

SIN AND SAD.

ACCORDING to the students of literary Arabic the distinction of these two letters is most carefully preserved in speaking, and they are never confused. Nevertheless, even in the dictionaries, a few words may be found which are occasionally written with either.

In our recent survey we found the native scribe, who was intelligent and well-instructed, sometimes unable to distinguish the two letters in the pronunciation by the Bedawin of local names : such as Wâdy Sîr and the ruin of Sûr, and it is commonly said in Syria that the nomadic tribes make no distinction between *Sin* and *Sad*. Even among the teachers of Nahu or correct speech there is a difficulty, for when hard pressed they are obliged to admit that a deeper vowel sound accompanies the *Sad* than that belonging to the *Sin*. Thus even to the present day we have a survival of the syllabary from which the distinction of some Semitic letters originates; and this is but one example of the importance of studying the local peasant dialect of Syria, which is very different in many respects from the polite Arabic of literature, preserving as it does archaisms which are of the highest value for archæological purposes.

C. B. C.

DISTRICTS IN PALESTINE.

THE hills north of Jerusalem are divided into various government districts, bearing ethnic names, viz. :—

<i>Beni 'Amîr</i>	....	....	....	Sons of Omar.
<i>Beni Hârîth</i>	....	....	....	Sons of Aretas.
<i>Beni Murreh</i>	....	....	....	Sons of bitterness.
<i>Beni Salîm</i>	....	....	....	Sons of peace.
<i>Beni Zeid</i> ....	....	....	....	Sons of increase.
<i>Beni Hamâr</i>	....	....	....	Sons of the ass.
<i>Beni S'ab</i> ....	....	....	....	Sons of stubbornness.
<i>Beni Hasan</i>	....	....	....	Sons of beauty.
<i>Beni Mâtik</i>	....	....	....	Sons of royalty.

These are not pastoral or nomadic, but agricultural districts, with a settled population of Fellahin. There are no Arabs in these districts, and historically the nomadic tribes seem never to have held them. I have never seen any explanation of these names, nor does their origin seem to be known in Palestine. M. Clermont-Ganneau has indicated the interest of the names, but has not explained their origin. Professor Palmer in revising my nomenclature has added the word Arabs to the title, apparently thinking that they applied to existing tribes in Palestine, but the districts are entirely free from nomadic tribes, nor are any existing Arab clans west of Jordan called by these names.