

## The Opportunity of the American School of Archaeology in Palestine.

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GOING to the Orient for the double purpose of studying the Arabic language and of seeing whether further archaeological research in Palestine would pay, in view of the many able explorers who have already been in the field and in view of the continuous labors of the British Palestine Exploration Fund during the past thirty-five years, you may imagine my surprise to find that, with the exception of Jerusalem, a small section of Tell el Hesya and the four unimportant sites worked during the past two years, scarcely anything has been done. Fully ninety-five per cent of the work remains to be accomplished by the enterprise of the future.

My time was spent partly in residence in Jerusalem and on Carmel, and partly in various rather hasty journeys in Syria and Palestine, which afforded me, however, an opportunity for some observations and for coming to some conclusions on the subject of the practicability of future excavations.

I journeyed along the Maritime Plain from Gaza to Sidon. The mountain ridge which extends along the whole length of Palestine I traversed from Ma'in (Maon), south of Hebron, to Mount Gilboa. Of the Valley of the Jordan I visited about two-thirds, and made a tour through Gilead and Moab, beginning at the Yarmuk and ending at Medeba. I made also a trip from the Sharon Valley up the Wady 'Arah to Tell el Mutasellim, supposed to be the Valley of Megiddo, and I travelled the whole length of the Valley of Esdraelon several times. In addition to these trips I made several excursions across the hills of Galilee and in Syria.

Perhaps I should add that I was with Dr. Bliss during the excavation of Tell Zakariya (Azekah), and that Sir Charles Wilson very kindly accompanied me to the site of ancient Samaria, and we examined it together. General Wilson is the only person of whom I have ever

heard who has made any attempt at the excavation of this important and ancient site; but, according to his own statement, he did only so much as was necessary to determine what the successive occupations were.

I was three times at Samaria, three times at Beisan or Beth Shan (the Roman Scythopolis); twice I was at Caesarea, twice at Hebron, and some four times in the Jordan Valley.

During these journeys I was grieved to see the large amount of destruction that had been done in recent years and still continues. Architecture, tombs, and monuments—all are suffering irreparable injury at the hands of stone-quarriers on the one hand, and of treasure seekers on the other. It is easier to dig hewn stones from the ruins than to quarry them, and, as long as tourists will buy, dealers who encourage the robbery of ancient tombs will not be wanting. These dealers are natives and know more about the country than Europeans, and the mischief being done at the present time is enormous. Rifling of tombs is now going on at Haifa (Rom. Sicaminum), Tyre, Shefa 'Amr, at Beit Jibrin (Rom. Eleutheropolis), in the Hauran, and at fifty other points. Quarrying for stone has been for years a profitable industry for the Bosnian colony at Caesarea. At Beisan I myself saw the beautiful Khan el Ahmar, the best preserved Saracenic khan in the whole of Syria and Palestine, being pulled to pieces to supply stone for the roadbed of the proposed Haifa-Damascus railroad. At Jerash (Gerasa) and Ammân (Rabbath Ammon, Rom. Philadelphia), across the Jordan two Circassian Mohammedan colonies have well-nigh destroyed the whole of the latter ruin and are making rapid progress with the former. When it is understood that Jerash contains one of the most complete series of Roman ruins in the world,—two theatres almost perfect, several temples, a forum surrounded by columns and containing a bema, an almost perfect street of columns, a practically perfect *naumachia*, baths, a triumphal arch, and many other ancient structures of more or less importance,—it will be seen how serious this matter is, and why the work of excavation not only needs to be done, but to be done quickly.

During all my travels I had especially in mind possible excavations, and my conclusion was that, in spite of the fact that only two really important Hebrew inscriptions have thus far been discovered, the land is rich in promise to historians, archaeologists, and Biblical students. No other country of which I know can offer so long a series of radical historic changes. Arranged in periods they would be:

1st, Hittite, Amorite, and Egyptian, and possibly early Babylonian traces; 2d, Phoenician; 3d, Jewish; 4th, Persian; 5th, Greek; 6th, Roman (abundant); 7th, Byzantine (abundant); 8th, Kufic; 9th, Crusader; 10th, Saracenic; and, east of the Jordan, may be added to all these Moabite, Ammonite, and Nabatæan.

Perhaps I ought also to mention the prehistoric period of rude stone monuments. Of these I had the good fortune to find two of which I have seen no mention, and possibly a third of considerable interest. One was on Jebel Osha', on the road leading from Salt to Nablous, a fine stone circle; another is on the road between Ras el Abyad and Tyre, a dolmen whose table stone lies beside it; and a third may prove to be the veritable circle used by the priests of Baal at the Maḥraka on Mount Carmel.

