

## PRESIDENT GEO. A. SMITH'S

*Account of his Journey to Palestine, Delivered in the New Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, Sunday Afternoon, June 22nd, 1873.*

REPORTED BY DAVID W. EVANS.

BRETHREN and sisters, I am exceedingly thankful, through the blessings of the Lord and your faith and prayers, that I have been permitted to perform a lengthy journey and to return and associate with you again, to behold your faces, and to lift my voice and bear testimony to the things of the kingdom of God in this Tabernacle. I feel exceedingly thankful to my heavenly Father for his preserving mercy, and to my brethren and sisters for their prayers and faith, and for their kind assistance, which was bountifully rendered to me, enabling me to bear the cost of a lengthy and expensive journey. The principal object of that journey was to visit the lands in which the events recorded in the Bible transpired. Incidentally we visited many countries, and had an opportunity of acquiring information and extending acquaintances into lands which heretofore have been barred against visits from our elders, as the elders, when they went abroad went expressly to preach, and were frequently prohibited from entering these countries, or if permitted to enter were not allowed to speak of the gospel. We, having means to travel, of course passed along as other travelers, for not being on a mission for preaching we were not interrupted, and this enabled us to acquire a knowledge of the laws and customs of the various countries we visited, and a variety of information that we had heretofore only got by reading; and I understand very clearly that a person may read almost any subject and yet a personal inspection will give better and perhaps more extended or different ideas from those gleaned solely from reading. In reading books you learn the views, thoughts and reflections of the individuals who wrote them, modified more or less by a great desire in the human heart to make books readable, in order that they may sell. It is really true that a great share of the books in the world are written more to be read than to communicate facts. It is said that when Henry the Fourth was on his sick bed, his son, knowing his father had always been very fond of history, proposed to read a little history to him. "Oh," said the dying king, "I am too far gone to bother my brains with romance." That showed his opinion of history.

As soon as we reached Rome we began to find the localities referred to in Scripture. It was in the reign of Augustus Caesar that Christ was born. At that time Judea was a tributary kingdom to Rome, its King being Herod. The decree which went forth from Augustus Caesar that all the world should be taxed, of course included Jerusalem and the entire kingdom of Judea, which at that time was of considerable extent. Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem to be taxed with the house of David, and there being no room in the inn, they took up their quarters in a stable, and there the Savior was born.

Some years after the ascension of Jesus St. Paul went to Rome, in order to get a hearing before Caesar, on an appeal case, which had been adjourned from time to time before the authorities in Cesarea Philippi, in consequence of his refusal, it seems from the reading of the Book of Acts, to furnish the "backsheesh." Thinking that Paul's friends would pay liberally for his relief his judges had kept him bound in prison; but as the expected bribe was not forthcoming he was eventually sent to Rome on his own appeal; and while we were at Rome we were shown places where he was said to have been imprisoned, and one room where they said he used to hold meetings, and a variety of places and incidents connected either directly or indirectly with the mission of the Apostles in the first century.

In the cathedrals of almost all the countries which we visited we were shown relics that had been brought from Palestine. At Pisa there is a burying yard, probably an acre and a quarter in extent, nine feet of earth having been brought from Palestine as a covering for this burial place. It takes a permit from the Pope to be buried in that sacred soil. In the cathedral of San Lorenzo, in Genoa, they show-

ed us the chain with which John the Baptist was bound, and the casket which they said contained his head, and a variety of other relics. In the church of St. Mark, in Venice, they showed us the coffin of St. Mark, and while there they showed us a casket said to contain the remains of St. John the Baptist, also the marble slab on which his head fell when he was executed. I ascertained, however, to my satisfaction, that this was a local saint, carried by the Venetians, seven or eight hundred years ago, from Marsaba, in Palestine, where he was recognized as St. John of Damascus. There is so much relic worship, that it has been overdone; but we commenced, when we got to Rome, to tread the ground where the apostles labored. We visited a prison in which it is said St. Peter was imprisoned. We saw the spot where he is said to have escaped from his enemies, and was about to flee, but the Savior called to him and asked him if he was afraid to die, so says tradition. They show the print that Peter's foot made when he heard the Savior's voice. That is on a spot outside of Rome. They built a church on that place and it contains a statue of St. Peter, the toes of one of the feet have been worn off, we were told, by kissing, and their place supplied with bronze. They showed us the stairs, brought from Jerusalem, which they say led up to Pilate's judgment seat. We saw a great many people crawling up and down them on their knees, weeping and wailing and kissing every step.

