

given I put it down from sound (by Eli Smith's alphabet), and made Edward (who knows Arabic) do the same, and at the same time I made the dragoman write it down in Arabic on the spot. Each evening these lists were compared and an Arabic list made out, and on our return Dr. Sandreczky very kindly undertook to revise it; the results of his labour have already been sent home.

Many of the words no doubt are somewhat in error, but I believe with this list it would be very easy to get a correct list of the whole country from the Bedouins on the other side, who now often come to Jerusalem.

It was not an easy job to keep the reconnaissance connected in a country where some of the most important points were inaccessible, and where now and then we had to be careful of showing our instruments, on account of the prejudices of the Bedouins.

I may observe that on the east side, as on the west, it is not the ruins, or the 'ains, or the hills which have names generally, but a whole district; thus in one tract there may be nothing particular to mark it, while in another you may have two or three conspicuous hills, an 'ain, and several ruins, all of one name, and this fact, until it is recognised, is very perplexing.

From the pointed arches lying so frequently on older work, it is apparent that domesticated races lived on this eastern side long after the fall of the Roman Empire, and that it is comparatively but a short time since the Bedouins have held sway there. The population at one time on the Belka appears to have been dense.

The country now is cultivated by the black Bedouins and runaway fellahin from the western side, working under the Adwân.

## LETTERS FROM MR. E. H. PALMER.

JERUSALEM, *March 7th*, 1870.

### III.

Having found it expedient to divide our journey, and being unable to obtain camels for the second part without going up to Hebron, we have run up to Jerusalem for a few days to refit before starting again southwards, and I take the opportunity of writing you a short account of our progress.

I am glad to say that our investigations thus far have been eminently successful, and that we have made some discoveries of great importance. The outline and features of the mountain range forming the edge of the Tih plateau were examined by us from the south, and while still in Sinai. This will be duly explained in the maps and route sketches, which we have made, and which we hope to be able to forward as soon as our work is complete. From the Naôb el Mirad the pass in Jebel el 'Ejmeh, by which we entered the scene of our explorations, we crossed to

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Nakhl, where we had made our depôt, and thence proceeded in a north-east direction as far as J. Ikhrimm.

The whole of the desert crossed by the Hajj route, and of which Nakhl is approximately the centre point, is an arid rolling plain, relieved by a few isolated groups of mountains and low plateaus, but otherwise presenting scarcely any features of interest to the explorer. The great Wady el Arish and its tributaries, which have been exceedingly incorrectly laid down on the maps, were first determined by us, and the orography more accurately defined; but as these are points that can only be elucidated by means of our map and route sketches, I refrain from dwelling upon them here.

At J. Ikhrimm we again turned off the regular route which we had been following for two days, and from this point up to our arrival at Beer-sheba every portion of our route was marked by objects and discoveries of the highest interest. Hearing that some ancient remains had been recently discovered by the Arabs at a place bearing the name of "El Contelleh" in Wady Garaiyeh, the large valley which receives the drainage of the mountain plateau south of J. Magrah or mountains of the "Negeb," we determined to investigate the facts. Arriving at the spot, we found an isolated hill, its summit covered with *débris*: here a chance hole was shown us in which we were told that a large water-jar had been found. We were unable to devote more than a day to the excavation of the place, but even in this time we cleared out sufficient of the *débris* to show that the summit had been occupied by a strong walled building, probably a fortress; but the most remarkable feature observable in it was that along the foundations of the walls there were square holes each containing four large amphoræ, carefully packed in with straw and other rubbish, and protected above by a framework of timber. Of one of these jars, which was thus marked upon the shoulder, Mr. Tyrwhitt Drake has made a careful coloured drawing.

Leaving Garaiyeh, we turned northwards to J. 'Araif, of which, in spite of the attempts made by the Arabs to prevent us, we made the ascent, being the first Europeans who have ever done so. The observations taken from the summit were of great use to us in determining the lie of the country, and in correcting previous maps. For instance, the high cliff noticed by Dr. Robinson, and called by him J. Mukhrab, is not an isolated mountain like Araif, but the precipitous edge of an extensive mountain plateau called Magráh, which, though intersected by various broad wadies, runs northwards, without any break, to a point within a few miles of Wady Sebá, where it is divided by Wady er Rakhmah, from the mountains of that name. To the west of this plateau, and forming the eastern border of the desert of et Tib, are a number of lower mountain groups, amidst which the wadies which take their rise in the heart of J. Magráh meander on their way to the sea. This country is of course much more fertile than the open plain, and here it is that the interest of the region culminates, for here must have been the scene of a great part at least of Israel's wanderings, and here, if anywhere, we must look

for the traces of many of the cities and towns of "the south country" mentioned in the Scripture records.

