

## NEHEMIAH'S WALL.

To all readers of the *Quarterly Statement* it must have been a foregone conclusion that the Rev. W. F. Birch would attack my paper on Nehemiah's south wall. He holds very confidently certain views of his own with regard to Jerusalem topography, and he is not able to see any probability in any others. For the benefit of perplexed readers he points out what he conceives to be the errors of my paper. May I be allowed in the interests of archæological truth to make some reply?

In seeking to restore the south wall of Nehemiah I have built upon a basis of fact, and have nowhere departed from probability. In carrying the wall round the southern brow of the modern Zion, I am only doing what most writers have done, and what Mr. Birch himself would do. He disputes its continuation along the eastern brow, up the Tyropœan, as far as the Causeway (or say the north wall of the Upper City). But this appears to be required by the statement of Josephus, that the Upper City had a wall of its own, going all round it. Apart from Josephus, it is inherently probable. Further, in adopting it I am only following Lewin, who gives reasons for it. I follow Lewin also in bringing a wall down the eastern side of the Tyropœan; I think with him that Josephus so describes its direction, and it seems to be required for the defence of Ophel, which received no protection from the eastern wall of the Upper City. Taking into account Sir Charles Warren's discoveries, which have been made since Lewin wrote his books, I assume that the wall last referred to joins the wall of Ophel, at the point where Warren found that wall to terminate. This arrangement localises the intramural "suburb," which I then have a short transverse wall to protect.

This bay up the Tyropœan is objected to by Mr. Birch as well as others. Instead of it they take the wall southward to the Pool of Siloam, and then northward along the eastern side of the Ophel hill. Their wall then does not and cannot effect a junction with the wall of Ophel, actually discovered. Moreover, it cannot be made to satisfy the descriptions in Nehemiah. The wall as I draw it does coincide with the descriptions of Nehemiah in almost every detail. In tracing the points of coincidence I am aided by Warren's discoveries, and I no longer find a guide in Lewin. That the coincidence should be so close is a strong presumption in favour of its truth, for the argument is cumulative, and it cannot fairly be put aside by such general considerations as Mr. Birch thinks it sufficient to urge. When Josephus speaks of the wall bending above the Fountain of Siloam, Mr. Birch takes him to mean southward, below Siloam, so as to include the Pool. He argues that Josephus must mean this because he speaks of the wall bending "thence again"—thence again from Siloam, says Mr. Birch; but why not thence again from the Causeway, after bending to go up the Tyropœan? As regards the Causeway, Mr. Birch allows that my plan is right, agreeing with Josephus, who

makes the Causeway part of the first wall. Whether the Causeway also joined Akra to the eastern hill is a detail, and Mr. Birch is quite wrong in saying that Warren's Akra is the basis on which I build. The question as between a wall making a bay up the Tyropœan and a wall making a sweep round the Pool of Siloam may almost be rested on the single fact that the first explains the omission from the route of the procession of so many places mentioned in the description of rebuilding (compare Neh. iii, 16-26, with Neh. xii, 37), and the second does not. It is to be noted that while Mr. Birch tries to find one or two weak points in my series of coincidences—coincidences between Nehemiah's descriptions and the line of wall in my plan—he does not attempt to make out that his own line of wall satisfies Nehemiah's description at all.

Mr. Birch is not solicitous to satisfy Nehemiah's descriptions, but rather to support one or two ingenious ideas of his own. He is confident that the wall did enclose the Pool of Siloam, because otherwise he, personally, would see no use in the rock-cut channel from the Virgin's Fountain, and he is sure that the wall of Ophel extended farther south and east than Warren found it to do, because otherwise Joab could not have found his way by the shaft from the Virgin's Fountain into the city itself, as Mr. Birch surmises that he did. That Joab entered the city in this way, aided by Araunah, is an ingenious guess; but it is only a guess, unsupported by any coincidence with any description in the Bible or elsewhere. Even if it be correct it militates against Mr. Birch's reasons for taking the wall of the city southward below Siloam Pool. For the passage if used by Joab existed in David's time, and since it afforded to the inhabitants of Jebus a means of obtaining water, even when the valley entrance to the fountain was blocked with stones and hidden from besiegers, there would be no necessity in Hezekiah's day to cut a channel through the hill for the like purpose. The supposition that Hezekiah cut this tunnel implies that he did not make Siloam Pool, for there was an open channel previously, which the rock-hewn tunnel was to supersede, and the open channel required the pool. The open channel being confessedly useless in face of an enemy, the pool which it supplied would seem to have been made for use in times of peace. But the open channel would only supply it when the water in the Virgin's Fountain rose so high as to overflow at its mouth in the Kedron Valley. It might be desired to bring it to the pool more constantly—for the same purpose as hitherto, whatever that purpose was—and one can imagine that the water ran through the tunnel when it would not have flowed by the open channel, not rising high enough. England is full of tunnels, excavated through hills and under rivers, but not at all with the purpose of hiding canals or railway trains from an enemy, and perhaps we should not make so sure that the purpose of the Ophel tunnel was to supply a besieged city.

