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PALESTINE : ITS PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

THE CHAIRMAN said that the lecturer that evening, on a most interesting subject, was Miss Estelle Blyth, who was a daughter of the late Bishop of Jerusalem, and had lived in that city the greater part of her life. There could hardly be anyone more competent than she to give them an instructive lecture on Palestine.

Miss Blyth then read the following paper on "Palestine : its Past, Present, and Future :"

The future of Palestine and Syria is a problem that comes up for consideration from time to time, and, indeed, can never rest until these much-tried and deeply wronged countries are freed from Turkish rule. This great deliverance now seems to be at hand, and in view of it the future of Palestine assumes a definite place in our thoughts as being very urgently and very particularly one of England's responsibilities.

We shall start from a clearer standpoint if we consider Palestine and Syria as being quite distinct from one another. They are so, but because they are next-door neighbours, and have been under the same rule, they are always spoken of together and counted as one. The Turkish Empire has been for so long in a tottering condition that any interference with one part of it might well have caused the whole crazy structure to collapse—an undesirable complication from the European point of view. For the purposes of our argument we will separate Palestine and Syria as completely as if such division did indeed exist.

The history and influence of a land are so largely determined by its geographical position and peculiarities that there can be no real discussion of Palestine, either past, present, or future, without due consideration of its physical features, characteristics, and relationships.

GEOGRAPHY.—Briefly, then, it is a small, narrow strip of land running along the eastern shore of the Mediterranean, dividing the sea from the desert. Presenting within its narrow confines geographical features as varied and distinct as are the events of its history, and containing the dearest shrines of the Christian and the Jew, Palestine arises from the abasement of her present weakness, a land unlike any other, remaining mysterious, aloof, remote. Geographically

it is an insignificant item on the globe ; a highway along which successive generations of races, wars, conquests, changes, and governments have passed, raising clouds of dust and leaving many footprints, but not altering the character of the road at all. These all pass, but the road remains. Palestine stretches from the mouth of the Litany River ($32^{\circ} 20' N.$) south to where the Wadi Ghuzzi joins the sea south of Gaza ($32^{\circ} 28' N.$), and, running south-east, includes Beersheba. The configuration of the land is thus exactly what Isaiah describes it : "A highway out of Egypt to Assyria." Within these accepted limits Palestine is less than one-seventh of the size of Great Britain.

MOUNTAINS.—"It is a land of hills and valleys, and drinketh water of the rain of heaven," said Moses. The chain of Lebanon runs north and south, Lebanon being divided from Anti-Lebanon by a narrow valley. Lebanon belongs to Syria rather than to Palestine, but from this great range—the pride of which is so apparent in the Bible, while the people of the land still call it "El Jebel," or The Mountain—the four big rivers take their course. Mount Hermon is perhaps chief of the peaks in historical interest ; it is 9,200 feet in height ; its "lofty triple summits" are nearly always under snow, and on clear days the view of its majestic heights from the foot of Carmel, looking across the Bay of Acca, is indeed a glorious one. Dahr-el-Khotib, to the north of Hermon, is actually higher by some 1,300 feet. Sir George Adam Smith, in his wonderful book "The Historical Geography of Palestine," very clearly defines the contour of Palestine, giving three great mountain ranges—the Western, the Central, and the Eastern—whose bold sections and bisections divide the land into "a series of four parallel lines or bands running north and south," and form a barrier to the desert, thus :

Sea	Maritime Plain	Central Range	Jordan Valley	Eastern Range	Desert

The Central Range is the "Mount of the Amorites" of the Book of Deuteronomy. South of Hermon is a high plateau intersected by a deep ravine running north and south, which forms the bed of the Jordan and the Dead Sea. The Mountains of Moab, of Judea, of Galilee, though interesting from a Biblical and historical point of view, need not be touched upon separately, being practically offshoots of the big ranges, as Carmel, with its bold head thrust outward to the sea, is a continuation of the chain of Lebanon. Still, there must rise to our minds names dear to us from childhood—Tabor, the traditional Mount of the Transfiguration, with its steep sides covered with brushwood and trees, and its curiously flat top ; Olivet, one of the hills that "stand about Jerusalem" ; Ebal and Gerizim, overshadowing Nablous (Shechem), both alike beautiful, though so different in character, the blessings and curses uttered from whose summits could plainly be heard by Israel trembling in the valley below.

RIVERS.—From the cedar-covered slopes of Lebanon four rivers take their way. The Litany runs west; the Barada (the Abana of the Bible) east, enriching Damascus on its way; the Jordan, rising in Hermon, flows south to its end in the Dead Sea; and the Orontes, rising in the upper valley between the two chains of Lebanon, flows north to Antioch, then, turning west, seeks the Mediterranean. The Jordan Valley, aptly named by the Arabs "El Ghor," or the Depression, is 1,290 feet below the level of the Mediterranean; the soil has been famous from the earliest times for its extreme richness and fertility. Varying from 90 to 100 feet in width, the swift brown river runs onward with many dangerous currents, the depth being from 3 to 12 feet. Such is the intense heat of the Jordan Valley that the ground cracks in the summer, and the natives move their tents into the hills; the thermometer will register as much as 118°. Hence, despite its richness, the absence of life and movement in the Valley; the ordinary work of town and village is impossible in such heat, and Jericho to-day is but a small mud village. In the tangled scrub and undergrowth along the river-side wild boars flourish, and leopards and a species of wolf are found, but rarely. Only two out of the four rivers find an outlet, the Orontes and the Litany; the Jordan dies in the Dead Sea, and the Barada, perhaps the most beautiful and fertilizing of the four, in the desert.