We next examined Wadies Mayein and Lussan; in the latter, we discovered many cairns and stone circles, as well as traces of a later occupation. There is an ancient caravan road, probably Roman, from Gaza to Akabah, running up a portion of Wady Lussan.

Crossing successively Wady el Serúr and Wady Seisab, we came to 'Ain el Gadis,—in a wady of the same name,—the position of which, as representing the ancient Kadesh, it was of so much importance to identify. By Mr. Rowlands, who first made known its existence to Biblical geographers, it appears to be confounded with 'Ain el Gudeirát, which is, however, situated some miles farther to the north-east. We then turned off slightly to the west to examine Moweileh—the traditional site of Hagar's well—and found there many very interesting remains and traces of what appeared to have been an extensive and very ancient city, belonging to the same period as the stone circles and dwellings before noticed. On several of the higher hills were cairns, the form and arrangement of which afforded us considerable food for speculation. They are placed in rows, and invariably on the edge of the cliffs facing the east; they are too small to have been tombs or dwellings, and too far apart to have ever formed a wall. Near the same place were also two caves, one of which is approached by a staircase cut through the rock, and containing three small cells or compartments, and had evidently been used as a hermitage in Christian times, as the walls still bear traces of rude frescoes, amongst which crosses could be plainly distinguished. From Moweileh we proceeded to Gaseimeh, where we found water, also caves and many specimens of the ancient stone remains; thence we went on to Wady el 'Ain, so called from the 'Ain el Gudeerát, which exists some two days' journey up the valley.

Wady el 'Ain has been erroneously represented on the maps as a broad plain, which, running into Wady Murreh on the east, divides the Southern or Azazimeh mountains from the Northern mountains of the 'Negeb.

Without dwelling upon the slight geographical difficulty of making two valleys, undivided by a watershed, cut through a mountain plateau, I will merely repeat my former remark that the plateau of Jebel Magráh stretches without a break from immediately above J. Araif to Wady er Rakhmah. It is true that Wady el 'Ain, being a valley of much greater extent than any of those previously mentioned, makes a large gap in the outline of the range; and as it is at this point that we first find traces of cultivation and ancient habitation on any considerable scale, the natural limits of the "Negeb," or "Land of the South," may well be considered to begin northwards of this point. Crossing a low range of hills, we came to Wady es Seráin, where we once again struck the ordinary route, but almost immediately afterwards turned off by a side wady to the north-east into Wady el Birein,

in order to inspect the ruins said to exist there. Here began our first serious difficulty with the Arabs; the Azazimeh were encamped in large numbers in the valley, and word was sent to our sheikh that if we attempted to approach the place we should be driven back by force of arms. Accordingly Sheikh Suleiman implored us not to venture, as it would be at the risk of our lives; but, laughing at his fears, we walked straight for the place, leaving our Arabs to follow, and telling them that if there *must* be a blood-feud, they would be the sufferers. Firmness and a little "chaff," added to the tales which our Bedouins chose to invent of our prowess, soon overcame all scruples, and we remained two days on the spot, examining the ruins without molestation. Wady el Bircin contains two ancient wells (whence the name) built with strong masonry, many ruins of houses, villa and other buildings, amongst which is a "faskiyeh," or reservoir; an admirably constructed aqueduct leads down to it from the wells (this appears to have been wilfully destroyed).

