

that the treasures of the library of Sargon included a great work on astronomy and astrology in seventy-two books (72, it may be remarked, is an oft-recurring number in mythic writings, because  $5 \times 72 = 360$ , the number of degrees in the circle of the heavens, and of days in the ancient year). The priestly guardians of these writings, however, being the scribes of the people, would by-and-by be entrusted with the care of the contracts, &c., which they drew up; and so Mr. Rassam discovered, at this site, thousands of tablets relating to fiscal, legal, and commercial transactions.

These, then, are the kinds of records which we may hope to find at Kirjath-Sepher in Judea. The place was very likely the site of a temple of Nebo, or some equivalent god of writing, and the records preserved would be, first of all, astro-religious, and then commercial.

Kirjath-Sepher is otherwise called Kirjath-Sannah, and also Debir. It was one of the Canaanitish towns taken by Joshua, and the worship would relate to that early time; the tablets would belong to the pre-Israelitish inhabitants. In "Fresh Light from the Monuments," Professor Sayce gives the name *Debir* as meaning sanctuary, and compares it with Kadesh, "the holy city." In the "Survey Memoirs" (iii, 402) we are told that "the name has the meaning 'back,' due to its position on the ridge." I have always supposed that the later name, Debir, had the same meaning as the earlier name, Sepher. Dabar, from the same root, signifies a word, speech, saying, command, law, oracle, &c.; and Furst, under the word Debir, allows that it may mean Book-town, the same as Kirjath-Sepher. It comes from *Dabar* (דָּבַר) to speak. Apparently, the root-meaning of Sepher and Sauneh is connected with the idea of piercing and being pointed, like thorns or like crags, and may have had reference to the conical hills on which Nebo temples are built, or to the stylus used in writing. The west or hinder part of the temple was called Debir, and in that connection the word is said to mean hinder; but if the sacred books were kept on that side, the name may perhaps have reference to the writings.

Kirjath-Sepher is represented now by the village of *edh Dhábertyeh*, south-west of Hebron (see Memoirs iii, 402, and Armstrong's "Names and Places," O. T.). The description of it is not unpromising for the investigator—"ancient materials," "an old tower," "a sacred place," and "houses over caves."

GEORGE ST. CLAIR.

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## MEETING OF THE GENERAL COMMITTEE.

THE Annual Meeting of the General Committee was held at the offices of the Fund, 1, Adam Street, Adelphi, on July 3rd. Chairman, Mr. James Glaisher.

After the Honorary Secretary had read letters from various gentlemen

regretting their inability to attend the meeting, the Report of the Executive Committee for the year was read as follows :—

MY LORDS AND GENTLEMEN,—

Your Committee elected at the last General Meeting, on June 14th, 1887, have, on resigning their office into your hands, to render an account of their administration during the past year.

1. The Committee have held twenty-two meetings during the year.
2. The work of exploration has been carried on during the last year by Herr Schick at Jerusalem, and by Herr Schumacher in other parts of the country.

We had on this occasion of last year to announce the deeply interesting discoveries made at Saida of sarcophagi and rock-cut tombs. We have been enabled to publish a more detailed account of these monuments, partly from Professor Hayter Lewis, who was allowed to see them at Constantinople, partly from the "Revue Archéologique," and partly from a journal published in Arabic at Beyrout. Hamdi Bey himself has not yet published any photographs or further details, which it is hoped may shortly be produced.

Several very valuable discoveries have been made in Jerusalem during the year :

(1) The ancient wall at the Jaffa Gate has been proved to be built inside the modern wall, which has no foundations, and stands upon the earth.

(2) One or two small points have been discovered as to the second wall, but its course has not been yet determined. Herr Schick will lose no opportunity of investigating this most important point.

(3) Herr Schick has discovered a Byzantine pavement, which in the opinion of most can be no other than the open space paved and adorned by Constantine in front of his group of Churches. It is of less importance, but it is still interesting to ascertain that on this pavement stood the "Vaulted Street," long lost, described in Crusading accounts.