As we steamed towards the east, we passed the Isle of Candia, the cradle of scripture, and were reminded by various places that we saw, of the incidents of St. Paul's shipwreck.

Before leaving London we made arrangements with the firm of Thomas Cook & Son, to supply us with railroad facilities, hotel coupons, steamboat conveyance and transportation from London to Palestine, for one hundred and thirty days, terminating at Trieste, in Austria, via Constantinople and Athens. By this means much of the annoyance of traveling in countries where we did not understand the languages and manners and customs was avoided.

We reached Egypt and landed at Alexandria on February 6th. We were met on board our steamer by Mr. Alexander Howard, a dragoon of Messrs. Cooke & Co. He took charge of our effects, assisted us in passing the custom house, and conducted us to the Hotel d'Europe, giving us choice rooms, where we had a magnificent view, and furnishing us all the information necessary to make our sojourn in Egypt pleasant and profitable.

In Egypt we were still on Scriptural ground. Egypt, after the days of Constantine, until those of the Saracens, was a Christian country. In the seventh century it was conquered by the Saracens or Mahomedans. Alexandria is supposed to have contained 600,000 inhabitants when it was conquered by Amru. All the world has been horrified by the decision of Omar, Caliph of Medina, that the library of Alexandria—said to be the largest collection of books and manuscripts in the world—should be consigned to the flames.

"After a siege of fourteen months Amru, also called Amer, took it, and in his letter to the Caliph Omar, he informed him of the conquest he had made, saying that he had found there 4,000 palaces, a like number of baths, 400 places of amusement, and 12,000 gardens, and that one quarter alone was occupied by 40,000 Jews." It is said that the books and manuscripts of that library furnished fuel for warming those baths for some four months.

There is in Egypt a sect of Christians called Copts, or the Coptic church. They are descendants of the inhabitants of Egypt that were conquered by the Saracens. At Cairo we visited one of their churches, and were shown the place where they said the Savior, his mother and Joseph resided during their stay there, when they fled from the wrath of Herod, and the basin they washed in, and we saw many persons who had come there to be healed in consequence of the holiness of this place. This class of Christians—the Copts—have maintained their identity through the reign of Mahometan power, Turkish and Arabic, down to the present time. There is probably a million of them, perhaps more, in Egypt and Abyssinia. There is also the

Oriental Greek Church in Egypt; they showed us some traditional holy places.

We went to visit Heliopolis, or the city of On. I have taken a great interest in family matters, believing in the doctrine of baptism for the dead, and I went to Heliopolis because I had good reason to believe that Joseph who was sold into Egypt married his wife there, Asenath, daughter of Poti-phar, priest of On. Heliopolis is believed to be the On of that day, and was the great college at which all the leading men of Egypt were educated. Probably Moses received his education there. There is a needle or obelisk, some sixty feet out of the ground, at Heliopolis, containing inscriptions from top to bottom. How far it goes into the ground I know not, but the inscriptions on that needle, if rightly interpreted by Egyptian scholars, indicate that it was probably there when Joseph went to Egypt. The city and all its temples have gone to decay. Other needles of the same kind, which were there, have been carried away, one of them stands in Constantinople. The ground is in a state of cultivation though the ruins of the city of On are to be seen scattered about, and when we were there there was on the ground a luxuriant crop of sugar cane, showing that the soil was very rich.

Everything that grows in Egypt has to be irrigated from the river Nile. There is little, in fact no other, water except that which comes from the Nile. I say there is no other water, but a little below the city of On there is a very old tree—a sycamore I believe, under which the Copts believe that Joseph, Mary and Jesus camped while they remained in Egypt, during their flight from Herod. A great number of the branches have been carried away, and portions of the tree, but its boughs are still very wide spread. The owner of the tree has put around it a very decent picket fence of pine lumber, I do not know where he got it, and any man who will give him a franc he will lend him a knife and he may cut his name on the fence, but if he will not give him a franc he must not do that, and he must not carry away any of the tree. I did not care about cutting my name on the fence, so I saved my franc. But there was a spring or well close by, and the water was drawn up by a mule on a kind of rudely constructed wheel, with a number of earthen vessels tied to the ends of its arms. They told me that the spring was in ancient times brackish and unfit to drink, but when Mary came there she bathed in it and it became sweet and good. I drank some of the water and found it so, tasting very much like the big spring at St. George. I remarked to the man I really wished she had made it cold while she was about it, for a drink of cold water would have been very refreshing just then. This cost me one franc.