Two hours to the north-west lie the ruins of El 'Aujeh, where we also stayed to sketch and photograph. They consist of a Byzantine church and a fort situated upon the summit of a hill, with the ruins of a small town at the foot, where we also found a smaller church, and three fine wells, now dry. Around the base of the hill sweeps a fine broad valley, banked up into flat terraces with wonderful skill, and divided by innumerable strong walls and fences. This valley is called by the Arabs Wady el Hanein: to the stranger it is Wady el Hafir, and the real name has never before been breathed into European ears. Perhaps the names Abdallah and Ali, which our Arabs had themselves given us, made them forget that we were not of the "faithful," and rendered them more confidential; but certain it is that the wady is called Hanein, as we have had many opportunities of testing, and that the Arabs have the strongest repugnance to naming it to a stranger. The reason for this is, that there exists an old tradition amongst them, that "should a seil (or flood) once come down Wady Hanein, there would be an end of all prosperity in the country." The origin of this legend is obvious: the wady is so well embanked, and laid out in terraces to distribute and utilise the waters, that a flood would be a physical impossibility. This the Arabs do not understand, but the tradition savours sufficiently of ill omen to prevent them from mentioning the name to people who are supposed to exert so powerful an influence over the rainfall as the Nasára.

El 'Aujeh has been identified by Dr. Robinson and others with el 'Abdeh, the ancient Eboda, and the question has not been hitherto satisfactorily settled. We have, however, discovered, without any doubt, that 'Abdeh is situated in the very heart of J. Magráh, at the head of Wady Murreh, and near the Nab el Gharib, and that there is a road from Tell 'Arad, and another from Gaza, both leading to Akabah, which pass by this place.

We have already made arrangements with the Arabs for visiting

'Abdeh on our return journey southwards into the mountains. Another much-disputed point is the position of Sebáta. Mr. Rowlands pronounces it to be identical with Rehaibeh, and Dr. Stewart heard that it was situated east of Khalasah, at the foot of the Magráh mountains; but no one appears ever to have visited it. It was not without considerable difficulty that we could prevail upon our Arabs to reveal the site, and when that information was at last extorted from them, it was no easy work to induce them to take us thither, as they were on bad terms with the Bedouins of the neighbourhood. At last we succeeded in discovering and visiting the real site, and this and other discoveries to which it led have amply repaid us for the trouble and risk.

From El Aujeh we crossed low hills and wadies in a north-east direction for eight miles, when we struck Wady el Abyadh, and about three miles farther came to the head of a small valley called Wady Sideriyeh. A mile to the north of this, and on the summit of a hill overlooking a large plain, is situated a fortress called El Meshrifeh. The sides of the hill are furnished with escarpments, bastions, and strong towers connected with rock-hewn chambers, and on the summit are several buildings, amongst them a church. But the lower portion of the masonry of the towers is of a different date, and these, as well as an old walled-up cave, appear to belong to much more ancient times. Three and a half miles to the south-south-east, situated in a large plain called Migrá Esbaita, is the ruined town of Sebáta (pronounced Es'baita). Its size and state of preservation warrant the Arab saying, "Greater ruins than El Aujeh and El 'Abdeh there are none, save only Sebáta, which is grander than either." The city contains three churches and a tower, all in a much better state of preservation than any other ruins we had seen, the apse of the larger church still standing upwards of 30ft. in height; the houses in some cases are nearly perfect, and the streets still well defined. Over the door of the tower we found a rudely-sculptured stone, on which was this device—an urn, from whose mouth sprang a palm, or lotus, supported by a lion and a griffin.

The houses are constructed with great architectural skill, and the want of timber is supplied by the contrivance of building the basements with arches about 3ft. apart, large stone beams being laid across to form the floor of the next story. The number of garden walls, towers, and villas, which for miles surround the city, show how fertile and thickly populated the country must once have been. Here, as well as at El Aujeh, we noticed a peculiar feature in the landscape. The hills and more elevated portions of the wadies are covered with black flints, and such ground is called by the Arabs "Himadhat," and they were in every case swept into swathes or small round heaps, with a regularity that pointed to some agricultural operation, although we could not at first conceive what plant could be cultivated on such stony and unpromising soil; but the tradition of the Arabs, who call them "*teleilat el'Aneb*," *grape-mounds*, at once solved the difficulty; and the advantages

of these sunny slopes, and of the radiation of heat from the black stones for the cultivation of the vine, was at once apparent. I mention this, as it has suggested to us the possible solution of another important topographical question, which, however, I will reserve until we have books of reference at hand.

