

CITY OF DAVID.

MR. BIRCH is occupied in nearly every *Quarterly Statement* in exposing the "idle fancies" and "growing error" not only of Captain Conder, but also, at times, of Josephus. He states that it is an "entire mistake" to suppose the word *Matzab* is ever rendered a "pillar," though it is constantly employed of the menhirs of the Canaanites, which are "images" in the English version, but by many authors recognised as equivalent to the *Ansáb* of the pre-Islamite Arabs.

What, may I ask, does Mr. Birch make of the words **אלון מצב** (*Elon Matzab*), rendered "oak of the pillar" in Judges ix, 6?

It cannot be considered that Mr. Birch's case is strengthened by having to postulate that the authority, on whom after all we are obliged mainly to rely, "makes two false statements" or "deliberately altered" an inconvenient statement. I may perhaps be content to be placed by Mr. Birch in the same category with Josephus, and although it appears that I am so constantly inconsistent, I may perhaps be permitted to plead that Mr. Birch has been equally confident that he knows the exact place of the Tombs of the Kings, on more than one occasion, but in very different situations. The same may be said of the Nameless City, and this observation has been made by more readers than myself, so that we are still in doubt what Mr. Birch finally considers to be the truth.

As regards the proposal to recognise the "Tombs of the Kings" in the ancient Jewish sepulchre now called "of Nicodemus," I can only say that the idea has been favourably received by many persons well acquainted with the history of Jerusalem. As regards the "balance of authority" in favour of *Acra* being west of the Temple, I would say that I do not rely on numbers, but on the character of the authority. I place Robinson Warren, Fergusson, and others whose names may be supposed to carry weight in one scale, and Mr. Birch in the other, and after reading all he has written I incline to give preference to the other view. If David and Solomon did not build a wall round the Upper City, why does Josephus say ("Wars," V, iv, 1) that "the old wall built by David and Solomon began on the north at Hippicus? Is this another false statement, or is Hippicus on the Temple spur, and is the Upper City *post* Herodian? And if they did why should the "City of David" be applied to a hill which was only walled in by later kings?

But leaving aside these questions—for to me it seems that the longer he studies the question of the tombs the more Mr. Birch will find his difficulties increase—I would ask whether he has realised the conclusions to which his theory leads him. The City of David, I understand him to believe, stood south of the Temple. He speaks wrongly of "the hill" on this side, for there is no distinct hill, but part of a narrow sloping spur which falls steadily from the *Sakhrah*, and has no valley to divide it from the part of the same spur on which the Temple stood. He also, I understand, excludes *Ophel* from the City of David, though it is not clear

where he supposes Ophel to have been. The Temple itself was, he will admit, outside the City of David, or at all events it was not inhabited. If this be the case his city is only about 10 to 15 acres in area—a population of 600 to 1,000 souls at most, taking even the proportion of any squalid modern village in Palestine, without public buildings, or indeed without any street. In Galilee the ordinary size of a village is 20 acres, and there are many of nearly double that size. Herod's Temple alone occupied 35 acres, and modern Jerusalem 200 acres, within the walls. But Mr. Birch's Jerusalem, or City of David, is only 10 to 15 acres in area, including the "fort," which was the lower city (2 Sam. v, 6), and the citadel itself, which was *not* the lower city (Josephus, "Ant.," VII, iii, 1), unless Josephus makes another false statement. In fact, we have Zion, Moriah, Acra, Ophel, all on one spur within about 10 acres, while the remaining two larger hills and the remaining 190 acres have no names at all! And why? Because Mr. Birch refuses to accept any statement of the ancient accounts which does not agree with his theory.

Was this hamlet the capital of 15,000 square miles of kingdom in the days when Nineveh and Memphis were still inhabited? and if so, at what period of history did Jerusalem grow over the Upper City until it covered 300 acres in all? Not in the troublous latter day of her history surely, when, according to Mr. Birch's view, the "very old wall" of Josephus would seem first to have been built.

C. R. C.

THE SHAPIRA MANUSCRIPTS.

ON the morning of July 20th last, Mr. Shapira called at the Society's office in Adam Street, and informed the Secretary that he had brought to England a manuscript, which if genuine would be certainly considered of inestimable value, being nothing less than a text of the Book of Deuteronomy, written on sheepskin, in characters closely resembling those of the Moabite Stone, and with many and most important variations. He refused to show the documents to the Secretary, but offered to do so if Captain Conder were also invited to be present.

On Tuesday, the 24th, he returned, and, in the presence of Captain Conder and Mr. Walter Besant, he produced the manuscript, and with it an account in writing of the manner in which he acquired it. This account, which he afterwards gave to the officers of the British Museum, was subsequently published in the *Times*, and is as follows:—

"He first heard of the fragment in the middle of July, 1878. A Sheikh, with several Arabs of different tribes, came to him at his place of business in Jerusalem on other matters. The Sheikh had nothing to do with antiquities. They spoke of some little black fragments of writing in the possession of an Arab. They had been found in the neighbourhood of the Arnou. One of the Arabs spoke of them as talismans, smelling of asphalt.