LAKES.—Palestine has three lakes, all famous. Lake Huleh, the "Waters of Merom," lies to the south of Lebanon, where the valley begins to sink downwards; in the swamps around its margin grow thick jungles of papyrus-reed. The Lake of Galilee, nearly thirteen miles long and eight miles across at its greatest breadth, is one of the most beautiful of all the sights of Palestine. Deep blue in colour, with clear fresh waters full of fish, its appearance is so instinct with life and beauty that it is hard to associate with it the treachery of the violent and dangerous storms which mar it to-day, as long ago when Christ's word stilled the waters into peace. "Jehovah hath created seven seas," said the Rabbis, "but the Sea of Gennesaret is His delight." The Dead Sea lies nearly 1,300 feet below the level of the Mediterranean; its bitter waters wash an arid shore on which no vegetable life is seen. It is the picture of a terrible desolation, of a land under the curse.

CLIMATE.—Palestine lies in the subtropical zone. The extraordinary differences in altitude and surface characteristics (it varies from 1,300 feet below the sea-level to 9,000 feet above it) must widely affect the climatic conditions and the characteristics of the inhabitants. The average summer temperature is from 80° to 90°, occasionally rising to 100°. The heat is never unbearable except in the Jordan Valley, for the stone houses, with their thick walls, are well adapted to keep it out. The rainfall is from 28 inches to 32 inches; winter has even brought 12° of frost, and snow falls, but not every year. In Eastern

Palestine, I believe, the differences in temperature are even greater, the upper heights being covered with snow. The rainy season, roughly speaking, lasts from the end of November to the end of February; "the former rains" begin at the end of October, and the "the latter rains" fall in March and April. January is cold and stormy; May and October are the sirocco months, to be avoided by newcomers and travellers. In August, with the rising of the Nile, heavy dews begin to fall, refreshing the land when it is weary. Barley and wheat are sown in December, and reaped from April to June: millet, sesame, figs, grapes, melons, etc., from August to October. The chief grain fields are the plain between Lebanon and the Hauran in Syria, and, for Palestine, the Plains of Esdraelon and Sharon, districts around Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and Hebron, and, of course, the rich lands east of Jordan. The winds of Palestine are often referred to in the Bible. The south and west are refreshing winds, the north wind is a storm-bearer. The east wind, the sirocco (for the natives use the Italian word derived in the first place from their own "sharkiyeh," eastern), is a malicious wind, piercingly cold in winter, and dry and heavy in the summer. The heat of Palestine is largely sun-heat; on the hottest day (not sirocco) there will be a touch of chill in the shade; and at sunset a treacherous coolness sets in, leading to fever if due care is not taken. At sunrise lovely little silver mists rise upward from the earth, like incense at the sacrament of dawn.

SPRINGS.—There are many springs in Palestine, and these, with the gracious dews, partly atone for the lack of rain. The hot springs at Tiberius (temperature 140° F.) are still frequented as a cure, as in days of Herod. Hot sulphur springs are also found west of the Dead Sea. Drinking-water is stored in rock-hewn cisterns, with which, both ancient and modern, the land is strewn; when these run dry at the end of a long summer following upon a poor rainy season, fever and sickness crop up everywhere. In spite of this, nothing would induce the Turkish Government to tackle seriously the question of a water supply, by no means an impossible one, nor would it allow anyone else to do so. Water and fuel are the two chief problems of life in Palestine. We discuss every fraction of the rainfall with all the earnestness it deserves, for on it, indeed, depend both health and food for the coming year; and the disastrous taxation on trees under Turkish rule, and their wholesale destruction, either for firewood or to escape the tax, have sensibly lessened the rainfall. The scarcity of wood, the difficulty of bringing it from long distances in a country where roads are few and generally bad, and the rise in prices consequent on these hard conditions, made this one of the gravest anxieties for the future just before the war: though Cardiff coal was obtainable latterly, it cost 80 francs a ton, or £3 5s. All these things, taken in conjunction with a population rapidly increasing through

immigration, for which no provision was made by the Government, made the question of one's daily bread an anxious one. The situation must be even graver now, for trees have been cut down recklessly during the past three years, and olive-wood has actually been used on the railway to supplement the scarcity of coal.