The name Sebáta at once suggests the Zephath of the Bible. Zephath signifies a watch-tower; and it is a noteworthy fact that the fortress of el Meshrifeh, discovered by us in the same neighbourhood, exactly corresponds to this in its position and in the meaning of the name. I would make one more suggestion respecting this site. Zephath has always been considered as identical with Hormah; and in Judges i. 17 it is thus spoken of: "And Judah went with Simeon his brother, and they slew the Canaanites that inhabited Zephath, and utterly destroyed it. And the name of the city was called Hormah." May we not understand the word "Zephath" in its proper signification, and consider "the city," after all, as separate from the tower or fortress thus attacked and destroyed. The city, which was protected by so commanding a fort, might well be spoken of as the City of the Tower; and, as so important a position would not be likely to be neglected by later inhabitants of the land, I think it not improbable that in El Meshrifeh we see the site of Zephath itself, and in Sebáta that of the city of the "Zephath," to which the Israelites, after their victory, gave the name of Hormah. About fifteen miles to the north-west we came upon other remains hitherto unknown: a rock-hewn sepulchral cave containing six lateral recesses; and, a little farther on, a ruined town of considerable extent, called Sa'di. Near by are traces of a rock-hewn well, which, from the fallen troughs beside it, cut in huge blocks of stone, belong evidently to a very ancient date, and would seem to possess a much better claim to be identified with Isaac's Well at Rehoboth, than that at Rehaibeh, two miles farther on. The ruins at the latter place, and those at Khalasah, where we next encamped, are better known; and, although we were enabled to make a more leisurely inspection of them than has yet been attempted, I shall reserve the description for a more extended report. Khalasah is situated in Wady Asluj, which at this point takes the name of the ruined city. Wady el Kurn, in which it is generally placed, has no existence except upon the maps. From Khalasah we went on to Beer-sheba, and found on our way the ruins of a Roman station, and a road from Gaza, joining, as we were informed, the old road to Akabah via 'Abdeh, or Eboda. We found Beer-sheba presenting an aspect far different to that described by previous travellers; for such had been the severity of the recent drought, that the herbage is entirely burnt up, and in place of rich pasturages there is nothing but a dry, parched valley, bare and desolate as the desert itself. This state of things had compelled the Bedouins to move off with their flocks and herds to more fertile spots, and we were therefore unable to find camels to take us back into the mountains without going up to Hebron, as our Arabs dare not venture so far beyond their own borders. We did not

regret this, however, as we were enabled to visit the ruins of Haura described by Dr. Tristram, and moreover succeeded, even so near the beaten track, in lighting upon another ruined town named Datraiye, of which the existence has not, I believe, previously been made known.

In a short sketch like the present report, I cannot give the details of our work; but I may confidently say that when they are published, we shall be found to have corrected many erroneous impressions with regard to the country, and to have discovered much that is of high importance in illustrating the geography and history of the Bible; and I trust that in the remaining portion of our explorations we may be as successful. Our journey has been a most interesting one, though not without its anxieties and risks. Our Arabs were very different to the "gentle Towara," and it was no easy task to overcome their prejudices and their fears, and to extract from them the information which we required.

The whole of our journey—nearly 600 miles—from Suez to this place has been performed on foot, and having no servants, everything has devolved upon ourselves. This, with the route-sketching, making plans, &c., left us but little time to ourselves; and although Mr. Tyrwhitt Drake, in addition to his own natural history investigations, devoted himself with great energy to assisting in the other objects of the expedition, yet we seldom worked less than fourteen to sixteen hours in the day. We have brought plans and sketches of all the ruins and other objects of interest on our route, and Mr. Tyrwhitt Drake has also taken a number of photographs. Curiously enough, we did not find a single inscription in the country, if we except the Arab tribe marks, which have, many of them, considerable archaeological and historical interest. I commenced a collection of them last winter in Sinai, and hope to give a complete account of them, with their history and origin.

When we arrived here at Jerusalem, the long-continued drought had caused the greatest apprehensions, as the water supply was nearly exhausted; the rain has, however, at last come, and has set in with great violence. As soon as the weather permits, we shall resume our journey. Starting from Hebron we shall enter the "Negeb" mountains by Tell Arad, and instead of following the regular route to Wady Musa, shall pursue what we believe to have been the course of the Roman road to Abdeh. From this point we shall descend into Wady Murreh, and examine this and Wady Figreh, as well as the passes of Ghárib, Enfah, &c., exploring as far as possible the lower portion of the mountains inhabited by the Azazimeh. This will complete the exploration of the Tih and its mountain borders, the work which the Palestine Exploration Fund has confided to my hands. After visiting Wady Musa we shall return into Palestine north-east of the Dead Sea, and so back to Jerusalem. In our remaining trip we shall travel even more simply than before, discarding the larger tent, and only taking

with us the absolute necessaries of life. We find that a very light equipage enables us to move with more freedom, to say nothing of its advantages in an economical point of view.

