount Carmel is an irregularity which almost reaches the coast. In the north, where the narrow plain broadens out locally one usually finds a town of some importance - Iskenderun, Tripoli, and Beirut are examples. The plain has light fertile soil, and the whole area is proverbially fertile. South of Carmel the climate is typically Mediterranean, with a comparatively small range of temperature, frost and snow being unknown in winter and the average August temperatures not exceeding 80°. The rainfall increases steadily from south to north.

(ii) The western hill belt; north of Tyre it is a succession of mountain ranges divided into three blocks by the gorges of the Orontes and the Holms-Tripoli pass. The northern block is known as the Amanus Range, the central as the Ansariyeh Mountains, and the southern as the famous Lebanon. Much of it is wild; the mountains are of limestone and the inhabitants live mainly in villages in the valleys. Few trees now remain. South of Tyre is divided into two blocks by the broad fertile plain of Esdraelon, that to the north being Galilee, to the south including Samaria and Judaea. It is here 25 to 40 miles in width, built up of a succession of hard impervious limestones and chalky limestones, the beds being approximately horizontal; where the hard limestone prevails the hills are barren and stoney, the innumerable valleys narrow and dry, whereas the chalky limestones give rise to more fertile country, softer, with broad fertile patches. The outlines are all pretty tame; it is less arid in the north, in Galilee, where the rainfall is heavier and where lava flows have disintegrated to a rich soil. The climate is more severe than that of the coastal plain, January average temperatures being as low as 45°, frost being usual and snow not uncommon. The natural vegetation is a rough scrub, thorny bushes, dwarf oaks, while amongst cultivated plants olive groves are especially important in Samaria and corn crops in Galilee, but very large areas are uncultivated and tenanted only by a few sheep or goats. This is especially the case in the south, where rainfall is very low. Jerusalem lies in the heart of the whole belt of Judaea, about three thousand feet above sea-level, while Nazareth occupies an almost corresponding position in Galilee. The rainfall is heavy at Jerusalem - 26 inches - but decreases east to the Dead Sea, so it's desert from there. The main ridge of the Ansariyeh is 3000 ft. precipitous to the Orontes valley on the east, gentler on the west; it was the Mons Cassius of Roman times, now known also as the Jebel en Nuseiriye from the heretical sect of Islam who have maintained religious and political independance in its remote peaks. The Lebanon has peaks

of up to 10,000 feet, and goat-tracks seam its rocky limestone slopes.

(iii) The central depression is one of the most remarkable on the face of the earth. In the north it is not so well marked as in the south, nor does it sink below sea-level. In the north it is formed by the fertile plain of Antioch, and further south by the course of the Orontes. It culminates in the long, straight valley of the Jordan, with its steep, almost precipitous,sides, and an almost level floor averaging 10 to 15 miles in width, and the Dead Sea, the surface of which is 1292 feet below sea-level. It is a trench dug right down the middle of the country.

(iv) The eastern ranges merge off into desert, some plateau land and some mountains like Anti-lebanon and Hermon. It is agricultural and pastoral land of varying width, but sooner or later passes into the Syrian desert.

The political divisions of the land are not so easy. The area marked "Syria" on the map on the last page is now the Republic of Syria, and is no longer under French mandate. The little bit marked "Lebanon" is a separate, although allied, Republic. The areas of Palestine and Transjordan are no longer under British mandate, but are partitioned between Jews and Arabs as the map at Easter Sunday shows. The Arab league refuse to recognise the Jews' right to the land, and the strain between the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and Israel is pretty tense.

Iskenderun, as the map shows, is on the coast. To get to Antioch we had to climb right over the Amanus range, and then drop almost to sea-level again. We set off in our taxi - a De Soto - at 1010 amid real Mediterranean weather. Hooting through the main street at donkeys and pedestrians, we were soon out of the town and running along a straight road to the country. It was a good road by the standard of these parts, and about our "B" classification. To the left, across a half mile of lucious green plain-fields, the jagged sides of the mountain rose to a smooth skyline; to the right, the sparkling blue sea. We climbed almost immediately into the hills with a rolling motion like a dingy going over waves on the beat, and looked back on the whole bay and narrow coastal belt. The road wound up through very beautiful hill country, cultivated where possible, but stony and dry,with cacti by the roadside. On the whole it is very green, some very rich, but other is scraggy, the earth showing through. The road mounted rapidly up gorges; at the head of one, a hatchet-cut in the ground, clung the little village of Belan. We ran towards it on the brink of a precipice, did a hair-pin through it, and ran away parallel to our entry on the other side of the gorge; as we crossed the river at the head we had a wonderful view right down the valley. The wooded houses were built in steps, one above the other, completely covering the hillside, clinging to the sides like a wasp's nest. We bought some iced oranges at a shop carved out of the rock, and the driver peeled and eat his while racing round bends at 80 kms. - no mean feat. The road had left the foothills now, but while it was winding back on its tracks over the town we could look back at the green plain and the sea, and away over them the Taurus. Looking down, the foothills seemed sandy. Up and up the road twisted, round open hair-pin bends, gorges going straight down on one side of us and hills straight up on the other. As we passed between two snowbound forested peaks, the foothills, very cut up and jagged, were continuous right away to the coast until we could see them meet the Taurus. A few minutes

after passing Belan we were over the 3,000 foot top of the snow-bound range, the famous Pylae Syriae, the culminating point of the pass.

Suddenly all the country for miles around was spread out below like a map. There was the flat Plain of Antioch, with a few roads running across it like brown string, and the Lake stretching across it, but dry in many patches to the east, and especially in the middle. Mountains lie on the boundaries of the plain, looking from this height like walls to it; to the left, the north, the Amanus swung away westwards into Asia Minor; straight ahead to the east were the low khaki ridges of Jebel Sim'an, lying between the plain and the stony desert on which Aleppo stands; to the right the volcanic looking cone of Mount Casius. We went swiftly down an amazing series of hair-pin bends, through the same rough, Christmas-treed valleys of sandy earth. This picture is not of the pass - it is in fact of Italy, - but it illustrates the road perfectly, except that the straights between the bends are too long - they were on an average only twenty yards, and that kept the speed down. There was one hair-pin bend after another, and about fifty in all. Then we were down at the lake and the plain, and rang along beside the shallow, muddy marshes, with wooded hills on the right - very lovely. The space between the lake and the hill was well cultivated, one big field and no boundaries. Then at 1125 we were into Antioch, basking in the sun beneath the barren hills.

ANTIOCH in Syria was the third largest city in the world when Paul came to it. It is a geographical creation; the abrupt angle formed by the coasts of Syria and Asia Minor is backed up by a mountain range, both more or less parallel to each coast and not far from the sea. The principal break in their confused meeting is the river Orontes, on which stands Antioch. By its harbour it was in communication with all the trade of the Mediterranean, and its ancient title was "the Beautiful and the Golden". In a hot, green valley, the river cuts for itself a narrow gap through the hills. Here the town lies, shielded by the high mountains, while the Orontes, pale-green with melted snow, rushes arch-high beneath the bridge; and the broad shoulder of Mount Silphius towers majestically above a cluster of one-storied Arab houses and a white forest of minarets. There is no room to touch on the importance of this wealthy and blatant town to Christianity; apart from being the Mother Church of Gentile Christianity, it gave it its name.

We crossed the narrow bridge over the Orontes, which, muddy and sullen, raced under as a mighty torrent, and were into the narrow, shop-lined streets, with the usual spattering of modern buildings.

The driver took us straight to what appears to be the show-piece of Antioch, a Greek Orthodox church called the Church of Saint Peter. It occupies the site of a church which dates back to 50 A.D. and is presumably one of the original places of worship in the Christian world. After a bit of delay in finding the keys, we were taken over it. It wasn't very impressive inside, but I don't think that Greek Orthodox ones ever are; still, it had the virtue of being fairly plain and simple. Then we walked back through the streets, back to the River Orontes, rushing arch-high under

the narrow bridge, and into a little museum on the bamk. These photos show well the mountains which back up the trough in which the river runs and the town lies. The museum was remarkable for its fine mosaics, on wall and pavement, and had the usual collection of beheaded statues and shattered pottery standing on pedestals. Unfortunately we weren't allowed to photograph the mosaics, some of which were in almost perfect condition, although this town has long since been obliterated by the scythe of time. The mosaics were well viewed from a galley built above them for the purpose. Another excellent feature was a first-class collection of coins, classified into Emperors and periods. We strolled back to the car, and persuaded the driver to wait while we went for lunch. The street was lined with open shops with interesting interiors, and in the many cafes and gambling-houses the Arabs were getting their hookahs into action, dreamily, like a steam engine at rest - potentially explosive. By our usual trick of pointing to what we wanted, we got a quick and good lunch - a kind of mince patty, over which I put macaroni. The job was then to extricate the driver from among his friends, but soon we were off - on the east of the river this time. I felt that I hadn't, and still haven't, done justice to such an important place as Antioch.

The driver raced up the river at a furious rate, following the valley, with the might Amanus across the plain, six or seven miles away, glowing so white in the sun that they made the clouds hanging above look like an advertisement for Persil. The valley was a shimmering green. At first it looked as if we were going to follow the crags to our right and go fight round the end like the Orontes, but at 1300 we crossed the river and headed straight across the dead flat plain. We kept up a steady 100 kms, although the road was pretty rough - not as good as a Scottish "B". The villages were terribly poor, made entirely of canes and dried mud, huddled together, looking squalid and poverty ridden. The families which we passed on the road were sometimes walking barefooted on the tarmac, and even the littlest had a bundle on its head. Organised hitch-hiking seemed unheard of, and they were all resigned to walk; they must be very poor, because no one in the East walks if he can possible afford to do anything else. The crops, by contrast, were prosperous, some up to

eighteen inches high, and light green; some of it looked flooded, and at one point the shallow lake spilled over onto the road - 1320.

When we joined the direct road from Iskenderun in a mud-built village, through which we raced at a criminal speed, just missing pedestrians - deliberately just - , we began to climb into the rocky foothills of Syria. They were so rocky that I was reminded again of the west coast of Ireland, but then the earth turned red, making a nice contrast with the cultivated patches of green. We ran along the border for a long way, past villages built of the convenient boulders, and mud, and climbing steadily further up into the limestone hills. These are rough grey mounds, absolutely devoid of vegetation, and looked like armoured forts, built as they are of small grey boulders like the skin of an alligator. Sometimes they reached right down to the road in this state, and at others there was a green ring round the bottom of the hill; the occasional ploughed field was very red in colour. The streams were dry, with many and big boulders lying about their courses. We ran up a valley between two rows of the armoured towers.

The Turkish border was pleasant, and the formalities few. There are a handful of modern houses - comparatively - set among the limestone hills, and we drove up beside one which had a small fountain cheerfully playing in a decorated pool. A surprising feature of these hills is the remains of huge houses of immense stone blocks standing along the roadside; there was one just above the frontier, and I later took a photo from it. Soon we were passed, and ran on through much the same country to the Syrian post; the road goes through splendidly desolate limestone hills, open and sweeping, with some very bad patches of road. We came through an immense archway to the Syrian border, a square yellow rock-hewn and official-looking building, standing all alone on the crest of a hill. We parked beside it and went in, where a Prussian-looking official in military uniform took our pass-ports. In one way it was very formal, but in another it was rather primitive, because we sat on a wooden bench round the wall of a small room which was not very imposing, and not large enough for all its files. We passed the first test, because when he looked for our names in his filing-cabinet he was satisfied with what he found. But then he went through a list of names typewritten on foolscap sheets of paper, and found Charles' name on it; that turned him from a human being into a civil-servant, and he became politely obstinate. He said that the list was of those who were known to have Jewish sympathies, and that it was impossible to allow Charles into Syria. We denied that Charles had any such sympathies, and he explained that he had been connected with the American Christian Council, - had he not ? Charles explained that he was not connected with it in any way, and had only been on a previous tour of Palestine organised by it. The man said that he believed us, but what could he do ? he was bound to obey the list. That may have been so, but he was about as uncooperative as he could be. He wouldn't phone anybody, because it was an official phone and couldn't be used for private matters - so he said. He wouldn't ring up the consul and reverse the charges, because the consul mightn't accept, and as soon as he lifted the receiver he would be debited with the call - so he said. He wouldn't take the money from us to pay for the call, because he wasn't allowed to accept money - so he said. He said that he was sorry, but he refused to do anything to help; all he would say that was positive was that he wasn't going to let Charles across - what else happened he didn't care, and wouldn't give any concrete advice. He was a whole government department rolled into one man - elusive and unsatisfactory to deal with. He spoke English as well as we spoke French, but he made sure that he kept the initiative by saying " You speak French - then let us talk in French." After battering our heads against the brick wall for half an hour, and not making the slightest impression, we gave up and went outside. All we

had learned was that Charles could not pass.

It was fortunate that we had the car to ourselves, because in the normal group-taxi organisation the others would have gone on and left us to walk home. As it was, the driver was thouroughly bored with waiting, and willingly agreed to take us back to Iskenderun. We thought that it would be best to go back to a big town, where we could get good advice and perhaps phone the American consul. At 120 kms it didn't take long to reach the Turkish border; fortunately they were agreeable to taking us back, and cancelled the entries in their books, so that in a few minutse we were speeding down through the limestone hills. We cut straight across the plain, and through the lake on an embankment about five feet high; as much of the lake was dry as was wet. Some of the houses were built on stilts, but most were normal. We crossed three bridges - at one of which the Turkish army was practicing getting into rubber dingies - at 120 kms, and were soon in the foothills, where we joined the road which branches off for Antioch. We got up nearly all those hair-pin bends in top gear, which says quite a bit for the De Sota, and something for the driver. He had an idea that it saves petrol to work up to a terrific speed - over 70 mph - then switch off and coast along the level road for about half a mile; but here he just kept going at the maximum speed without switching off.

Soon we were over the top, and going down as fast as the car could hold the road, with much squealing of brakes and tyres. We stopped again at Bailan, the little village clinging onto the head of the sheer valley, and this time bought biscuits. Soon we saw Iskenderun spread out before us in the sunlight; it had lost some of its lustre in our eyes, but it was still very beautiful. We asked for advice at the taxi-office, and then took our things back to the Atlantick Hotel, where we eventually got the same room again. Then we went along to a shipping office to see about sailing round Syria, but there did not appear to be anything doing in the right direction. Then we tried the manager of the Ottoman bank who had been recommended to us, and while he was very kind and ordered tea for us, he wasn't much help with our problem. We returned again to the restaurant on the front, and had a good steak meal again, over which we discussed the position. Charles thought that he might fly over Syria and try getting into Jordan, or even try Syria again at Beirut, so we arranged to meet at the Arab Tourist Agency in Jerusalem, and I booked in a group-taxi for Aleppo on the morrow. We went back to the luxury of our hotel, where we packed and exchanged information before going to bed. Outside, it was a lovely night - dead calm, very warm, and tropical, while there was a full gallery of very bright stars.

WEDNESDAY, 25th March.

The new day was a perfect sample of Mediterranean weather. From the moment that the sun appeared in the cloudless sky, it was warm; the calm sea turned bluish-green in response, and on the dark hills above the town a white crown of snow glowed like an advertisment for Persil. It was the sort of morning that draws you inexorably out of bed, so I got up at 6, and paid the usual penalty for early rising by having to shave in cold water. I emptied my case on the floor, and started to put aside any of Charles' belongings which had strayed into it; we couldn't decide what to do with the tin of orange juice which we had been carrying since Venice, so we opened it and drank as much as we could. Reluctantly I abandoned the stone which I had picked up at Philippi, but as the weather grew warmer there was more and more to be carried in the case. The taxi for Aleppo was supposed to leave at 8 o'clock, which was the same time as the restaurant opened for breakfast; we were just beginning to learn that time means even less to an Arab than to a Hebridean, but I didn't want to risk a sudden departure and so I waited at the office, where I could keep an eye on the car-park. Charles had been offered a lift to Adana by some American army officers, so he said good-by and departed, having promised not to turn up in Bellevue without me if we didn't meet in Jerusalem. No one seemed in any hurry to start, but just before half past nine the driver appeared, and I, being first there, went into the front seat beside him; we picked up three others at various hotels, and then set out at a good pace over the now familiar road into the hills. This driver is far better than the clown we had yesterday, but even he got 85 out of the De Soto on the straight bits.

It was a beautiful spring morning as we swung left into the hills, and the sea was brilliant blue beneath us, but I felt that I had seen enough of this road and was impatient to see new things. Also, I was worried about the reception that the Syrians were going to give me. Soon we were across the plain, and through the armour-plated hills to the Turkish frontier, where the passport official recognised me and put on his stamp without even looking at the photograph. While the others were being quizzed I climbed the slope of the valley through which the road ran, and took this photo from the ruins of a cottage about half way up. The boulders in the foreground are the remains of the wall of the house, which was probably once like the present houses on the other side of the valley; the modern building on the right is the customs shed, and the trellacing to its left is the ornamental fountain. In the background are the coastal hills, with the El Bahra plain in between. When I got back, another official was examining the luggage, and he was somewhat annoyed because I had gone away and left a locked case in the car. He barked something at me in German, but when I proved to be an innocent traveller he became almost pleasant, and we had an interesting conversation about the geology of the

district. Soon the gate was opened, and we were allowed out of Turkey; I was sorry to leave what seemed to be a very promising land. No more can it be called the "Sick Man of Europe", and with the last of the medieval traditions being swept out it is now in a position to take its place again among the powers of the East.

As we bumped over the potholes toward the Syrian post, there was a general re-distribution of belongings in the car. The driver said to me, "Foreigners are not allowed to bring any local currency over the border, so give yours to me and you can take the cigarettes which I am not allowed to import." There didn't seem any good arguing, and in any event I couldn't afford to lose even a few pounds. In the back seat the same thing was going on, with foodstuffs and even a tin of petrol finding temporary owners who would not offend the finickity Arabs. The road through no-man's land appeared to be the responsibility of no man, but if somebody would take the trouble to clear away the few ridges which separate the innumerable potholes, it might be possible to drive on the road instead of beside it; there isn't much to choose between the road and the adjoining fields.

In fear and trembling we parked outside the solid yellow building, and the driver went inside with our passports; we started to clear the car, because they are not satisfied until it is standing completely empty, with all the doors open, so that they can see through it. Once the luggage was in official custody, and safe from marauding children (of all ages), we went inside to learn our fate. The little officer leapt up from behind a pile of documents on his table, all bows and smiles, and greeted me volubly in French, enquiring "... et ou est votre ami maintenant?" If I hadn't been so dependent on him, I would have told him exactly what I was thinking - 'if it wasn't for <u>you</u>, he would be on the way to Damascus.' He was a perfect example of that modern curse, the bureaucratic mind; so long as everything was square on paper, he was charming; but if the books didn't balance, he was ruthless, and other peoples' feelings just didn't matter. The passport examination was again rigorous, but encouraging, and I was very relieved when the senior official at last reached for the rubber stamp. The baggage officials had strewn our property all over the room by the time we got there, and were busy poking into every corner of every case, sometimes demanding that we empty the whole lot on the floor. He strode over to mine, put his hand in for a lucky dip, and produced a coat-hanger; he tried again, and got a loaf of bread. "Anything to declare???" Somewhat guiltily I produced my packet of cigarettes; he ripped the celophane off, looked inside, and stamped it with a big round blue mark. The tin of petrol was confiscated, summarily and brutally, with no reason given, and no one daring to ask for one. I would have liked a photograph of the place, so as to have something by which to remember the Secret Police, but I was afraid to ask in case I was put in prison indefinitely, and without appeal.

When we restart, there are nine of us in the car, which doesn't make the road seem any smoother. It was difficult for property to find its way back to its owner, when both you and he are beneath two layers of Arab in the back seat of a five-seater car, doing anything up to 70 on an unmetalled road; I got the money from the depths of the driver's pocket, and held my packet out until somebody claimed it. For a long time we crossed a pleasant little plateau, set amid low and fairly open hills. The earth is red, like a tennis court in colour,

and where there is water, either a little stream or a pool, the red becomes several shades darker, and the banks are almost crimson. I suppose every country has some colour associated with it, like the green of Ireland, and the tawny-yellow of Egypt, but I shall always think of Syria as red, with the soft lion-coloured hills in the background. The hills beside this road are bleak and lonely, rolling waves of limestone, but the land in the broad valleys is ploughed, and this accentuates the colour of it; the green crops trace lines across the furrows, mainly young wheat standing about a foot high. Here and there villages merge with the foothills, built of the stone which is lying all over the agricultural land; it is the same as the west of Ireland, with great stone dykes separating little patches of arable land, and usually far more stone than earth. The road is not worthy of the name, but we raced over the monotonous red plain at a steady 60, and I spent the time usefully by learning the Arabic numerals which were printed side by side with the European ones on the milestones. The bareness of the hills is broken every now and again by little rows of trees and bushes in the middle-distance.

By the roadside there are large numbers of people who are too poor to travel in any other way than on foot; they plod along in the hot dust, often barefooted, carrying all their worldly possessions on their back. Some have shabby little donkeys to carry their bundles, and they walk infront if the animal is lively, or behind and prod it if it isn't. There are also a few horses, and an occasional camel, usually being towed by a man on a donkey, and with the face of an aciduated and misunderstood Victorian aunt. This procession has been going continuously since civilisation began, aided by the Romans and others who have built roads along this most ancient of routes. Traces of the older roads are scant, because the well-quarried stones have found their way into the walls of the surrounding towns.