FLORA.—Despite the dead hand of Turkey upon her, the fertility of Palestine is as amazing as it is great. Everything grows out in the open and, as it seems to us, under conditions that ought to prevent any self-respecting vegetable life from attaining maturity. The land, after yielding one crop, will be scratched up (for the primitive native plough does little more than disturb the surface), and planted again almost immediately; on the hillsides, which look so stony and unpromising, every little patch of soil amongst the rocks will be sown or planted, and with excellent results. Palestinian vegetables would demoralize an English market; we have cauliflowers that measure at least a foot across, and water-melons hardly to be spanned by a man's arms: to this day the grapes of Eshcol grow in clusters from 3 to 4 feet in length. We have in their seasons grapes, apricots, nectarines, plums, damsons, quince, mulberries, figs, lemons, oranges, prickly pear, pomegranates, bananas, and many kinds of nuts; a rotll of grapes (6 pounds) costs about tenpence (old residents consider the price excessive), and for a trifling present you may go into a vineyard and eat as many grapes and figs as you can manage.

And what of the flowers? From the semi-tropical vegetation of the Jordan Valley to the English flowers cherished in gardens, practically everything seems to flourish. The wild flowers in spring are glorious beyond all telling, especially, perhaps, in Galilee, where they have been less interfered with. We have anemones, scarlet, white, mauve, and pink (many people believe that they are the "lilies of the field" before whose glory that of Solomon paled), hyacinths, ranunculus, narcissus, honeysuckle, daises, buttercups, cistus, cyclamen, irises, black arums, broom, mandrake, oleander (rose and white), thrift, hyssop, orchises, asphodel, acanthus, vetches of many kinds, unscented violets, roses, speedwell—all these, and many more whose names elude me now, grow wild in Palestine with a profusion that no words can describe. Besides these, which we may term native to the land, most English flowers flourish in gardens with a little care: cowslips, daffodils, primroses, sweet-peas, pansies (we had some that shot up 9 inches in height), violets of all kinds, tuberose, chrysanthemums, asters, jasmine, heliotrope (this grew like a tree, at least 10 feet in height), begonias, geraniums, carnations, hollyhocks, pelargoniums, white arums, roses, syringa—the list becomes unduly long, but it is not complete. When you have lived in Palestine, and marked its lavish beauty and fertility under the most harrowing ill-treatment as well as neglect, you realize that such expressions as "the glory of Lebanon," "the excellency of

Carmel and Sharon," and "the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose," are no lovely fancy of the poet, no delusion of the overfervid patriot, but the sober literal truth. Palestine is still a land of corn and wine. We see the surface richness of her, but what of the treasures hidden within, "the chief things of the ancient mountains and the precious things of the lasting hills"? Moses assured the Israelites that it was "a good land." "Thou shalt not lack anything in it; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass." But who has looked for it? The Turkish Government, by its unscrupulous taxation, put an effectual stop to anything like private enterprise, and (to give one instance only) when, some four years ago, a Syrian found that his little plot of ground yielded oil of an excellent quality, he carefully concealed his find, knowing well what would happen if the Government got wind of it.

FAUNA.—The lions of Bible days are extinct now, but cheetahs, leopards, wolves (though rarely), hyenas, jackals, foxes, gazelles, and wild cats are found, and bears in the Lebanon. Sheep, goats, and cows are plentiful, but small and lean; the beasts of burden are donkeys, mules, horses, and camels. The horses, though small and slender, are extraordinarily game, and work to the very end until they drop. When a camel falls, and has to be killed, the fellahin eat the flesh and consider it a great luxury. Venomous snakes are not very numerous; lizards of many kinds, large and small, chameleons, mantises, locusts (still eaten by the Bedouin), scorpions, centipedes, tarantulas, all abound. One year a particularly rich harvest in the Plain of Sharon was eaten by an army of rats before it could be reaped, and the terror of the people in face of this plague was intense. A plague of locusts is another terrible visitation; the air is darkened by myriads of them in flight, and where they fall not a blade or leaf survives. Amongst birds, owls, partridge, quail, hoopoes, jays, swallows, thrushes, finches, and sparrows are more or less common. Large flocks of storks pass through on their way south, and I remember once a flight of flamingoes, a lovely sight; cuckoos are occasional, but not common.

HISTORY.—We said at the beginning that the history of a country was largely determined by its geographical conditions. The history of Palestine bears out this statement in a very definite way. It is a somewhat tangled narrative of changes and conquests, the early records being vague and unsatisfactory in the main, though certain periods and facts stand out with distinctness against the shifting background of uncertainties.

