

PHœNICIAN INSCRIPTION IN THE POOL OF SILOAM.

A GREAT deal has been written about the Pool of Siloam, and all kinds of hypotheses have been propounded about the canal by which the water is carried from the Virgin's Fountain to the Pool of Siloam. All investigators are agreed in maintaining that it is a piece of very ancient workmanship, and many of them try to prove its connection with the waterworks made by King Hezekiah—but every theory that has hitherto been put forward regarding it has been founded on guesswork, and I had very little hope that we should ever arrive at any certainty respecting its age. An accidental occurrence has, however, led me to believe that we shall in course of time learn something definite about this aqueduct. A short time ago, one of my pupils, when climbing down the southern side of it, stumbled over the broken bits of rock and fell into the water. On rising to the surface, he discovered some marks like letters on the wall of rock. I set off with the necessary things to examine his discovery, and on thoroughly investigating the place I found beside the eastern wall of rock a very smooth level about 25 feet distant from the (southern) entrance, round which the rock stood up like a kind of frame surrounding a tablet sunk about half-an-inch below it. It appeared to be smooth and polished, whilst the rest of the rock was left quite rough. This tablet is about 2 ft. 2 ins. broad and high, but as it goes right down into the water I could not measure the height exactly. The rock rises quite 7 ft. above the tablet to the top, and opposite it, on the western side, is a niche hewn in the rock, where the maker of the tablet must have placed his lamp.

There is an inscription on the tablet consisting of 8 or 10 lines; *the letters are very small* indeed; unfortunately they are not very deeply engraved, and have become more indistinct because of a deposit of silicate that has gradually covered them in course of time; a squeeze of them on paper was therefore very inadequate: many of the letters, being somewhat different in colour, are still quite recognisable, but are not sharply enough cut to admit of an impression of them being taken. As far as I could judge the letters are Phœnician, but you must judge for yourself on that point from the squeeze.

Before we can have an exact copy, a perfect squeeze, the following measures must be resorted to. In Colonel Wilson's "Ordnance Survey Plan of Jerusalem," the depth of the Virgin's Fountain is given as 2'087 ft., and that of the present bottom of the western end of the Pool of Siloam, where the spring flows out, is also put down as 2'087 ft. This shows that the water merely flows through the canal with what it has gained from the Virgin's Fountain which generally rises to 3 ft. In Dr. Tobler's opinion, and in that of Colonel Warren ("Recovery of Jerusalem," p. 238), the canal is so low in several places (especially in the middle), that one can see that it used to be higher. "Sand, rolling stones, and mud," are to be found there. See what Colonel Warren says of his investigation of the place in the middle of the 240th page of his book. Thus one sees that the canal

has got not a little choked up with rubbish in the course of years, and that its bed is rather higher than it used to be. As the tablet with the inscription is now partially sunk in the water, which could not have been the case in the old time, it is apparent that the canal is very much filled up with broken rock, etc., in this place also. This is assuredly the case with the Pool of Siloam, through which the little stream flows. In order to lay bare the tablet with the inscription and thus get at it properly it would be necessary to employ workmen to make a ditch through the pool (so as to lower the water), either to bring it to its former level, or at any rate to make its bed 2 or 3 ft. deeper. This could easily be done, and then it might go through the dam, and by this means the canal would be emptied 10 ft. further up than where the table is. There would also be no further stoppage of the water, which would have a free course through the canal down which it would run in a stream of about an inch deep, and over it a board might be laid on which one could stand and work comfortably. Perhaps the silicate might be removed by a chemical process, and then a perfect impression could be taken of the inscription.

The work would be better done if it were done with the consent and under the direction of the municipality, and so far there are few difficulties in the way—but an outlay of about £25 (and perhaps more), would have to be made. I am quite willing to undertake the work if it is desired.

I told Dr. Chaplin about it and he told me that he would go and see it, so he will perhaps send an account of what he has seen.

As the paper used to take off the impression was partly in the water, it was quite wet, and tore in taking it off the stone.

If the surface of the water were lowered in the canal it must also be lowered in the Virgin's Fountain, and then we shall probably be able to find out where the water comes from, a matter that still remain unknown. Later on I shall send a short paper with drawings of the Pool.

C. SCHICK.

ZELZAH.

THERE is some difficulty connected with this word. The fulfilment of predicted detail was to assure Saul of the truth of Samuel's words. Many particulars are given in 1 Samuel, x, 2-5. It is said, "thou shalt find (*lit.* come upon) two men by Rachel's Sepulchre in the border of Benjamin at *Zelzah*." No such place is named elsewhere, nor has any trace of the name been found, since Beit Jala is too far distant to satisfy the conditions.

The Sp. Comm. rightly observes that the mention of any place is unnecessary, since Rachel's Sepulchre would be sufficiently well known. Accordingly for כַּעֲלִיצָה it suggests reading כַּעֲלִיצִים (with cymbals). The Vulgate gives "in meridie" (towards the south), while the LXX