Between 1230 and 1300 we passed 4 or 5 of the unique bee-hive villages which characterise the plain of Aleppo. The roofs are mud, and the walls stone, and hundreds of them stand in regular rows, surrounded by a common wall. The driver stopped to allow me to take a photo, but I was chary of going too near with a camera. Inside, they are scrupulously clean, and put much wealthier Arab villages

to shame. They were well furnished with wooden furniture, and every day the women take out the bedding to air it in the sunshine.

At 1320 we breasted a ridge, and in the shallow valley, and running up the hillside opposite, was ALEPPO, built entirely of white limestone, and gleaming in the sun like a planner's model at an exhibition. It looked a beautiful city from the crest of the hill, with clean, broad streets, huge modern houses, and the flat-topped roofs flinging back the noonday light. But the most wonderful thing was that when we got into it the illusion was not spoiled, and for once a town which looked from a distance like a scene from the Arabian Nights also deserved the title on closer contact. In the middle is a Saracen castle which looked as solid as Edinburgh's, and above and beyond it is an enormous expanse of brown country which fades off into desert, and on a clear day you can see the Euphrates.

Aleppo has been a trading centre since time began. For centuries camel caravans brought the produce of the East to Europe through Aleppo. When the Kaiser ran his Berlin to Baghdad through the city, he was following a route which had been used by the Egyptians, Greeks and Romans, and more recently by the Turks, French and British. It has risen from its own ashes time and again, after plague, massacre and earthquake, to maintain its destiny of being the caravan market of Eastern commerce. With the development of sea and air traffic, Aleppo has suffered, and the 'khans' which once abounded with silks and spices harbour only memories. In the evening I stood in the empty courtyard which was once the starting point for the main trade arteries of Mesopotamia, and realised just what the Suez Canal meant to the world.

The taxi stopped outside an office in the centre of the town, and a shower of Arab children descended on us, offering to carry our cases. I had the address of an American missionary at the College, so I thought that the best thing was to go and ask him for advice about this unknown land into which I was cast. I left my bag at the travel office (not without qualms - I was absolutely ignorant about what to do and what not to do among Arabs) and, declining the aid of the multitude who offered to show me the way (I knew that much), set out to find the College by asking the way. I walked along the broad main street for about 10 minutes, admiring the big green parks on one side and the ultra-modern office buildings and hospital on the other. But when I reached the suburbs, I knew that I had taken a wrong turning somewhere, and set about finding someone who spoke a European language. For the first time I began to feel alone, a friendless stranger in a foreign city where no one understood, and wouldn't have cared if they had. But it was just at that moment that the prayers of the people of Bellevue were answered in a way more wonderful than a man of the world would believe possible. Just as surely as Ananias was placed in Damascus to be ready when Paul needed a friend to answer his prayers, so a succession of people were prepared in the neighbouring city of Aleppo to provide the company and help which I had lost through Charles' departure. The

first was a green-grocer. He didn't know where the college was, and couldn't find it in the phone book, so he directed me to the Post Office, where he was sure they would know. His directions were, "The first building past the power-station"; it was essential to describe it like that, because the names of the buildings were in Arabic script, but a power-station looks the same in any language.

I walked through the luxuriant park, where the fountains were sending cascadesoof spray into the sparkling air, and where the office staffs were eating sandwiches for lunch; it reminded me of Stratford on Avon, except that the river was muddy, and the buildings were white, and there were minarets instead of chimneys to break the horizon. By following an almost inaudible humming sound, I arrived at the place where all the pylons converged, passed it, and went into the next building. It certainly didn't didn't look like a Post Office, but perhaps Arabians have their own ideas about what a G.P.O. should look like, I thought as I entered. I went to the Public Counter, and, having got no response to "Does anyone speak English?", tried "Est-ce-qu'on ici parle francais?" The response was alarming - several replied in perfect French; I should have remembered that this country was under French mandate until 1936. I explained what I wanted, and by this time some one had produced a draftsman who spoke excellent English; he said that he was just going for lunch, and would show me the college. We went up to the drawing office to get his overcoat ! I was just considering taking off my jacket ! He asked why I had come to this place, and I said that I was directed to it. "What, to the Power Station?" "No, the G.P.O." "But this is the administrative part of the Power Station !" That was the most valuable mistake which I made on the whole trip, for if I had gone to the P.O. I should never have met Zaki, who revolutionized my stay in Aleppo. We went up to the College in his little export A40, diminutive beside the American cars all round it; he liked it very much, finding it very economical to run, and only finding fault with a sticky gear-change. I would have liked it better if the front hadn't been missing - he explained off-handedly that he had had an accident two days before.

The American College was a typical modern school, and reminded me of Bathgate Academy. Zaki knew his way, and we went up to the Principal's office. He was a fine American, busy but always anxious to help, and he said that Dr. Votaw had left, but that I ought to meet his successor, Dr. Seto. We met him in the passage as he was going into a class, so the Principal suggested that I come back at 1630, and we would all have tea together. The scenes in the passages might have been in any British college, with boys going to classes in groups, books in a bundle, and the walls covered with notice boards advertising football games and school concerts. The classrooms might have been transplanted from the Academy. The only noticeable difference was that the babble of conversation was in a different language. It was a great privelege to attend the College, and competition for entry was keen, Zaki said. He was proud that he had been there, and that his brother was just starting. It wasn't till later that I learned that the Shilazi family was one of the best known in Aleppo.

It was now 1400. The engineers at the Power Station worked from 0800 to 1400, had two hours off for lunch, and then from 1600 to 1900. I was extremely hungry by this time; perhaps I looked it, because Zaki insisted that I go home with him for lunch. We drove through the new town - it wasn't till then that I realised that the College was in the diametrically opposite direction from the route to his home - and into the old walled Arab part. He expressed his disgust at the Jews' Cemetery, lying outside the wall, which of course could not be sold and consequently

was obstructing the town Development Plan. "If it wasn't for all these Jewish traditions," he said, "we could build houses there." We ran past big blocks of flats, and stopped in Nayyal Street, which had pleasant brown coloured houses on one side, and a wide area of beaten mud on the other. We climbed up to the first flat by means of an open stair - ever so much cleaner and lighter than the usual type in this country. His family was just assembling for lunch. The room was big and cool, with a padded seat like a station waiting-room all round, and a well-spread table in the middle, with chairs round it. His father, was dressed in priest's robes, and was, I learned, the Chief of the Greek Church in Aleppo. His brother and brother in law were reading, and two sisters and a sister in law were sewing, one with a Singer. All except the parents spoke excellent French, and we talked about the route I had followed, until lunch. It was some kind of fast, and they were not allowed to eat meat, but they produced a tin of it for my benefit. It is difficult to describe the other courses, but there was some kind of fish, salad, one potato for the whole company, bread, a crumby kind of cheese, and preserved peaches; there were various oriental tit-bits in oil, which I did not sample - the sight of them was enough. I showed the father the poppy which I had picked from St. Luke's grave at Ephesus, and when it was explained to him what it was he kissed it and blessed it with all the rites of the Greek church. We talked round the table for a little, and then Zaki said that he would take me to meet a man from Edinburgh who was in business in the city. I was sorry to say good-bye to them all, but they had to get back to work, and my French volcabuary was running out.

Back through the sun-kissed streets, and into the centre of the town, and just opposite the hospital there was a huge block of little offices, one of which had on the door "Kahyan Estates and Trading Company". In-side was Major J.D. Forsyth, who had farmed 'Torcraig' at Gorebridge, and whose son was doing a B.Sc.(Agriculture) at Edinburgh. He had been here for 17 years, having retired from the forces after the war because he had grown to like the Arabs so much that he wanted to stay and work with them. We all chattered away for about an hour, and then Zaki said it was time we were going back to the college. The major said either to come back or else to phone him to arrange for dinner; with typical British ignorance he said to the wog who accompanied him everywhere to translate for and advise him, "George, what's my telephone number?" - and it was his own office ! He told me that after 17 years he was just beginning to understand the numerals, but couldn't fathom the letters yet; I nearly told him that I had learned the figures from the first two dozen milestones after the border, but that I quite sympathised about the letters - they looked like shorthand, only worse because they weren't in straight lines. We reached the college about 1630, and Mr. Sato was just coming out. He asked me what my plans were, and then said that he would be doing much the same later in the week, when the school holidays started. I asked if there was any chance of a lift over the desert route to Petra, and he said certainly, and wouldn't promise that he would let me pay for a share of the petrol. He wasn't leaving until Saturday, and I didn't want to spend 3 days in Aleppo, so I arranged to meet him at the Philadelphia Hotel in Amman on Monday morning. This was beyond my wildest dreams, because when Charles had gone I had abandoned all hope of reaching Petra. Now I was going to see all of Syria and Lebanon at my leisure, and then have a car waiting to race round the rest of it when I reached Amman. He was greatly relieved that I had next to no luggage, and we said 'au

revoir'. Zaki ran me back to the Office, and returned to his work with my profuse thanks; I jokingly said that I would sent him a p.c. from Israel, and he said that if I did he would go straight to prison, so he would rather that I saved it up until I got home. He eventually was sent a box of Edinburgh Rock, with a letter hidden between the first and second layers - all mail is supposed to be censored.

The major and George said that they wern't busy - which I can well believe - and that they would like to show me Aleppo before dinner. So we went down to the taxi office where I booked a seat for Beirut the next morning, and took my bag along to a hotel which the major recommended as good as well as cheap; I am afraid that an officer's idea of cheap is not the same as mine, but I decided that he probably wouldn't take me out to dinner if he saw the place that I meant by cheap, and in any case the cost of the dinner would offset the six Syrian pounds which I was going to spend for the bed. Then he hailed one of these two-horse carriages which are still fairly common if you arn't in a hurry, and we set off for the Citadel. As it appeared round a corner, I took this photo of it from the buggy; the blur on the left is the oil lamp, and above that a typical small mosque and minaret. The castle was not open to the public, but we walked round, and admired its solidness and mighty buttresses. The hill on which it stands is, as the photo indicates, artificial, and there is an Arab legend that it is upheld on eight thou- sand pillars.

From there we walked to the other great sight of Aleppo, the 'khans'; these are the court- yards where the camel caravans from India and Mesopotamia unloaded, and round about are stables and inns which have housed a king's ransome many times over. Adjoining them are the bazaars, still the commercial centre of the town. In this great labyrinth of vaulted lanes there is a whole street devoted to every worthwhile trade - one for all the iron mongers, one for the fabrics, and four or five for the sellers of the bright red shoes which hang like clusters of grapes from every available nail. There must be miles of these streets, all lined on both sides with booths and workshops; everything has to be bargained for, and to buy even a pair of shoes is such a long business that you can understand why it's necessary to have a dozen shops selling exactly the same things all nest to each other. No where did I see a 'prix fixee' notice, but that may have been due to my ignorance of the language. The major was looking for a size 15 collar, and we spent a pleasant two hours trying all the shops, and never buying one. Outside the old bazaar are shops which would put New York to shame by their streamlined appearance, with fluorescent lighting and plate glass windows far finer than anything I have ever seen in Edinburgh. Aleppo has accepted the West very gracefully, without losing its character in the process. I tried to buy a red 'tarbush' which the city Arab wears, but when we found the appropriate centre, and watched them being made, I realised why the price was so high as to be prohibitive for a souvenier. (£2). By this time night had fallen, and the neon lights were every bit as bright as Leith Walk's; it was warm and the air had the scent of a town which deals in spices. It was a gay town, and prosperous-looking despite the decrease of transit trade.

Back in the two-roomed office of Kahyan Estates we searched for a piece of cardboard out of which to make a new case for my camera,

as I didn't want to start off into the really dusty part of the country with it wrapped only in a bit of cloth; a heavy paper envelope seemed the best we could do. The major took me next door to meet his best friend which is, being interpreted

المحامي

ريمون الباسي عازار
شارع الطونيان
حلب - سوريا
هاتف : ١٣٠٨٧

RAYMOND E. AZAR M.A. (Law)
ADVOCATE
Altunian Street,
ALEPPO - SYRIA
Phone 13087

We discussed the different training which we had had, and were just going to make tea in an electric kettle when a client came in. While they discussed trivialities they didn't mind the major and myself in the room, because neither of us understood a word they were saying, but when they got down to business we felt we ought to go, so we took the half-boiled water next door, and adapted it to the major's plug. When it boiled we had ours, and tried to keep Mr. Azar's hot on a terrifying kerosene stove; I was sure that it was going to blow up any minute, but the others assured me that they were widely used throughout the middle east. The principle was that kerosine was allowed to drip into a bowl, which of course was a raging inferno, and I still don't know why the resevoir tank doesn't blow up. With paraffin a few pence a gallon, it is a very economical way of heating, but it failed signally to keep the tea warm. At 2045 he at last persuaded the client to go, and joined us. There was a couch in his waiting room, and he offered it to me for the night to save the cost of a hotel; we phoned up, but the hotel wouldn't cancel the booking, so I regretfully declined what looked a very comfortable sofa. Then the three of us went out for diner - George could be dispensed with when there was somebody else who spoke the lingo. It was a good meal, but not a very great restaurant; I don't think that they would have gone to anything less than the best, so it doesn't say much for Aleppo's catering. Apart from the usual green bits and pieces soaked in garlic, it was a normal western meal, except that the bread was round, and the water in bottles. We walked back through the soft night to the hotel, and I was soon up the stair, a little to the left along the wide corridor, and into a comfortable bed, with a slatted window overlooking the main entrance and the road. It was a most remarkable day, starting in gloom, and ending in a blaze of sunshine; I had much for which to give thanks, and I only hoped that Charles had been as fortunate.

THURSDAY, 26th MARCH

Again the bright sun was responsible for waking me at 0630; just as Morton did when he was here, I opened the slatted shutters, and the sunshine leapt in like a tiger, to lie in warm, striped bars across the carpet. I looked out into a street already busy, and wondered what these favoured people would feel like if they woke one morning to find a typical Scottish sky, instead of just taking this Californian climate for granted. I read all the notes I had on the country which I hoped to see that day, and tried not to build too high an ideal from the graphic word-pictures, lest I be disappointed with the reality. Then I hunted up the porter who should have been on duty on this floor, and, strangely enough,

found him where he ought to have been. By elementary sign language I obtained some hot water, which was a pleasant change. At 0730 - the time when the taxi was supposed to leave (I was learning) - I paid the receptionist and wandered up to the main street, letting the sun sink right through my bones. Only ten minutes to bask in the sun, and then into the worst seat - they were reserved - of an 8-seater De Soto. There were three in the front, two on collapsable seats in the middle, and another threein the back, with me in the centre. Away about 0800, and stopped at a hotel to pick up the two who would complete the cargo; While they were coming I ran to a nearby bakers' stall and bought a loaf of bread, which, washed down by a bottle of lemonade bought at the first stop for petrol, served very well for breakfast. He must have been honest, because I gave him a coin which I thought was worth a few coppers, and he gave me a handful of smaller ones in exchange; it's bad enough trying to put the value of a foreign coin into British currency when you know what it is, but when it just says it's hopeless.

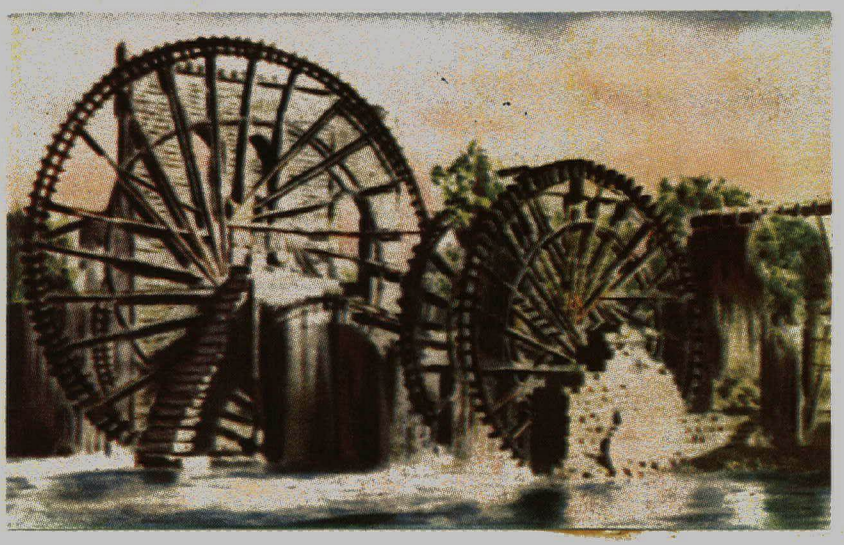
We set off along the same road as we came in yesterday, up the hill to the college, and out into the rolling country-side. As we climb out of the town we are going against the grain, and see the edges of the exposed strata. The limestone lies in layers, and so the side of a hill looks as if it act- ually had the contour marks on it, or as if you had a pile of green books with an occasional white one sticking out a little; you don't see this unless you are actually climbing a fairly steep hill. On the outskirts there were several gangs of cloaked Arabs hacking at blocks of the yellow stone, making it so square that the buildings require very little cement. Once clear of the town, we are again confronted with a very rocky but not infertile country, the white stones and the young wheat all being placed on the background of red earth, which doesn't change from one hour to the next, and is therefore a bit monotonous. Near some of the bee-hive villages, which look like rows of brown eggs on trays, there are white patches where an orchard is in bloom. The contour of the road is not unlike A68 at the border; you climb what appears to be a large mound, and as soon as you reach the top you run down the other side, and up another one. To the sides, however, the ridges do not continue, but rise and fall like a swell at sea - no appearant rythem. The land is good in patches, but there is a lot of limestone showing, either just exposed or else lying loose in large slabs; the problem is not to find building stone, but how to clear enough land for agriculture. It seems to be rougher and stonier to the right, and more fertile to the left, but the hills are in front - a moderate range of a peculiar ashen colour in the middle-distance, and away on the horizon the snow-topped coastal range; both are fairly level, but with some big peaks standing up like volcanic cones.

At 0840 we reach the junction, and swing away to the left to break new ground. We run almost due south along a long low ridge, with

rolling red fields stretching away for miles on either side, all the same, and not very interesting. Literally thousands of the bee-hives can be seen in little clusters all over the plain. I was fascinated to watch a group of men building one, as we stopped for a moment in one of the smaller villages. They had a large pile of wet mud, and were fashioning rough bricks which were laid out in the sun to harden. All round about the bricks were in various stages of drying, and the industrious but slow-moving manufacturers were tramping out the clay and moulding it with boards exactly as I imagine the Israelites must have done it in Egypt four millenia ago; for the first time I wished that I had the cine camera - it was really picturesque with the green grass rising from the dusty road to the curious conical houses, the brown mud and the Arab peasants in their flowing robes. All too soon we set off again over the plain; the road was good, the sun shining, and the music from the car's wireless cheerful. Altogether, I thought that life was good.

This pleasant state continued for about an hour. The white strip of the coastal mountains is visable most of the time on the right horizon, curling round so that it often appears in front as well. Then we turn sharp left, and the hills around disappear as we sink into a flat plain with a dead straight road right across it. The monotony is broken by a news bulletin from Radio Damascus announcing that all Arab property which is now in Israel will become Jewish property as from April 1st. I was surprised that the Arabs in the car took it so quietly; some of them had left not only houses but also surgeries, garages, as well as all their personal belongings in enemy hands. I suppose that they had given up hope long ago of ever seeing it again. After about half an hour on the plain, the white strip appeared again on the right again, much nearer this time, over a ridge, and there also appeared to be one in front which must have been the end of the Lebanons. Suddenly we're overlooking the Orontes valley, marshy and unhealthy, with the 3,500 ft Ansariye block like a perpindicular white-topped wall all down the opposite side, sheer, dead level on top, and jet-black below the white.

Up into little higher country for a few minutes, over a ridge, through a pass, across the railway, and down into the Orontes valley, which is completely filled by the town of HAMA. Hamath (meaning defenced, walled) is mentioned 36 times in the OT in 12 books; the Hamathites were a Hamitic race and are included among the descendants of Canaan. The Greeks called it Epiphania, but it is probably not Hamath the Great, since its full name is Hamath Zobah. It was 1030 as we dropped into the town, which is built entirely of baked mud - houses, streets, and everything. The most interesting sight was the giant water-wheels, turning at about 1 m.p.h. by the force of the river. They are enormous, far bigger than a circus wheel, and you look down on them from far above, and then run down beside them. More than one was broken at the axle, and lay twisted in the river. The houses are modern - if a mud house can be modern - but roads just don't exist; for a mile or so we bumped



down and up again a broad tract of parched mud between the houses, which was like a picture of 16th century England. Then up the other side of the valley and back ontothe plain, to see the mighty Lebanons in front, and the middle block of the range dying away on the right. At 1100 we cross the Orontes again; suddenly we drop from the flat plane into a gorgeous little ravine, lucious green in colour, and all the sides terraced. Through the bottom rushes the muddy torrent, with the surrounding cliffs almost overhanging it; this is the life-blood of the delightful and fertile belt about 10 miles wide which surrounds the upper reaches of the Orontes, and almost before you realise that you have plunged down you are climbing the other side again, twisting and winding round the dissected hillocks. The plain is the same again, flat, monotonous, gently rolling, and nearly all agriculturally red.