E. H. PALMER.

#### IV.

JERUSALEM, *June 2, 1870.*

LEAVING Jerusalem on the 20th of March, we proceeded to Hebron, with the intention of completing our explorations in the mountains of the Tih. From the latter place we took with us a small party of the Jehalin Arabs, with four camels to carry our baggage, and an Abyssinian lad whom we had hired as servant, and the well-known old sheikh Hamzeh of Khalil; we ourselves, as usual, performing the journey on foot.

Passing by Tell 'Arad, Keseifeh—a ruin of considerable extent, and containing the remains of a Christian church—Melh, 'Ar'arah, and various other places of minor importance, we came to Ras Abu Taráfeh, erroneously called on the maps Abu Teraibeh, from which point our route lay through entirely fresh and unexplored country. Here we noticed traces of a large caravan road, and the ruins of a small station or fort, the first indications of the Roman road to Arabia, through the mountains of the Azazimeh, the existence of which has been before suspected, and which we have since proved by our subsequent discoveries. We then traversed that portion of the mountain plateau known as Jebel Bakhmah, and on the fifth day came in sight of Wady Murreh. The maps are so incorrect that it would be impossible to convey an idea of this piece of our journey without tracings of our route sketches, but we were pleased to find that the latter exactly fitted in with those which we had previously made while examining the mountains from the western side.

The descent into Wady Murreh is made by a steep pass, called Nagh el Gharib; the valley is not by any means, as has been described, a broad plain, but is a deep cutting in the great limestone plateau, and from its sheer precipitous sides, and the huge mounds and banks of alluvial deposit with which its bed is dotted over, presents a picturesque and even grand *coup d'œil*. To the south-west the plateau assumes a more broken and mountainous character, forming the head of Wady el Abyadh, and to the east of this are situated the ruins of 'Abdeh, the ancient Eboda, which we had determined to visit. We pitched our tent in a small branch of Wady Murreh, called Emka'ab, and made preparations for an excursion, which was to settle the disputed site, on the following morning. By this time the Azazimeh, who were encamped in large numbers in the neighbourhood, began to collect, and showed considerable displeasure at our intrusion on their domains, hinting, in unmistakable terms, that we should not be allowed to see any more of the country. In the morning, however, we started, fully prepared for a scene, and taking with us two

of our Jehalin camel-drivers, whom we found, in spite of their bad reputation, to be very willing and intelligent fellows, made for the pass at the head of Wady Emka'ab, by which 'Abdeh was to be approached. As we neared the foot of this pass we observed a party of armed men hastening on to anticipate our arrival, and who, as soon as they saw us, called out to us in peremptory tones to go back from whence we came while our lives were yet safe. Getting nothing but a laughing retort, and seeing us determined to advance, they became very angry and excited, and rushed up the pass singing their war-song, and occasionally firing off their matchlocks. Arrived at the top, their attitude and language became so menacing, and the large stones they threw over the edge came so unpleasantly near, that we thought it advisable to sit down and endeavour to hold a parley and come to terms. We accordingly sent up one of our men to treat with them, but the experiment was unsuccessful, and our messenger of peace was met with drawn swords and pointed guns, and fairly driven down the hillside. We were, therefore, obliged to discuss the matter from a distance, and after several failures and several grand demonstrations on the part of the Azazimeh, in one of which they actually lit the beacon fire, proclaimed war, and offered us the customary start before making the attack, we at last arranged the matter amicably for a pecuniary consideration, our late antagonists consenting themselves to act as our guides for the sum of not quite eight shillings, to be divided amongst them all. Here and at other places where no Europeans had before ventured, we overcame very serious difficulties at a trifling cost; but elsewhere, where the ill-advised liberality of M. de Saulcy and the Duc de Luynes and others has raised the expectations and excited the cupidity of the Bedawin, we were often compelled to pay extravagant sums before we could prevail upon them to show us a single thing. The invariable answer to our remonstrances in such cases would be, "The Amir thought it worth so much, and if you don't like the price you need not go."