Of the various periods I have mentioned, architectural monuments, tombs, rock-cuttings, roads, and coins are to be found in various parts of the country on the surface, and most of these have been described by travellers and by the surveyors employed by the Palestine Exploration Fund of England, as well as by French and American expeditions. If what they state is accepted as true, what may we not expect to find in the future, when almost the whole work of excavation remains to be done? The country east and west of the Jordan contains literally hundreds of *tells* and promising ruins, of which only four or five have thus far been, in any way, examined. Follow any of the great plains or valleys, and you will be confronted by a continuous series of *tells*, or great artificial mounds. Follow any of the rocky ridges, and you will not fail to encounter ruins in equal abundance. Among all these are the sites of cities of the highest importance to science — the cities of the Philistine plain, Samaria, Beth Shan, Jericho, Heshbon, and many others of nearly equal celebrity. I know of no part of the Trans-Jordan country (whose surface has been so admirably described in *East of the Jordan*, by our own Selah Merrill) that has been excavated, and yet here was found the Mesha Stone! It is thrilling to examine such sites as Heshbon, Elealeh, and Medeba, and to realize that underneath the present Roman and Byzantine ruins must lie countless objects of antiquarian value, and, in all probability, many inscriptions which would shed a flood of light on many vexed questions of history and of the Bible.

The evidence already in hand, the Mesha Stone, the Siloam inscription, and the large number of jar handles with inscriptions recently found by Bliss certainly point in the direction of greater

treasures beneath the surface, while the Tell el Amarna tablets and the one tablet found at Lachish, together with the evidences from the Euphrates and the Nile, justify us in expecting to find many evidences of a higher pre-Abrahamic civilization than has, until recently, been suspected in this part of the ancient world. The well-intentioned but unfortunate opinion of some supporters of archaeological research that the results would not justify the expenditure is, in my opinion, due mainly to the fact that in Palestine very little thorough work has as yet been done. I frankly think those who hold this opinion mistaken; and I am reminded by them of the judgment of the great explorer Layard who, after what in these days would be called some superficial excavation at Nippur, in the early fifties, without finding anything but a few late terra-cotta coffins (Sassanian), concludes:<sup>1</sup> "On the whole I am much inclined to question whether extensive excavations carried on at Niffer would produce any very important or interesting results." Thus England lost not only the credit of the discoveries at Nippur but also the tablets that have since been found there.

When you add to the reasons already given for excavations in Palestine on an adequate scale the fact that this is the land of the Bible, in which not only scientists and antiquarians are interested, but in which all bodies of Christians and Jews have a still greater interest, the inducement to do something worthy of the object becomes very strong; and the chief source of wonder is that, while so many are more than pleased to help on the splendid achievements in Babylonia and Egypt, so few should be willing to contribute, in an adequate manner, to what, it will be admitted, is a work of at least equal importance.

It is my opinion that the excavation of Palestine remains to be accomplished by Americans, and I live in hope that the money which, in our progressive country, always lies ready to promote any cause that is shown to be worthy will be supplied in sufficient quantities to meet this great and pressing need.

With a self-sacrifice which few of us realize the gentlemen appointed by the Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis last year have devoted themselves to the establishment of a school for Oriental study and research in Jerusalem, the first school of the kind established by any country in the East; but, after great efforts, their work has as yet been crowned only with partial success.

<sup>1</sup> *Babylon and Nineveh*, 1853, p. 477.

Such a school, above all things, must carry on excavations, and these cannot be carried on without money. We cannot here, as was the case with Germany and France in the excavations at Olympia and Delphi, expect government aid. We must rely entirely on the liberality of private contributors, and, for the raising of an endowment of about \$200,000, it will be seen how great that liberality must necessarily be. Such a sum, if given, would soon yield results which would astonish those who, with but little knowledge of the facts, imagine that nothing remains for the explorer in Palestine.

But even in surface exploration all has not yet been done; there is much which has been overlooked. New inscriptions are being constantly found, one quite recently at so well known a place as the Haram Ramet el Khalil, near Hebron. In Sidon I found that the American missionaries, in digging for foundations for their new Industrial School, had excavated, in addition to vases, glass, and some marbles of the Greek and Roman periods, four curious "bulls," whose workmanship and type prove them to be Persian, and exactly similar to the bull-capitals surmounting the sixty pillars of the throne room or hypostyle hall of the palace of Artaxerxes, at Susa, of which one may be seen at the Louvre. Dr. Murray, of the British Museum, also pointed out to me a Greek modification of the bull-type capital from Cyprus. In these capitals the bulls crouch in pairs and back to back.