I am not designing, however, to follow the incidents of my journey any further than they relate, more or less, to the history of those countries mentioned either directly or by tradition in the Bible. In Cairo we were shown Joseph's well, and we were told by our guides that it was made by and called after Joseph who was sold into Egypt. But on investigation we found that when Saladin, Caliph of Egypt, undertook to select a place for a citadel in his new city of Cairo, he hung up meat in different parts around, and he found that fresh meat would keep longer at that point than any other in the neighborhood, and he came to the conclusion that that was the healthiest place, and he had the ground cleared for a citadel, and in doing that they discovered a well filled with sand. The sand was cleared out, and as one of the names of the Caliphs was Yoosef it was called Joseph's well, so it may be that Joseph who was sold into Egypt made it, and it may not. Its present name, however, I believe, comes from the Sultan Yoosef Salah-eddeen, Caliph of Egypt, in the 12th century, a man known to fame. The water of the well is brackish and is chiefly used for laying the dust.

We all felt more or less interest in the locality anciently called the land of Goshen, but as nobody could tell precisely where the land of Goshen was it was necessarily a matter of guesswork. But the streams of water must run now somewhere near the same as they did then, and we followed the course of a fresh water canal, which has recently

been turned from the Nile, and which is some one hundred and fifty miles in length, to Suez and the Red Sea. This canal passes near Zagazig, which is probably in the vicinity of the Land of Goshen; and when the children of Israel started for Canaan they had to follow this route in order to secure themselves the necessary amount of water from that old fresh water canal, which is now known and identified as having run very nearly on the same ground as the present one, which has been made within a few years, and which the railroad follows.

There is a good deal of speculation as to where the children of Israel crossed the Red Sea, but the most reasonable conclusion I can arrive at, so far as I have been able to investigate the matter, is that they followed this fresh water canal, and that they camped near its terminus on the Red Sea, and crossed over to the peninsula of Sinai, after which they were miraculously supplied with water, food and clothing through the deserts of Arabia.

We passed over that portion of the Suez canal, between Ismailia and Port Said. The Suez canal is certainly a very grand enterprise. Port Said receives its fresh water from the Nile. It has got pipes over fifty miles in length to bring that water from the canal at Ismailia to supply the town. Port Said is considerable of a place, and there is a good deal of enterprise there.

On the evening of February 22 we sailed from Port Said on the *Vesta*, one of the steamer's belonging to the Austrian Lloyd's. The next morning we came in sight of Jaffa, the Joppa of the Scriptures. Jaffa is a kind of promontory or headland, projecting into the sea. The anchorage is simply an open roadstead, and landing is sometimes very difficult. If we had had an unfavorable wind and been carried by that port it would have cost us considerable time and expense; but when we reached there the day was pleasant and the sea smooth, and we landed without difficulty.

At Jaffa we were met by the before named Mr. Howard, who conducted us to the Turkish custom-house officer, who, I believe, examined only one passport, and passed us, and we went directly to our tents, which were pitched not far from the seaside, near the burial place. They were very nice wall tents, well carpeted, with all the outfit necessary ready for use, and we at once commenced keeping house.

This Joppa is the place where King Solomon landed the cedars that he got from Hiram, King of Tyre, for the building of his temple. I am of the opinion that the place has undergone some physical changes since that time, although I, of course, could not determine to what extent. In the vicinity of this city is a colony of about six hundred Germans, under the presidency of D. V. Christopher Hoffman, who consider themselves the spiritual temple of Christ. They have bought some land and have put it under cultivation, and they say the rains have increased there very much within the last few years, and the lands are very productive. They raise wheat and a variety of grains without irrigation. They say their gardens and orange groves require irrigation. I think the olives do not. The most beautiful orange groves that we saw, perhaps, on our entire journey, were at Jaffa. We visited this German colony. The American vice-consul, Mr. Hardegg, met us and treated us with courtesy. He is a German by birth, never was in America, speaks English. We also saw a number of persons who were connected with the scheme of one George J. Adams, and who, after its failure, were left in that country, one of whom, Mr. Floyd, is now a dragoon. They built some houses, but they have been purchased by this German colony. We attended a meeting of a missionary, and heard a Methodist sermon. It seemed to be a very difficult thing to get together people enough to have a meeting.