Mr. Birch imagines that the city of David was confined to the Ophel hill. It seems to me that while the hill of Ophel was included, it was not of itself the whole of the city of David. Adopting Warren's Akra, west of the Temple, as the site recommended by what we now know of

the rock levels, and as suiting the references in the Books of the Maccabees and in Josephus, I think it possible that this was the fort which "held out still," after David had captured Ophel; but which he afterwards took, and joined it to the Lower City. The Akra thus became part of the Lower City; and this extended Lower City thus assumed a crescent form. Mr. Birch objects to my adopting the term *crescent-shaped* as a translation of Josephus's *ἀμφίκυρτος*. Well, the Greek word means doubly-curved, without specifying in what way; it might as well describe the gibbous moon as the crescent moon; but why not the crescent as well as any other double curve, especially when the local features of the ground seem to require it?

Mr. Birch further disputes the accuracy of some few details of my plan, and my accumulated coincidences.

1. He says that in Neh. iii, 19, 20, I make one "turning" count as two. Let him prove that it is only one. Again, the first salient angle of my plan is not mentioned in Neh. iii, and I show that there was no need to mention it, because the working party advances beyond it, and it is neither their *terminus a quo* nor their *terminus ad quem*; and in this connection I refer to the omission of the Ephraim Gate in Neh. iii, 6-8 "The Throne of the Governor beyond the river" comes in there instead; and it is obvious to every careful reader that this *may* be the same structure, or may be another structure *near* it. Mr. Birch tells us confidently that it is the same. Thus, he says, the Ephraim Gate is not omitted, and so my salient angle ought not to be. But the reason I have given is sufficient. On the next point I admit that Binnui comes *unto* the turning of the wall and *unto* the corner, and not simply *over against* them; but this would only require me to leave a trifle less space between Nehemiah's wall and the wall of the Temple enclosure.

2. In Nehemiah's description one builder takes up the work *after* another, and no doubt often at the point where the previous builder leaves off. Mr. Birch wishes us to believe that this was invariably the case, even where the next stretch of wall was not damaged, and again where diverging walls did not admit of it. I speak of Shallun repairing a transverse wall, branching eastward from the Fountain Gate, and of Nehemiah, who comes "after" him, repairing the wall from the Fountain Gate northward. Mr. Birch stands on the preposition, and cannot understand how the two men could begin their work at the same point. May I ask him simply to allow for a moment the possibility of the wall being as in my plan, and then to describe the succession of workers in some better phrase than Nehemiah does, if he can?

3. It seems unlikely to Mr. Birch that the transverse wall should be named from the Pool of Siloam, outside, and so far down the valley. Will he tell us why the Jaffa Gate is named after a town on the sea-coast and the Damascus Gate after a city in Northern Syria?

4. The bay of wall is pronounced inadmissible, because Mr. Birch knows that Nehemiah was too intelligent to fritter away the strength of the workers on a loop line of wall four times as long as the transverse

wall. But why not repair all the walls if there were workers enough? Owing to the previous building of the enclosing wall of the Temple, Nehemiah's wall, as I draw it, is pushed so far west as to be at one part very little above the valley bed; and Mr. Birch ridicules this. But it is to be observed that even this part of the wall is at no lower level than the wall of Ophel, discovered by Warren. A wall in such a position was the best that the circumstances of the locality admitted of, and was better than none. It could not be reached unless the transverse wall were taken first. Its position could scarcely be weaker than that of the north-west wall of the city, which actually has higher ground outside. Mr. Birch's alternative is a wall carried from the south-west hill, round Siloam, to the eastern side of Ophel; and *this necessarily crosses the valley*, and at a much lower level than the wall in my plan.

Finally, may I say that I have drawn a definite line of wall, and have correlated it at many parts of its course with points in Nehemiah's description; the argument is cumulative, and is not answered if one or two details be shown to be doubtful. Mr. Birch has not drawn his wall definitely, and could not make any wall going down to Siloam to tally with Nehemiah's descriptions. The Ophel wall actually discovered has no use on his theory, and apparently ought never to have been built. Further, comparing Neh. iii with Neh. xii, the processionists skip over a long line of wall repaired by the workers, and there is no way of disposing of it except by allowing the loop line as in my plan.

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## THE WATERS OF MEROM.

I. Grounds for supposing that the waters of Merom (Josh. xi, 5, 7) are not the Lake Semechonitis of Josephus and the Bahr el Hûleh of the present day, and therefore that of this lake there is no mention in the Bible.

II. What was this "waters of Merom," and the locality of Joshua's victory over the northern tribes?

I. There appears to be no trace of the "waters of Merom" having been identified in ancient times with the Lake Semechonitis of Josephus; the Bahr el Hûleh of the Arab as far back at least as the Crusades. The district itself indeed in which this lake lies was known as the Ulatha in the days of Josephus. Ant. xv, 10, §3.

Such identification, therefore, rests at best on slender inference, and is destitute of satisfactory authority. But the name having been once thus assigned (at what time it is difficult to trace) it has been taken as correct, and handed on by one writer after another without enquiry or question.

Now it struck me in closely examining the maps of Western Palestine with Stanley's account of Joshua's battle with the northern tribes, that there were difficulties in accepting his localisation which could not be got over.