(4) The most important discovery, however, is that of the Pool of Bethesda :

An apparently uninterrupted chain of evidence from the year A.D. 333 to the year 1180 speaks of the Probatina Piscina as near the Church of St. Anne. The place spoken of, recently believed to have been only a mediæval and traditional site, is said by the earliest writers to have formerly had five porches, then in ruins. Nothing was known of the Pool described by those writers until quite recently, when certain works carried on by the Algerian monks laid bare a large tank, or cistern, cut in the rock to a depth of 30 ft. It lies under, but not immediately under, a later building, a church with an apse at the east end. The cistern is 55 feet long from east to west ; north and south it measures  $12\frac{1}{2}$  feet in breadth. A flight of 24 steps leads down into the pool from the eastern scarp of rock.

Now, the first requisite for the site of the pool of Bethesda is that it

should be possible to have five porches. The only way (as shown by Sir Charles Wilson in his notes to the new edition of the "Bordeaux Pilgrim") in which this requisite could be satisfied is that the pool should be what is called a twin pool, such as that discovered close to the Convent of the Sisters of Sion—that is to say, two pools lying side by side, having one portico on each side of the four sides thus formed, and one between them on the wall of separation.

The discovery of the pool at the church of St. Anne did not at first admit of this possibility. It seemed, therefore, to be of interest chiefly as the re-discovery of a mediæval site. But Herr Schick now reports that he has found a continuation of the pool, or, rather, a sister pool, lying end to end, 64 feet long, and of the same breadth as the first.

We are, therefore, able to make out a reasonably strong case for identifying the newly-discovered twin pool with the Pool of Bethesda.

(1) It is undoubtedly the pool pointed out by all the writers, from the 4th to the 12th centuries inclusive, as the *Piscina Probatica*, around which other traditions gathered; as that it was the birthplace of the Virgin Mary.

(2) The five porticoes spoken of by the "Bordeaux Pilgrim" as being then in ruins, could very well have stood here.

In other words, the historical evidence in favour of this site is as strong as that which connects the Holy Sepulchre with the site adopted by Constantine.

In the minds of most, therefore, it will be probably acknowledged that we have here none other than the ancient Pool of Bethesda.

Herr Schumacher continues to send us valuable notes and papers. He reports antiquities and ruins uncovered in progress of excavation at many points at Zimmârin (now called Zicron-Jacob), at Tiberias, at 'Akka, at Rushmia, at Lejjûn, and elsewhere, all tending to prove that the antiquarian wealth of Palestine is below the surface not above it.

We received, in the autumn of last year, from Mr. Flinders Petrie, a loan collection of ethnological casts, representing the races of Syria and other countries, prepared from the sculptures at Thebes. These casts were shown at the Society's exhibition at the South Kensington Museum. A small grant having been made by the British Association towards the expenses of the work, the casts were taken last winter at Thebes by paper moulds; the series was prepared from the moulds in England; and photographs of all the casts were taken. The greater number of the casts represented the Syrian races, with whom the Egyptian monarchs were constantly at war. The characteristic faces of the Hittites, the Amorites, the Arabs, the Judeans, and the inhabitants of many towns of the North of Syria, could here be studied from contemporary portraits; and, moreover, from such a number of examples, that the general type could be seized without the uncertainty of errors of the sculptor. One most prominent result in Palestine was the resemblance of the Judeans to the Amorites (agreeing with the kings of Jerusalem and Hebron being kings of the Amorites, and Ezekiel declaring to Jerusalem

“thy father was an Amorite”), the faces of the former being of exactly the same type of that of the latter, only rather more refined and subtle of expression. Besides these there were sculptures of many other races; the Southern Arabians, who seem to have originated the Egyptian stock; the Libyans, the fair tribes of North Africa, of Aryan type; the Greeks, Sardinians, Philistines, and allied peoples; and some negro races. A mass of trustworthy material was here brought to hand in the most convenient form, for study by the historian and ethnologist. The collection remained on exhibition at South Kensington until the end of the year.

We have translated and presented to subscribers, during the year, Herr Schumacher's “Jaulân,” an account of his survey and its results. This we have so printed as to be detached from the *Quarterly Statement*, and bound in a volume similar to Captain Conder's “Tent Work.”

We have also, ready to be issued, Herr Schumacher's “Pella,” an account of a survey and description of that city and its surroundings. This is also illustrated in the same style, and it will be forwarded to every subscriber who signifies his wish to have it.