The importance of this discovery, and such it is considered by both Clermont Ganneau and Sir Charles Wilson, lies in the fact that the American Industrial School is built on the site of what was, in all probability, the Persian satrap's palace during the time of the Persian domination in Western Asia. It indicates the point from which Syria and Palestine were governed during that period, and thus sheds important light on the relations of the returned Israelites to their Persian masters.

In my trip beyond Jordan I took the road over the mountain leading from Pella to Ajlun, after having ascended the Yarmuk (Rom. Hieromax) to Umm Keis (Gadara), then along the east side of the Jordan Valley to Pella, from which place we proceeded over the mountains to Ajlun. On this road I found six uninscribed Roman milestones, which Dr. Merrill told me he had not seen, though he had found other proofs of the Roman road from Pella to Jerash mentioned by Josephus. Thus Dr. Merrill is shown to be correct in spite of the doubts of Le Strange and others. A little side trip on the road from Salt to Ammân brought me to a place called

Yajuz. Here, on the road to Ammân, lie four inscribed fragments of Roman milestones which I do not think have been described. I found time to obtain a good copy of only one of them, but I called the attention of Père Lagrange, head of the Dominicans at Jerusalem, to the existence of the stones, and he will no doubt look after them.

At Kafat er Rubud, near Ajlun, I found a pointed arch which, I think, proves the building to be, at least in part, Crusader. At one end is a fighting-cock, and at the other are two such birds in active operation, both carved in relief. Perhaps some one can tell me whether such designs occur on Saracenic architecture. I noted also here and at Kokeb el Howa, on the west side of the Jordan, that the remarkable rock-cut fosse is weather-worn and much older than the stones of the castles. The sides look as if the rock had been cut thousands of years ago.

There is no more interesting object to the Oriental traveller than the ruin called Mashita, lying on the edge of the desert southeast of Ammân, and discovered by Tristram in 1871. It has been pronounced Persian by Fergusson, and with him the Germans and many other archaeologists, who declare the building Sassanian, appear to agree. The chief difficulty with this view is that a sufficient motive for the erection of such a building in such a place by the Persians cannot be found. Thus the mystery attaching to this superb piece of architecture is far from being cleared up. During my recent visit I discovered what may possibly prove an additional clue to its identity. Something like a half-mile to the northwest of the ruins there is a low hill which rises a little above the long line of plateau running north and south which here ends. On this hill there are numerous signs of former occupation and in its interior are many caverns of considerable size. I found also a long and deep cistern. When standing on this hill overlooking the desert, I pointed in the direction of the ruins which were in full view, and said to the Beni Sahr sheikh who accompanied me, "Over there is Mashita." He at once answered: "No! This on which we stand is Mashita; that is the khan." When it is remembered that the Damascus Hajj road passes close by both the hill and the ruins, that Mashita means "shelter" or "winter quarter," and that the Amawee and Abbasside khaleefehs did many things to alleviate the hardships of the Mecca pilgrims, and that not only the influence of Greek, but of Persian artists also, determined the early Arab architecture, it will be seen that the splendid ruin may be an unfinished attempt at an elaborate building to accommodate the Mecca pilgrims.

This, then, is the field, together with a few of my hasty observations. Now, what may be expected from further excavations? In other words, will it pay to expend further energy and money on this land? Does the work need to be done?

Leaving aside entirely the benefits which will accrue to students at the new Oriental School from practical work and knowledge of modern methods of excavation, I think it may be answered: "Yes; excavations will pay, and pay well, in results added to the sum of knowledge." There is no other country which has had so interesting a series of occupations. As the highway of Oriental nations, it has peculiar interest for the historian, who, in the buried cities of the Maritime Plain, may look for materials to furnish the missing links that will connect the eastern and the western worlds; while, in places like Beisan and the tells of the Jordan Valley, he may expect a flood of light on that pre-Abrahamic civilization of which we have hints in Sacred Writ. Excavation will repay the philologist, who may expect to find inscriptions which will considerably augment palaeography, and will supply some links that are wanting in our knowledge of the Phoenician language. It will repay the topographer by settling disputed and unknown sites. It will repay biblical students by throwing a new light on the meaning of many statements of Scripture. And, lastly, it will repay Christian and Jewish believers by placing on a scientific basis a large number of the statements contained in the books which furnish the historic basis of their faith.