

REPORTS FROM MR. F. J. BLISS.

JAFFA,

February 20th, 1891.

I ARRIVED here on Monday 16th, and began at once the tedious labour of arranging a tram to facilitate the removal of earth from the excavations. The matter took me five days in Cairo. The Government people—Colonel Ross, Sir Colin Moncrieff, Mr. Perry, and others—were very kind, and I made thorough inquiries but found that though I could buy second-hand tram stuff, it would be very expensive. For example, I was offered a complete tram-line four or five times the needed length, with ten wagons, for 160*l*. This would then have to be transported from Suez. They would not divide the plant and sell me part. The people at the Barrage asked 20*l*. a truck to contain a cubic metre of earth. Finally I was directed to a foundry where I purchased 16 pairs of iron wheels (second-hand) with axles, and was advised to bring them to Jaffa and have trucks made here and also wooden rails with an iron cap.

I have spent a wearisome five days trying to get estimates from the German carpenter and wagon-builder here. The contract is at last signed, and he has agreed to make the hard wood rails with iron cap for a line of 60 metres, with ties, and to construct 8 trucks of wood and iron (to tip earth either side) upon the wheels and axles which are to come from Cairo, for the sum of 51*l*.

This, after two weeks' work, is the cheapest that I can do, though it seems a large price, for the iron bought in Cairo cost somewhat over 8*l*., making the whole about 60*l*.

I have had to advance the wagon-builder 20*l*., which he agrees in the contract to refund in case he does not keep to the terms. If the iron arrives in a fortnight he agrees to furnish the rails and trucks in six weeks from this time.

Mr. Petrie thinks that the first month should be spent in working over the low west town, which is Amorite, and must be explored and turned over before the hill is touched, so that earth can be then thrown down upon it from the hill. He thinks that this low west town may be as valuable a place to dig as anywhere else, and must be done and done first.

I had a profitable month in Egypt with Mr. Petrie. I came from Port Said by the Austrian steamer, but had fully intended taking the Russian a day later. She now lies a wreck off the shore here, and yesterday morning I saw the most thrilling sights. It is supposed that

all but two or three were saved. One of the directors of the French Railway Company has been very kind with advice, and I have had advice from others.

Tell-el-Hesy, March 9th, 1891.

At last I write from this address. The Effendi and I left Jerusalem on Thursday the 5th, and the next day had a long day's ride from Ramleh.

Some of the ditches were quite bad, but the mules got over them all without serious accident. The country is simply charming, with its rolling greenness of grass and wheat and sweet scented beans. My own horse, brought from Beirût by my man Yusif, is delighted to graze all day near the tent. The Effendi is happy because no Arabs are near and the tribes are at peace. By the way the Effendi is really a very nice fellow; he boasts rightfully of his descent from the great Khalid, and his family is much honoured. He is very intelligent, kindly and accommodating.

Of course these first two or three days I have employed no workmen, but spent my time in tracing Petrie's work very carefully. On the whole, the heavy rains have rendered it easier to trace the brickwork, as the moisture brings out differences of earth colouring. Some of Petrie's points I cannot yet determine, but in general the brickwork is more clearly traceable than I expected. What astonishes me is that he did such an amount of work in so short a time. But then one must add to his six weeks actually spent here, the years of acquaintance with brick in Egypt.

The stone steps and guard-house at the south-east of the town have been removed by the villagers. My man Yusif will be a great help, as he has a keen scent for brick in its various stages of decay. Unfortunately the west town, where Petrie strongly advises me to begin work, is covered with crops as is the Tel. Buying these out will necessitate some outlay of cash. I am very sorry Major Watson was prevented from visiting me here.