We have to thank Mr. Greville Chester for his “Journey from Iskanderûn to Tripoli;” Mr. Guy le Strange for a paper on the Arabic geographers; Mr. St. Clair, Mr. Birch, Mr. Laurence Oliphant, and Dr. Hutchinson, for notes on various points. Major Conder has again proved himself a steady friend and supporter, by contributing many valuable papers.

We have also in the press a paper by the Rev. Dr. Post, of the Medical College, Beyrout, giving an account of the botanical results of a journey to Eastern Palestine. They will be issued in October.

The Enquiry into the Manners and Customs is also in Dr. Post's hands, and he will begin to forward replies on his return to Beyrout in the autumn.

We have at length completed the long-promised “Names and Places,” containing all the Old and New Testament names, with their modern equivalents. The whole forms a volume which is of the greatest use to Biblical students.

We are preparing for press, and shall shortly issue, the first volume of a work similar in appearance and size to the “Survey of Western Palestine.” It will consist of three volumes with an Index, all abundantly illustrated with maps, drawings, plans, &c.

- (1) The first volume will be Captain Conder's “Survey of Eastern Palestine,” as far as that has been undertaken.
- (2) The second volume will consist of M. Lecomte's beautiful drawings, about 900 in number, made for M. Clermont-Ganneau's mission of 1873-1874, with some descriptive text.
- (3) The third will contain Mr. Chichester Hart's “Natural History of the Wâdy 'Arabah.”

There will be 500 copies, and no more, of the work. The price of subscription is £7 7s. for the first 250 copies, and £12 12s. for the next 250. The agent, Mr. A. P. Watt, has already received a sufficient

number of promises to warrant the Committee in authorising the commencement of the work.

Mr. Harper, one of the Executive Committee, is engaged upon a popular work, which, though it will not be published by us, will have our hearty good wishes. It is an account of the light thrown upon the Bible by all the recent excavations and surveys. We have placed at his disposal all the assistance in our power.

The Balance Sheet for the year 1887 is as follows :—

BALANCE SHEET FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31<sup>ST</sup> DECEMBER, 1887.

RECEIPTS.			EXPENDITURE.		
	£	s. d.		£	s. d.
Balance, 31 <sup>st</sup> Decem-ber, 1886 .. ..	322	11 0	Management .. ..	407	5 7
Donations, Subscrip-tions and Lectures	1,572	9 11	Exploration .. ..	647	14 0
Maps and Memoirs ..	280	10 4	Printers and Binders ..	942	4 0
Books.. .. .	369	10 3	Maps and Memoirs ..	337	3 7
Photographs .. ..	5	1 5	Balance, December 31 <sup>st</sup> , 1887.. ..	215	15 9
	<u>£2,550</u>	<u>2 11</u>		<u>£2,550</u>	<u>2 11</u>

The Secretary, Mr. Walter Besant, who had for some time given his services gratuitously to the Society, has found it impossible to continue them, and has, therefore, resigned, but he has consented to remain as Hon. Sec., and we have appointed Mr. George Armstrong as Assistant Secretary. The management expenses of the Society are kept down by this change, and it is hoped that the efficiency of the office will not be in any way lowered.

We have to propose as members of the General Committee the following :—

General Sir F. Goldsmid, K.C.S.I.,  
 Professor Greenwood, of "The Owens College," Manchester,  
 Halford J. MacKinder, M.A., F.R.G.S.,  
 Rev. E. W. Bullinger, D.D.  
 Rev. George E. Post, M.D., M.A., of the Medical College,  
 Beyrout.

In conclusion, we have to assure the General Committee and our Subscribers generally that all the steps necessary to ensure continuation of the work on its present lines have been taken—that is say, no opportunity will be lost of making researches and following up discoveries in the Holy City, and every possible agency will be brought to bear in the prosecution of research in the Holy Land itself and the countries which surround it.

We have to express our best thanks to the local Hon. Secretaries, and to all who have helped to extend the knowledge of our existence and

aims, and even claims, to larger and more general support. The income of the Society is barely equal to the demands upon it, and while we are continually paying off the liabilities caused by the printing of papers and results, more reports continually arrive which call for immediate publication.

It was proposed by Mr. Guy le Strange, and seconded by Professor Hull, that the Report be received and adopted. This was carried unanimously.

