

## The Mosaic recently found at 'Ain 'Arrûb.

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ABOUT a month ago a photograph was shown me in Jerusalem of a mosaic which, it is said, the fellahin had recently unearthed at 'Ain 'Arrûb, between Bethlehem and Hebron. The mosaic was evidently from the floor of an old church and is inscribed in Greek characters. The characters are well formed, but the Greek is quite ungrammatical. I was told that the mosaic had been photographed, but that, through fear of evil consequences, the fellahin had covered it up again. The photograph which I first saw belonged to a friend. A little later, finding that photographs of it were in several hands, and were on sale in Jerusalem, I secured one. The accompanying photograph was made from a drawing, and the spacing of the letters may not be absolutely accurate. This photograph has since been published in the London *Graphic* of October 25, together with a very bad photograph of the mosaic of Madebah, which was found in Moab some years ago. The reason for coupling these two mosaics is that the mosaic of 'Ain 'Arrûb bears the name of Zacharias, while the mosaic map of Madebah locates the place of the "holy Zacharias" in this same part of Palestine.

The mosaic as shown by the photograph is on page 42.

It will be noticed that the inscription is much broken, and that the beginnings of all the lines are lost. The first letter visible in the first line is Γ, which is probably the concluding letter of ΑΓ, the abbreviation of ἅγιος, saint. If this conjecture be right, two conclusions follow: (1) One letter only is lost at the beginning of the line, and consequently but little is missing at the beginning of the following lines. (2) This abbreviation was followed by a proper name. Three letters of this name are clearly visible, ΠΑΗ. It is probable that the letters ΩΝ which occur beyond the break also formed a part of this name. What the letters were (about four in number) which are lost we can only conjecture. A Greek name Πλήσιππος occurs in Greek

inscriptions,<sup>1</sup> and that name would just fulfil our conditions here. The misspelling *ων* for *ος* is quite characteristic of the bad spelling to be noted below.

At the beginning of the second line an *omicron* is in part visible. P probably preceded it, completing the name *Καρποφόρο*, a bad spelling of the genitive of the name *Καρπόφορος*. In the middle of



the second line and at the beginning of the third, parts of the name *Ἰωάννης*, which is, in this inscription, spelled *Ἰωάνν*, are visible.

The letters AE at the beginning of the fourth line are evidently the end of some word. We have a vacant space not only at the beginning of this line, but also at the end of the preceding. One expects here some word like *ἐτελεύτα*, which this writer would probably give in an uncontracted form *ἐτελεύται*. The main objection to supplying

<sup>1</sup> See Benseler's *Wörterbuch der griechischen Eigennamen*, p. 1211.

the lacunæ thus is the fact that the word seems too long for the space, but it may be noted that the letters both at the end of the third line and at the beginning of the fourth are closely crowded ; the presence of a long word there would account for this.

The end of the fourth line is broken away. My interpretation makes it necessary to assume that the spelling and grammar of the inscription are both defective. This assumption is justified by the analogies afforded by the epitaphs published in Waddington's *Inscriptions grecques et latines de la Syrie* to the sense which my interpretation yields. The lacunæ should, therefore, be supplied as follows :

Α]ΓΠΑΗ[CIΠΤΤ]ΩΝΚΑΡΠΟΦΩ  
Ρ]ΟΚΑΘΩΝΚΣΙΩΑΝ[ΙΝ]ΖΑΧΑΡ[Ε]ΙΑΣ  
ΙΩ]ΑΝΙΝΑΒΕCΟΜΒΟΝΚΣΙΩΑΝΙΝΚΣ[ΕΤΕ  
ΛΕΥΤ]ΑΕΤΕΛΙΩΟΙΤΟCΡΤΟΝΕΤ[ΕΩΝ.

This, transliterated, with corrected spelling and the abbreviations filled out, would read :

Ἅγιος Πλήσιππος Καρποφό-  
ρου, καθὼς Κύριος Ἰωάννης Ζαχαρίας,  
Ἰωάννης Ἀββᾶ συνέβη Κύριον Ἰωάννην, κύριος ἐτε-  
λεύτα, τελέσας<sup>2</sup> ρ' τῶν ἐτέων.<sup>3</sup>

Saint Plesippos, son of Karpophoros,  
like Saint John, the son of Zacharias,  
(John, the Abbot, agreed with Saint John), the Saint  
died, having completed 100 years.

The use of Κύριος in the sense of "saint" corresponds to the similar use of "Mar" in Syriac. This, together with the bad Greek, indicates that the writer or writers were not born of Greek-speaking parents, but were probably Semitic. If our interpretation is correct, the writers' knowledge of history was as imperfect as their spelling, for they have ascribed to John the Baptist the traditional age of John the Apostle. If our interpretation is correct, this mosaic has no necessary connection with the birthplace of John the Baptist, as the writer in the London *Graphic* supposes, for the only reason he is

<sup>2</sup> Or, perhaps, τελείωτος; cf. Sophocles's *Lexicon*.

<sup>3</sup> Perhaps we should read ἔτους, and regard the ρον, which actually occurs in the text, as a grammatical mistake rather than a mistake in spelling. The drawing probably allows too much space between the E and the fragment of the T in the word ἐτέων.

mentioned is because his age was supposed to be the same as that of the deceased Plesippos.

Against our reading of the name Plesippos, it may be objected that no day in the calendar of either the Greek or the Syrian church is devoted to such a saint. It may be answered, however, that there are many local saints in Palestine, like Mar Elias, to whom a shrine is dedicated between Jerusalem and Bethlehem, to whom no day is devoted in the general calendar.

*November 15, 1902.*