I mention this because that part of our journey which lay through districts previously visited was beyond all proportion more expensive than that through unknown parts of the country; and while professing ourselves able to deal on fair terms with the Bedawin, we are powerless in the face of such precedents as "the Amir's" lavish backshish. Had we given in at first to the Azazimeh they would have demanded pounds instead of piasters, and we might, by paying these demands, not only have saved ourselves some unpleasantness, but have effectually closed 'Abdeh against all but millionaires. As it was, neither our purses nor our inclinations sanctioned such a course, and we preferred trusting to firmness and patience for success.

'Abdeh is situated on a kind of promontory, and is defended on the east side, where it joins the plateau, by a strong wall, and on the precipitous parts by escarpments similar to those described at Meshrifeh. It consists of a large fort, with official residence attached, and a village of considerable size extending on either side. The buildings, which are

Christian, are some of them in good preservation, but the remains are neither so extensive nor so perfect as those of S'baita. Careful measurements were taken, and plans made of the whole. The discovery of the real site of Eboda is important in a geographical point of view, as Dr. Robinson and others have identified it with El Aujeh, ruins which I have described before; and the existence of an ancient road from Gaza to Petra and Akabah, passing through the Azazimeh mountains, has consequently remained a matter of great doubt.

Leaving 'Abdeh, we proceeded down Wady Murreh, which, after about seven miles, is joined by some other wadies, from one of which it then takes the name of Wady Madherah. Four miles farther down, the ancient road, which we had hitherto been following, branches off into the mountains of the Azazimeh by a valley called Umm Tarfa. We were surprised to hear from the Arabs that Jebel Madherah lay only a little farther down the wady of that name, so sending on our camels, with orders to camp in the Wady Umm Tarfa, we proceeded to ascertain if the information was correct. After two miles we reached the foot of the mountain, or rather large isolated mound, which we sketched in with the neighbouring passes of Yemen and Sufâh, over which lie the roads from Hebron to Petra. We found the position of this mountain to be wrongly marked on the maps by more than twelve miles.

Turning into Wady Umm Tarfa we commenced the actual exploration of the Azazimeh mountains. For some miles we followed the course of a precipitous but narrow valley, called Wady Hanjûreh, and then struck over a monotonous, though rugged, plateau of limestone; descending by a steep pass, called Nagb Ibn Már, we found ourselves on a broad open space, which might almost be called a plain, and from which several large valleys, the principal ones being called Wady Rámán and Wady Abu Taraimah, flow down into the 'Arabah. The elevation of this mountain near the Nagb Ibn Már is about 2,000 feet, the same as that of Jebel 'Araif, which, however, is considerably higher than Migráh. This shows how gradually the plateau lowers until it falls away, in a series of precipitous steps, into the 'Arabah on the east, and towards Jebel 'Araif to the south, terminating the plateau of the Azazimeh mountains, and again rising until it forms a second step at Jebel 'Ejmeh, the southern limit of the Tih. On the third day we emerged from the mountains by Wadies Rámán and Jeráfah, near the head of the former of which we found a ruined fort or station, a conclusive proof, if the numerous broad but disused camel tracks which we continually met with had not been sufficient, that we had been following the ancient Roman road throughout the whole of our course. In Wady Ghamr, to which we next came, we caught our first glimpse of the Arabeh. Here, again, we found the maps considerably at fault: Wady Ghamr is described as a smaller wady, taking its rise in the Azazimeh mountains, and flowing into the Arabeh from the west; and Wady Jeráfah is set down as a larger watercourse, flowing down from Jebel 'Ejmeh and meeting the waters of the Ghamr at the south-east corner of the Migrah mountains. The real fact, however,