Stop for lunch at 1130 at Homs, a prosperous town because the landscape allows the river to support a wide spread of cultivated fields and fruit trees. It appears to have been the Emesa of the OT, but I can find no reference to it in the text itself. I wandered over the sunbaked square to a snack-bar, and was just wondering how safe the cheese sandwiches were when a doctor who was also travelling in the car came over and helped me to choose bread and cheese and some excellent date patties, almost identical with Naafi Eccles cakes; I afterwards discovered that they were for babies who had not yet enough teeth to chew, but they were so good that I went back for more; they came in two sizes, at ½d. and a penny, and once I knew the price I could bargain with shopkeepers who tried to charge more; I was surprised that of the many dozen places I subsequently tried, only one put the price up because I was a foreigner, and he reduced it when I objected. The doctor, who had hitherto been very quiet, now became talkative, and told me that he was on his way to a medical conference in Egypt. I asked him if the taxi went by Baalbeck, where there are famous ruins, and he said 'no'; just then the driver came up, and I got the doctor to find out if there was any chance of going by the side road through the temple. He said, would I like to go that way? I said, very much if it wouldn't inconvenience the others. And so the whole taxi went several miles off route just so that a mad foreigner could look at some stones.

Just after leaving Homs we pass on the right the lovely little lake Bahret el Kattine, shining blue through the heat-haze. Almost at once we are between the famous Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon mountains; from the sea it may deserve and justify such a description as 'a hundred miles of canyons and rugged mountain tops, a bleak world of ravines and dead rock walls', but from the inside, so to speak, there are just two mounds with a little snow on top, and separated by a flat plain. The view from the frontier of Syria-Lebanon is most unimpressive, and the land is not only flat but also well-cultivated. There was no trouble at either post, only a slight delay, and we ran swiftly and smoothly up the flat roads; we were climbing all the time, like going up a long, shallow incline. After the Lebanon customs the hills get noticeably more like mountains, and there are even patches of desert on the plain; the land is good one minute, then bare, flat, and hard, and then there will be an outcrop of rocks, followed by another fertile patch. Terracing is essential; often the stones are used to build ledges, row above row, up the side of the mountains, usually to cultivate vines; once we cross a river, a deep channel some 35 yards across, which is entirely terracedlike an enormous staircase, a tremendous work embodying millions of golden-brown stones. I suppose the annual flood - it was dry at the time - brings good silt with it. Several times we criss-cross with the railway. Gradually the Lebanons get better, but the Anti's are no good at all -

really most unimpressive little mounds. However, the scene looking back through the rear window is pretty wild, with fertile and bare patches alternately stretching away back down the corridor, and the slope looks more formidable from the top than from the bottom - but it always does to me. But suddenly, about Lebwe, the mountains rise to justify themselves on either side, and a great block of uniform height accompanies us all the way along, the ones to the right about twice as far away as those to the left. The top 500 ft are powdered with snow, then an overlapping belt of trees, and below that the cultivation begins; they run parallel to us, and I guessed that the foothills were four or five miles away, although sometimes it looked about one or two. it reminded me of crossing the Red Sea - with a wall of water on either side.

At 1405 we reach the top of the rise in the plain, and as we come over the crown the driver very kindly turns left onto a side-road to show me Baalbec. The first glimpse took my breath away; across a falling tract of very rough and barren ground, against the backcloth of the Anti-Lebanons, gigantic columns appear standing above a grove of poplar trees. The pillars disappear behind the trees as we come down to ground level, and then, suddenly, we were standing beside a ruined

corner stone of a size that defied description. All I could do was take this photo, and let it show the rubble; unfortunately there is not much to give an idea of size. On the other (left) hand side of the car there was another monument to paganism which only a picture can explain. On either side these 2 towered up, and the car lay like a tiny insect in between. The driver said, "We'll let you have five minutes." I could have used five years; on that bright spring afternoon the pride and pomp of the Roman empire was preserved in the Temples of Jupiter and Bacchus in a manner that not even Rome boasts. The tall columns, the dark

ruined halls, and dry fountains have a splendour in decay that many an age has never captured in its prime; no comparison can portray the massive splendour of this colossal sanctuary of paganism, set amid a mist of white fruit blossom. Many of the columns are of Egyptian granite, and time has lent only dignity to them.

I wished for time to climb to the top of a wall, like this photographer, to see the gold-brown courts and temples against the plain, and watch the clouds drift lazily along the Lebanons across the valley. But all I could do was buy post-cards from a French-speaking guide who tried to sell me the history of Baalbec for 15/-, and run back to the car.

On the south of the town there were fertile and ploughed fields and we were coming to the famous plain of el Bikar, which flows with more milk and honey than the Jordan ever could. Down the ever-deepening corridor, dead flat from side to side, the fierce heat of the spring sun is drawing out the apricot and almond blossom, with thousands of mulberry , orange and lemon trees to fill in the gaps, and all overlooked by miles of black terracing in which grow the renowned Rayac wines. The hills are now worthy of the name, rising steeply at what I underestimated to be 3 miles apart; and appearing to converge at the end of the road, although of course they never do. The Antis are still not what I expected of them, but the Lebanons are pretty good, lofty and very white, with the road coming through at over five thousand feet. Somewhere over the crest, amid the snows, are the last cedars of Lebanon, whose ancestors provided the timber for Soloman's temple.

At Rayac the valley is still flat - sideways speaking - although still falling perceptibly away from us, and we turn toward the right and climb a little into the foothills, so as to look across an airport to the Anti-Lebs., which are looking decidedly healthier. They are as uninspiring from inside as a lump of dough, straight on top and with their sides rythmetically dissected into about two dozen equal buttresses; they could pass for a loaf of sliced bread if they weren't white nearly all the way down.

After tending rightish for a while, we came to Chtaura at 1445, where we joined the Beirut-Damascus road. I don't suppose it existed in Biblical times, but it is famous now as the meeting place of Syrian and Lebaneese politicians to settle their disputes, and it is also an extremely popular honeymoon resort; I was just going to ask why on earth anyone would come to a place like this for their honeymoon when the doctor added that he had brought his wife here, and so I decided it might be wiser to explore and see for myself. We had been stopped on entering the town, and told that we would have to wait at least half an hour until the convoy from Beirut arrived; I wondered what form of military dictatorship this was, until the driver explained that when the snow was deep on the passes there was one-way traffic, with one lot queuing up until a batch from the other end arrived. After wandering through the warm fields, and breathing the mountain air scented with

fruit blossom, I realised the reason for its popularity. After consulting the map and the driver, I decided it would be almost impossible to reach Beirut and be back in Damascus that night, and so I removed my bag from under a live turkey which was stowed beside it in the boot, and went into a cafe to wait for the procession from the coast. The manager assured me that he would find me a place when the cars arrived, and sent a little Arab boy out to keep watch and stop one; meanwhile I enjoyed some tolerably good tea, and finished the loaf of bread which had been breakfast. I disliked the arrangement from the first - mainly because I like to do my own hitch-hiking, and also because I very much doubted whether the boy had the authority to make a driver stop. In the latter I was right; after about 35 minutes the cars began to whizz through, and I felt as if I was at Charterhall. After a few minutes I went out to see what was happening, and found I was right - the cars with empty seats didn't give more than a passing glance to the native boy, although he was trying hard enough to attract attention, and nearly getting run over in the process. I should have had more sense than to trust the cafe proprieter's infallible schemes, and realised that his boast "everyone stops here for a drink" was mere wishful thinking. I knew his countrymen better than himself if he really believed that a ragged boy of twelve had the personality to stop a Cadillac doing 60 down hill. I thanked the boy - it wasn't his fault, and he had done his best - and took over, but it was too late; the fast traffic was nearly through, and of the two who stopped for me one was going the wrong way, and the other not far enough. Then the Transport began to arrive, so rather than wait an hour for more Chryslers and De Sotos, I started to thumb everything - and regretted it. Almost at once a big petrol tanker drew up, and it's one of the unwritten rules of the road that you never refuse an offered lift. I piled my bag and myself in between the Arab driver and his mate, and we set off for the Anti-Lebanons; I soon discovered that our mutual volcabuary was restricted to two words - 'Damask' and 'Beyrouth'. All round, in front, behind, and often beside us, were other tankers, a happy, easy-going crowd, pleased to let the private cars out of the way so that they could play the passing game with others of like kind. Road transport is important in these countries, because the railways are of so many differing gauges that through traffic is difficult, and lorries can go over hills where not even the Germans could follow.

As soon as we begin to climb, we see the real hills, bare, running down to road level like an alligator's skin, and rough on top. Our course is south-east, and the open plain lies to the right, broad and sweeping, while to the left the grey cliffs sweep up for hundreds of feet until on their stricken tops there is no sign of life but the slow flight of an eagle; the stones make the landscape harsh with an almost savage intensity, and it is all as solid as if cast in steel - an atomic bomb wouldn't make one boulder quiver - and the sun gave it a false appearance of hospitality. We twist and turn up through the foothills, and play a fantastic game of catch-as-catch-can, no holds barred, to try to pass and not be passed. The whole drama is played out at a maximum speed of 10 kilometers, so it's like normal passing seen in slow motion. Most of the time we were in first or second gear, and would begin to slip past the tanker in front; inch by inch we would creep up, and for perhaps quarter of a mile would be level, with neither prepared to give way unless there was a dangerous bend coming. Hogging the centre of the road for miles on end seemed quite inoorder, and there was never a smile by either of the combatents, either to themselves or others. The real fun came when the hill grew really steep, and the man in front dropped to 2 mph and we, who could just manage 2½, tried to pass while a cattle truck was on our outside doing 4 or 5. One of the real reasons

for the rush was that this single line traffic meant teriffic queues at the frontiers. There were about 40 lorries waiting at the Lebanon post, so we parked in order at the right hand side of the road, went and got the papers stamped, and then slipped up the left of those still parked, had a formal check, and were away. This seemed to be the normal practice, and the only snag was when traffic bound in the other direction, on its proper side of the road, met those slipping past the queue on the wrong side. The result was usually temporary chaos, with the two offenders being made to back off the road, and number two in the queue slipping through. It was particularly bad that day, because the muddy fields by the road - there are no fences - were just thawing under the hot sun, as can be seen in the photo which I took while the driver was filling in forms about 150 yards further up the road. The border is set in a little circular plateau, ringed by hills and covered in snow; it was very pleasant to wait right on top of the mountains, with the cool air and the peaceful ring of higher ground.

The passport examination was purely formal, and there was no customs that I could find, so I went without; I was a bit afraid that he would notice the time of my entry visa, since I could not possibly have been to Beirut and back since 1200, and yet my permit said that I was going to there. We handed our passports through a grill, and almost at once a voice said, "You are coming from Beirut?" The obvious thing was to say 'oui', - which was perfectly true - but before I could say anything the papers were stamped and shot out through the bars, and the voice said, "Next". The queue at the Syrian hut a few miles further on was even longer, and coming back from the office I had to walk so many hundred yards that I though I had passed the lorry without recognising it, and began to wonder how I would ever find it among so many the same; there must have been fully 70 almost identical tankers in front of it. I had had to walk off the road for a bit, and had collected a bucketful of clinging mud on my shoes, which refused to be scraped off; it was the stickiest mud I have ever seen, and several trucks which had tried to avoid the traffic jam by running over the field not only got themselves in trouble, but ploughed furrows for the rest of us to fall into when we had to leave the road temporarily to allow north-bound traffic past. I don't know what happened to the co-driver, but he wasn't with us after this point. After about a half-hour delay, during which I wrote up my diary, we wriggled through a tremendous jam, and were soon at the highest point of the range.

These are the hills at their best - the limestone strata are twisted to stand on end, and a rivulet has cut a knife-edge gorge almost perpindicular for 600 feet; pinnacles stand up like gigantic sentinals, originally white, but stained by the red earth. We run down the valley made by the Barada River, the Albana of Naaman's day; the limestone is so pliable that in places it has been cut so swiftly down that there is just room for the river and the road to get through, with not a yard over. Where the process has been slower, and the angle is more obtuse, boulders often lie precariously perched on the sloping hill-side, some small, but others weighing 5 or 10 tons. We climb again for a little, and then down a long hill so steep that we must engage 2nd (minus) gear all the way. While we are running down I realise that the mighty dome on the right which is rapidly turning from pink to rust-red is none other than Mount Hermon. Even as I marvel at the reflection of the sunset which makes the eternal snow seem pink, the light fades, so I hurriedly open the cab window and take a hasty snap, quite by accident including one of the

cairns which are there to mark the road in winter, when terrible snow storms sometimes rage here while the world below is gasping in the heat. But it is really an easy pass considering its height, because the Abana bursts full born from the heart of the hill mountains and for 10 miles there is a natural way through the barren flanks of Anti-lebanon. We roll on and down, through towering gorges and gentler open spaces, then leave the hills and cross the six miles of the plateau known as "es Sahara", whose shadeless miles are hidden by the approaching night. The blistered rocks give way to orchards of figs and apricots, pomegranite and vine, and on the left thirty feet of dark green water shoots down a steep smooth bed; for two more miles the bare brown walls keep a respectful distance, and round the river the leafage is as lavish as a virgin forest, but a closer look shows none of the rankness of the jungle. Through a village, over a bridge, past a waterfall, beside an aquaduct the Romans built, and the rut narrows; just when the cliff comes near enough to overhang the road, the hills turn sharply away, and we are out on the plain. A mile more of orchards and we slip unobtrusively into the outskirts of DAMASCUS - not a very spectacular approach owing to the darkness; all I can see is lights running up the hillside to the rear-left. The tanker is going to by-pass the town, so he drops me in a suburb; I gave him one lira for his help, but he said, "I vant too"; it was no place to argue, and even two was not unreasonable, so I gave him some Lebanon money which I had over, and so saved myself a trip to the money changer. There was a man in what looked like police uniform, so I asked him to recommend a hotel; he showed me a place about a quarter of a mile away, right in the heart of the city, with a name in Arabic which I never had translated, and said not on any account to pay more than 2/- for the night ! The tall Arab in flowing robe and head-dress asked for 3/-, and with relentless courtesy refused to reduce, and I didn't mind paying 50% too much when the whole bill was less than half what I was prepared to give. The office was about half way up a reversing stair case, and he asked me to wait for a few minutes. Soon a boy came staggering up the stair - which ran through the office - with an enormous mattress on his back, and a few minutes later again with one of those blanket-cum-sheet contraptions. After about 10 minutes I am permitted to see the room, which looked quite adequate - clean and plainly furnished, with two single beds side by side, and a window looking back to the hills. I locked and left my case, and went out to see Damascus.

One should visit Damascus, even if only to pay homage to great age; the oldest city in the world has eternal youth, and has seen the rise, felt the effect, and survived the passage of all the forces which have strewn Syria with ruins. There is not a fallen city but Damascus was old when it was built. But more remarkable than even its age is the beauty of its situation. Damascus is called by its own poets "The Pearl of the East" and the "Eye of the Desert". It answers to the Koran's description of Paradise, and the Damascenes believe that the Garden of Eden was located here, that Adam's clay was taken from the banks of the Abana; to prove this they show you the tomb of Abel, thirty feet in length ! It is an astonishing site for a city; it is utterly incapable of defence, and is remote from the sea and other lines of commerce. But one look east supplies the answer - here is a great harbour of

refuge from the earliest sea that man ever learned to navigate; the Abana has created an oasis between the desert slopes of Anti-Lebanon and the rolling waste which stretches to Palmyra and Baghdad; it is an Eden of life and beauty surrounded by death and desolation. This river, instead of wasting her waters on a slight extension of the fringe of fertile Syria, saves them in her narrow gorge till she can fling them well out upon the desert, and there, instead of slowly expending them on the doubtful possibilities of a province, lavishes all her life at once in the creation of a single great city, and straightway dies in the face of the desert; the plain, which is too high to be marshy, is shot all over by the cold rapid waters which do an equal service in bringing life and carrying away corruption. Well might Naaman think that this River of Gold was better than all the waters of Israel; it is her life, just as the desert is her protection.

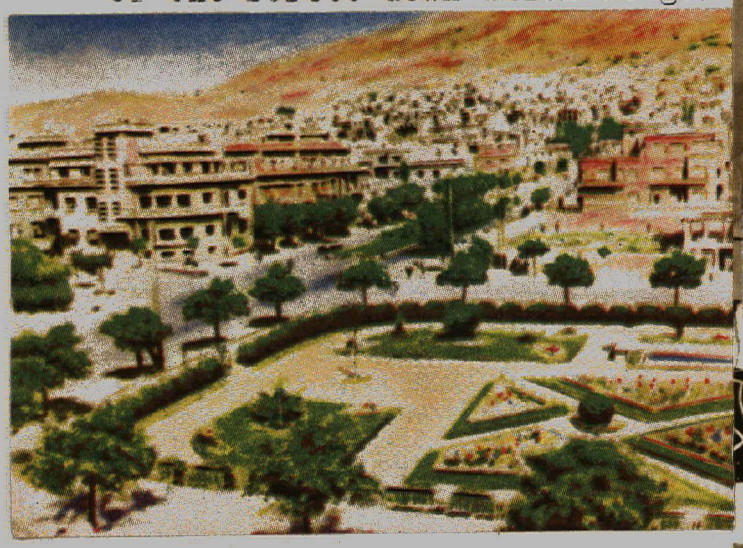
I knew at once that the French had been here; the narrow streets of the old town were filled with the tinkling little tram-cars which seem to follow wherever France sets her foot. In contrast, the main thoroughfares were splendid modern roads, well lit, and lined with gleaming white stone buildings, giving an air of luxury and peace. Twenty St. Andrew's houses laid down a marble Leith Walk on a midsummer evening wouldn't give half the splendour of new Damascus. I walked along the Abana, here confined to a concrete channel, and came to the old town, a labyrinth of narrow, crooked, ill-paved dirty streets crowded together in inextricable confusion, and by no means a place to linger in at night. I found a clean looking cafe on a main road, and ordered supper. There were fifty or sixty slices of meat piled on a revolving skewer on the counter, being kept hot by a horizontal gas jet, and from this there was cut as much as I was entitled to for two lira; I had thought that the best way to order was to give the head waiter as much as I could afford, point to the cook and his pile of dishes, and sit down to await the result. He brought some kind of soup, meat, salad, (which I regarded with suspicion) and two big flat cakes of rough bread, plus innumerable glasses of water. Then I wandered back to the station, which was the landmark for the hotel, and was in bed by 2030. I strewed my possessions all over the adjoining bed, and fell sound asleep at once.

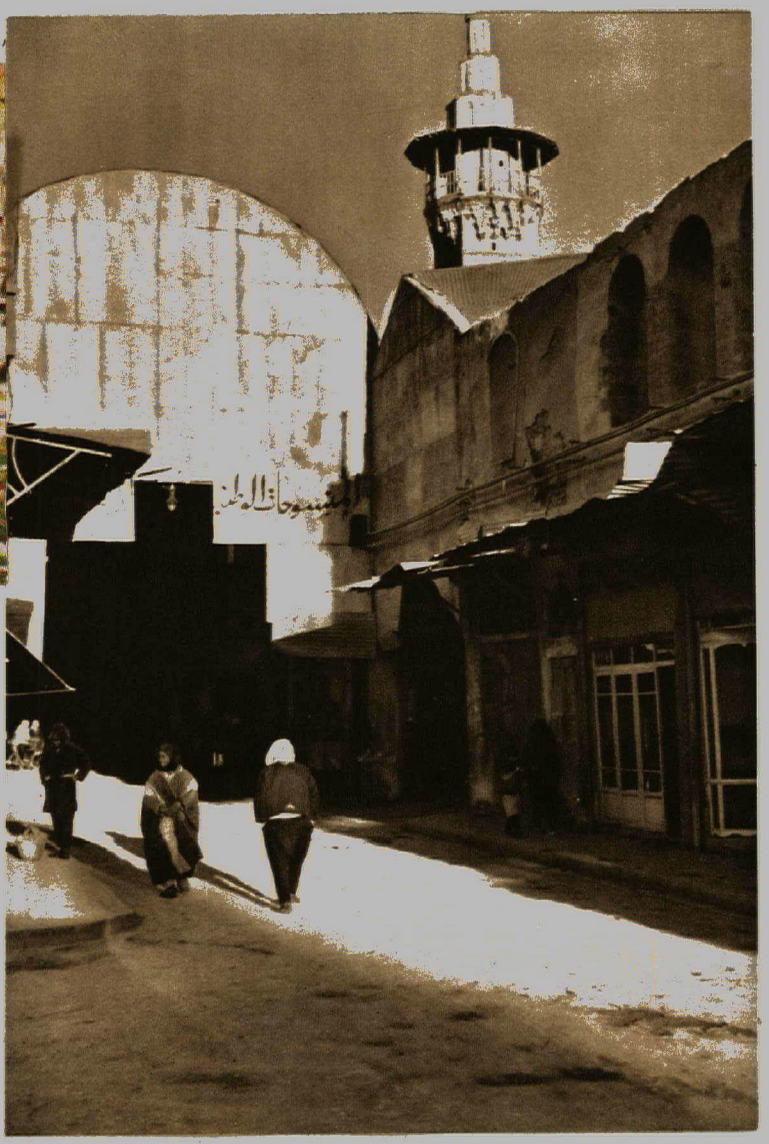
FRIDAY, 27th MARCH

I was wakened just as it was beginning to get light by rhythmic snores from nearby, and in the greyness I could just see that the contour of the bed beside me had altered; a foot or two away was a very old and not very clean Arab, but how and when he got there I had no idea. A little judicious creaking of my very squeaky bed woke him with a grunt, and the snoring stopped; I went quickly to sleep again

before he re-started. The next thing I knew it was 0600, and I decided to see Damascus as quickly as was possible, so as to leave time to reach Amman before sunset; that meant starting at once, so I said "Good Morning" to my companion, who was wakened by a symphony of springs the moment I moved, but only received another grunt in response. I hunted round until I found the cold tap which served the whole of the first floor, and was thankful that there was only one other man after it - it must be difficult to get near it about breakfast time. My belongings were piled on a chair, so I just picked up the bundle, pushed it into the bag, and left it locked in the office; I suspect that the owner took this to mean that I was coming back for another night, but I was tired of trying to communicate with him, so I paid my 1½ lira, and left him to thing what he liked. It was 0625, and the sun had been up for an hour, so I photographed the Abana, looking west to the hills. The first job was to book a seat for Amman, so I went to the El Alamein Garage, but they said that they weren't sure yet of their plans for the day, and to call back; I didn't, because they wanted to charge 15 lira, and Dadah Brothers, where I called last night, would do it for twelve. I went back to the Dadahs, but their office didn't open till 8, according to the boot-blacks on the pavement outside.