It was proposed by Professor Hayter Lewis, and seconded by Mr. Morrison, that the following gentleman be elected members of the General Committee :—

General Sir F. Goldsmid, K.C.S.I.,  
 Professor J. G. Greenwood,  
 Halford J. MacKinder, Esq., M.A., F.R.G.S.,  
 Rev. E. W. Bullinger, D.D.  
 Rev. George E. Post, M.A., M.D.

This was carried unanimously.

It was proposed by Mr. Maudslay, and seconded by Mr. Guy le Strange, that the Executive Committee be re-elected, with the addition of Mr. Walter Besant. This was carried unanimously.

The following paper was read by Professor Hull :—

Geological investigation has made considerable progress in the regions adjoining Palestine, both to the north and west and south, since the publication of the "Geological Memoir on Arabia Petræa and Palestine."

1. The work of Dr. Carl Diener, of Vienna, entitled "Grundlinien der Physischen Geographie und Geologie von Mittel Syrien," Wien, 1886. This is certainly the most important work which has yet appeared on the geology of the Lebanon, as the author has not been content merely with an outline of the formations, but has produced a detailed map showing the geological structure of the region lying between Beirût and Damascus, and reaching as far south as the Lake of Merom.

2. Then there are the excellent papers of Herr Schumacher on the region of the Jaulân and part of the Haurân, extending from the Jordan Valley to the neighbourhood of Damascus, accompanied by an excellent topographical map in which the old volcanic craters and lava-streams are clearly delineated ; together with other physical phenomena of that remarkable region.

3. Then there is the remarkable work of Mr. Doughty on "Arabia Deserta," in two volumes, in which it is shown that the great Arabian Desert, lying to the east of Moab and Edom, is largely occupied by extinct volcanic cones and lava-streams, similar to those which are found in the Jaulân and Haurân. There can be little doubt but that these volcanoes were in active eruption during the same period as those in Northern Palestine and Syria, and that they died out and became extinct at, or about, the same epoch, so that it would appear that the whole

region lying to the east of the Jordan-Arabah Valley, and stretching from the base of Hermon for several hundred miles into the Arabian Desert, was the scene of active volcanic operation in the Pliocene, and perhaps in the Post-Pliocene epoch.

It was proposed by Professor Hayter Lewis, and seconded by Dr. Ginsburg, that the best thanks of the General Committee be awarded to Mr. Walter Besant on his resigning the office of Secretary.

It was proposed by Mr. Maudslay, and seconded by Professor Hull, that the best thanks of the Committee be passed to the Chairman, Mr. James Glaisher.

The proceedings then terminated.

## NEHEMIAH'S WALL AND THE ROYAL SEPULCHRES.

THE following is an abstract of a Paper read by Mr. George St. Clair, Lecturer to the Society, at the recent meeting of the British Association at Bath :—

The topography of Ancient Jerusalem has been difficult to make out, and the site of the sepulchres of the kings of Judah remains unknown. But the problem has been simplified by recent excavations. We now, for the first time, know the contours of the rock and the features of hill and valley before the 80 ft. of *débris* began to accumulate.

The Akra of the Maccabees being identified, it is seen how by the recorded filling up of the Asmonean valley the two parts of the Lower City became joined into one *crescent*, lying with its concave side towards the Upper City, according to the description of Josephus.

The investigations of Sir Charles Warren show that the Temple must be placed on the summit of Moriah, with Solomon's palace south-east of it, leaving a vacant square of 300 ft., where now we leave the south-west corner of the Harem Area.

From the south-east corner of the Haram enclosure extends the wall of Ophel, discovered by Warren, running 76 ft. to the south, then bending toward the south-west. Further, it is found that from the Gate of the Chain, in the west wall of the Haram enclosure, a causeway, with complicated structures, extends westward towards the Jaffa Gate.

Having this groundwork we may proceed to place the walls :—

The 3rd wall, built by Agrippa, does not concern us.

As regards the 2nd wall, it suffices for the present purpose to adopt the line of Herr Conrad Schick.

The 1st wall was the wall of the Upper City. On the northern side it ran from the Jaffa Gate to the Haram wall. The uncertainty has been about its southern portion. The author gives, on a diagram, the line he has been led to adopt ; and then shows that it corresponds in detail with the descriptions in the Book of Nehemiah.