Excavations in Palestine have revealed traces of prehistoric dwellers in caves and huts whose implements were fashioned from bone. The skulls and bones of these people are akin in some instances to the modern natives of Palestine. A land of many tribes and petty kingdoms, with their perpetual wars and ineffective treaties, each one

striving to get the upper hand by guile if not by force, it is difficult to form a distinct historical idea of it from the confusion of battle ever waging amongst these tribes; and when out of the vagueness of these shifting periods arise the Hyksos, the invaders of Egypt (1700 B.C.), they present a greater definiteness of outline which we welcome. The hand of Egypt lay heavy on Palestine for many long years, some of the Kings of the land even being appointed by Pharaoh, to whose power they appealed for help, vindication, or protection in their constant internecine wars. Seti I. (1320 B.C.) led an expedition into Palestine; but the power of the Hittites (from Northern Syria and Mesopotamia) was gradually building itself up in the land, and Rameses II. (1300 B.C.) by a treaty with them renounced almost all the Egyptian holding in Palestine. Egyptian supremacy revived under Rameses III. (1200-1169 B.C.), but fifty years later the Assyrians under Tiglath-Pileser swept away in their rapid encroachment the landmarks of the Egyptian and the Hittite suzerainty. Those periods which are immediately concerned with the Bible possess, of course, the chief interest for us. Palestine, divided into a series of small kingdoms ever at variance with each other, was in a state which rendered it peculiarly open to foreign access and conquest; and amongst these petty tribal kingdoms the Hebrew invaders out of Egypt made a firm place for themselves, aided, no doubt, by that learning of the Egyptians which they brought with them in the formation of an ordered communal life. They took deep root and spread abroad, and in the interval between their entry under Joshua and the day of the Messiah Whom they rejected, theirs was the history of the land. It is strange that, with a mass of tradition and the work of scribes, the political records of the Jewish Monarchy are yet so slight. Taking the books of the Old Testament which are concerned with those years merely as historical records of the kingdoms, we are struck by the prominence given to the personal character and life of the King, and by the correspondingly scanty attention paid to the country and its foreign policy and relations. We are told, for instance, of Solomon's wisdom and of the fleet that gathered riches from all lands, but we are given no details of his policy, home or foreign, which seems to have been governed largely by a commercial spirit. Thus the records of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah are chiefly the records of the life and deeds, good or bad, of each king and the never-ending struggle between the hierarchy and the monarch. The kingdoms, which lasted, roughly, from 1075 B.C. to 597 B.C., drew to their dishonoured close: the kings went into exile and the people were dispersed, never again to be gathered in one. "Other lords have had rule over us," was the bitter lament of the prophet. The people, who had rejected every chance over and over again, were left to struggle as they might against the overwhelming pressure of outside forces.

For as the might of Israel, religious and political, waned, other influences had strengthened in Palestine—Babylonian, Chaldean, Assyrian. The growing predominance of the latter power swept Palestine through a series of mighty changes during a period of some 300 years. Warfare decimated the population, and the conquerors brought in their own countrymen to fill the empty places. The social, religious, and national life of the Jews was broken up, an exhausted people lay at the foot of an iron conqueror, and during the period of acquiescence that followed on submission the Jews absorbed the invaders after a fashion peculiarly Jewish. The kingdom of Israel came to an end about 722 B.C., whilst that of Judah lasted some 130 years longer. A number of Jews returned to Palestine some fifty years after the Great Dispersion, under the favour of Cyrus, though they “came back, not to a kingdom, but to a *medineh* or district (and city) of the Persian Empire.” (G. A. Smith, “Jerusalem,” vol. i., p. 380.) Palestine was practically a Persian province until the overthrow of the Empire by Alexander the Great (333 B.C.). After his death the Ptolemies in Egypt and the Selucidæ in Northern Syria contended for the possession of Palestine, and a time of great misery followed for the Jews, culminating in the plunder of the Temple by Antiochus IV. His cruel persecution goaded the Jews into rising, and the priestly family of the Asmonean Mattathias led the revolt, which for a time was successful. Judas Maccabæus, the son of Mattathias, founded the Asmonean Dynasty, which lasted until 34 B.C., when Herod the Great, an Idumean, or Edomite, by nationality, and Roman Prefect of Syria, murdered Antigonus, and made himself King of the Jews. Under his rule Palestine enjoyed some prosperity, and ruins of his magnificent buildings yet enrich the land; but with the death of his son Archelaus (A.D. 6), Palestine became a dependency of Rome.

The New Testament story embraces much of that of the Roman occupation of Palestine. The Roman influence was very strong, and traces of it remain to-day in the wonderful ruins of walls, aqueducts, roads, baths, temples, amphitheatres, etc., and in names of places. The Gospels are stamped with the image and superscription of Cæsar’s supremacy: Roman laws, money, institutions, customs, officials, appear all through the New Testament narrative. Before the stern onward sweep of the Roman Eagles, Greek influences, once also strong, paled and dwindled. We may trace the struggle between these two chief powers of the West in the Books of the Maccabees and of Josephus. Probably the Jews suffered more under their Roman masters than under any other foreign conqueror. Fire, sword, and persecution reduced the people to utter misery and despair, which their occasional maddened revolts only served to make more poignant. From this abyss of suffering the more beneficent rule of Constantine the Great and the establishment of the Christian faith in some degree relieved

them—though the Christianity of that day was not too kind in practice. Palestine remained a Roman province from the day when Pompey added her to the Imperial crown (A.D. 65), until the Arab Conquest in 634.