I asked a policeman the way to the street called Straight, and he put me on a bus, said something to the conductor, and told me not to pay anything. This picture isn't much of an exaggeration of the street down which we go.





When we stop at the bottom, the conductor points to the right, and after a moment's walk I recognised it from pictures I had seen. There are curved corrugated iron roofs to protect the bazaars, and the one at the west end looks like the end of a barn. The arched roof had holes through which little beams of sunlight squirted down. The Street itself is straight, but the Via Rectus is only part of a very long road which is nearly straight all

the way, so that the overall result is not very impressive. It is as if you were walking from the Castle to Holyrood, and were told that the part from the Sheriff Court to the Tron were the Straight Street; of course the analogy is very bad, because the original is flat, and not nearly as wide. On both sides, and opening off in little allies, are the bazaars, hundreds of adjacent stalls, and at this early hour they are just opening up for the day. I wandered through, feeling as if I was inside the Waverley Station, and out into the sunlight on the other side of the tunnel. A tiny mosque covers the traditional site of the house of Judas, and I peeped into it, a small, whitewashed, and unornamented interior, with a friendly warm look. There is no minaret, so the muezzin calls from a small green balcony which reminded me of a parrot's cage; it would have made a wonderful place for an open-air meeting. A short distance east is a splendid Roman arch, which marked their entrance to the city, but while I waited for the sun to come round a little a lorry parked in front of it, and my patience gave way before the driver's. I stopped at a shop to buy some of these excellent date patties for breakfast, and asked the way to Ananias' house; the man was an extra good guide, and also explained how to find the part of the wall where Paul was lowered. I left the city by the Gate of the East, as men have been doing since the Romans built it, and turned south for about one hundred yards, where pious tradition associates a window over a recently restored gate as the place where Paul escaped in the basket. It is about forty feet high, and was so out of keeping with its surroundings that I photographed the part immediately to its right instead, as being more like an ancient city wall. Then I sat down under a bush just behind the place where I stood to take the picture, and looked at the wall while I had breakfast. Unfortunately I forgot to bring a spare spool, so when I walk back past the gate to Ananias'

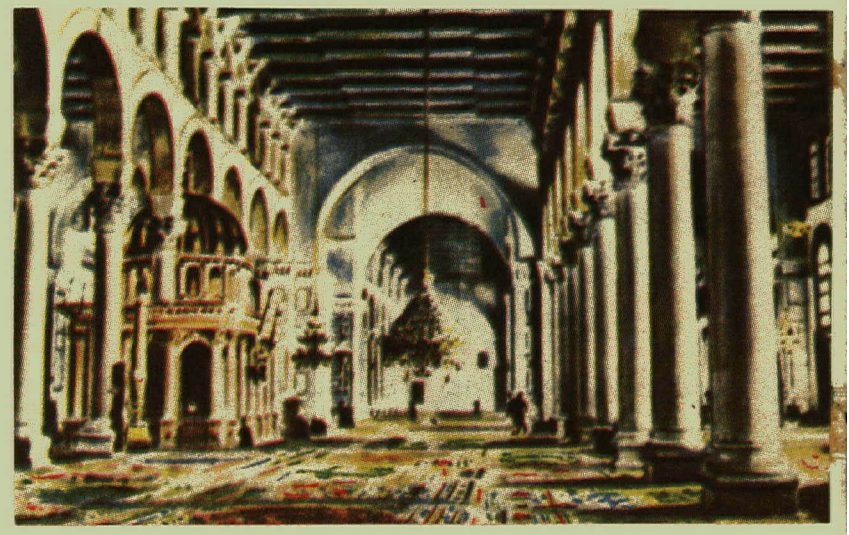
traditional - and perhaps authentic house, I cannot record it permanently. When I realised how far south I was by this time, it seemed a good time to call at the Edinburgh Mission Hospital, and meet Dr. Thomas. By cutting across country, and asking every few minutes for the Victoria Hospital, I reach it through a variety of typical French suburbs.

They were naturally glad to see someone from home, and showed me round the hospital, and invited me to stay for lunch, although Dr. Thomas was not at all keen on having anybody with an Israel visa on the premises; he himself had refused to meet one of the staff from Nazareth even on neutral ground in case the Arabs heard about it. He lived in fear of the hospital being closed down on some small pretext.

Two of the young doctors were just going off to an Arabic lesson, and offered me a lift back to town in the hospital station waggon. The driver then took me up to the hills on the west of the city, so that I could see the whole oasis spread out on the plain, with the endless desert away beyond. The road climbed up past ultra-modern blocks of flats, clean and sparkling in the sun, until the panorama is complete. The white city is a diamond set in the dark green of fruitful gardens; amid a hundred and fifty sguare miles of olives, walnuts, apricots, pomegranates, poplars, cypresses, and palms, the white compact of the city rises like an island. Mohammed, then a mere camel-driver from Mecca, stood at this spot in amazement, and turned away without entering the city, saying, " Man can have but one paradise, and my paradise is fixed above."

The hospital car took me back to my hotel, where I recovered my bag and took it round to the Dadahs; they could not offer me a seat for Amman until 2 pm, so, seriously considering accepting the invitation to lunch, I changed the spool in the camera and wandered back to the Street called Straight to photo Judas' house. On the way I met a water-seller, with brass urns on his back, a tap and a troughful of drinking cups on the front, knocking two little dishes together and crying, "Ya balash". I had seen a notice somewhere, ' Il est permis de photographier partout en Syrie, sauf dans les zones Militaires et les Aerodromes ', so I asked him to pose for me; he darted back into the shadows, gesticulating and jabbering, and then disappeared sullenly, with his back turned. I asked a by-stander what was wrong, and he said that you arn't supposed to photograph working men; I have never found out why. But this was too good an illustration of Isaiah's "Ho, every one that thirsteth" to be missed, so when I met another just opposite the entrance to the Street I took a long range shot, and this is the enlargement. I'm not sure whether it's me or something else he's looking at so suspiciously. Then I went for a walk through the bazaars, long dusky tunnels where the perpetual banquet of colour never seems to change hands, although hundreds are always bargaining, and came out at the other end in the old quarter. The most marked contrast with the impressive splendour of the new town, perfectly laid out in white limestone, is the absence of gardens and green parks. Here there is a high wall on either side of the narrow road, and it is only when a door is ajar that you glimpse a whitewashed court, a splash

of green, an orange tree and a well behind the blank wall. The new part of Damascus isn't ashamed of itself, and the rolling lawns are for all to see. Next on my list is the Grand Mosque, one of 248 in the city, and one of the four chief sanctuaries of Islam. It was originally a temple of Jupiter, and then Theodosius built a mighty Christian Church dedicated to St, John the Baptist, whose head it is said to contain. It is still imposing, with the Theodosian splendour still there, and I walked through the court, and looked inside without entering.



There is a standing protest against the Mohammedan usurpation inscribed on the outside of one of the walls, where in large Greek letters on an arch are the words,"Thy kingdom, O Christ, is an everlasting kingdom, and thy domain endureth throughout all generations." The Arab believes that Christ will judge the world from the Minaret of Isa (Jesus), one of the mosque's four, and that in this mosque will be assembled Moslems, Christians, and Jews. "Then the names of the believers will be read from the Great Book of God, and the Christians and Jews will learn to their amazement that only Moslems are inscribed in the book of life." (I quote the Arab historian of Damascus, Ibn Asaker.)

There remained only number two to be seen, so I asked an educated-looking man if he could tell me how to find it; he insisted on taking me there himself, which was very nice, the only unfortunate bit being that I had to pay my very last halfpenny of local currency to get him in as well as myself. It is a modest little place, but a jewel set in a small green garden, an exquisite memorial to a paragon of chivalry who is immortalised in our literature by Scott's 'Talisman'. Inside is a quiet marble chapel no bigger than a room in a bungalow, with walls of striped stone and arches covered with beautiful coloured tiles. There is just space enough to walk round the carved marble sarcophagus, on which there are framed pictures which recount in Arabic the great deeds which Saladin performed for Mohammedanism, and at the head of which is his turban. It is one of time's little ironies that the foe of the Crusaders was at heart the best Christian of them all. Over the entrance are the words, "O God, accept this soul, and open

EXCURSIONS A DAMAS
SIGHT—SEEING IN DAMASCUS

1. The Ommyad Mosque,
2. Salaheddine Tomb,
3. King Beibars Tomb,
4. Azem Palace,
5. Assad Pacha « Khan »
6. Street called Straight,
7. The Cross Street,
8. Eastern Gate,
9. Ananias Catacombs,
10. The City Walls,
11. St. Paul Window,
12. The National Museum,
13. Sultan Sélim Mosque,
14. Dervish Pacha Mosque,
15. Sanan Pacha Mosque.

to him the gates of Heaven, that last victory for which he hoped." My friend was going the same way as I was, so we walked back to the hotel, past it, and on out into the country, chatting all the time about Damascus. He showed no sigh of stopping, and I was beginning to feel the effect of the noon sun, so I used the British Embassy as an excuse when we passed it, and said good-bye; he continued to bound along with tremendous energy. I asked at the embassy if they had a reading room where I could sit until the taxi went at two; I thought it was expecting a bit much for 3/- to go back to the hotel. They directed me round the corner to the Consulate, where there was a nice room and piles of magazines on economics and export statistics, but one of the staff lent me the month's Readers' Digest. I stayed there from 1145 until 1315, when they closed for lunch, and then wandered back to Dadah Brothers. They mentioned casually that there was no car available for two o'clock, but that there might be one later if I cared to pay 15 lira; they seemed quite pained when I said that I didn't care, and told them I could make other arrangements. I collected my bag, cancelled my booking, and took my 12 lire deposit back; with this sudden wealth I hired a taxi - all you have to do to hire a taxi is stop walking with a piece of luggage in your hand and there will be two or three beside you - to the outskirts of the town. The results were quite encouraging; it was a fairly busy road, and several cars stopped in the first 10 minutes. None of them were going very far, and I didn't want to be stranded out in the country, so I could quite honestly decline them. Three Arab youths who had nothing to do with themselves (it being Friday) stood watching for a bit, and then volunteered the advice that most of the through traffic would be full because of the Easter at Jerusalem, and that it would be better to try in the city. I said that I had tried, without success, and that I would rather move on to somewhere new, even if it wasn't far, than spend two nights in the same place. They replied that they would fix me up, and so we took a bus back to - the "El Alamein" garage ! There the foreman (?) said I could pile into a taxi that was just leaving if I would pay him 15 pounds - the 3 extra because it was a feast-day or something. I agree, and go off to change a couple of dollars to make raise my capital to £5. But then the driver adamantly refused to take more than 8 in his 6-seater, and so I, being last to book, drop out. The foreman, obviously in a bad temper at losing trade, motioned to a mechanic to pick up my bag, and said that if I followed him he would get me a private taxi to Amman for 15 lira, and maybe I would give him a dollar or two for his trouble? I said to get the taxi, and we would see about the dollars.

We walked at a tremendous speed to a hotel about half a mile away, and on reaching it the man muttered what sounded like Arabic curses, and set off even faster for another hotel. There was a Dodge standing outside, and he told the wogg to put my case in the boot, and invited me to go into the front, where the driver was fiddling with some charms. I wasn't quite sure what I was letting myself in for, and I didn't trust the garage man an inch, so I said to wait a minute, that I wasn't getting into anything or going anywhere until I knew what this was all about , and how he could afford to give me a car for so little. Just then a well-dressed man who could have been no one but an Englishman came out of the hotel and put his case in the back. I asked him where he fitted into the plot, and the whole thing at onee became clear and satisfactory. He was a commercial traveller, and had hired a car from the Alamein garage to go to Amman, because he refused to be stuffed in the back of a group taxi with half a dozen nationalities and a few sheep. But the foreman knew that he would tolerate British people in his car, and so hoped to make a little extra by charging us both for

the same hire. When I realise this I am quite happy, and refuse to give the fellow any extra dollars as baksheesh, although I did give the other one a shilling for carrying my case. Number One came in the front with me - the traveller was in the back - and I wondered what he was up to now, but he was only taking a lift to the garage where we stopped for petrol.

The road from Damascus to Amman is of intense interest. It is divided naturally into three regions by the rivers Yarmuk and Jabbok, which run perennially in deep gorges well below the average level of the plateau. The belt as a whole is from 30 to 80 miles wide, between Jordan on the west and the desert on the east; its average elevation is nearly 2000 feet above sea level, which gives it a temperate climate amid lands of tropical heat. The Arabs complain of the cold up here, - the thermometer rarely rises above 90. It is famous pasture land, as the OT bears witness, and its only fault is its openness to the desert, which has exposed it in all ages to the invasion of hungry nomads like the Ishmaelites and Midianites. Broad andbreezy as it looks from afar, it also looks barren, and when you come to it it surprises you by its fertility.

The northern section has always been distinct from the others. In OT times it was known as Bashan, in Greek days the Yarmuk was the political frontier, and now it is the border between Syria and Jordan. The northern limit is really Mount Hermon, but Damascus is usually included for convenience, although its river drains east and not west. The limestone which forms the basis of the country is covered by volcanic deposits, which yield a rich red soil for wheat growing. The loam rests on bed of ash, and there are vast eruptions of lava, suddenly cooled and split open into the most tortuous shapes. Down the edge of the Jordan valley, and down the border of the desert, run rows of extinct volcanoes. In the centre is a great plain, fifty miles long by twenty broad, scarcely broken by a hill, and absolutely treeless, known as the 'Hauran', which is the granary of Syria. Hauran wheat is famous throughout the Levant; before the railway was built, camel trains which passed without a break all night have been known to be insufficiant to export an average crop.

We left Damascus for this prairie at 1515, and were soon ripping along the level roads at a steady 85 kph; almost at once there was plain on the left, flat and green and ploughed and fertile, and a ridge curving round from left to right in front of us, about 200 feet high. This was the face of the first of the series of terraces, each from three to four miles broad, by which the plain rises as you go south. To the right there is of course only one feature, the mighty Hermon, twenty miles away but looking so near that I estimated it as four. The top half was covered with the snow which never leaves the peak, and it sparkled in the afternoon sunlight. This gigantic range, for you cannot call a ridge twenty miles long a mountain, has peaks more than twice the height of Ben Nevis; vines and olive and mulberry trees grow half way up its slopes, but after 5000 feet the bare rock piles itself in fantastic ridges, heaped above terrible chasms, the haunt of eagles, wolves, and mountain bears. It completely dominates the landscape; the photograph was taken from a long way south, looking back in the Damascus direction. Its snowfields and miles of desolation are a far more probable place for the Transfiguration than the little mound of Tabor.

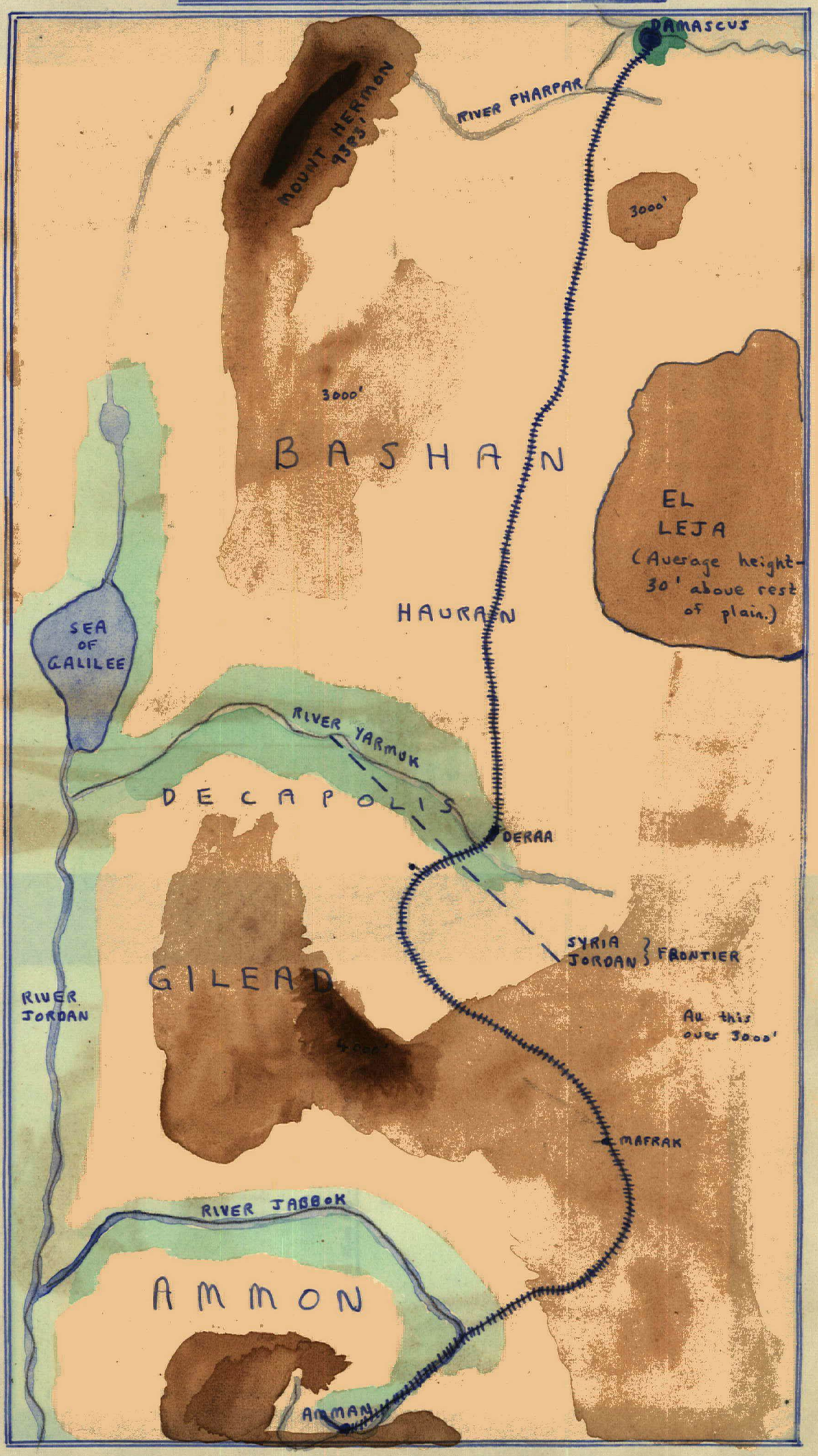
We must have passed the actual spot of Paul's conversion, because this is the very ancient line of traffic to the South; and old tradition locates it at a distance of about five miles from the city, where the

Jerusalem and Banias roads cross, near an oasis and a fountain. At any rate it must have been within his range to see the white minarets of the city, the majestic Hermon beside him on his left, and the bare ridge of the Antilebanon. Then across the Pharpar, the other river of Damascus which is better than all the waters of Israel, and the land is drier as we rise to meet the ridge. The fertile spread of the garden of Eden dies away, and we are out into pasture land, much of it scratched for agriculture, but pretty poor stuff. This part is peculiarly void of specific places mentioned in the Bible, although the district as a whole is important. The soil is brown on top, but the cuttings as we climb the ridge are red; at the top the ground stretches level to the next step of the terrace, several miles away. Hermon shuts off a quarter of heaven to the north-west, but all around the rest of the circle there is only openness, light, and the sweep of prairie air; a wind, fresh as at sea, is uninterrupted for fifty open miles. The surface is broken by little mounds, very conical and sharp, with a small edition of the Salisbury Crags behind. There are a great many flocks of sheep grazing, and sometimes camels. The road is busy, with donkeys carrying firewood or packs, an occasional horse, or a cow, or a small herd of angular cattle; there are quite a few trains of camels, queer prehistoric-looking beasts, the very colour of the rocks, as many as seven in a file. We go through a depression and into a plain, the rich red Hauran, or so I wrongly think.