is that Wady Ghamr takes its rise to the south-east of Jebel Araif, flows round the base of the lower plateau, into which we had descended from the Nagb Ibn Múr, and receives the waters of Jeráfah from the north. The whole appearance of this mountain region is desolate in the extreme, and although we found water in many parts of our route, the Azazimeh who inhabit it are some of the poorest and most degraded of the Arab tribes. We did not complete the exploration of their country without experiencing considerable opposition and annoyance, but owing to the light baggage with which we travelled, and the unpretending appearance of our *cortége*, we were enabled to overcome the difficulties, and to escape without any serious mishaps. From Wady Ghamr we crossed the Arabeh and entered the mountains of Edom. The Arabs to the east of the Arabeh were then actually fighting, and at least one party of travellers whom we afterwards met had been unsuccessful in reaching Petra. To the no small astonishment, however, of the fellahin, we appeared amongst them without warning, and remained for more than a week examining the antiquities of the place. On our entry we were encountered by a band of thirty armed ruffians and a great display of warlike demonstration, and alarm guns were fired from all parts of the valley to collect the fellahin against the invaders. It required all our diplomacy to manage these scoundrels, who are now, if possible, more lawless and turbulent than ever, but we luckily escaped with no further loss than that of a crowbar. We were fortunate enough to discover a small but exceedingly interesting rock-cut city some distance to the north of Petra, the existence of which had been previously unknown. Of this we shall give a description in another place. At Petra a question of some difficulty presented itself with regard to the expedition to Moab, which it had been arranged that I should undertake. The obvious and cheapest route was to return to Jerusalem and enter the country by the territory and under the escort of the 'Adwán. To take the eastern course involved passing through a country already embroiled in warfare, and amongst tribes whose lawlessness and rapacity are proverbial even amongst the Bedawin themselves. Several considerations, however, determined us to take the latter course. The 'Adwán and S'Khúr Arabs had been employed in the affair of the Dhibán stone, and being "posted up" in desert news, we knew that they had not only searched in vain in their own country, but had been unsuccessful in their attempts to discover several "written stones" said to be in the possession of the Hamaideh and Beni Hamideh, the tribes whose opposition caused the lamentable destruction of the celebrated monument of Meshá. We accordingly resolved to brave the risks and enter into negotiations with the last-mentioned tribes, unprejudiced by the presence of strangers, whom we knew that they regarded with no small suspicion and distrust. We accordingly made arrangements with the 'Ammaún Arabs, and, under their guidance, left Petra. Although this tribe possesses a better reputation than the other Eastern Arabs, we soon found that there was little to choose between them and their neighbours, and from them we met, for the first time in our expe-

rience of Bedawin, with breach of faith and dishonesty. Although several times threatened, we fortunately escaped without personal violence, and have great hopes of bringing the offenders to justice, as, thanks to the kindness of Mr. Moore, the consul, the affair has been taken up officially here. Throughout the whole of our journey to Moab we were obliged to adopt the most stringent precautions, as predatory bands infested the country in all directions, and we had more than one instance of the state of things in two wholesale murders, which occurred within a short time of our passing the spots in which they were perpetrated. On one occasion an Arab of the Saidiyeh tribe sought the refuge of our camp; he had been robbed of his arms, stripped to the shirt, and received a bullet-wound in his foot, while his three companions had been shot dead within a short distance of our camp. Poor fellow; he was only a robber, according to his own statement to us. Even our own guides, as we were making a forced march one night, appropriated a camel, whose owner being alone had fled at our approach, and we had some difficulty in compelling them to abandon the spoil.

We traversed the eastern sides of the Arabeh, descended into the Ghor, and proceeded past N'meirah to the Ghorel Mezári, where we took guides from the Ghawárineb, and devoted a day to the examination of the Lisan, on which we found one small ruin. We entered Moab by the pass of Jerrah, and were hospitably entertained by Ahmed Ibn Tarif, the sheikh of the Beui Hamideh. The object of our coming was immediately divined by the Arabs, for we found that the affair of Dhibán had afflicted them with a positive mania for "written stones." Our host offered to conduct us at once to Shihán that we might see, and, if it pleased us, buy a stone which he declared he had found and concealed there, and which the now celebrated Ibn Nuscir had been unable to obtain for the "consuls at Jerusalem." He had, however, a keen eye to profit in the transaction, and declared that we must pay a sum of money down before seeing the stone, because, as he frankly told us, it might be worth nothing, and then we might only give him a trifle for his trouble, which would not answer his purpose. He, moreover, added the following reassuring remark: "If you Franks had come down here twelve months ago and offered me a pound or two, you might have taken all the stones you chose, the Dhibán one included; but now you have taught us the worth of written stones, and the Arabs are awake to their importance at last." In fine, we considered the necessity for ascertaining the truth, and had in the end to give a liberal backshish for permission to see the stone, which turned out after all to be a carved Ionic capital. This was but one of a series of troublesome and expensive disappointments. Several times we were told, by men who had actually assisted in breaking the Dhibán stone, and who might therefore be supposed to know what it was like, of other monuments which they declared to be the very counterpart of it. We could not leave such statements unsifted, and the same routine had to be observed time after time—an extravagant backshish—a long walk or ride, occasionally entailing a night passed under

the shelter of a rock, with no other food than a piece of dry bread and a skin of water—the result being a stone covered with old tribe marks, natural veins, or at the best a fragmentary Nabathæan inscription.

