

JERUSALEM.

IN a letter dated 28th February, Mr. Schick informs us that he has found portions of three aqueducts at different levels, outside the Damascus Gate, and that he hopes to be able to trace out the source from which they derived their supply of water.

The excavations in the Muristan are being continued, and a series of large tanks connected with each other, and 40ft. deep, has recently been discovered.

In the Haram Area Mr. Schick has confirmed the existence of the ditch north of the north-west angle of the platform, which was first noticed by Captain Warren. He finds several walls of small stone beneath the surface, and believes the old ditch to have been arched over.

Mr. Schick has also found indications of the existence of a vaulted passage near the Golden Gate, running apparently from the old postern in the east wall towards the platform; and after a close examination of the ground near Solomon's Throne, he has come to the conclusion that there was once a tower there similar to that at the north-east angle.

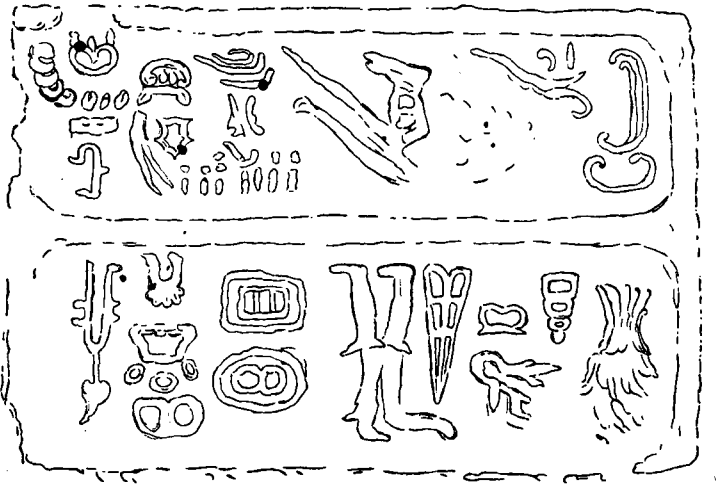
IDEOGRAPHIC INSCRIPTION FOUND AT ALEPPO,
AKIN TO THOSE OF HAMATH.

THE attention of *savans* has been for some time directed to the ideographic inscriptions found at Hamath, near Damascus, and made known to the scientific world chiefly through the exertions of Captain Burton and Mr. Tyrwhitt Drake. When these two gentlemen were at Jerusalem in 1871, I told them of a similar kind of inscription existing at Aleppo, of which, thanks to the kindness of my friend M. Colonna Ceccaldi, I possessed a drawing made by M. Paucker, and which I gave to them to copy. It consists of two lines, containing figures whose analogy with those of the Hamath inscriptions is evident. The original stone, of basalt like those of Hamath, is embedded partly in the wall of a mosk, and partly in the hareem of an adjacent house. Only the former portion is visible, and consequently either the beginning or the end of the inscription is wanting in the above copy. Mr. Drake, on visiting Aleppo a short time after, found the stone still in its place in the mosque El Kakán; but the engraving given in "Unexplored Syria" differs considerably from the one under consideration.

The authenticated existence at Aleppo of an inscription belonging to the same system of writing as those of Hamath is a fact of considerable importance, as tending to show that these latter, whatever their origin, age, or meaning, are neither confined to one particular locality, nor to

be considered as isolated and accidental specimens. They must be no longer treated as a chance phenomenon, but as part of a regular system of writing belonging to that part of the country (*système régional*); and it is very probable that further researches in North Syria will bring to light other inscriptions in the same character.

Refraining from making any premature efforts to decipher these inscriptions, I will merely remark that the signs are very few, and repeat themselves frequently in groups, which seems to show that they belong to very simple phonetic elements, syllabic if not alphabetical. Apart from any historical interest which they may possess, these inscriptions have a special value in that they prove almost conclusively the existence of an apparently figurative system of writing specially belonging to Syria, and dating from a very early epoch, and may consequently be the means of bringing about some unexpected solutions of the problem as to



the sources of the alphabet. Without wishing so far to dispute the results at which science has already arrived as to assert that the Phœnician alphabet was entirely derived from this ideographic writing, which, so to say, died in giving the alphabet birth, one may still think that the one exercised a certain influence over the formation of the other. It is of course still a question whether this Syrian system of ideography is original, or merely an offshoot from the systems of the two great civilised centres, Egypt and Assyria, of which countries Syria was always alternately the satellite. It is possible that the Syrian ideographic system and the alphabet may have nothing to do with one another, but may both have been borrowed successively and independently from the same source at an interval of several centuries.

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