Some of it was green with young wheat, some just tilled, but I must be a bad judge of soil, because I can't say that it looked very fertile to me; perhaps the Hauran doesn't come as far north as suggested by the map, and I concluded that I had expected it too soon. We are cruising at a steady 100 now, quite a good road, a kind of dust over stone effort. We dip down and up again several times, and then the plain is very flat. I realised with a shock that we have only been on the road for ten minutes, so no wonder the map and the ground don't correspond. Mount Hermon is still looking great on the right, and little knolls appear on the horizon like minature Bass Rocks. We rise gradually to the next line of hillocks, and on the mound it is very stoney, little ones at first, then bigger as we go up, but never very big, although there are plenty of them; they are white, stained brown with earth, and some slopes are studded with them.

The most striking feature is the absence of trees - there just arn't any; so the people have learned to do without. The villages which we passed were made of stone, coated with mud, and some appear to have cane roofs, but more often it was just mud. At 1530 a long low line of blue appeared on the horizon to the left, and as we went on the blue darkened, and stood out as an irregular bank of shiny black rock, from thirty to forty feet high, split by narrow crevasses as the edge of a mud-heap is split on a frosty day; it is a long low flood of lava, twenty-four miles by twenty, and is known as the Leja. The plain was now gently rolling, not very impressive, red where it had been ploughed, and only half a dozen little conical mounds to break the middle-distance. By 1535 it is almost desert, there are so many stones, but still it is tenaciously cultivated; there is no rock, but millions of loose stones, some of which have been placed one on top of the other so that the little exposed patch can be hoed. In many places there is more stone than red earth to be seen; in no case is there a patch of more than a few square feet without stone - it cannot be cleared because there is nowhere to put the boulders, and even if you move them there are only more underneath. But it is fairly fertile considering what you would expect it to be, and is giving better reward than similar soil in the west of Ireland. Wherever there is a streamlet or a pool of water the green is really bright and lush, and usually a flock of sheep are being watered. If there is enough water there is a village of big ungainly mud houses surrounded by a dry stane

DAMASCUS to AMMAN



HERMON

AMMAN

dyke. Sometimes the hillocks on the left die away, and there is only one big field of sparse green stretching away for about eight miles to the petrified ocean, and at others there is a mound or two fairly near the road. On the right the Hermon range is turning away, and about a dozen black shapes pop up here and there a few miles away, but are shyer than the ones on the left and keep at a respectful distance. All around, the plain rolls on a rather monotonous green.

At 1600 we are on the Pilgrims' Road from Mecca, and are quite definitely in the Hauran, or 'Hollow'; the plain is still green, although there are barren patches, and the rolling is gentle. It runs away for miles on the left, but on the right disappears quickly over a ridge into a valley, a gentle plain, with fairly big hills at the other side of it, shaped like an alligator, and terminated by our boundary, the River Yarmuk. A ridge in front appears black because it is up sun from us, but after we have crossed a muddy stream, and begun to climb through red fields largely free from stone, it shows itself to be green, and after we have crossed the narrow-guage railway the houses of DERAA stand out against the gentle slope. The city is set on the edge of the plain, climbing up into the little hills of limestone which are deeply dissected by one of the muddy tributaries of the Yarmuk. The Syrian post is before you enter the town, and when we drew up opposite a snack bar I left my passport to be scrutinised and went and bought two loaves of bread, two oranges, and a hard boiled egg; we gave him a shilling, and received fourpence-halfpenny change ! There was something vaguely irregular with the traveller's passport - no exit visa or something - so while he was inside explaining I sat on the balcony in the decreasing afternoon sun and made a fine meal. We were there for about half an hour, and no group taxis from Damascus had arrived by the time we left. We passed through Deraa by climbing to the top of the hump, then falling steeply down the gorge, deep and fierce looking with the strata sticking out of the sides; the river takes an acute left hand bend, with shambles of houses clinging to the promontory, looking more like a row of stone walls than dwellings, so we, who were on the left bank of the river by this time, went spiralling round to the left behind them, and, by holding our course longer than the river did, shot away from it. We climbed through very cut-up rich red arable land, ringed with hills, onto rather a lumpy plane; as we approached a village a signpost intimated that we were approaching a "built up area". No need to say who had occupied this territory. At the Jordan frontier we were stopped by one of that remarkable army, the Arab Legion, wearing the regulation sun helmet with a built-in kaffieh and a silver spike on the top. There were more of them inside, all looking overworked, and they didn't give us much trouble. I didn't think that they had put a necessary stamp on my visa, and asked both the driver and the legionary about it, but they assured me that the little red squiggle was all that was necessary; I wish I hadn't given in so easily, because subsequently I found that I was right, but if it had been alright I wouldn't have had so much fun at Nablus, so it was all for the best. The car in front appeared to contain missionaries, and the travller's remark that he wished that he had their faith led to quite an interesting conversation as we rushed on into Gilead.

The desert road from Deraa to Amman seems to avoid everything which might be a historical sight. The famous names of Gilead cannot be accurately fixed, but Nature bestowed so few good sites here that it is impossible for us to believe that those in use now were not used for a similar purpose in OT times; granted all this, however, the road manages to miss everything which were famous sites, and which only the meagreness of geographical details in the OT prevents us from naming.

South of the Yarmuk the volcanic elements disappear almost entirely,

and the limestone comes to the surface; in the Hauran, ancient inscriptions are still legible in the hard black basalt, but there are none left in this part - limestone does not preserve them. The whole region was in Biblical times loosely called Gilead, although in the strict sense it applied only to the part next to Jordan, and the track the road follows is really the beginning of the desert. It is easy to understand why Gilead became the peculiar domain of Israel on the east of Jordan, and why the half-tribe of Manasseh were never driven out. It is the only part of Palestine which is on the East of Jordan while looking like the West; it is hill-country between the two great plateaus of Hauran and Moab, the former swept by the chariots of Assyria, and the latter by the Arabs and Ammonites. But although they sometimes carried fire and sword across Gilead, neither of them could dislodge the Hebrews from the high wooded ridges which formed almost as integral a portion of Israel as the hill country of Judah.

But I was too far east to see the real Gilead, where David fled, where Elijah hid, where Jeremiah sought for balm, and for which Micah prayed. We ran across a rolling plateau, and, having crossed a ridge which lay in front of us, entered a tract of unsymmetrical green hillocks, fairly high, with the sandy soil barely hidden at times. At 1800 they became more barren, drier, and humpier, although some were still scratched for agriculture. It reminded me of Gullane on a larger scale, and any moment I expected to see the sea; at times they spread out, and are a hundred yards back from the road, then close in again, and we twist through or over them. Sand pokes through the rough scrub, but they are all very green, and are what I imagine "And did those Feet" to be like. We are climbing steadily, but reach the top and start to descend by a series of ups and downs before dusk falls swiftly and blots out the snow-rim of Jebel Druz which has been a faithful companion on the left since twenty-five past three. The driver has a charm against evil spirits, consisting of an aeroplane about the size of a pencil sharpener with a light inside hung inside the windscreen by blue beads (the essential part for a Moslem), and it is most distracting, like driving with the roof-light on. But he never slackens speed for an instant as we race along the flat top of the plateau. It is more barren on top here, and we cross a number of dry rivers. We appear to go through the process of climbing in reverse, with first of all the mounds, and then a bit of plain, but instead of Yarmuk we come to the Jabbok, the one certain feature of the OT in these parts. It rises on the edge of Moab, only 18 miles from Jordan, but flows towards the desert past Amman, then comes round in a wide curve to bisect the range of Gilead, and winds west-south-west to the Jordan, making a total of over sixty miles, not counting the windings. From first to last its valley is of great fertility, and in the best fields round its upper reaches much wheat is grown. The water is shallow, nearly always fordable, which is just as well, because when we reached the bridge our headlights lit up an enormous army lorry with a broken axle in the middle, and hardly room to walk past. The driver swung left onto the desert, drove about 35 yards upstream until he came to a rough ford, and we splashed through about nine inches of water, and then just drove along until we came to a good place to join the road again.

Its gorge has played havoc with the limestone , and we run through its valley, over and round steep and deep gorges, run up the hillside and look down, and then sweep into Amman, like running down to Holmfirth of any other Midland spinning town. Time : 1945. As the post-card several pages back shows, the town lies in a shallow valley, and has now run up the hillsides and spilled over the top. The commercial traveller just drives straight to the Philadelphia

Hotel, and just takes me as his guest without asking me, saying to the receptionist to put it all on his bill (which is eventually charged up to Borroughs-Wellcome as travelling expenses). Philadelphia was an old name for Amman, replacing Rabbath-ammon in NT times and later, and the hotel is the best in town, the local Ritz, far finer than any hotel I had ever been in before. I went upstairs to room three hundred and something, to wash and put on my one clean shirt, and ressurect a tie which I hadn't worn for over a week; it was a pleasant surprise to see a hot water tap with a pipe connected to it, but even more pleasant when hot water came out. This isn't meant to reflect upon the state of Eastern civilization, but upon the cheaper hotels. I went down to the hall, where the traveller had just met his business friend. We had a sumptuous four course dinner, and then went to the lounge to listen to the orchestra; gradually they began to talk shop, and discuss the penecillin traffic, so I spoke to a young American at the next table. He was here with his father, who was an official with "Point-4", a scheme to help backward areas, and was attending the local American college. We talked about the Arab refugees - for whom he had whole-hearted contempt - and his impressions of Amman, which likewise were not very great. He offered to take the day off school to-morrow, and show me round the town in his car; the band started some new tunes (which had been extinct in the west for over two years, e.g. "Music"), and as the travellers were deep in business, and it was nearly midnight, I excused myself and went upstairs. I didn't know what the rule was about paying for baths, but it seemed too bad to have a room next to one and not to use it, so I helped myself to a warm shower - the first since Tarsus. As I went to bed at 0015, I thought again how miraculously fortunes could change in a day; at 6 o'clock that morning I had been sharing a garret with an Arab, and now I was a guest of one of the best hotels in all the Kingdom of Jordan - I had a great deal for which to give thanks. Outside, the Jabbok rippled past under the window, and the white hills were gentle in the moonlight.

SATURDAY, 28th MARCH

I woke at 0645 to another perfect day, and flung the windows open to let the happy sunlight in; this picture of the view from the window is most inadequate, because it doesn't show the blue sky, the green trees, and the heat of a desert sun flung back off white lime-stone cliffs. I was delighted to see a mighty theater of great antiquity built into the hillside just opposite; some say it is Greek, others that it is Roman, but in any case it seats seven thousand people. As the school children entered the build-ing in the foreground about an hour later, they all sang a stirring patriotic song, as we might sing "The Queen" at the unfurling of a camp flag.

Amman was the chief city of Ammon in the OT, and is mentioned four-teen times in seven books stretching from Deuteronomy to Amos. When Greek immigration flowed into Palestine in the wake of Alexander the

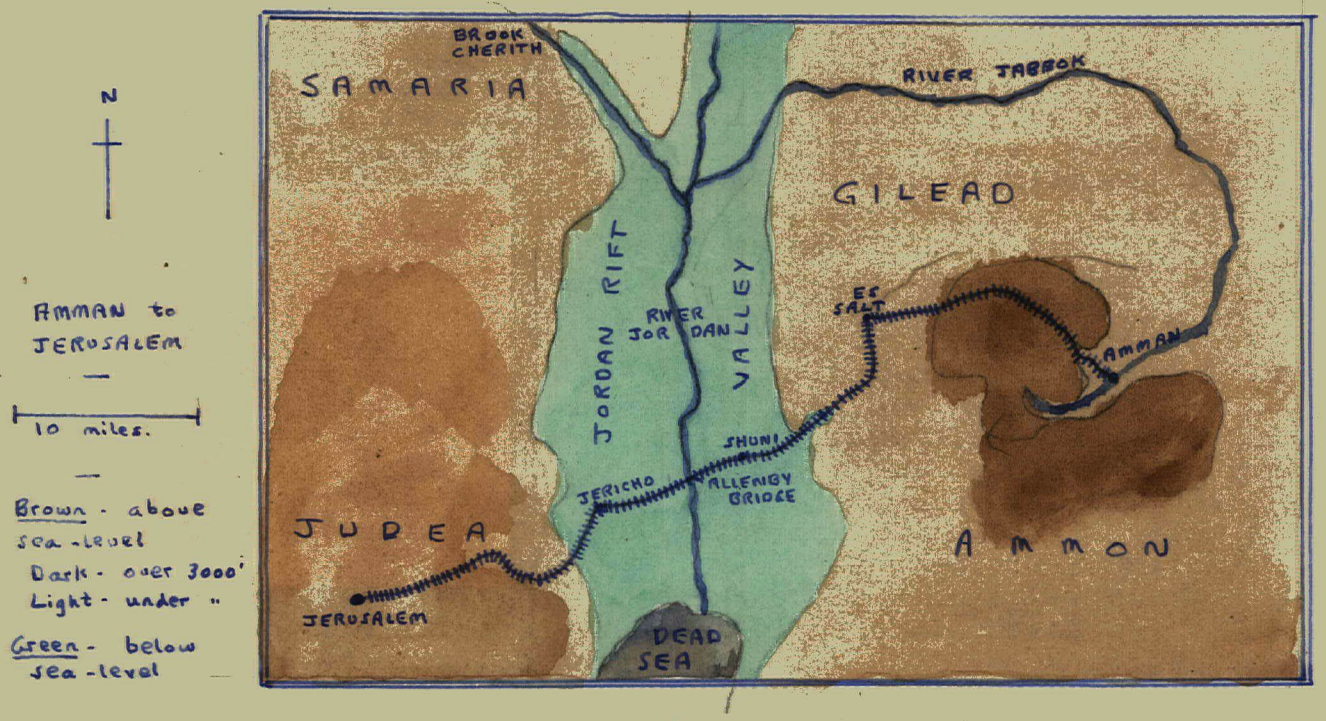
Great, one of the earliest settlements was Philadelphia, on the site of Rabbath-Ammon, and it had grown to be an important fortress by 218 B.C.; but no inscriptions or coins have been found of a date earlier than the arrival of the Romans. It was the farthest south of the Decapolis, the most famous confederacy of Greek cities in the Orient, and like the other nine arranged with a strategical eye to the ancient routes. The league was formed for commerce, and the cultivation of the Hellenic spirit against alien races; in the time of Christ the cities were brilliant and rich, in constant touch with Greece, and in daily contact with the varied foreign traffic that passed through them, coming north from Egypt through the gorge of Petra and flowing south from Damascus over the long brown desert road. The favourite Greek site was a mound or ridge beside a shallow stream, preferably with a good view of the surrounding meadow and arable land; this place must have housed a splendid Greek city of the Roman period, with a colonnadad street, arch, forum, temple, theatre, bath, and mausoleum all in the florid Doric and Corinthian style. The theatre still rests on the hollow side of the hill, but of the rest only a dozen columns stand as gravestones to Pallas and Herakles.

I awake from these daydreams, and go down to the dining room, where the others are already at breakfast at 0810; I had an excellent omlette, large and warm and brown, and the usual continental snack of coffee and toast. The others moved away about nine, having business to do elsewhere, and said good-bye. I shall not forget Mr. for a long time; there was a man who would have delighted Immanuel Kant's metaphysical heart, because I always had the impression that he was acting according to the Supreme Principle of Morality, although there seemed to be an element of the Natural Inclination there in some degree. I reckoned that my week in Jordan was going to cost me £10, so I cashed traveller's cheques for that amount at the desk; at any rate, it just couldn't cost me more - I didn't have any more. I read up in my room about the Jordan valley which I intended to cross after lunch until 1000, and then went down to wait in the sun for Chuck Burns; it was nice on the veranda outside the front door, with rich and lazy tourists all round, and the ample, solid basin, with its high tiers of benches, facing the hotel across the road. The Decapolitan amphitheatres faced either north or west, or somewhere in between; the Philadelphian one was due north, and so the warm morning sun lay on the veranda. At 1030 Charles arrived in a station waggon with his sister Bettie, and we went up to the top of the hill behind the hotel, and there they showed me a ruin which they said was the one which Uriah the Hittite was sent to attack so that he might be killed; that seemed to accord with II Samuel 11:16, so I went closer and took one from the roof looking down.

Somehow the lines seemed to be too straight for a Hebrew building, so I asked if it might not be a Greek or Roman building on the ancient site, Bettie had a habit of not being sure when any problem

was asked, which was quite attractive but rather maddening when you really wanted to know. All she would say was that she had been told that it was the real thing, and I daren't pit my amateur archeology against local tradition; but when we came to this, I rebelled and said that I knew a Roman road when I saw one. Again she "was not very sure", and I don't think that Chuck either had a clue or could have cared less, so we asked the guide at the local museum; he said that all the ruins were Roman, but that the site was that of Uriah's death. There was a little museum just in its infancy, with statues and sarcophagi standing unlabelled in piles, and empty show cases just being filled with fascinating scraps of ancient art; there is always something attractive about a place which tourists of a few months before did not see, especially when it is still unfinished. We drove off the hill, and round the side to where we could look down on an Arab refugee camp, and again Chuck expressed his contempt for their laziness and lack of co-operation; their side of the story was quite different, but I think that they are wrong. Then we passed the Burns' house, just completed in a dreamy kind of pink rock, big, modern, and roomy, and finer than anything which Britain can produce; they were obviously very proud of it, but doubted whether the poor cement they use in these parts would last very long. Back past the college, drop Bettie at the chemists', and up to the British Consulate to find out about an exit permit; after about an hour's dilly-dallying all the necessary forms are ready to be sent to Jerusalem, and the consul, who doesn't seem to know much about this sort of application, keeps my list of people known to the S.G.M. for references - for what it's worth. Back to town about 1230, where a very worried Bettie has been phoning all over to find out what has happened to us. They were going to pick up a friend at "the" hotel, so I went back with them, and got the receptionist to book a seat in the next group taxi for Jerusalem. The charge is 35 piastres (100 to a Jordan pound, which exactly equals a pound sterling), or 50 if the taxi comes to the hotel to pick you up; I said no thank you, and the Burns offered to drop me at the terminus on the way home. I packed the absolute minimum in the little cloth bag - soap, toothbrush, razor, brush, map, spare film, Morton's "Master", and Bible - and left the rest in my case with the porter at the hotel; now I felt absolutely free of anything and anybody, and rejoiced in my freedom, as they dropped me at the taxi stance.

You can tell a taxi going to Jerusalem by its appearance - the windows are all down as far as they will go, and the driver has a choked kind of expression like one about to walk through a wall of fire. I was at the window of the left rear of a big and ancient 6 seater as we set off at 1310. The road goes north-west up onto a 3000 ft plateau, and then west to Es Salt, where it follows Wadi Shaib down to the Jordan. I think that the notes I made at the time are more descriptive as they stand, and would only suffer by being rewritten in better English, so here they are. "Up the barren valley, and onto a broken plateau, where the red earth is cultivated where possible. The plain rolls sharply, and the rocks outcrop through the soil most of the time. The crops are not up yet, nor are the vines. Through cuttings where oxen are ploughing; the hillocks are piling up, about 100 yards from us, with plenty of green trees. Boulders come right down to the road; ploughed all the way. Villages are made of stone. We go over a fertile valley, and very wild



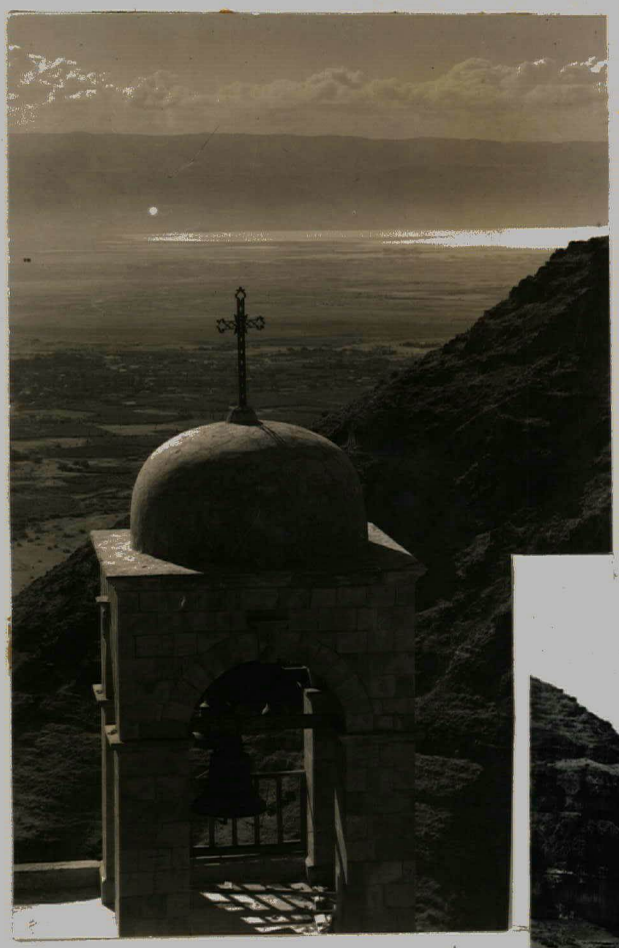
barren stoney country begins, falling away in front of us." Perhaps I should interject here that although this plateau looked like an unconnected mass of rock at the time, I realised later that it was part of an enormous high tableland, and that the tops of the hills were of one level, while it was the valleys which were the intruders which spoiled the symmetry. "We go round the south-west rim of one of these fertile bowls, and then cut left and up, and find another to the left." The road runs up and down them, and round the extreme edges of them, mile after mile with never a living soul in sight. "It is all sandy brown in colour, with ribs of perpindicular rock marching from north to south in line ahead over hill and vale, and separating to go round the little hollows, round which a lot of loose stuff lies. We are very high up, and look down at these minature beef tubs. We still go up, and it is terribly stoney." Then we crossed the top of the plateau, and looking back I saw the high bare moors which had been in front of us now lieing against each other to the sky through the rear window. "There is a deep smooth valley, and we slide down it; the terraced rock is scratched, the strata sticking out horizontally. A donkey struggles up with firewood. The stream has a lucious green belt beside it, 600 feet below us. There is a village of yellow stone stuck onto the side of the precipice, with green patches where it can get a hold." This is ES SALT, which must have been used for a fortress in OT days, and was certainly known to the Crusaders. It is already old, and is becoming deserted as its population drifts steadily to Amman; it is the only town to the east of Jordan where nothing new has been built since 1948.