Since 634, when the Arabs swept through Palestine and took her, she has been a Moslem country. Some four hundred years later began the period of oppression of Christians, which led to the Crusades—those vain, romantic, fascinating episodes in history whose glamour affects us even now. The First Crusade (A.D. 1096) was born of the impassioned preaching of a monk of Amiens, Peter the Hermit, who had made the pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and was half crazed by what he saw, and also shared, of the sufferings of the Christians in the Holy City. To him the aged Patriarch of Jerusalem appealed with tears: "Behold how we Christians suffer at the Tomb of Christ for our faithfulness to Him! Behold how that sacred Tomb itself is in the hands of infidels, who mock its sanctity and our pains! Do our Christian brethren in Europe care for none of these things?" To Peter also, praying and fasting and mourning over these things, there came strange visions, and voices that urged him to champion this cause; and so, taking his way home, he preached throughout Europe the woes of Jerusalem and the shame of the Holy Sepulchre. The Pope blessed his mission; princes, knights, and commoners took fire at his tale; words and deeds ran hand in hand; and when Godfrey de Bouillon—warrior, statesman, knight, and hero—espoused the cause, the thing was done. An organized army, under the leadership of Godfrey, aided by the first knights in Europe, was to start for Palestine in the spring of 1096; and during all the winter months Europe rang with the clang of arms and the din of preparation.

Surely no stranger army ever set forth. Men of all tongues and nationalities formed it, who were unable even to speak to each other, split up into factions by international jealousies and quarrels, yet bound together in some strange way in the bond of a common cause—the freeing of the Sepulchre of Christ. By day these men marched, and toiled, and fought with strong opposing forces, and by night they slept on the alert, never putting off their arms, while at set hours heralds passed down the sleeping lines, and cried aloud, "Remember the Holy Sepulchre! Remember the Holy Sepulchre!" And at the cry those grim, fierce warriors awoke from sleep to cross themselves and pray that it might be theirs to free that Sepulchre from the infidel. Many hardships, obstacles, and perils had to be encountered and overcome by the way; yet each in turn was met and overcome, and at last one hot June day in the year 1099 Tancred of Sicily, called the Perfect Knight, with the vanguard of the Crusading army, climbed the Mount of Olives, and from there beheld the City of their desires in all her matchless charm and beauty, and, beholding, they fell upon their knees

and wept. Three years had been passed upon the road; forty days later Jerusalem fell before the fierce siege of the Crusading host. In rushed the conquerors, fighting down the narrow streets, slaying without discrimination, mad for the time being with the lust of fighting and of purpose accomplished. The Crusaders' horses trod over the fetlocks in blood, and the steep paved streets ran with it. Godfrey, perhaps unable, perhaps unwilling, to stem the fury of his men, made his way to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre with a few like-minded companions, and knelt there absorbed in prayer while the grim work of death went on outside. By-and-by others slipped in, too, and with night the horrid work of slaughter ceased; but it was resumed the next day and for seven days more, until not an "infidel" was left. Jerusalem was now a city of the Christians, in Christian hands.

With comparative ease and quickness the land fell under the Crusaders' rule, and the Christian kingdom was set up, during the eighty-nine years of whose duration Palestine was governed absolutely on the lines of mediæval Europe. Read the chronicles of the day, read that strange book "*The Assizes of Jerusalem*," and see with what burning zeal and energy the Crusaders set their stamp and seal on Palestine. Godfrey hung up his crown in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, refusing to wear a crown of gold where his Lord had worn the crown of thorns; but after him there came Kings who were weak or selfish, or both, from whose inert hands the sceptre of Christian Jerusalem at last fell in dishonour to the dust. The shameful quibble that a Christian need not keep faith with an "infidel" was indirectly the means of their downfall, and it led very naturally to their not keeping faith with each other, and even to treating secretly with the enemy against each other. When Saladin, the righteous-minded and upright, arose like a sword of flame, there was no longer faith, trust, honour, or courage in the Christian kingdom to oppose to his onset. Rotten to the core, even so soon, the kingdom fell by its own hand, slain by the treachery and selfishness of the rulers who should have been its bulwarks. The Christian power, broken utterly at the Battle of Hattin, in July, 1187, was never again raised to rule in Palestine. And yet it is amazing what a deep impress the Latin Kingdom has left upon the land—in words scattered throughout the language, in buildings whose majestic ruins still attest the skill and energy of the makers, in the signs of Western blood traceable to-day in the natives. Passing through Palestine to-day, vivid memories of the Crusading kingdom accompany the traveller, fascinating and enthralling him by their romantic glow. Perhaps the strange force of the Crusaders' short tenure of Palestine lies in the fact of their "coming to her, not, like most other invaders, because she was the road to somewhere else, but because she was herself, in their eyes, the goal of all roads, the central and most blessed province of the world" (George

Adam Smith, "Historical Geography," p. 13). The incense of their devotion, so freely offered, despite all faults, lingers yet in Palestine, enriching her history beyond all price, drawing East and West together by a common love, and absolving the memory of men—fierce, ruthless, unstable as they were—who bore the cross-handled sword through the land. Eight Crusades at later periods strove to recover the land, but in vain; and in 1517 Palestine fell into the hands of the Ottoman Turks under Selim I. The invasion of Palestine by Napoleon lacks the shining impress of the Crusaders' devotion and enthusiasm, and appears to us in more sordid guise, though, of course, the heroic defence of Acre by Sir Sidney Smith, from March to May, 1799, must ever be a proud memory for Englishmen. "Had I but captured Acre," said Napoleon, years later at St. Helena, "I would have reached Constantinople and the Indies—I would have changed the face of the world! But *that* man made me miss my destiny!"