I believe the only place of particular Scriptural import which they pretend to have identified in Joppa is the house of Simeon the tanner, by the seaside. Some were so critical as to doubt whether it was the identical house in which Peter lodged when the messengers of Cornelius came; but then, there are the tan vats, and it is right by the seaside, and the Bible says that Simon was a

tanner and that he lived by the sea side. They showed us the flat roof on which they say Peter was sleeping. In one end of the house—the end towards Mecca, there was a recess, such as the Mahometans have in their mosques to pray in. We inquired of the man in charge of the house whether Simon was a Mussulman? He said, "Yes, and there was where he prayed."

It is not important, of course, whether that building is the identical one or not, yet it has been visited by thousands, and is a source of revenue. It was in this neighborhood that the Lord revealed to Peter that what God hath cleansed should not be called common or unclean, and that it was proper for him to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, and from that place he went to visit Cornelius, and administered the gospel to those not of the seed of Israel.

Having obtained our horses and saddles, Monday morning, Feb. 24, we started for Jerusalem. I could not obtain a Syrian saddle large enough for me to ride on, and I was compelled to ride on an English saddle. This made a great difference in my comfort. If I had carried a Spanish saddle from home I should have been much more comfortable on my journey. I was constantly afraid that the fastenings of my English saddle would give way, I did not think they were strong enough, and then its construction and shape were not comfortable and convenient, and in those particulars it was nothing to be compared with a Spanish, or even with a Syrian saddle. I am pretty heavy, and had not been on horseback for fifteen years.

Travellers in Palestine suffer greatly from the sun, but we were early in the season—two weeks earlier than travellers generally set out for Jerusalem. Mr. Cook was fitting out several parties; but they were two weeks after us, and we were comparatively alone, though some few travellers fell in with us incidentally. At noon, we halted at what was called the Martyr's Tower, in Ramleh. Ramleh has a history relating particularly to the crusades. It is in the vicinity of the country anciently occupied by the Philistines, and from its tower, which we climbed, and which is probably a hundred feet high, we could see a portion of their country. There is at this place a monastery of monks, who, it is said, feed travellers of all denominations, and they are spoken of by all travelers as being very kind. They are Roman Catholics. Of course we had no need to test their hospitality, for we had everything within our reach that was necessary to supply our wants, carrying it right along with us.

In the evening we camped on a very nice stream at the entrance of the Valley of Ajalon. Our Sunday school children will recollect this very well, from the fact that Joshua said to the sun, "Stand thou still upon Gibeon, and thou, moon, in the valley of Ajalon." I ought to explain that in Palestine what we call a ravine is called a valley, and wider valleys they call plains.

Before reaching Ramleh we passed through the plains of Sharon, where a kind of red flower, called the rose of Sharon, grows abundantly, and the land appears to be very fertile. We were rather surprised, having heard such accounts of the sterility of Palestine, to find on our entrance into it that the land was apparently fruitful; though we were told that if we had come later it would have looked more barren.

Miss E. R. Snow and Miss Clara Little had a tent; Elder Paul A. Schettler and myself occupied another, over which floated the "Stars and Stripes." Elders Lorenzo Snow, Albert Carrington, Feramorz Little and Thos. Jennings occupied another. My tent was used as our dining room. Our dragoon and cook had each his tent and we had another for convenience sake. We were supplied with good camp stools; we had iron-framed bedsteads, with good mattresses, and good, clean nice blankets and sheets. All the difficulty about it with me was that my bedstead was too small for me. I have always had a horror of being buried in a coffin not big enough, and I have always desired that my friends—whoever might live to put me in a coffin, would have it at least two inches bigger every way than I was. I have always felt annoyed at the idea of being buried in a cramped up coffin. It often made me think of it when stretched out upon that bedstead, or in the berths of the ships which I have had to stay in so many days on this journey, for generally they have been too small for me. Our dragoon, Aushonny Makloof, of Beyrou, supplied us very well with provisions. We had our Arab cook and our Turkish muleteers. Only one of them all could speak a little English, and really, to this day, I never could tell how many there were, although on some days we had more and some less, for as we