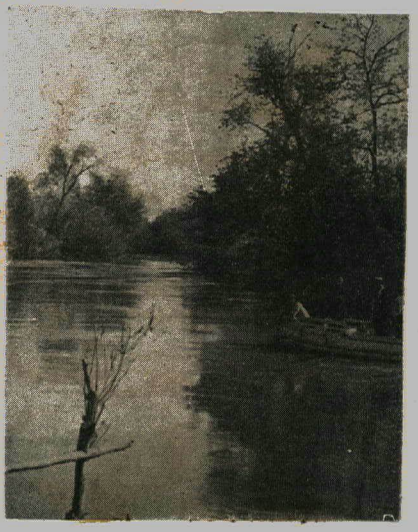
We went round a hairpin left hand bend, and began to follow the Wadi Shaib's valley down to the Jordan. The water has cut like a knife through the high bare moors, and the road hangs by its eyebrows to the edge of a straight drop of 600 feet all the way down, gradually sinking to meet the river and leaving the precipice proportionately higher above it. The cliffs are golden yellow, and throw back the heat from bleak and parched faces only a few hundred feet apart; we twist along the north one, past the old road which became unusable when the whole mountain side moved a few feet during an earthquake. In absolute contarast to the walls of the valley, the whole floor is a luxuriant mass of green; the river is terraced away below us, and the great heat has brought on the vegetation. Pomegranites and fig

trees were conspicuous amid wheat and barley, and it all looked well cultivated and lovely. At 1410 we dropped below sea-level, marked by a sign in English and Arabic peeping up above the oleanders and smothered in brambles. The valley opened out a bit, and the sides fell back as we reached the bottom, and suddenly we were out onto the most astounding plain in the world. I had been warned that it was a geological freak, and was prepared for a tropical trench cowering between the terrific limestone mountains of Judaea and Moab, but nowhere had I read about its awful sterility. My first impression was of miles of dragons' teeth backed by crumpled foothills. Everything is covered with a spectral shroud of salt, and instead of being flat there are miles of white and khaki salt heaps, bleached and stained, with silent dead rocks twisted into a grotesque mounds five times higher than the car We twisted and turned through these as if through a huge labyrinth of artificial pyramids of salt, flattened on top and painted unhealthy white and dirty grey. From ground level it appears a flat plain, but as soon as you rise 10 feet above the average level you see down into the hollows, twisted in an agony of prehistoric convulsion. Hard layers of sandy rock have in places preserved the original level of the Dead Sea, and provided an ideal setting for a switchback railway on a minature scale.

Suddenly the Dead Sea is very near on the left, beginning almost imperceptibly; the salty land and the slimy yellow rocks slope very gently away from us, and the deep blue water laps silently over them at a point which seems close at hand, but is probably several miles away. Distances are deceptive in this airless nightmare, and the hills on the other side look a quarter of their fourteen miles away; taken as a whole it is almost flat, both sides sloping gently to the green streak which bisects the plain. The salty land is useless at this point unless it is irrigated, and not very much of it is. Unlike its counterpart the Nile, the Jordan has no effect on the surrounding desolation; there is a little artificial irrigation by means of concrete channels, and bananas and oranges are far advanced in the overwhelming heat which makes even the camels look tired. The Arabs in Shuni, the last village before the river itself, are a sickly and degenerate race, which is not to be wondered at considering the temperature has been known to rise to 118 degrees; we raced through it at 1420, and saw a large number of refugees from Palestine living in tents on the left of the road, while a complete new village of wooden huts stood empty on the right. The Arabs who have been driven out of Jewish territory refuse to take any permanent accomodation in case it jeopardises their chances of return,

which they alone refuse to estimate at nil. Swiftly the flat plain was past, and we entered the lumpy bottom of the valley which houses the border and barrier of the River Jordan; at the time I described it as " the dissected clay of the old bed of the sea, dead and salt, with small flakes of green." Visibility was about 20 yards, because wherever you looked there was a mound of salt; suddenly we were at Allenby Bridge, and beneath us lay the river which flows in every part of the Christian world, the River Jordan. I was disappointed; so, I have since learned, are most other people. The mighty Jordan was a sullen muddy stream not much wider than a cricket pitch is long; but the road along a ten foot embankment was mutely eloquent of what the little stream could be like when the snows were melting. Although its banks are thick with exotic foreign trees and shrubs, palms, oleanders, tamarisks, willows and balsam wood, it bears no comparison in majesty and beauty to the great rivers of Europe and America; in colour it is different, and in speed it is unique, but I have seen half a dozen more impressive. No wonder Naaman thought the clear rivers of his native Damascus far superior; yet the Abana and Pharpar could not wash away his leprosy, and there is nothing to approach the Jordan in historical importance. Although it is only mentioned a few times in OT poetry, the music of its name has sounded across the world. Somewhere about here, near Allenby Bridge, tradition says that Christ was baptised. This somewhat drab photo is exactly what I remember from my three brief glimpses of the river, and for that reason I include it. Too soon we are through the narrow jungle of shrub and wood which draws its life from the turbid waters. We climb through a similar desolation of conical blocks, and then are back on the flat, gradually sloping plain. Jericho is just a black smear against the white wall facing us, which rose from the burning floor of the rift valley to the barren hill tops. As we approached, the





perpindicular side of this tropical trench became terrifying in its harshness, and I wished I was on top looking back across the valley to the Dead Sea.

The plain between the Jordan and Jericho is absolutely devoid of natural vegetation, but is gradually being cleaned and irrigated by little concrete channels fed either by a well near the river, or the water stored from the winter torrents which sweep out of the Judaean mountains. Most of it is very flat and very barren, but it was encouraging to see a mechanical digger at work on a new well beside the road. This desert must have been a formidable obstacle to any heavily burdened invader from the east, because Jericho commands the only springs for a score of miles around. It is not difficult to imagine the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in this wilderness of unmitigated desolation; the smell of brimstone still hangs over the brown sea of salt and sulpher. Suddenly I was aware of lamp-posts and pavements, and we were among oranges, lemons, palms, and dates; we were in the City of Palms, as the earliest historians called Jericho. A description of it will be more appropriate when we visit it next Friday.

The road from Jericho to Jerusalem is of course one of the most famous in the world, but I did not have time to explore the old path which Christ trod and immortalised in the parable of the Good Samaritan. In the wilderness of Judaea there are many gorges torn by winter torrents, but none of them is broad or straight enough to carry a road; the route therefore did not follow any one valley, but rather followed the ridges between them. Even Palestine, however, must move with the times, and by means of blasting and machinery the engineers have constructed a road which smashes across the old barriers and therefore has few of the features of the old route; it is difficult to imagine robbers on a busy, first-class motoring road which cuts through the hillocks behind which a brigand would hide, and spans the valleys on cast-iron bridges. The following description is of the road as it is, and bears little resemblance to what it was until a few years ago.

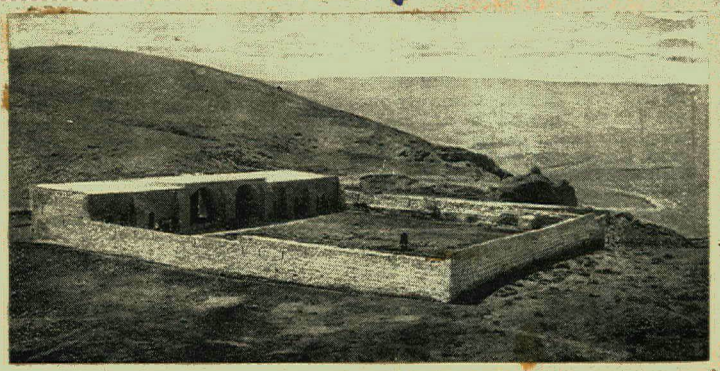
It runs almost due south for a few miles, parallel to the hills, and past the biggest refugee camp in the country; many of the 600,000 who were driven out of Israel are stoically awaiting their fate in these black tents. Just as we turned west, away from the plain and into the hills, I took this photo from the car. The barren, waterless Mountains of Moab, 14 miles away, dwarf the salt formations which are just visable in the middle. A streak of green marks an irrigation channel, and

the scarred foreground is the result of a sudden winter torrent unleashed on the pliable waste-land. We stopped for a moment for refreshment at a wayside cafe, but I preferred to spend the time taking the photo at the top of the previous page, looking almost due north to Jericho. Then the road turns into the hills, up a river valley, and between great, bald, hump-shaped hills of clay, the colour of putty, and as uninspiring as a lump of dough. I was told that later in the year they will have a covering of green and a sprinkling of flowers; I hope so, or else Moses must have been awfully disappointed when he saw the Promised Land. We followed the river valley for a long way, but this clayey waste must have been a terrible barrier for travellers before the modern road crashed its way through projecting buttresses; it is the sort of scenery you expect to find only on the moon - row upon row of gently rounded and yet very steep mounds of sterile sand, trackless and silent. After an initial fling they die down, and the ground is fairly flat for a bit, but as far as the eye can see uphill there are brown domed hills piled one behind the other, rising up the corridor for two thousand feet.

When we have swung round in a semi-circle, and head due west for Jerusalem, the scenery becomes really wild; the strata of pure brown sand are twisted and crushed into alarming curves, as if the mountains were built of corrugated iron, and the khaki walls of the cuttings tower up like cliffs above the road. The air was hot and still, and the sandy hills so arid that it seemed they must be the walls of a gigantic furnace designed to burn up any vegetation which dared invade this quivering wilderness. It eased off slightly as we passed the "Sea Level" sign, but the hills still went up and up, and we twisted round and round hair-pin bends which necessitated even the De Sota changing into 3rd gear. It was 1455. The sandier the soil, the wilder it seems to make the country; it is fairly easy through this belt, because we follow a dry river most of the way. It's easy for the water to cut through this kind of rock - a real gift - and the result is very deep cuttings in the sand, with sharp and steep edges. The serpentine bends continue, and the road is never straight for very long; caves are quite common beside the road, and in the hillsides across the valley. As we plough up through the sandy wastes, we join the line of the old road,

just as you sometimes do on the Great North Road. We are usually above both the old road and an even older track which may be the Biblical one, and the sight of them makes you glad that this one has been built. At a point where all three converge, we suddenly come upon the Good Samaritan's Inn on the brow of a hill. This must be the one the Lord was

thinking of when He told the parable, because there has never been any other inn between Jerusalem and Jericho. It is now a police station, and we stopped for a routine check. This is the front, from the telegraph pole seen in the first picture, and this a reconstruction, from the back, ↓ the south-west.



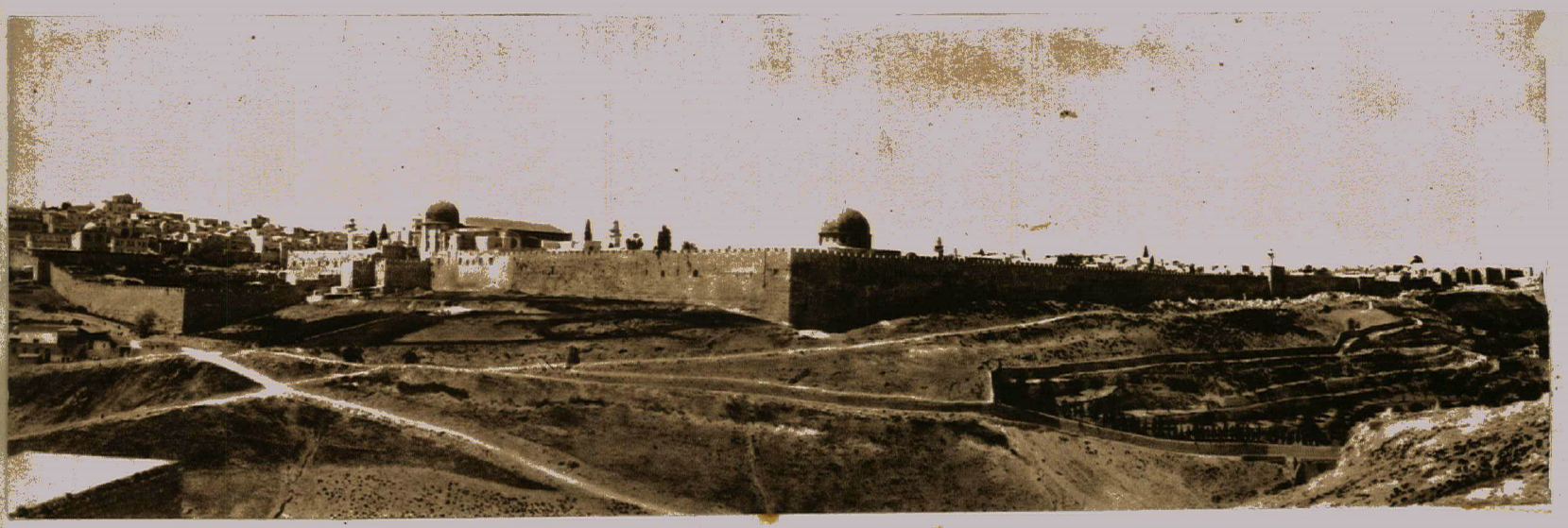
see enlargement of this in tomorrow's diary.

over

The oriental inn or 'khan' is in the form of a hollow square, with a one-storey house along the road front, generally placed within easy reach of a city. This is obviously not the same building as was standing here two thousand years ago, but it appears to cover the same site, and is no doubt of similar construction.

The road falls away for a moment from the crest of the ridge on which the inn stands, and then points its nose to the sky again; it is really no more than difficult to drive on than A1, and the run down to Jericho is no worse than one to North Berwick. But the polished tarmac is oddly out of place amid the sterile wilderness of parched rock, vainly writhing in an attempt to escape from the bleakness and solitude; on either side are blistered limestone rocks - we have left the sandy belt behind now - and in front the bare hills are piled high, without shadow or verdure. Some of them are littered with million upon millions of limestone chips, while others are bare and volcanic, cone-shaped, twisted, tortured, and deformed. We join a stream on our left, and the valley becomes more gentle; the hills, seen from the comfort of the car, are no more than large green lumps on either side, not unlike many a Border pass by St. Mary's Loch. They are smooth and convex, 5 or 6 hundred feet above the road, sparsely covered with coarse grass, and the bottom quarter is very well ploughed for something which hasn't appeared yet. The gorge flattens gently, and houses are built on both sides facing each other, with terraced gardens and fertile fields running down to the river between, rich after the desolation, and with plenty of trees. The valley ends abruptly in a hill, and the houses run round to meet each other and look together down the long corridor to the Dead Sea, a strip of blue beyond the enigmatic emptiness of unearthly brown hills. This collection of rubble is the Arab village of BETHANY, looking, like all Arab villages, as if it had endured a recent artillary bombardment; it, too, will be described in its proper place. We run round the bowl in which the town is huddled, over the top at the back, and see the new road to Bethleham dropping steeply down another scarred and shining valley, covered with little flat white houses. The Church of the Ascension is prominent on the left, and I knew that we were very near the Holy City. Of all the approaches to Jerusalem, this is the only spectaculer one, the one where the whole city appears as if flashed onto a screen and lies spread out before you; the brown hills about us were strewn with a million grey boulders, and bare ridges stood between stricken valleys; the horizon was shut in by sloping terraced fields, and criss-crossed by white tracks twisting here and there among the rocks; I felt that it was impossible that Zion should be near at hand, amid the cruelty and intolerance of these highlands, but I grew excited as I waited for the vista to open in splendid defiance of its situation. As suddenly as turning this page,

I saw JERUSALEM



and every pre-conceived imagination was shattered in an instant. Then it was gone, hidden behind a long brick wall, and I was left to reconcile my city of enchantment with the bare rocks and crags of reality. I had not ripped this high mountain ridge from its gilt-edged background in my own private little vision by the time that we had run right round the wall and stopped at the Damascus Gate. This is not the place to describe the city, but I must record my first impressions. "That rocky gorge," I wrote in my notebook, "is the Kedron, and here amid these barren peaks is the Holy City, its strong wall hiding a forest of church spires. Beside me are the Mount of Olives and Calvary, but so close and so different that I can hardly believe they are real."

But one cannot stand in bewilderment for long in the East, and soon a guide was volunteering his services; I told him that I hadn't any money, but he said that he didn'd mind, and would be glad to show me round. I remembered that Orientals were sometimes siezed with fits of genorosity even in Biblical times, so when I was sure that he understood the situation I asked him to take me to the Arab Tourist Agency, where Charles was to leave a note if he had arrived. It was a strange walk along the modern road, with relics of the Jewish-Arab war on one side, and the personification of Scriptural scenes on the other. There was nothing from Charles, so I wrote a message for him, and left it with the poste restante. Problem number two was to find accomodation in the city for next Wednesday and Thursday; the problem seemed insoluble, because Friday was not only Easter for the Western Church, but also one of those rare occasions when the Eastern and Western calenders coincided, so the Eastern Church was here to celebrate the feast as well, thereby halving the chances of finding a bed. The difference between the dates of Easter in the two Churches is due to the use in the East of the obsolete Julian calender, which since 1901 has been thirteen days behind the Gregorian calender introduced by Pope Gregory XIII in 1582. Although West and East observe as Easter the first Sunday after the full moon falling on or after March twenty-first, that date in the two calenders is 13 days apart, and so often falls in different moons; again, the Eastern Easter may never precede of coincide with the Jewish Passover, but must follow it. The next date on which East and West come together will be in 1957. This coincidence therefore complicated the problem of accomodation. I asked the Arab Tourist Agency if they knew of anywhere, and they said it was

(to back of following page)

otherwise it is a monotonous stretch of desert, without variety of form or colour. There are a few trees and shrubs, but they are starved and stunted, for there are no perennial streams, and the soil is parched and poor. The grass is thin, and although Spring had sprinkled it with the brilliant colours of the wild mountain flowers, the land as a whole was barren and dreary. Even the towns and villages seem from a distance to be mere outcrops of the rock. This featureless plateau two to three thousand feet above the sea was the land of Benjamin, of Saul, Shimei, and Jeremiah, where "A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping, Rachel weeping for her children; she refuseth to be comforted for her children, because they are not."

To describe my impressions of the road between Jerusalem and Ramallah (?Ramah), here is verbatim the notes which I took on the outward and inward journeys to that place. Outward: " Out through the shining limestone of the northern suburbs of Jerusalem, and almost immediately into arable land. All around as far as can be seen are hillocks of exceeding rocky texture, stretching away at almost uniform height. They are partly outcrops of rock, but mostly loose surface stone, presenting a very wild appearance; this is not enhanced by laborious and tenacious terracing, which at the moment is devoid of even a blade of grass. I am told that later they will be green, but at the moment they are very wild. Valleys rise and fall, sometimes about a mile from the road, sometimes right beside us. Cottages and flats are being built very nicely from the stone, and there are numerous olive trees. As far as one can see all round is a sea of rock, all a very monotonous rustic brown colour. The sky has clouded over, but it is still warm. Sometimes there are just piles of rock and loose stone, at others the hillsides are quite successfully scratched for agriculture, especially in the valleys.