We visited camp after camp, staying with the various sheikhs, passing from tribe to tribe, and living *à la Arabe* in order to gain their confidence, and in this way we succeeded in inspecting every known "written stone" in the country, besides examining and searching ruins for ourselves; but the conclusion has at last forced itself upon us that, *above ground* at least, there does not exist another Moabitish stone.

If a few intelligent and competent men, such as those employed in the Jerusalem excavations, could be taken out to Moab, and certain of the ruins excavated, I think it not improbable that further interesting discoveries might be made, as the Bedawin have at various times undoubtedly found relics of antiquity—gold coins, and even a small idol—when ploughing in the neighbourhood of the ancient cities. Such researches might be made without difficulty if the Arabs were well managed and the expedition possessed large resources, but it must be remembered that the country is only nominally subject to the Turkish Government, and is filled with lawless tribes, jealous of each other and of the intrusion of strangers, and last, not least, all greedily claiming a property in every stone, written or unwritten, which they think might interest a Frank.

At least a thousand pounds would be required, and with this sum a second Moabitish monument might be found, but until such sum is put into an explorer's hand there is little chance of a second being brought to light.

Our journey has not, however, been unfruitful, as we have visited many parts of the country previously unexplored, and have carefully examined ruins before known only by name, and have thus collected much valuable geographical information. Amongst other curiosities, we were told of the existence, on the shore of the Dead Sea, of a wonderful figure of "the wife of the prophet Lot," of which they told a legend differing but slightly from the Biblical account. The spot was very difficult of access, and could only be approached by men on foot and without incumbrances, so we started early one morning from the camp of Ibn Tariff and reached the "Bint Nobi 'Lut" a little before sunset, and passing the night as best we might under shelter of a cliff, returned the next day. This figure is situated between the "seils" of Jerrah and Mojib, and is a natural pinnacle of rock, which, however, does present a rude resemblance, when seen from a distance, of an Arab woman with a child on her shoulder. The legend is sufficiently curious as showing how local tradition preserves the memory of bygone events in spite of time or change of race. Returned to Jerusalem, we have been working diligently at the inscriptions in the Haram area and elsewhere, and have got copies, or squeezes, of them all. The great Cufic inscription round the arcade has been copied with great care. The point where the substitution of the name Abd Allah for Abi el Melek was shown by M. de Vogüé puzzled us a little at first, as the distinct join shown in that

gentleman's illustration is the commencement of a fresh set of mosaics, the former batch having run out, which is carried through the rest of the inscription. But on inspecting it closely by the aid of ladders, we found that immediately after that join, the mosaics had been taken out, and clumsily replaced to insert the forged name. I have taken a squeeze impression, which shows the state of the mosaic both in its original and altered aspect; and having traced the outline of the letters while they were visible through the wet paper, have obtained a copy of this part of the inscription, from which persons interested in the question may judge for themselves.

We have had no leisure to make tracings of our plans, inscriptions, &c., as we have worked without interruption since leaving Egypt. I, therefore, reserve these, as well as a more detailed report of our proceedings, until our return to England. As soon as we can finish our work here, which I trust will only occupy us a few days longer, we intend visiting Beit Jibrin, starting immediately afterwards, through Palestine to Damascus, and shall endeavour to glean all the information possible about the nomenclature, traditions, and archæology on our route.

E. H. PALMER.

#### INSCRIPTIONS AND MASONS' MARKS.

THESE inscriptions and masons' marks, from the Lebanon and Saida, are for the most part reduced from squeezes, and have not been described or published previously.

They are naturally very imperfect; but it is hoped that future travellers will, with these to help them, recover those portions which are here missing or incorrect.

C. W.



Mason's mark or name on the bottom of a Corinthian capital : t Saida. The middle letters are indistinct.