

AN ANCIENT HEBREW WEIGHT FROM SAMARIA.

WHEN recently at Samaria, I purchased from a peasant boy a hæmatite weight of the size and shape here represented. It is flattened on one



ANCIENT WEIGHT FROM SAMARIA.

side, so as to stand on a smooth surface without rolling, and on the upper part there is an inscription in two lines of ancient Hebrew characters.

In the "Athenæum" of August 9th, Professor A. Neubauer writes respecting this weight :

"Professor Sayce has communicated to me the following inscription on a small weight found on the site of Samaria, and purchased by Dr Chaplin last spring : Face 1, רבעשל ; face 2, רבענצג ; which seems to read רבע של רבע נצג, 'a quarter of a quarter of a נצג.'

"Mr. Flinders Petrie, to whom Professor Sayce communicated this interpretation, writes that he has discovered from other sources that the standard weight of Northern Syria amounted to 640 grains, of which the quarter of a quarter would be 40 grains, that is, exactly the value of the Samaritan weight in the possession of Dr. Chaplin. Whether נצג is derived from the root נצג cannot be decided yet, but the use of של is important at the probable date of the eighth century B.C., which the forms of the characters indicate, and in the northern kingdom. של which is a contraction of אשר ל=ש ל, is found in Canticles, which is considered a production of the Samaritan kingdom, in Jonah, and in Ecclesiastes. The early use of של might perhaps help to bridge over the gulf which Professor Margoliouth has found between classical Hebrew and that of Sirach."

Mr. Petrie adds :—

"In discussing the weights which I found at Naukratis in 1885, I found a standard of 80 grains in common use, and suggested that it might be an eighth of the 5 Assyrian shekels ; again, at Defenneh, in 1886, I found the same standard, and I then proposed its identity with the standard indicated by the tribute of the Hittites and Syrians on the Egyptian monuments ('Nebesheh and Defenneh,' pp. 91-2). The weights showed a variation of 77 to 83 grains, and by the tributes I deduced 77 to 80 grains. I concluded that it was five Assyrian shekels halved successively into 320, 160, and 80 grains, and used in Syria and imported thence to Egypt.

"Now all this, which was a tentative deduction, is exactly confirmed by Dr Chaplin's weight, and explains that weight. It is 39·2 grains,

and is said to be 'quarter of a quarter of a Netzeg.' The Netzeg was, therefore, 627 grains, which is well within the variations of 5 shekels; and it was divided by halving down to a sixteenth. The one-eighth is 73·4 grains, which agrees with the 77 to 80 grains which I had previously reduced for this Syrian standard. So we now know that the Syrian (or Hittite ?) name for 5 shekels was Netzeg."

THOMAS CHAPLIN, M.D

A STONE MASK FROM ER-RÂM.

As I was riding through Er-Râm one day and enquiring for "antiques," a woman brought me a very curious stone mask, which I immediately purchased for a small sum. It seemed, however, that the object was regarded in the village as a sort of talisman which it would not be well to part with, so a number of men ran after me with their guns and demanded it back. Fortunately the Arab is always open to argument, and I had not much difficulty in persuading the men that it was to their own interest, if not for the good of the village, to let me take



STONE MASK FROM RAMAH.

the thing away; and I was soon permitted to ride off with my prize. It is of the variegated reddish limestone of the country, of the shape represented in the drawing, and measures about 7·3 inches by 5·7 inches