

is unable to produce an alternative position for research, and indulges in that promiscuity of method to which I have referred in these pages, so long can it hardly claim to be of any *direct* assistance to biblical studies. This is not to say that the "critical" position is perfect or beyond reproach. Far from it. But it realises its own difficulties—and far more clearly than do its opponents—it is aware of the imperfections of its tools, and seeks to improve them; while in dealing with certain real difficulties, which are intimately connected with the present unrest in this age of transition, it would endeavour to do in one of the many aspects of life what its opponents are doubtless doing in others—to solve or at least to simplify grave problems.

STANLEY A. COOK.

*ACHIKAR AND THE ELEPHANTINÉ PAPYRI.*

*(To the Editor of the EXPOSITOR.)*

DEAR SIR,—

I cannot pretend to have formed any opinion about the problems which have been raised by the wonderful discovery of the Elephantiné papyri, or about the way in which these affect Old Testament history; but as co-editor (with Dr Rendel Harris) of the *Story of Achikar*, I feel constrained to reply to some of my esteemed friend Professor Margoliouth's remarks in your January number, and in the *Expository Times* for February, and specially to his doubts about their genuineness. In these doubts I cannot follow him.

I have many reasons for being sincerely grateful to the very learned Oxford professor for his many acts of kindness to my sister and to myself. And none of his many friends has a greater admiration for his brilliant gifts than I. But

I enjoy his expositions of Mohammed and of Islâm more than I do his dissertations on the somewhat scanty remains of the earliest edition of Achikar.

If there be a factory of papyrus material at Syracuse, it must be quite a small one. Its supply can only come from the Anapo, a narrow, muddy, swiftly-flowing stream, much impeded by rushes. I visited the place in 1890, the only spot in Europe where that interesting plant grows wild. After passing the junction of the Anapo with a still smaller blue stream, the Cyane, we were towed past lovely groves, where the tufted heads of the papyrus bent beneath our towing rope. Unless these famous reeds have been cultivated artificially since that time, they would only produce enough pith to find a sufficient market in the manifest and easily detected forgeries that are shown in the antiquarian shops of Egypt and the other lands that lie around the Mediterranean Sea. Those foolish tourists who buy manuscripts which neither they nor their friends are able to read, almost deserve to have such stuff palmed off on them. If the documents are really ancient, to purchase them is to hamper scholars, and to impede the progress of Biblical and historical science by raising the price of what may be vulgarly called its "raw material."

The quantity of the plants in that "sorry stream," as Theocritus calls it, of Eastern Sicily, a stream not sixty feet wide, and filled with abundant water only in the rainy season, cannot allow of anything but a small output from the said manufactory.

But forgers need not go to Syracuse for papyrus. I am told that plenty of it is found quite blank in the tombs of Egypt, ready for their use, left there by the ancient scribes.

The real test of the genuineness of any document would lie in its handwriting. And surely when the Elephantinê archives have passed through the hands and under the eyes

of the most critical people in Germany, if they were a fraud, we should say that the age of miracles is not yet passed away.

But were the documents found by Dr. Rubensohn *purchased* from some one? If they were so, Professor Margoliouth's suspicions might be justified in a slight degree. But if no money passed between the excavators and the natives, except that the latter received their just wages for digging, what profit could accrue to the almost superhumanly clever forger or to the Syracusan manufactory?

The occurrence of Persian words, and specially of official titles, borne by Jews or others, is not surprising. Our own British friends in India, Egypt and Turkey are, many of them, designated—Kaid, Bimbashi, Pasha, Bey, etc., while the Persian title of Sirdar is conferred on the Commander-in-Chief of the Egyptian Army. And was not Nehemiah the Tirshatha in Jerusalem?

Dr. Margoliouth suggests in the EXPOSITOR that the word "faden," for a *plough* (but which, as Dr. Grimme very properly points out, is really used in its primary sense of a *yoke*, has been suggested to the forger's mind by the German word "Faden," a thread. This is surely a very curious way of looking at it. Dr. Margoliouth is so accomplished a linguist that it is superfluous to point out to him that many words which sound the same in two languages, and are even spelt alike, have often no identical meaning. Thus a German who bears the name of "Hell," corresponding to our "Bright," is not necessarily a depraved character; and if a Norwegian speak of a "Pigge," he may perhaps mean a pretty girl, and not the creature who, as Achikar tells us in his own true proverb, "went into a hot bath with people of quality; and when it came out, it saw a filthy hole, and it went down and wallowed in it."