FUTURE.—What is to be the future of Palestine? If her past is any guide to us in our attempt to solve the riddle of the future, we may well come to the conclusion that she can never belong to any one race or people after the absolute fashion of other lands. She is a road, a highway; she can be policed, controlled, kept safe and open, made beautiful and pleasant, but she cannot become the absolute property of any one nation. She has been held longest in point of time by Turkey, whose people are the most mixed and least national of all races; but Turkey has been such a weak, unstable Power latterly that it has held Palestine more or less under the will and by the grace of Europe. And Turkey, who by its cruel taxation, its insincerity, its injustice and cynical oppression, its utter faithlessness to trust, has all but ruined the country, has driven abroad the best of her youth, and broken the spirit of those who could not escape—Turkey's fetters on the land were broken for ever, we trust, on that glad day when Jerusalem surrendered to the British. The question is too wide and too wonderful in its illimitable hopefulness for us to do more than touch on points here and there; but it is a very important one, and we cannot keep our thoughts from dwelling on it in these days of great and terrible changes. For Palestine is no lonely little island lost in the midst of a great sea, whose possession is of small moment to anyone; her position on the map makes her as real and vital a factor in the world's history now as she has ever been. The Russian pilgrims ardently believe that in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem is the actual centre of the world, and it is certain that in Palestine, which contains the dearest shrines of the Christian and the Jew, and to the Moslem is almost equally sacred, are centred some of the chief and most urgent problems of the world. There is nothing more alluring and less fruitful than speculation on political problems, and as such speculation can never be entirely free from controversial bitterness, perhaps we shall do better

to dwell rather on points whereon all nations and all creeds are at one. And we are all one in our love of Palestine, our reverence for her sacred past, our firm belief in her sure and glorious future. We have all mourned over her abasement and her misery under Turkish misrule; we all desire most passionately that she shall now be raised to her rightful place in a cleansed and liberated world. How can this great end best be attained?

In speaking of the coming restoration of Palestine we may not overlook the dream of the Zionists for a place therein. English sympathies are very quickly stirred by the cry of a people for freedom. England, who has suffered so much in her fight for liberty, not only for herself, but for the little nations that have turned to her for help time and again—England understands the longing of a wandering race to have at last a home. Every Jew and every Zionist can now, if he will, have a home, and freedom, and utmost liberty of body and of soul, in a Palestine that is under the guardianship of Great Britain.

But a great deal has already been done by the Jewish race towards colonizing Palestine. The Jewish efforts were not always successful, and it was not until the immigration of the petty trader had given place to the agricultural immigrant that a solid foundation was laid in Palestine as a home for the Jewish race—this, be it understood, as distinct from the traditional and religious side of the question. The British forces have already freed several great Jewish centres—Jaffa, where the orange-gardens are world renowned; Richon-le-Zion, whose wine already bids fair to capture a European market; Mulebbis, and many others. Between forty and fifty settlements were scattered throughout the country in 1914, "back to the land" being the policy of the Jewish associations responsible for the development of immigration. The only rivals to the Jews in Palestine as colonizing agents have been the Germans. Their undoubted influence with the Turks has enabled them to claim many fine tracts of arable land—Haifa, Jerusalem, Jaffa, and Saron. are a few of the many. Happily, this dangerous growth will now be checked, allowing a larger scope to the Jewish nationalist.

Every signpost seems to point to the one end, every argument to lead to the one conclusion—namely, that Palestine, which is now being freed by the outpouring of English blood and by the ungrudging sacrifice of splendid English lives, shall remain under England's protection, and so experience those benefits of English rule which she has so long desired. England alone will hold her on trust for the rest of the world, Christian, Jewish, and Mahomedan; under England's care Christian, Jew, and Moslem will worship in peace and safety; by England every religious and national prejudice will be respected. Many voices have been raised in favour of Syria proper passing into French keeping. It seems a good—indeed, a natural—solution of her

