

MEETING IN THE QUEEN'S COLLEGE, BELFAST.

On the 23rd April a large company, at the invitation of the Rev. Dr. Porter, President of the Queen's College, assembled in his own house, in the college buildings, for the purpose of hearing from him something of what had been done towards the exploration of Palestine, and what was in contemplation by the new Survey undertaken by the Royal Engineers of England. The company was received by the President in one of the large rooms of his private residence. The new ordnance maps of Palestine, and many objects of interest belonging to the country, were on view; and attracted considerable attention. Amongst those present were:—The Lord Bishop of Ossory, the Mayor (Mr. E. P. Cowan, J.P.); Mr. Wm. Ewart, M.P.; Mr. E. J. Harland, J.P. (chairman of the Harbour Commissioners); Mr. James Musgrave, J.P.; Mr. John R. Musgrave, J.P.; Mr. James Torrens, J. P.; Mr. Samuel Lowther, M.P.; Mr. F. D. Ward, J.P.; Mr. Thomas Sinclair, J.P.; Mr. S. G. Fenton, J.P.; Rev. Dr. Busby, Rev. Dr. M'Kay (president of the Methodist College), Dr. Parker (headmaster do.); Rev. Dr. Meneely, Rev. Dr. Bellis, Dr. Steen, Professor Watts, Professor Wallace, Professor Kileen, Professor Leitch, Rev. Dr. Murphy, Professor Nesbitt, Professor Everett, Dr. Hodges, Rev. Thomas Welland, Rev. Charles Seaver, Rev. Richard Irvine, Rev. M. Clarendon, Rev. Hugh Hanna, Rev. Thomas Hamilton, Rev. J. H. Moore, Rev. George Shaw, Mr. Otto Jaffé, Mr. John Jaffé, Mr. R. W. Corry, Mr. Quartus Ewart, Mr. H. Matier, Mr. Glass, Mr. S. Wallace, Mr. W. L. Finlay, Mr. Wm. M'Neill, Mr. Chas. Thomson, Mr. W. Young, Mr. E. H. Clarke, Elmwood; Mr. Alex. Jate, County Surveyor for Antrim, &c. There was also a large number of ladies present.

Rev. Dr. PORTER delivered a short address. He said the reason he appeared before them was to give some information relative to a country in which they all took an interest, and more particularly to tell them something regarding recent explorations. Every one would admit that the religious element was one that entered largely into everything connected with Palestine. In that country they had three important religions, each of which had exercised a paramount influence upon the destinies of mankind. First, there was the Jewish religion, next in succession the Christian religion, and then the Mahometan. The most sacred shrines of these three forms of religion were to be found in Palestine. With the exception of the shrine at Mecca, there was none more highly venerated than the site of the ancient temple, and the burying-place of the patriarch Abraham. The ancient house of Israel looked upon this land—and rightly so—as the land of their fathers, and that great people also looked forward to that land as the place of their future hopes and aspirations. He was delighted to see some representatives of that ancient and historic race present there

in their midst that afternoon. With regard to the Christian religion, and its connection with Palestine, he need say but little, as many places there were held sacred by every section of the Christian Church. They had only to mention the names of Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Bethany, Nazareth, or the Jordan to call forth affection and sympathy, as they were places round which they cling, and ever must cling. Palestine was interesting historically. **Some of the earliest chapters of the world's history opened up** before them in connection with that country. After referring to some of the early events mentioned in the Bible connected with this land, the speaker went on to refer to the Canaanitish tribes who, he said, had been discovered to possess a literature, and a language of their own. The Hittites exercised more than an ordinary influence, and he believed they were the inventors of the alphabet that had been ascribed to the Phœnicians. All the places throughout Palestine had an important bearing on Roman history. The physical aspect of the country was also of great interest to the student, the surface formation being the most unique in the world. After explaining the position and physical bearings of the River Jordan, the president referred to the architectural wonders of the country. He called attention to the huge stones which were used in many of the buildings, and the difficulties that must have been experienced in getting them placed. He himself had seen some specimens which were computed to weigh some 1,250 tons. These would be difficult to manage; but he supposed if Mr. Harland had them down at the Queen's Island, he could find some means of lifting them. Some very large stones were placed 100 feet from the ground, and as there were some engineers present that evening, perhaps they could explain the process by which they were got to that position. Palestine was the mother of commerce. Tyre and Sidon were great cities; they were the London and Liverpool of the world then; and perhaps Beyrout might be compared to Belfast. These cities did a great timber trade, but he could not say whether any of it had found a place in the composition of the White Star Line. They were also famous for manufactures and arts. Linen may have found a place there—that linen which was perfected by the looms of Belfast, of which trade Mr. Ewart might be regarded as the representative. Such being some of the objects of interest presented in Palestine, he would ask what was being done at present to develop them, or give the public more knowledge of what the land possessed. The exploration scheme had done a great deal, it had thrown a flood of light upon its archæological and physical qualities, and other matters of great interest in that wonderful country. Great changes had recently taken place. The ordnance survey of Jerusalem had been executed just as thoroughly as that of any part of our own country, and that by the Royal Engineers. It was gratifying to find the attention of the Government being drawn to this Survey, and these men giving their time to such an important work. The Americans tried to survey a portion of the land, but they disputed amongst themselves, and the company was broken up. As to what would be done in future, he might say that a meeting was held recently, under the chairmanship of the Dean

of Westminster, who had taken a deep interest in the work from the first, and it was proposed now to proceed to the country east of the Jordan. The surveying party had the assistance of Lieutenant Conder, of the Royal Engineers, and as the staff was an efficient one, and as they intended to work there for three or four years, much good, no doubt, would be the result. The speaker, during the course of an interesting address, gave a graphic account of his experience in the East, which was listened to with much pleasure.

The MAYOR rose, and said—Ladies and gentlemen, I have been asked to perform a duty which I have great pleasure in fulfilling. I feel sure it will meet with your approval, when I say that I have been asked to move a vote of thanks to Dr. Porter for his great kindness to-day in bringing us here to listen to such an interesting and instructive lecture as he has been pleased to deliver. It will require no words of mine to secure for this proposition a hearty reception. We all owe a deep debt of obligation to Dr. Porter for giving us the opportunity of examining his most excellent maps, and for the information he has given about past explorations in Palestine, and also about that which is to come. I need not detain you, and I must say it gives me the greatest pleasure to move this resolution.

Mr. EWART, M.P., seconded the resolution. He said—I merely rise to express the great pleasure it has given me to be present on this occasion. We all feel under a deep debt of gratitude to Professor Porter for the very learned and excellent lecture he has given us regarding a most important part of the world. (Hear.) I can speak for myself, and say that it has made an impression on me that I will never forget, and it has stirred up a wish within me more than ever that I might have an opportunity before I die of visiting the country.

The LORD BISHOP of OSSORY, who was cordially received, said—As a stranger, and as one who is present by mere accident, I may say that it has given me the greatest possible pleasure to listen to such a lecture as Dr. Porter has just delivered. It contained a vast deal of information, and was conveyed in a lucid and happy manner. There are two things that make me personally interested in this subject. One of these is that I was at a period of my life an engineer, and that long before I ever dreamt of being a parson, and at a time surely when I never thought of being a bishop. I know the work pretty well, and I must say it could not be committed to better hands than the Royal Engineers of England. The other reason is that I know a little of Oriental literature, although I have not travelled in the East; but I hope that my feet shall yet stand within the gates of Jerusalem. (Hear, hear.) I have no doubt that the vote of thanks that has been moved and seconded, will be carried most warmly.