This proverb, quoted by the Apostle Peter, must not lead us into thinking too scornfully of ancient Babylonian habits. The reference cannot be to a bath in the interior of a house, but rather to the stream which rushes from a hot natural spring in some volcanic region, where still, as in primitive days, men and animals may rush in at their pleasure. Achikar could not have been thinking of the sulphur springs at Gebel Hammâm Farâ'ûn (the Bath of Pharaoh) in the Sinai desert, near Wady Ghurundel, the supposed site of Elim, whose temperature rises to 160 degrees ; as there no mud could be found for the creature's delectation. But quite possibly he may have known the fountains at Hierapolis in Asia Minor, which cause the river Lycus to be lukewarm as it flows through Laodicea, even after it has received the tribute of the cold Asopus and of the Cadmus ; a system of hydrography which probably suggested the message to the angel of the local church in the Apocalypse. But we do not need to go further than Buda-Pesth to find such public hot baths.

With regard to the camels, I have seen, at Gaza, one of them working along with a bullock, under separate yokes, but drawing the same primitive plough. It was where a nomadic family were beginning to settle down, to use an Arab phrase, "between the desert and the sown."

I am therefore not surprised that a camel should be supposed to say : "I have lifted straw, and I have taken up (or accepted) a yoke ; but there is nothing lighter than a sojourner."

In Papyrus 8, p. 414, לִיבֵר הַסִּין תַּמִּיס would have suggested to me a strong plank of wood, perhaps olive-wood, artificially hardened, rather than a blundering imitation of the English word "lumber." I do not know what הַסִּין stands for in Persian, but is there any objection to our believing it to be either Hebrew or Aramaic ? I

even think that I could find the word in the excellent Syriac *Thesaurus* with which Professor Margoliouth has a relationship of affinity. A strong plank is quite a natural requirement for the construction of a ship.

It will be observed that the official documents found at Elephantinê are all in excellent preservation, carefully written, and carefully kept.

The papyri which contain the text of Achikar, that popular romance (the earliest of its kind) wherewith the garrison of Yeb beguiled their leisure hours, are all in rags.

Do we never find similar phenomena in our own day ?

There is another statement of Professor Margoliouth from which I venture respectfully to differ. He certainly writes as if, when the Jews took service under their Persian rulers, they were necessarily unfaithful to Jehovah, for "even this modified form of Judaism could probably not conceal its inherent hostility to *Paganism*."

But can we call the Persians Pagans ? Of all the heathen cults which succumbed to Christianity, surely the Persian one had most affinity with the worship of Jahve. It was not gross, like the Babylonian ; it was not idolatrous, for the idol, or image, was not used by its devotees ; it cannot be called *poly*-theistic. Though in its dualism it differed from the pure monotheism of the Jews, it yet looked up to one unseen First Principle of Good. That was probably why the servants of Jehovah and those of Zoroaster had no dislike to each other, and why the Jews were so active in the service of Cyrus, Cambyses and Darius.

Yet I think the most striking phenomenon revealed by the Elephantinê papyri is this. God never left Himself without a witness to the conscience of mankind, even in the darkest ages. As St. Paul says, "He gave the rain and the dew from heaven." We now see that after He had made known His will concerning the construction of the Tabernacle in

the wilderness with so much instructive symbolism in all its details (like a "kindergarten" picture to suit the infancy of the human race), and all pointing forward to a coming Deliverer, He never left Himself without a temple of some kind on this earth. The tabernacle was replaced by the Temple at Jerusalem (a tabernacle in stone), and we now know that during the seventy years when that temple lay in ruins, that is, during the Babylonian captivity, another temple of Jehovah was standing in Egypt near those great syenite rocks of the First Cataract, which are really an extension from the granite cliffs of Mount Sinai; and that there Jewish hands offered the various sacrifices prescribed in the Law. The types were not to disappear until the great Antitype came.

We cannot tell what the reason for this was; but we note it with awe and wonder as a historical fact. And the frontier fortress of Yeb appears not to have been the only Jewish colony which contained a sanctuary to Jehovah. The other and later one was at Leontopolis, and was founded by Onias in the reign of Ptolemy Philometer, nearly 200 years after that at Elephantinê had been destroyed.

Dr. Rendel Harris is preparing a second edition of the Story of Achikar, brought back to date, that is, to about 407 B.C., so as to include any variants found in the Elephantinê papyri. For this edition Mr. F. C. Conybeare and I will naturally revise those portions of it for which we are severally responsible: the Armenian and the Arabic versions.

AGNES SMITH LEWIS.

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