" At 1635 we pass some excavations on the left; the country is still going up and down, but at the moment is not too bad. Poppies and blue flowers struggle for existance by the thousand. At 1640 we cross the aerodrome, and the road across the runway is blocked for a few minutes while a DH3 takes off. The hills are becoming lower and the valleys shallower, and are getting redder as there is more soil and less rock. The strata still make an awful mess of the slopes, as their edges stick out of every hillside, horizontal and natural terraces, tenaciously cultivated still. The grass by the water, when there is any, is a beautiful green. Now the slopes get higher again at 1645, and there is more rock than earth to be seen. Huge stone dykes clear some of it for agriculture, some of them 3 feet thick, and many stones are piled high to help clear the ground. Climbing up the hill which we now approach, and looking down over a gentle, mile-wide valley, all of which is stone-dyked except the bottom, is a city. It is a typical scene, with the hill rising, the horizontal strata sticking out, and the dykes like little sheep pens; there are refugees in the valley. As we mount the main street, one shop labelled "Ramlah and Lydde Pharmacy" identifies the town as Rammalah." As far as I could discover after exhaustive investigation, this is the site of the Biblical Beeroth, a city of Benjamin with a small church built in the 12th century and also some ancient tombs; it is definitly not Ramah, as I thought at first. That meant that we were within three miles of Ai, and eight of Beth-horon, two places about which I had imagined much while reading of Joshua's campaigns; for once, the reality was not unlike the speculative. Once we were over Rammalah, and down the other side, we went round a corner and came to a similar hill of almost identical height, and beyond that another, and another, and another, and so on for many, many miles.

impossible; I said that there must be somewhere, and they said no. After about ten minutes they admitted that they had a place which they used for people who were on tours conducted by the Agency. By buying an appaling map of Jerusalem which they were trying without much success to sell to tourists, I moved them to phone up and see if there was room for one more; with obvious reluctance he admitted there was, but said it would have to be a double room, and that it would cost two pounds a day for full board. He gave me the name - 'Orient House' - and the patient Arab guide offered to take me round to it; the agent suddenly warmed up, and gave me a bundle of literature about Jerusalem. The House was a very fine place, full of Americans, and I was very pleased to have such a comfortable prospect to cheer me through the desert; in the hall an enormous American from California - connected in some way with the school at which Charles taught - started to give me his family history, and had got as far as burying his grandmother in Turkey when the manager offered to show him to his room, and I couldn't help connecting myself with Horace and the Via Sacra.

That most patient and tenacious of guides was still waiting with absolutely no expression on his tired brown face, although I had told him again before going into the hotel that I didn't have a penny to spare. He took me to the bus stance, where we found that the last bus to Samaria had gone some time before; he said that he would have recommended a group taxi in any case, so we went on till we came to a terribly ancient American car, just a square body and four wheels, which was appearantly awaiting only one more before making its last trip to Nablus for the night. Gladly I paid the requisite four shillings, and insisted that Official Guide Number Seven accept a couple for all his trouble; he took it reluctantly - or else was a very good actor - with the same impassive face. With a whine and a rattle the car lurched out of the garage at 1625; I was going to follow the Great North Road of Palestine, which used to lead through Samaria, Nazareth, Galilee, Damascus, Syria, and eventually to Rome, but which now comes to an enforced stop after only 50 miles. We know that Christ followed this very route, and probably Paul did too; pages of the OT record events which took place in this striped, tigerish hill-country, and the name of every village is reverenced by millions of people. The road descends from the mountains on which Jerusalem is enthroned into a blinding, burning valley, where every hill is marked with the ghosts of history and OT story.

The narrow table-land of Judaea continues for ten miles to the north of Jerusalem, and then breaks into the valleys and mountains of Samaria. That is the key to understanding the geography of the road to Samaria, and it was fascinating to watch the mountains unfold and broaden as we went north. The last ten miles of the Judaean plateau, with steep gorges on the one side to the Jordan and on the other to Ajalon, were the debatable land across which the most accessible fronier of Judaea fluctuated; so they became the site of more fortresses, sieges, forays, battles and massacres than any other part of the country. Their appearance matches their violent history; a desolate and fatiguing extent of rocky platforms and ridges, of moorland strewn with boulders, and fields of shallow soil thickly mixed with stone, they are a true border - more fit for the building of barriers than for the cultivation of food. The province is described as the hill country, but the hills have no bold or striking outline, and are so closely packed together that their flattened and barren summits form a broad and desolate tableland, more than half of which is bare grey rock. This part of the land has no beauty; there are no open plains or valleys. Here and there a deep ravine breaks the rolling outline of the hills, but

JERUSALEM to SAMARIA

Scale : 4 miles to an inch.

A Typical Samarian Valley.

View from Sychar's well looking east, with a stone water cistern in the foreground.

NABLUS. looking North.

The name is a corruption of Neopolis, so called to commemorate its restoration by Flavius Vaspasianus.

When I came back over the same road the following morning, this is what I wrote of the inward journey, from Ramallah onwards: " I guess this is now Judaea, because it is all high now, with much less contrast between the high and the low; the valleys, which are much shallower, are few and far between - there are only two good ones. Usually it is hill upon hill, with perhaps a deep knife-like gorge between, and the rivers are dry, in contrast to Samaria. There are plenty of olives, but little or no green; even where it is ploughed, there is not much up yet. It is ideal training ground for the soldiers whom we pass, lying with their rifles behind the boulders beside the road. The hills make vast theatres; the outcrops are bad, but the loose stone is worse - terrible. Up on top is absolutely barren, but still some of the sides are scratched for food; in Samaria it was wheat. The top of this plateau is open and rather flat and very barren. At 1150, dyking gives a foretaste of Ramlah again, and the dyking becomes intense. Then on and on, and hill after hill is the same level sequence - over the top and see another, all very flattish and dull. On and on - the hills are grey (underlined) here, very definitely grey topped, where they are untouched, and sandy-brown where they are dug. Transjordan is occasionally visible to the left through a gap. The hills, the good stone houses, the dykes and the rocks are all the same dazzling grey; again, standing on its own, is one of those dreamy pink houses, beautiful to look upon. And then Jerusalem is spread out quickly before us, with the Church of the Ascension on the left, across the valley from the city."

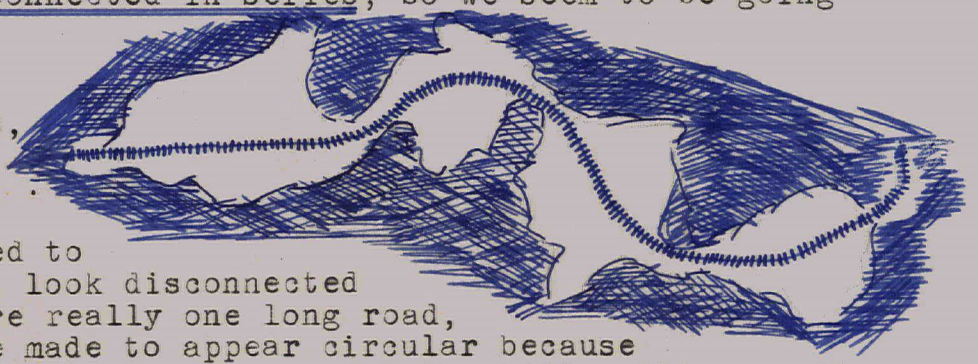
In the time of Christ these hills were probably covered with fig, olive, and vine, but now they are dead and faded yellow-brown. Another interesting relic of the old days was the ruined 'khan' in Ramallah, which marked the end of the first day's journey from Jerusalem before the time of Henry Ford; it is of little use now, since the car takes less than half an hour for what was once a day's march. Not very many minutes after leaving Ramallah it was obvious that we were nearing Samaria.

Compared with Judaea, Samaria is open and fertile. It is mountainous, but the hills are not so closely set or so barren as those of the south. They are loosely scattered about the province in groups, and many of them are covered to their summits with pasture and trees. Plains and valleys break up the country, and although they are not as large or as numerous as those of Galilee, they are watered by full rivers and streams, and are notable for their abundant crops. Amongst the mountain groups there are wild picturesque valleys and glens, but generally Samaria is a land of bold hills and fertile valleys. Halves of the same mountain range, how opposite the two regions are in disposition and in history. The northern is as fair and open as the southern is secluded and austere, and their fortunes correspond; the openness of Samaria is her most prominent feature, and tells most of her history. The more forward to attack, the more quick to develop, Samaria was always the less able to retain; the Patriarchs came first to Shechem, but chose their homes about Hebron. Few invaders were successfully resisted; armies swept across from the time of Israel to that of Titus, sometimes in a matter of days. One interesting feature of the openness of the land is the frequency with which the chariot appears in her history, while in the annals of Judah chariots are scarcely mentioned. We have the race of Ahab, the drive of Jehu, and the passings of Ahaziah and Naaman, which illustrate the level stretches of Samaria in contrast to the steep, tortuous roads of her sister province.

We entered this kind of country dramatically at the town of LUBBAN, at 1720. Since 1655 the hills had been getting more removed from the valleys - or perhaps it was vice-versa ! - and there was now a difference

between them of some three to six hundred feet. Sometimes they seemed to be getting less, and then would spring up again, and we would have another climb; at 1700 I noted that we entered a valley, leaving the worst of the hills on the right, but they hung on for twenty minutes after that, towering above. Olives abounded on the floor, and all down the slopes of this lovely long green valley, and we had a very long run down it, and then along the bottom. Natural terraces above us cut up the hillsides, and they too were thick with olive trees; the dry river bed was a mass of stones. This was the transitional stage, but Lubban was the first of the real plains. As if we had come to the edge of the Devil's Beef Tub (on a much flatter scale), we suddenly looked down on a little plain, about a mile square, an oasis of meadow and corn lands, where the crops stood about a foot high. Again, it is perhaps best to quote my notes on the road between Lubban and Nablus for both directions at the same time. Out; "We twist down the hillside, and at first do not see the town, which hugs the hillside, and runs up it to the west; it merges so well with the rock that we are past it before a signpost draws my attention backwards. There is never an isolated house to be seen - all in villages. There are more and more of these hollows, green, not large, but fine and arable. They now become broader and broader, and bigger and greener; but the hills are almost as rough, and when we think that they are at an end we cross a ridge and see five miles more in front. As we approach Nablus, the valley becomes the broadest of all (see photo) and is still broad as we approach the two peaks which stand like breakwaters at the entrance to Leith Harbour; once we are between the two mighty ridges, it becomes very narrow again, and suddenly the fields are replaced by houses. We are in Nablus, the OT Shechem, at 1745. "

What follows is bound to be confusing, because it leads away from Nablus and then leaves us out in the wilds, but since it is complementary to the foregoing it is best in here, and we must just jump back to this point at the conclusion. " The plain stretches away like a green cricket field with grass a foot high; it was then that I realised that these spacious meadows are all connected in series, so we seem to be going through one long valley.



The ancient route follows a succession of level plains, meadows, and vales, more or less connected, right through the centre of the province. These little hollows, two hundred to eight hundred yards broad, look disconnected and self contained, but are really one long road, mile after mile. They are made to appear circular because deltas of rivers come in at right angles, with the hills piling up three or four layers behind. Then away ahead the road goes up the mountain like a ribbon. As we begin to climb it remains fertile, but gets rocky with outcrops. When this particular series of valleys ends, and we must climb, the olive trees begin, but the land is still a very fertile green on the terraces. The green ends as we climb, except by the river, but returns as soon as there is a flat space on top. The piles of hills in front are terrifying. We go down into a valley, or series of valleys, and then up and out, over a ridge, down again, and so on. The valleys are broad and fertile, then narrow up for the climb, and broaden out on the other side. The heat is pleasant, just a little sun through the cloud layer; even although it is not actually shining, the light is enough to hurt your eyes. Many olives. Still a lot cultivated, even on the slopes; sometimes 300 feet, sometimes only a hundred, then a stoney

patch, then a long broad valley again, or rather a series of hollows giving the impression of one valley. Cumberland is the only place I know which gives the vaguest of parallels. Then at Lubban the valley comes to a dead stop, like coming to the end of a shoe-box (from the inside), and we zig-zag straight up, to look back on a rectangle, one mile by one and a half. "

Nablus, known as Shechem when Abraham and Jacob reached it, is still important for tha same reason as it was in their time. It stands at the parting of the waters on the one great pass which gives access across Samaria from east to west; it is therefore in full harmony with the geographical data that the story of the patriarchs brings both Abraham and Jacob, on their entrance into the promised land, at once to Shechem, and that the book of Deuteronomy selects Ebal and Gerizim as the scene of a great inaugural service by all Israel on taking possession of the country. The present town rests on the site of the older ones - indeed, it must, because there is no room to move in a narrow defile between three thousand foot mountains.

A few minutes after leaving the taxi, I saw a promising-looking hotel up a stair, and on entering found it to be a very nice, clean, and warm place, all built off a central corridor. I booked a bed in a double room - although there was no sign of another yet, I knew that there would be - for 4/-, and asked where I could eat. The manager, who was teaching two schoolboys to speak English, detailed a wogg to show me round; if I wanted to ask a question I suppose we were meant to come back to have it translated. He took me to a typical eastern eating-house - probably the best in town - with the usual marble-slabbed tables, and open kitchen, and greasy piles of strange foods keeping warm on trays. I made an excellent meal by walking round the cook's department and pointing to what looked edible; while I eat, my silent guide sat at another table and grinned every now and again at me, to which I waved something on the end of a fork, popped it into my mouth, and grinned back. That seemed to content him perfectly. It was my idea of a good restaurant; there were no objections when I went and helped myself - via the cook - to a second enormous plate of something which I couldn'd define, but which tasted excellent and filled up all the empty corners. I have known places where it is easier to get out without paying than to order a second helping.

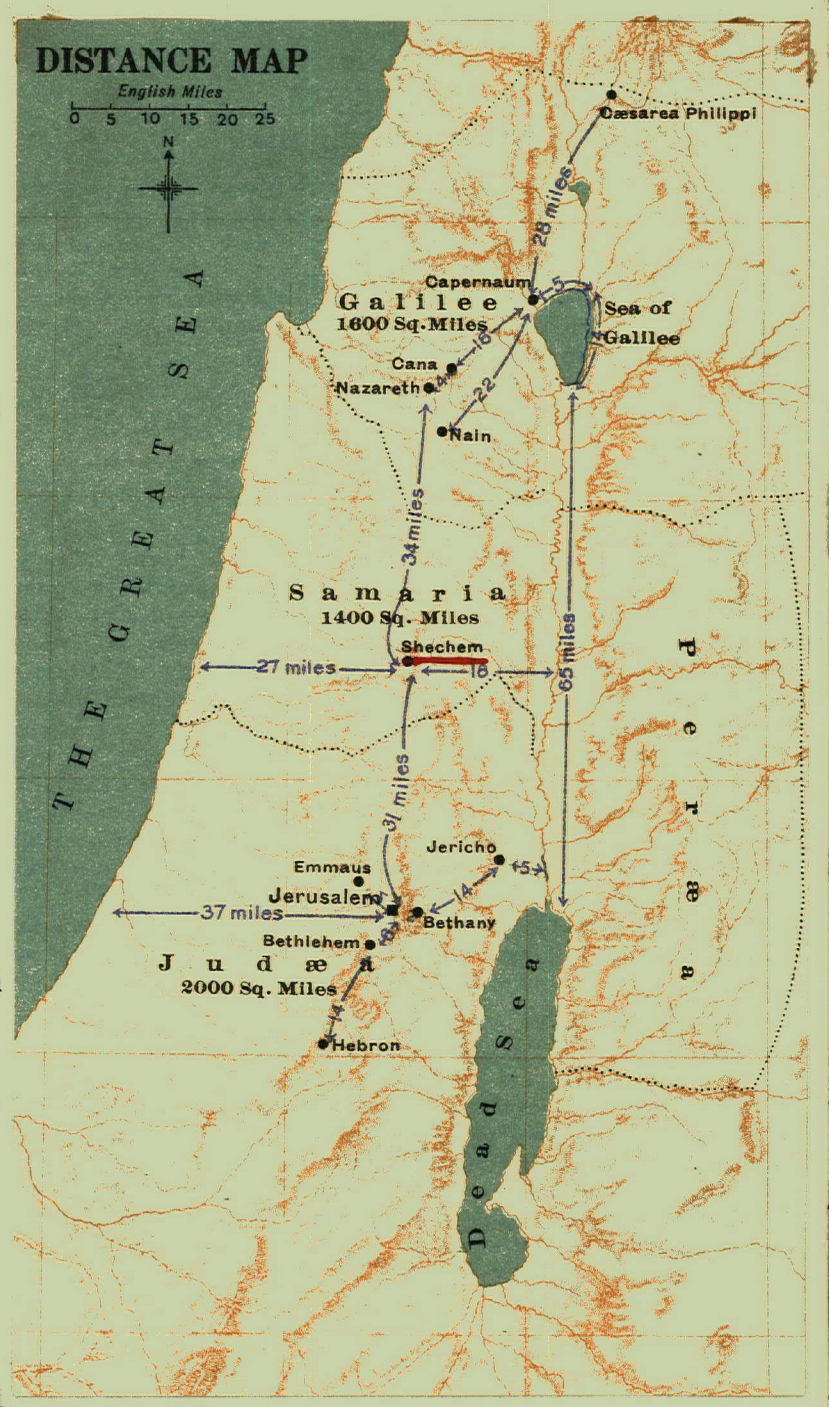
Then the guide indicated that he was going to show me round the town. It was pleasant in the warm night air, with the great barren slopes rising on either side, not unlike Dollar, only much higher. The town was well lit, and no dirtier than the usual; the buildings were reasonably modern, and the streets as good as many a British village. One of the points of call on the itinerary was the local picture house, so I went in to see what it was like. It was a great barn of a place, with concrete floors, and bare wooden seats, and reminded me of an army drill hall, although it had obviously been built for its present purpose. The lighting, screen, and that sort of thing were good, but the whole place had a rough finish which made it primitive. The show started with their national anthem, while the boy-king was shown on the screen against a background of the Jordan flag, and then followed a newsreel, including the Scottish-English game at Wembley; I couldn't make the mystified wogg understand that I wanted to know the score, as of course the commentary was in Arabic. When the main picture started, I managed to make him realise that I was going, but that he needn't come if he was enjoying himself. I wandered back alone, and was just preparing for bed when the policeman on pass-port duty came in to check on mine. We yarned away, but even he, a sergeant, couldn't tell me why

he had a spike on his sun-helmet; when he took it off to let me examine it, out showered his handkerchief, matches, etc., and he explained that it was as useful as an extra pocket. He confirmed what I had thought at the frontier, that there was a stamp missing on my entrance visa, and said to come up to the police station in the morning and he would also attend to a formality about which I had completely forgotten - reporting my arrival in the country to the Legion authorities within twenty-four hours. He then talked a bit more about the army, and what he thought of the state of his country, and excused himself about 2100, saying that he was very overworked and had to be on duty early the next morning. Long before he was due to finish his rounds, I was sound asleep, and, again, did not hear my room-mate coming to bed.

SUNDAY, 29th MARCH

I woke at 0630, and stretched out for a book to read; in so doing I knocked my watch off the table onto the concrete floor, and after struggling on for about ten minutes it gave up trying, with the result that I was uncertain of the exact time for the rest of the day. It was cloudy, and threatening rain, so I read until about 0715, and then found a tap in the kitchen-cum-scullery; since I was travelling light I was very grateful to an anonymous fellow lodger who had left his towel lying around. The manager deputed the message boy to take me up to the police station, and we set off about twenty to eight.

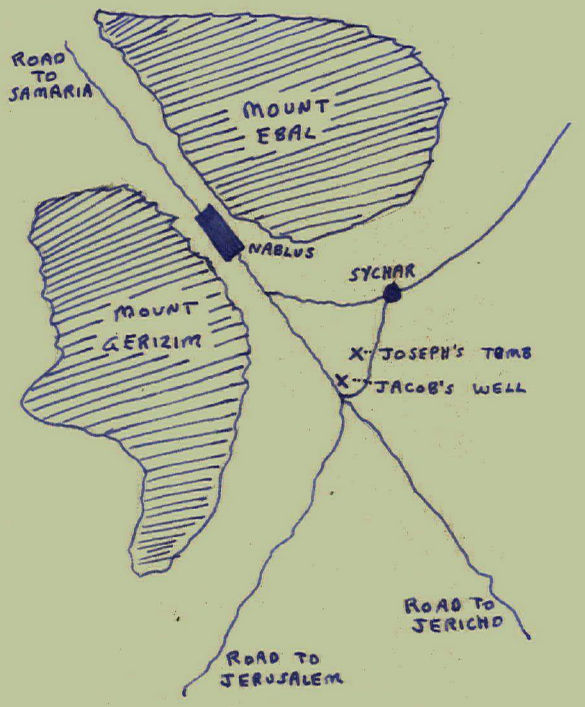
The great hills rose on either side, bare and rocky, shutting us in a deep corridor. If I had only had a day to spare, I would have climbed the one to the east, the one of which Jesus said, "Neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, shall ye worsip the Father." Shechem, by its natural attractiveness and central position, was always a rival to Jerusalem as the centre of Israel's worship; the specific mention of the mountain by the Deuteronomist gives greater relief to its claims to be considered the religious centre of the land. The flat ground to the north is thought to be the probable site where the tabernacle was erected, round which in Samuel's time some kind of more permanent building with doors was built. The High Priest of the Samaritans was a rival to the High Priest of the Temple in Jerusalem. But it was not only for that reason that I should like to climb Mount Ebal's three thousand feet. The view from the top covers virtually the whole of Palestine; there is no more striking example of the smallness of the Holy Land. Hermon in the north and Judah in the south are both within sight, while Jordan on the east is not twenty, nor the coast on the west thirty miles away. All the old standards of size have been revolutionised by the motor car; is is fantastic to think that Jesus was never more than seventy miles from this mountain in his life, and that all the dramas of the Old Testament could be packed into two or three of our larger counties. When we hear of somebody turning his back and going away in a rage, he probably didn'd go more than a few dozen miles. And it is here on Ebal that one can feel the size of the Holy Land, and the old wonder comes strongly back, that it is this small province which has



influenced the history of the whole world. But the explanation lies at our feet, where a Greek Church covers a well, where lies the road by which the patriarchs entered the land, and where are the roots of the mountain in which men even now worship the Father. No geography of Palestine can afford to dispense with the view from the top of Ebal, from which most of the famous scenes of history are in sight.

