

tion, all the individual elements calculated to prove the correctness of our supposition. Certainly the objections which, no doubt, will be raised against it in Berlin can, in the presence of the tangible facts in the cave, only make him smile; but I, being cognisant of the state of things there, and aware of the criticisms lavished on the results of Weser's expeditions, could not be satisfied, and, therefore, completed Schick's report in the essential points.

It is thus to be hoped that the truth may at last be known respecting this interesting question.

In the hope that the foregoing explanation may be of service to you in England, I remain, my dear Mr. Shapira, very faithfully yours,

(Signed) FREIHERR VON MUNCHHAUSEN,
Imperial German Consul in the Holy Land.

London, *Nov. 29th*, 1877.

Allow me to state here the results of my own observation:—

I observed that the rocky mountains south-east of Moab, from the upper Wadi Themad to the lower part of it, called Wadi Vali (the maps all wrongly give two separate wadis), as well as farther south to the Wady Sepha (perhaps the Supha of the Bible) and the River Arnon, consist of white soft limestone intermingled with masses of flint, as also some other harder stone called Missi in Arabic. Many holes occur in the limestone, some smaller, some larger, especially near the flint strata, which holes seem to be natural earth bubbles. The softer parts of the rock are apt to dissolve into very fine white dust, which tumbling down, and mixing with some harder pieces of stone fallen from above, in process of time petrifies, and so forms a new "rock."

The same thing must, in my opinion, have happened in the hundreds of caves I have seen, all of which are hewn in the original rock. The upper parts resolved themselves into powder, and the idols, vases, etc., hidden in the natural holes there (and used as talismans? or monuments?), also fell down to the bottom of the caves, and are, consequently, often found under ground near the rocky walls of the caves. Others, which were hidden in a hole in the midst of the rocky wall of the cave, behind a prominent row of flint, became covered by a petrifying new wall, formed in process of time from the dust, stones, or even buried pottery, which had fallen slowly from above.

Dr. Almkvist is Professor of Oriental Languages at Upsala. Mutlak, I may add, is Selim's greatest enemy, and would have long ago killed Selim if not afraid of me.

M. W. SHAPIRA.

Bodleian Library, Oxford, *Dec. 3*, 1877.

All Semitic scholars, I have no doubt, will read with the greatest

satisfaction, Freiherr von Münchhausen's letter, addressed to Mr. Shapira, so far as his new discoveries of Moabite idols and potteries, with and without inscriptions, are concerned. No one ever believed that the Mesha inscription was the first and the last made by Moabites, and hopes were expressed that some other documents would turn up in the land of Moab, and I may add, perhaps, even in the land of Ammon. But, as to the potteries bought at Berlin, no official or unofficial document will ever prove their genuineness. Before Profs. Socin and Kautzsch had even the idea of investigating the subject, I had shown, from Prof. Schlottman's specimens, published in the *Transactions* of the German Oriental Society, that, from a palæographical point of view, the inscriptions published by him must be a forgery, since we find there not only one and the same letter sometimes in the right position and sometimes upside down, but also Himyaritic and even Arabic characters, which cannot occur in a genuine document of at least 600 B.C. It is probable that the unskilful falsifier worked with a table of alphabets, let us say with that of Gesenius. I shall not insist, either, on the shape of the goddess of the earth, which, according to my opinion, represents rather the type of a German girl—this must be left to the judgment of the archæologists—or on a passage of these inscriptions which represents a permutation of a passage of the Proverbs, which might, perhaps, be disputed. If I am right in the last point, the falsifier must have been a person knowing the Hebrew text of the Bible. At all events, as I have pointed out, whilst no two words can be explained in the specimens published by Prof. Schlottmann, not even with the professor's strange method of decipherment, by having recourse to all the Semitic dialects, the Mesha inscription is read with facility except in the broken parts. I may add that the Moabite potteries at Berlin are considered tacitly by all the German Semitists, with the exception of Prof. Schlottmann, as forgeries, otherwise the inscriptions found upon them would have been published already. I may remind the Imperial German Consul in the Holy Land that the Crimean tombstones with Hebrew inscriptions, mentioned in your columns, were declared by a professor of geology to have lain buried horizontally for 1,800 years; and, in spite of this statement, it is now evident, from Dr. Harkavy's researches, that the inscription, which was believed to be 6 B.C., is not earlier than the thirteenth century A.D. Allow me to express the hope that, in the further discussions concerning these Moabite antiquities, no one will imitate the example of Prof. Schlottmann, who declares, in the *Norddeutsche Zeitung*, M. Clermont Ganneau's statements to be the result of *chawinisme*. Science is, and ought to be, cosmopolitan, and professors have to give the first example to the general public of confraternity and candour.

A.D. NEUBAUER.
