

MONDAY, AUGUST 19, 1878.

The following Papers were read:—

1. *The Land of Midian.* By Captain R. F. BURTON, H.B.M. Consul, Trieste.

The kingdoms of Zibah and Zalmunna have hitherto been vaguely and erroneously laid down. The wandering tribes still apply the term *Arz Madyan* (land of Midian) to the maritime strip, 108 miles long, bounded north by the head of the 'Akabah Gulf, and south by the Wady Surr, the great waterless river-bed upon which the fort El-Muwayláh is built. But Captain Burton also proposes a South Midian beginning at the latter point, extending 105 miles, and ending at the Wady Hamz (N. lat.  $25^{\circ} 55'$ ), where the Egyptian and Ottoman possessions meet. Thus the latitudinal length of the Midianite seaboard is 213 miles, which the windings of the coast prolong to 300. The inner depth is determined by the Shafah line of sub-maritime mountains defining the eastern frontier. Politically speaking, the country all belongs to the Khediv of Egypt, whose predecessors have garrisoned the two forts El-'Akabah and El-Muwayláh since the days of Sultan Selim the Conqueror, in A.D. 1517. Captain Burton assigned to the Jebel El-Tihámah (mountains of the Lowlands), the ghats or fringing ranges of the Arabian Peninsula, an altitude of 6000 to 6500 feet, a figure which the hydrographic chart has exaggerated to 9000.

Captain Burton proceeded to outline the movements of the two expeditions which he commanded in 1877 and 1878, both due to the liberality of the Khediv of Egypt, Ismail I. The four months of travel which ended 1877 and began 1878 were distributed into three excursions:—

1. The northern march, which visited the copper works established by the ancient Egyptians; the ruined capital, "Madiáma," which Ptolemy places in N. lat.  $28^{\circ} 15'$ ; the Fort El-'Akabah, where, also, traces of smelting metal were found; the sulphur-hill, northernmost of the three discovered, and the great gypsum formations of Midian and Sinai. This section concluded with a *periphras* of the perilous 'Akabah Gulf and a narrow escape from shipwreck and the sharka.

2. The central or eastern march to Middle Midian, the course of which was arrested by the villanous Ma'ázeh tribe, then turned southwards, and explored the ruins of Shuwák, the Soáka of Ptolemy (N. lat.  $27^{\circ} 15'$ ). This section concluded with a visit to the turquoise diggings of Zibá; an inspection of the central sulphur-hill, and the ascent of the mighty Shárr mountain which lies behind El-Muwayláh. Geographically speaking, it was the most important, as it brought back details of the Hismá or sandstone plateau bounding the ghats on the East, and of a huge volcanic tract called El-Harrah.

3. The southern march, which began and ended at El-Wijh, covered the region worked for gold by the ancients, and collected details, sketches, and plans of the mines open and closed. A third sulphur-hill was explored; the gold mine El-Marwah of the mediæval Arab geographers was satisfactorily identified, and a classical shrine or temple was found upon the southern bank of the great Wady Hamz.

The expedition, which landed in Arabia on December 19th, 1877, left it on April 18th, 1878. By sea and land, it had covered nearly 2500 miles; of these some 600 were mapped, the crucial stations being determined astronomically. It had measured and planned fourteen settlements, some large enough to be called cities, besides nearly thrice that number of *ateliers*. At least 200 sketches, and

colours, water-colours, pencil drawings, and photographs were taken, besides twenty-five tons of rock-specimens. The explorers brought back to Cairo a small ethnological collection of stone implements, rude and worked; coins of ancient Midian, mixed with Roman and Kufic; fragments of copper and bronze, glass and pottery; Nabathæan inscriptions and Arab tribe marks; skulls, spirit specimens of zoology, shells from the shores of the Red Sea, and a *hortus siccus*.

Captain Burton ended his paper by noticing that the terms of the Anglo-Turkish Convention have placed Great Britain, with reference to Arabia, nearly in the same position as that occupied by Rome after the days of Augustus. He found the land wasted and spoiled, far less civilised than it was in the nineteenth century B.C. But he cherishes the conviction that Midian is fated to see better days, and that by the development of her mineral wealth, under the fostering care of European, and especially English companies, this forgotten California, now like Algeria before 1830, will presently rival the rich and fruitful province of Algiers in 1878.

2. *On a Journey to Fez and Mequinez.* By A. LEARED, M.D., F.R.G.S.,  
M.R.I.A.

Dr. Leared, who, in May, 1877, accompanied the Portuguese Embassy to the Sultan of Morocco, in addition to many interesting personal and historical details, gives the following particulars of the country on the route followed from Tangier. For some three and a half hours' ride, the land near the city is well cultivated, the first halt being under a range of hills named Kaa-el-Urmil, near the river M'har. After advancing close to the sea and crossing a plain, a river fifty yards wide was forded, and the douar of Garbia reached, two hours from which is a thick grove of wild olive-trees, abounding in nightingales. A succession of hill and plain, but little cultivated, then followed, and Klatta de Raissana was reached, after fording another considerable river. Next day, a great alluvial plain was traversed, through which runs the small river M'Hassen, the distance from which to Alcaassar-el-Kebir (historically associated with the destruction of Don Sebastian and his army by the Moors in 1578) is some ten miles of level, little cultivated land, becoming an arid plain at two miles from the town. Dr. Leared estimates the inhabitants as between 5000 and 6000, considering Rohlf's number of 30,000 as much exaggerated. Beyond Alcaassar, two miles of wide and paved footpath were followed, ending at a ford across the Lucos, here about eighty yards broad. Still further on the land was better cultivated, and wheat was being cut (May 25th). The encampment was in the midst of an immense tract, covered with hay going to waste. After passing the bounds of the province of Larache, the river Guarot was crossed by a ford about 50 yards wide, and a rolling prairie traversed, grass and flower-covered, but with no tree or shrub. Ten miles further on, the douar or village of the governor of the Habassie tribe was reached; the next journey being through an immense level tract, with a sea-like horizon to the west. Much of this was cultivated with wheat and barley, with scattered douars and cattle; but the greater part was a fertile waste. The Sebou, one of the chief rivers of Morocco, here 120 yards wide and of considerable depth, was then passed in flat-bottomed boats and by swimming. A flat fertile country followed, with splendid wheat-crops; great tracts of a tall white-flowering wild umbelliferous plant were observed; and a camp was made, close to the village of Bokhara, on the bank of the river Irrdrum, a tributary of the Sebou, on a dead level plain, having to the south a fine amphitheatre-like range of distant hills. Four miles from this, after cresting the commencement of a hilly country, and making a short descent, a halt was made at Zacouta, on flat parched soil, deeply fissured by the summer heat, and abounding with the lesser bustard, a bird not known near the coast. Leaving Zacouta, the road lay through a succession of hills, on the slopes of which was much standing corn; and after a short journey, the party encamped under the mountain of Zarhoun, on the south side of which, less than a mile distant, is the town and sanctuary of Muley Edris-el-Keber. To the right, across a stream with deep banks, and on higher ground, stand the ruins called Cassar Pharaon (Pharaoh's Castle),