

Mohammedans were unable to disprove, notwithstanding the direct evidence of their senses to the contrary, and the prisoners were perforce set at liberty, and the charge abandoned. Equity, either in its technical or ordinary sense, is not a distinguishing characteristic of Muslim law-courts, but in this case no one suffered by the omission but themselves.

Mamún's brother, El Mo'tasim Billah, succeeded him upon the throne. In the year 842 a fanatical chieftain, named Temím Abn Hareb, headed a large army of desperadoes, and, after some temporary successes in Syria, made himself master of Jerusalem. The churches and other Christian edifices were only saved from destruction on the payment of a large ransom by the patriarch; after receiving which, the insurgents vacated the city, and were shortly afterwards entirely defeated by the caliph's forces.

A wonderful story is told of the great earthquake which took place in the year 846 A.D.; namely, that in the night the guards of the Cubbet es Sakhrab were suddenly astonished to find the dome itself displaced, so that they could see the stars and feel the rain splashing upon their faces. Then they heard a low voice saying, "Gently, put it straight again," and gradually it settled down into its ordinary state.

(To be continued.)

### AMERICAN EXPLORERS IN PALESTINE.\*

THE first impulse towards the exploration of Palestine, in recent times, was given by Dr. Edward Robinson in 1838. Dr. Robinson went through the Holy Land, not as a mere traveller making notes of his passing observations, but as a student of Biblical History and Antiquities making researches upon a well-defined method, with the scientific motive of preparing a work on Biblical Geography. He had fitted himself for the journey by the special studies of fifteen years, had mastered the whole literature of his subject, and had mapped out distinctly the points of inquiry which previous travellers had left undetermined. But he had also qualifications for his task such as are seldom combined in any one man;—a discriminating judgment, a retentive memory, comprehensive and well-digested knowledge, accurate powers of observation, the habit of patient and cautious investigation, and a rare faculty of common sense in sifting facts and weighing evidence. The most eminent geographers of Europe at once recognised the great value of Dr. Robinson's researches in a geographical point of view; but controversy was awakened by his opinion touching the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and other places of reputed sanctity, and by his broad canon of historical research—

\* From the *Quarterly Statement* of the American Exploration Society, No. 1.

“that all ecclesiastical tradition respecting the sacred places in and around Jerusalem and throughout Palestine is of no value, except so far as it is supported by circumstances known to us from the Scriptures, or from other contemporary history.” Next to the testimony of the Scriptures and of Josephus, Dr. Robinson gave importance to the preservation of the ancient names of places among the common people. In this branch of inquiry he had the invaluable aid of Dr. Eli Smith, a master of the language and the character of the Arabs, and an acute and careful observer.

The researches of 1838 were followed by a second journey of Dr. Robinson in 1852. In the meantime the greater part of his identifications of disputed sites in Palestine and the region of Sinai had been accepted by travellers and scholars, and his estimate of tradition, though it disturbed many cherished associations, had come to be regarded as founded in reason. All subsequent writers upon the Holy Land who are entitled to any consideration have profited by Dr. Robinson’s “Biblical Researches;” and these remain to this day the great storehouse of information upon the geography of Palestine—his projected work on the Physical and Historical Geography of the Holy Land not having been completed at the time of his death.

But Dr. Robinson was not equipped for a thoroughly scientific exploration of the Holy Land. He went at his own charges, having but a single companion, with few instruments, and no trained assistants for a proper survey. He opened the way to a scientific exploration, provided sound instructions and positive data for others; but he himself reported that “there yet remained much land to be possessed.”

In 1848, Lieutenant Lynch and his party made a scientific examination of the Dead Sea, so careful, thorough, and complete, that the official report of the United States Expedition under his command has become the standard authority upon that anomalous feature of Palestine.

The publication of “The Land and the Book,” by Dr. W. M. Thomson, in 1859, while it added much to our knowledge of Biblical localities in Palestine, popularised the illustration of the Bible from the natural scenery and history of the Holy Land, and from the manners and customs of its inhabitants.

Dr. Barclay’s “City of the Great King,” published in 1858, made some substantial additions to our knowledge of the topography of Jerusalem; Mr. Osborn’s “Palestine, Past and Present,” 1859, was a contribution to the natural history and the cartography of the Holy Land; Professor Hackett’s “Illustrations of Scripture,” published in 1860, gave a lifelike tone to many passages of the word of God from the natural phenomena and the social customs of Palestine; and other Americans, travellers and missionaries, have enriched our literature with journals, reports, and monographs upon the same fruitful theme.

We do not here speak of the obligations of Biblical science to explorers from other nations,—English, French, German, Dutch, Rus-

sian,—who have followed in the path opened by Robinson; for the object of this brief paragraph is not to give a *résumé* of modern explorations in Palestine, but to recall Americans to their duty in a field where their own countrymen were pioneers, and where American scholarship and enterprise have won such distinguished merit. If of late years we have suffered France, Germany, and especially England, to lead us, their successes should stimulate us to an honourable rivalry for a precedence that was once fairly American.

The appeal lately made to the public spirit and national pride of Great Britain concerning maritime discovery and survey applies with equal force to Americans concerning explorations in the Holy Land. "We fear," says "Nature," "that if we do not bestir ourselves, the credit which has been won by British scientific enterprise will pass elsewhere. Having shown other nations the way to the treasures of knowledge which lie hid in the recesses of the ocean, we are falling from the van into the rear, and leaving our rivals to gather everything up. Is this fair to the eminent men who have freely given their best services to the nation, and obtained for it a glorious scientific victory? If their success is regarded by other countries as so distinguished that they are vying with each other for a participation in it, surely we ought at least to *hold our own*."

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#### NOTE ON M. GANNEAU'S DISCOVERY OF AN INSCRIBED STONE OF THE TEMPLE OF JERUSALEM.

THE inscription found by M. Ganneau threatens the penalty of death against those who violate the regulation; the passage which he quotes from Josephus does not threaten this penalty, but reads thus: "When you pass through these cloisters unto the second temple, there was a balustrade of stone all round, whose height was three cubits; its construction was very elegant; upon it stood pillars, at equal distances, declaring the law of purity, some in Greek letters, some in Roman, that no foreigner should go within that sanctuary."—Bell. Jud. v. v. 2.

Upon this M. Ganneau remarks: "Il est à noter que Joséphe ne parle pas du sort tragique dont est menacé celui qui violerait le règlement: ce silence est certainement intentionnel," &c., &c., going on through an entire paragraph to show why Josephus says nothing of the penalty of death.

Permit me to point out that the agreement between the text of Josephus and the stone just found is closer than M. Ganneau perceives. He has overlooked a passage in the "Antiquities," which reads as follows:—"Thus was the first enclosure; in the midst of which and not far from it was the second, to be gone up to by a few steps. This was encompassed by a stone balustrade for a fence, with an inscription