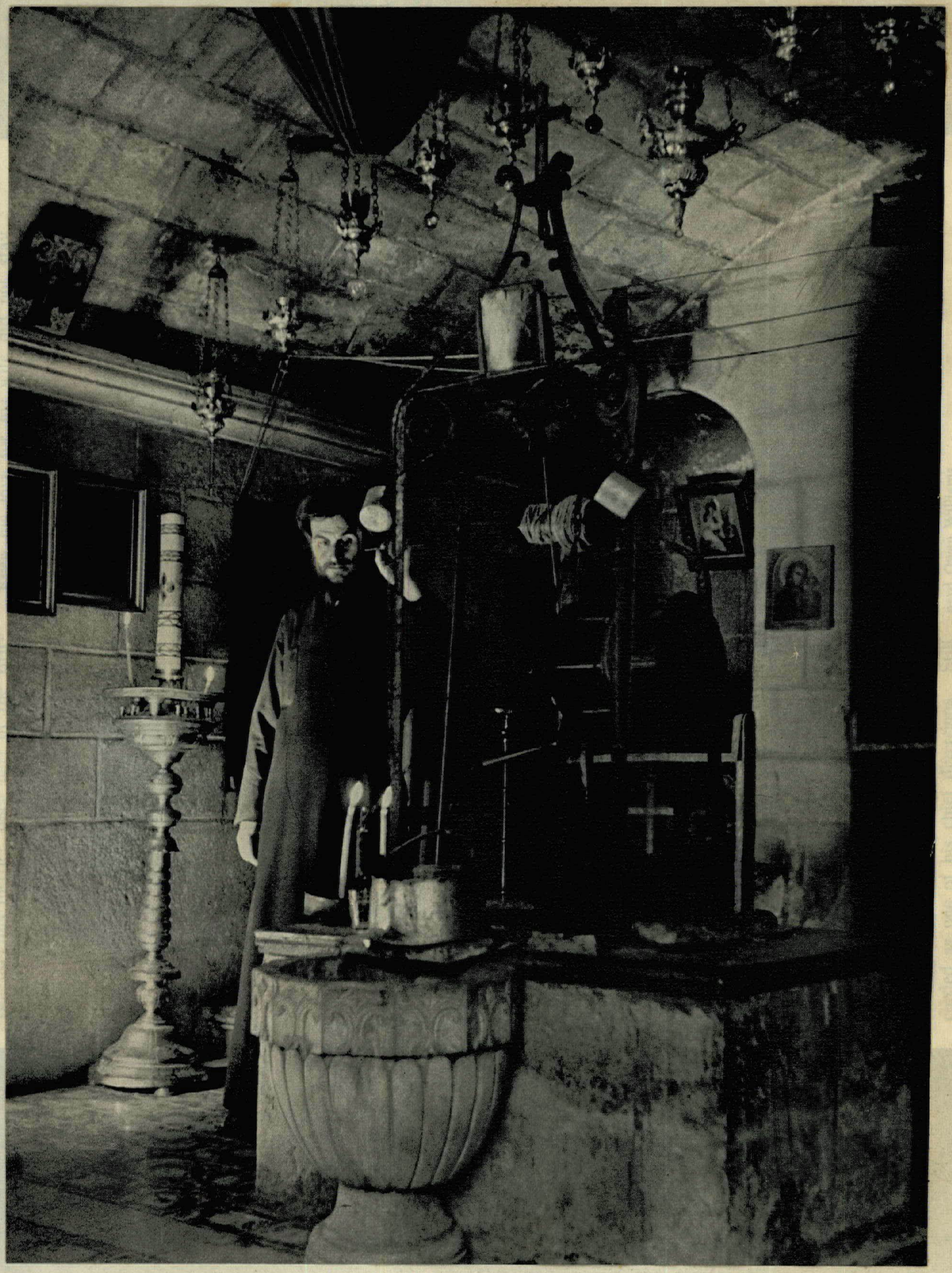
We reached the police station at 0750, and I talked to the lance-corporal on duty at the desk while waiting for the passport corporal (note) to arrive. He offered me a cup, or rather a glass of tea, sweetened with condensed milk; it was easy to see which nation had trained the Arab Legion - no other army or people can make tea like the British; we might have been in Fort George. At 0805 my corporal arrived - looking remarkably fresh for a man who had not gone off duty till midnight - and we went along to his room, where he gave me a cup of coffee. After another search, he cannot find the stamp which should have gone on at the border, so he referred me to a higher official. While we were waiting for him, the corporal offered me a seat at his desk, and sent the duty private to find me some breakfast; he returned with tea - of course - and toasted cheeze on toast, which was excellent. While I was eating, the corporal carried on with the day's business; the first item was to interrogate two men who were dragged in on handcuffs, and who, I learned, were being charged with theft. By the time he was finished with them, his superior was ready, and we went up to a grander office, who immediately offered me a cup of tea; this time I declined, and told him my story at once. He decided that it was above his level, and summoned my corporal back to take me to the next department. We went outside and took a taxi to the south, through the town, to a big block of government buildings - the local C.I.D.. This man was more genteel - he gave me tea out of a china teapot on a tray; he was the first one to say that he understood the position, and phoned the consul for advice. It being Sunday, the consul was out playing golf, so he said not to bother any more now, but to report in Jerusalem when I got there. I asked him the way to Jacob's Well, so he deputed the busy corporal to retain the taxi and to take me there in it; the corporal's "Yes, sir" barely concealed his anxiety to get back to work. We took the main road to the south - the one by which I had entered the town the day before - for about a mile and a half, and stopped where a branch road fell away to the left. There was a wall

around the site, and a soldier answered the bell. We went through a very heavy metal door, and past a little guard room, where half a dozen of the Legion were relaxing; where several religions are agreed on the authenticity of a Holy place, and consequently are liable to meet, it is essential to ensure that they don't disagree about something else! Together we crossed the grassy area inside the wall, past the remains of the various churches which have stood on this site, and came to the steps leading to Jacob's Well,



which is now over ten feet below ground level. Steps lead from the little boxes like workmen's huts down to the crypt of the present Greek church. At the bottom is a square vault, in the middle of which stands the rectangular block of stone, about two feet high, and with a five by three slab on top, which is the head of the well.

In the surrounding alcoves, the gloom was lit by seven candles, and adorned by faded pictures and ornaments. While an elderly couple in priest's robes were praying at the well, the priest on duty told me the story of the well; it was like looking down a chimney, only two feet in diameter at the top, and about ninety feet deep. I had always imagined it more like a village well, but it wasn't broad enough even to fall down. The couple then lowered the bucket, and the rope snaked away out of sight; it was possible to see the pail away at the bottom of the shaft, floating on the water, and to jiggle it until it filled with the soft limestone water. The two of them started to pull it up, and as they wern't making very fast progress I offered to help; they couldn't have looked more horrified if I had suggested pouring it back, and the wife stopped crossing herself for a minute to show that they could do it alone. It seemed to be a tremendous privilege to draw the water, and every few feet they both stopped to cross themselves furiously several times. When the bucket appeared, they almost went crazy; they drank several cups each, and then he took off his headgear and soaked his hair in it. Not content with that, he took off his collar, and his wife poured several glassfuls straight from the bucket down his neck. The remainder they put in tins to carry away; after she had kissed the musty pictures on the walls, they departed with superior looks on their faces. Most authorities agree that this is the well where Jesus met the Samaritan woman, and the present topography justifies the narrative; but even so, it seems rather primitive and childish to regard the rain water of nineteen centuries later as sacred. Perhaps the kindest thing to say is that they believe that themselves, but need something tangible



Jacob's well.

The Good Samaritan's Inn.

Jerusalem : The City from the Church of the Ascention. Mount of Olives in the foreground.

The Refugee Camp at Nablus.

to worship; it appears that all the other churches who have an interest in the well think the same way.

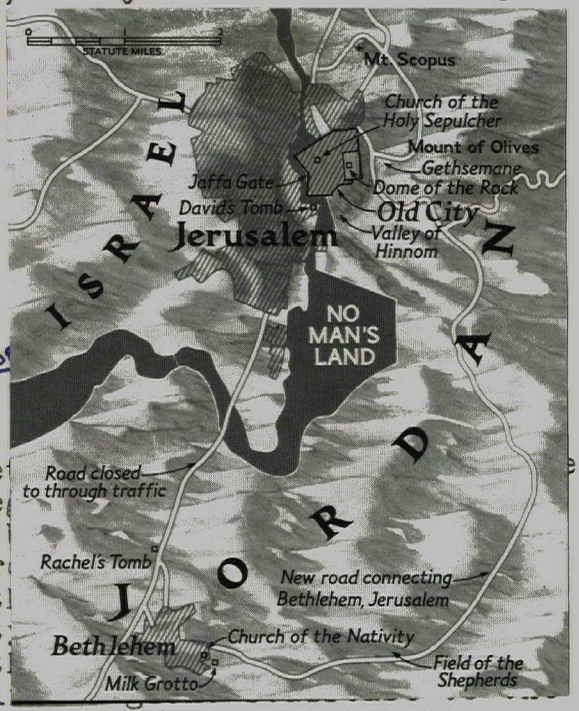
I let myself out of the garden, and wandered down the road to "the parcel of ground which Jacob bought of of the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for an hundred pieces of silver." On the left was an Arab refugee camp, so I walked into one of the communal tents and asked if anyone could tell me the way. Two young fellows offered to show me, one of whom spoke excellent English; they explained that they had been there for three years, with no work and no prospect of any, and were glad of an excuse to go for a walk. Although the Tomb could not have been more than two hundred yards from the camp, they obviously didn't know where it was, but they asked the natives - which I of course could not do - and after wandering round and over fields of young corn for about twenty minutes we came to a little square building. As usual, it was built round a courtyard with a tree in the middle. The porch facing leads to the Tomb of Joseph, whose bones were when laid there of the Children from Israel came in Joshua; the building on the left Egypt, as told school for Arab children, and the one is now a the master's house; behind the camera on the right a wall, with the main door to all the there is only master left his curious and grinning houses. The us the tomb, class to show a bare little whitewashed cave with a huge block of limestone guarded by wooden palings. The head (and only) master was a tall scholarly man, and in a pleasant voice he told me about the wanderings and final rest of Joseph; the site is of doubtful authenticity, and the body was probably moved later to Hebron, but this kind and gentle man seemed fond of his patriarcial relics.

We walked back to the main road, and from there saw a typical Samaritan valley, looking over the plain to Sychar, with the foothills of Mount Ebal on the left. From a cistern built in the rock to collect the water from a tiny stream, I took the photo framed with olive trees which appears a couple of pages back. The Arab boy who spoke English so well said that he wanted to go up to Nablus to see some friends, and that he would come up in the bus with me - for which I was very thankful. Eventually an old wreck with wooden seats rolled up, and we sat down together at the back. When the conductor came round to us, Mom'd Mah'd Jibreen - my friend - insisted on paying the fares, and I allowed him to, though I wouldn't have given in if I had known that when we came to part he was going to refuse to take anything from me. I wanted to give him

a few shillings to buy food, because they existed on tiny rations in Balata Camp, but with true Arab hospitality he refused to take even the bus fare from me. I tried to help him by offering to buy his keffiyeh, but he explained that it would be a terrible shame for a man to part with his head-veil. Almost as soon as we arrived at the centre of the town, a taxi for Jerusalem came by, and within five minutes I was saying good-bye to Mohammad and to Nablus. As we left the narrow defile, the sun broke reluctantly through the heavy clouds, and the lovely Vale of Shechem glowed like an emerald. About two miles down the road we came again to Jacob's Well, and the old couple waved to the taxi for a lift. There were only five in already, so we stopped, but the old man refused to pay the fare asked or something, because the driver suddenly slammed the door and drove off muttering under his breath. I noticed that his hair was dry already, and thought of the transient power of the water in which he placed such faith.

The road stopped through green valleys after a while, and climbed into the dead hills of Judaea. At about a quarter past twelve we ran quickly and quietly into the north side of Jerusalem, and drew up outside the Damascus gate. I had about five hours to spare before the last taxi left for Amman, so I decided to go to Bethleham and collect any mail which might be waiting for us there. I booked a seat in the last taxi for the Trans-jordan, and set about finding one for Bethleham; again I was fortunate, and jumped into one just as it was about to go.

It is not at present possible to follow the straight road from Jerusalem to Bethleham, because part of it is in Jewish territory, and so all the classical descriptions of the route are obsolete. The Arabs have cut a new road to circle Jewish land, and join the old road again as soon as possible on the other side. It drops down into the Kedron valley, and then twists its serpentine way up a road which is gradually being improved; when you get to the top, Bethleham is almost in sight on the opposite hillside. The scenery was so diametrically opposed to what I had imagined that it was all but impossible to describe it. The whole country round about is an undulating heap of brown, desert hills, rising and falling, tense with a terrific vitality, yet sullen and dispassionate with age. They are smooth and rounded, and yet striped terraces end and the bare rock be seem to be srtuggling desperately to run away from the heat and sterility of the r limestone stares back at you so plainly t to look at it; and yet the burning cruelt is tempered by the moulded curves which t The hills slide away down into the heat l Dead Sea, and the road winds up again to the ridge from which the Jews have forced it.



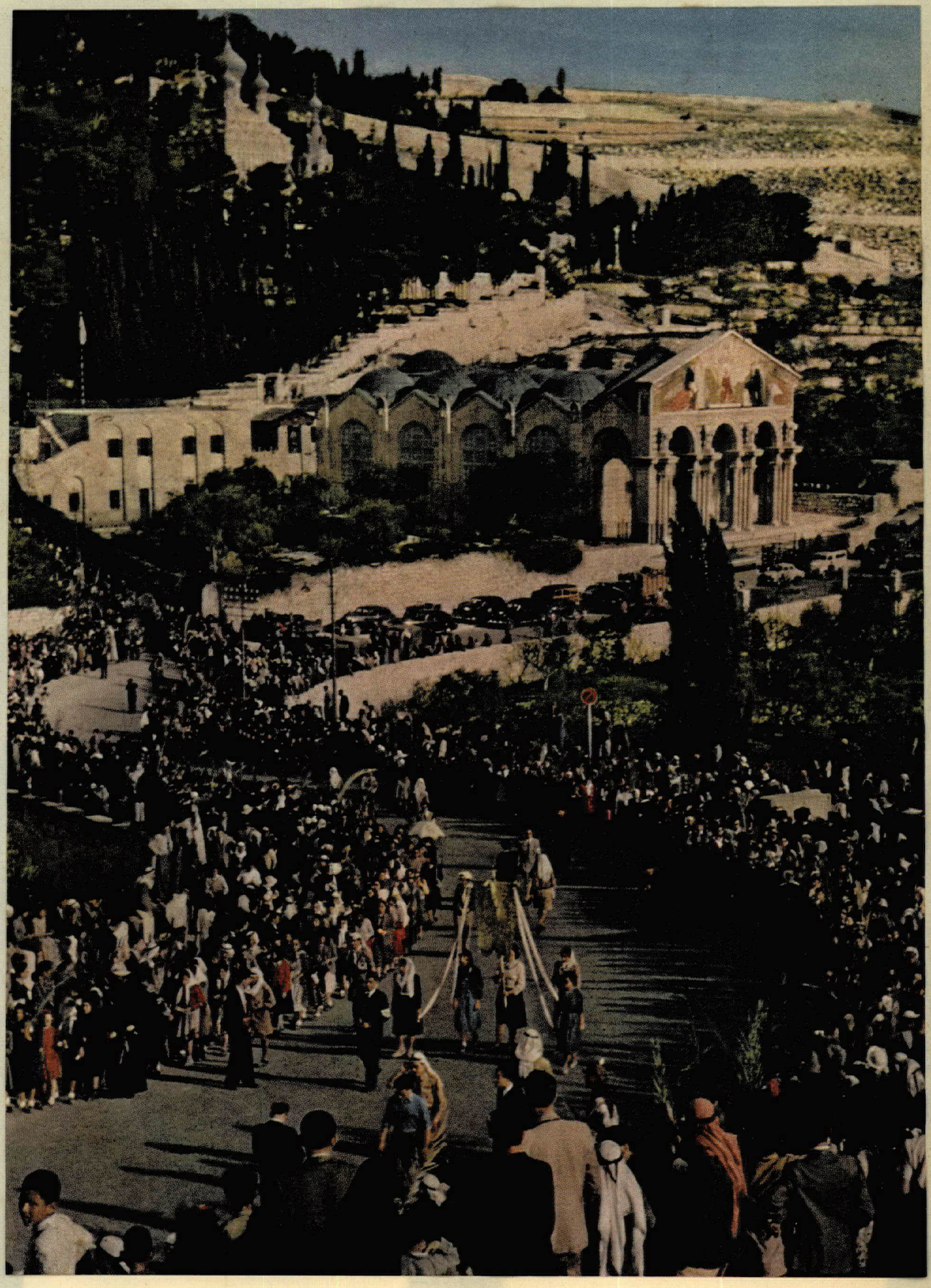
Bethleham comes as a surprise to the western imagination. From the crest of a ridge, you look across a bowl of limestone terraces to where flat white roofs rise one above the other until they run out of sight over the top, with a spire here and there to break the symmetry.

It takes a minute or two to realise that Bethleham is a hill-town, and before then we had shot up the road shown in the picture, turned right at the top, and pulled up in front of the Church of the Nativity. Right opposite was the Post Office, but it was closed until half past two. Perhaps, I thought, someone knows where Dr. Lambie stays, so I asked the taxi driver. There was a chorus of replies - they all knew him, and would take me by taxi. "Taxi ?" (I wanted to walk.) But it turned out to be at least eight miles, so I asked one what he would charge, and he said one pound. I had assumed that since Dr. Lambie's Post Office Box was "Bethleham", and No. One at that, his house would be in the town, but now there seemed to be no need to wait for Office to open. I asked where the group taxis stood, and a boy offered to show me. We walked through the narrow, stepped streets of the old town, and he stopped at a fruit barrow to help himself to some bananas; I expected the owner to say something about this, but the young fellow - Elias Danho Hajjo - explained that it was his father's stall. I bought some fruit to repay him for his guidance, and we walked right thru the town until we came to the Jerusalem-Hebron road. There was a taxi waiting to fill, but this time there was only one in it, so we had a long wait until a few more came; the charge was one shilling, so it was worth the wait. The scenery is best left until the next time I came over this road, because that time I went further along it.

It seems that everyone knows Dr. Lambie, and the driver dropped me at his hospital, built of tough local rock, right out in the wilds. There seemed to be no one on duty in the hospital, but after a while a nurse appeared and said that Dr. Lambie was at his house about three hundred yards further on. It was built of the same rough stone, standing just back from the road, on the side of a hill. Mrs. Lambie and three missionaries were in the Drawing Room, having just finished lunch. They insisted that I have some, and then Dr. Lambie came in about 1500, and gave me four letters, two for Charles and two for myself. We all talked for a bit, and then Mrs. Lambie drove me back to Bethleham in their car, so that I could catch a taxi for Jerusalem fairly quickly. Appearantly they had been expecting Charles and me to stay with them, and she persuaded me to wait in Jordan for the Sunrise Service at the Garden Tomb, and to stay with them on the Friday and Saturday which I had planned to spend in Israel. We were soon in Bethleham, and it wasn't long before there was a taxi ready for Jerusalem.

The run back was uneventful until we joined the Jericho Road just outside the Golden Gate, and then we teed into a procession coming off the Mount of Olives, and going up to follow the Via Dolorosa. I realised with a thrill that this was one of the sights which I thought I had sacrificed by going to the Lambies' - the Palm Sunday Procession which had started at 1430. It is organised by the Latin Church, and goes from Bethphage (where the Lord mounted the mule) over the Mount of Olives, to

St. Anne's Church, where the benediction is pronounced - if you can get near enough to hear it. Catholics from many towns come to walk the traditional one and a half miles, to commemorate the Lord's Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem. This photo does not show very clearly that there are two lines of marchers, each carrying a palm branch, and spaced like soldiers lining the street for a royal visit. The taxi was forced to wait at the right of the picture, so I walked along behind the crowds lining the route, took the photo from a wall, and followed the space between the people and the wall up the hill to the city. Getting in was a problem, because the narrow gateway was just wide enough to admit the worshippers, and so the crowd were tight against it both outside and in. The only way in was to join the procession - temporarily - but it was moving so slowly that the walls seemed yards thick. Never before did I appreciate just how difficult it is to enter a walled city. Once inside, I cut away into a side street, and was soon at Herod's Gate. This gives a much better idea of the Procession.



The Palm-Sunday Procession.

The Roman Catholic Pilgrims march from the Mount of Olives. Cypress groves around the bulbous Russian Church and olive trees near the Franciscan Basilica mark the places where the disciples slept and Judas betrayed the Lord with a kiss.

Flowers from the holy Land

Flowers from the holy Land

Flowers from the holy Land

Flowers from the holy Land