question. France has long cared for Syria, and Syria for her; France has spent a good deal upon Syria one way or another; there is something curiously akin between the two peoples, and it is likely that Syria as a whole would welcome French protection. Syria would present a fruitful field for the exercise of that engineering skill in which France is so eminent; there are great mountains to be bridled by roads and railways, rivers to be spanned by bridges and harnessed for irrigation, valleys and plains to be cultivated for the use of men. Thus, in separating Palestine and Syria, as we did at the beginning, if France has Syria, Palestine falls naturally to Great Britain. Our present occupation of Egypt makes it, indeed, a necessity that we should guard Palestine also; for the desert between is no certain protection to either country, and if a Turkish army (which is generally destitute of every military necessity except courage) could pass the desert with such comparative ease and celerity, what would not be possible to fully equipped and organized forces? English rule has long been the ardent desire of the Christians of Palestine, and latterly even the Moslems have cried out for it openly under the ever-increasing weight of Turkish oppression. About a year before the outbreak of war, deputations of Bedouin from beyond Jordan (wild creatures who usually avoid the stir of towns) kept on coming in to ask the Turkish Governor of Jerusalem when the English were coming to take the Holy City. The Pasha, considerably perturbed by this unexpected development, put them off with specious excuses—there was no answer yet from the English; letters took so long on the way; they were coming soon. Three times these untamed men of the desert came, then ceased, in bitter disappointment. Perhaps they thought that England had failed them. What had started the idea no one ever knew. About the same time a rumour arose in the city that five English Generals were coming by the evening train to take Jerusalem. Half the city flocked joyfully to the station, many of the Jews even went down to Jaffa to view the landing, and when no one arrived the disappointment was really intense. We may smile at the simplicity of these people, but never at the real desire for liberty, the real belief in England, that lay behind it.

England is greatly trusted in Palestine, for the people have come to understand that all her institutions out there are wholly for their benefit, and mask no ugly political aim or greed. The common saying "On the word of an Englishman it is true!" must make us proud each time we hear it. English prestige suffered a temporary eclipse in recent years, owing, perhaps, to a restrained line of policy that was misunderstood by those to whom power must be shown in concrete form, but it has never been destroyed. The extraordinary joy and thankfulness with which General Allenby and his army were welcomed by Jerusalem is a convincing proof of what the people feel for

England; and it is the more wonderful when we remember that for three years they have been subjected to bitter and unscrupulous anti-English propaganda by the Germans in Palestine, with no chance of hearing even a whisper of the truth. For many years past the education of the land has been almost entirely in foreign hands, with the result that there is now ready a generation of well-educated young Syrians, men and women, who know French and English well, who (the men chiefly) have been driven by Turkish misrule to seek their living in other countries. These will undoubtedly return to Palestine with the dawn of a fairer day, and there will be at once a generation ready and fit for use. A number of young Syrians have done well in Egypt and the Sudan in British Government departments, proving the extent of the Syrian's capacity and trustworthiness under firm but sympathetic direction. One important consequence of the quickened intercourse between Palestine and Egypt and the Sudan has been that the Syrians have been able to see and to prove for themselves the benefits of British rule, and to appreciate the immense difference between Egypt under the English and Palestine under the Turks. For years past the Syrians have said, "If the English cannot take our country as it is, then let them annex it to Egypt, so that we may be under English government and protection." You see, it had to be *England* somehow!

We may not doubt that now, freed from the long bitterness of an unspeakable bondage, and brought under the splendid breadth and justice of our Mother England's rule, which is, of all Western governments, that best adapted to Eastern needs, Palestine will become once more what she should be, the highway of God. Is she not to us all the land of an eternal and infinite promise?

Colonel A. C. YATE said he was no authority on Palestine, but was closely interested in the English Grand Priory of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem, of which the lecturer's father was for a number of years a Sub-Prelate. He had seen the suggestion made that Jerusalem might suitably become the seat of the Court of Arbitration which was now established at the Hague, while other writers had discussed the possibility of Egypt becoming a vitally central point of the British Empire. One of the foremost German writers on German war aims had called the Suez Canal the *nerve centre* of the British Empire. Ideas and suggestions such as these could not be ignored. What aimed at becoming the power of the age was Social Democracy, pervading all nations and leaguings them together for peace, and (what is ruin to the human race) subordinating individual talent, energy, and wealth to a common dead level of national mediocrity. Were the highest social grades going to allow Social Democracy to be the one dominating feature in the world, or were they going to set up to it what every

great political movement should have—an opposition? He for one was strongly in favour of an opposition. He was going to suggest in connection with the Order of St. John of Jerusalem something that might appear quixotic, but which, none the less, might take a practical shape. He believed there was a great possible future before the grand old Order, which had been so closely associated with the history of Jerusalem. It might be vouchsafed to the Order to become, if on a small scale, but in co-operation with other interests, a centre of opposition to Social Democracy. Within the last century the Order had been one of the great Hospitaller powers of the civilized world, and it was so still; but he was not in the least convinced that this should continue to be its main work. In comparison with it the Red Cross was of mushroom growth; but the latter was a strong up-to-date organization, and it would be possible for the Order to hand over its Hospitaller functions, in whole or in part, to the Red Cross. The Order, which now had its headquarters at Rome, might well be combined, as it formerly was, under one distinct head, and then become a political power, exercising a very wholesome influence. In the old days it was an essentially international Order, and its members were obliged by their vows to refrain from mixing themselves up in national and international quarrels. That was why, when the Guelph and the Ghibelline divided Christendom, the Hospitallers were able so long to hold Rhodes and Malta against the Turk and protect Europe. The anarchy that now threatened Europe was that of which Bolshevism in Russia was for the moment the most active apostle. That was a gospel that must be taken by the throat and choked. It was deeply to be regretted that His Holiness the Pope, as Mr. Richard Bagot had ably shown in the *National Review*, had failed to observe strict neutrality, and shown marked partiality toward Catholic Austria and partly Catholic Germany. Under existing circumstances, when Italy declared war against the Central Powers, the Grand Master of the Order, being an Austrian, had been obliged to withdraw to Vienna. In the old days the Order held aloof from international disputes. It should revert to this great tradition, put aside mere sectarianism, which was entirely unsuited to the age, and, by uniting its branches, become a strong political power. He wished to add, in conclusion, how much he had enjoyed a graphic description of Palestine direct from one who knew it so intimately, such as he had never had the opportunity of listening to before.

Mr. E. R. P. Moon said that all present had been interested by the new suggestion made by Colonel Yate as to the method of internationalizing Palestine. Miss Blyth had suggested an English protectorate; but we must remember how big our commitments were as an Empire, and that internationalization might be more in harmony with the spirit of the age. He wished to express his appreciation of

the brilliant and charming discourse to which they had listened. It was more than thirty years since he visited the Holy Land; but that visit led him to be specially interested in what Miss Blyth had told them of the Crusades, in respect to which his memory had recently been refreshed by re-reading Gibbon. He could give a very trifling morsel of evidence to support her view that there was a widespread feeling among the people of that country that England had some claim in the Holy Land and would make it good some day. He and his companion, for climatic reasons, were travelling from north to south, when they encamped close to the village of Hanin, and visited the old Crusaders' castle of Subeibeh. Next morning, about an hour's ride from their camp, three rascally looking men dashed upon them from behind shocks of corn and demanded their passports. It appeared that these were respectively the lindi, the village scribe, and the head of the local zaptiehs, and that the report had got about that they were surveying the castle with a view to its acquisition, so as to hold it for the benefit of the British Empire.

The CHAIRMAN said the internationalization of Palestine was tried in the time of the Crusades without any very great success. He hoped that if tried again the result would be more successful than in the past. In reference to Miss Blyth's remarks on the French claims to Syria, it was to be remembered that for many centuries the French were closely associated with that part of the world. In the first Crusade the leaders were almost all Frenchmen, and the last Crusade was participated in by Louis IX. of France, known as St. Louis, who was imprisoned for four years in Syria, and later on died at Carthage, with the words "Jerusalem, Jerusalem," on his dying lips. Ever since, the French had been keenly interested in the affairs of Syria. In 1840 the English took possession of that country from Mehemet Ali of Egypt, and handed it over to Turkey, much against the wishes of the French, who had been backing Mehemet Ali. Since that time the French had always been very active in propaganda in Syria. In the troubles between the Maronites and the Druses, the French always exercised their influence in favour of the former, whereas the English supported the latter. When he had the honour to occupy the latter post, he and his French contemporary were good personal friends, though more or less in political opposition to one another. Usually when he went among the Druses he was received with enthusiasm, but did not have a similar cordial reception among the Maronites; while the converse position applied to the French Consul-General. On one occasion the Maronite colony had a quarrel with his French colleague, and happening to go into the country, he (the speaker) was received in a most enthusiastic way by the Maronites, much to his astonishment. It was their way of showing the French Consul how displeased they were with him. When he got back to Beirut he and the Frenchmen had a good laugh

over the incident. It was not long before the French Consul recovered his position amongst the Maronites, and all went well with both of them. After all, the principal bone of contention between the French and English representatives in his time was as to who should have the smartest cavasses. They were each allowed four of these men, and vied with one another in dressing them gorgeously, very largely out of their own pockets.

The rapid survey the lecturer had given of events in Palestine from the time of the Patriarchs called up historical memories, and the allusions she had made could be multiplied by the hundred. One curious way in which East and West were combined was that in the time of Haroun-al-Raschid that monarch entered into communication with Charlemagne and appointed him custodian of Jerusalem. We all knew the story of our own Richard Cour-de-Lion, how he captured Cyprus and then sold it again to the French, who formed a kingdom there. Another curious incident was that St. Louis, to whom he had referred, was actually in negotiation as to the disposal of Palestine with Hulagu Khan, son of Jenghiz Khan, the famous Mongol conqueror. The Mongols were at that time Buddhists, but shortly after became Moslems, and the negotiations were dropped.

The Chairman then quoted the memorandum recently published by the Bolshevik Government in Petrograd, dated February 21, 1917, outlining the partitions agreed upon by the Allied Powers, under which Palestine was to be a protectorate under Russia, France, and England. How far the document was authentic we did not know. But he did not think that the Allies would divide the Eastern territories in the same way now, having regard to the defection of Russia. It was far from easy to speculate as to what was going to happen in the future. What might seem to most people the right policy to-day, might be impossible or undesirable to-morrow. He concluded by proposing a vote of thanks to the lecturer, which was seconded by Sir Evan James, and carried with applause.