

EXCAVATING FROM ITS PICTURESQUE SIDE.

By FREDERICK JONES BLISS, B.A.

The rolling country of Philistia with its rich red soil and its varying and vivid greenness was a genuine surprise to me. Our tents were placed where the land rises towards the crests and ridges at the south-west of Tell-el-Hesy. In every direction we could look at the delicious green of wheat, barley, and grass. Only one tree was in sight, and that crowned a small pyramidal hill two miles away. Far away to the east stretched the blue line of the Judæan hills, sometimes clear and sharp, again pale and mysterious. The spring flowers followed each other in bewildering variety. The glowing scarlet of the rich-textured anemone with its heart of black velvet was succeeded by the yellow red of the ranunculus, coarser and tougher in fibre, which in turn gave way to the fragile poppy, with its almost metallic sheen. So abundant were the flowers that they even grew within the tent! During the spring months the climate is delightful. I do not hesitate to say that it is far more bracing than the climate of Beirût. The nights were often cold, and the early mornings sharp. In early April we had two or three days of severe sirocco, which occurred again in May, but in general we suffered little from the heat. Unfortunately, the water from the springs near the Tell becomes stagnant and foul in May, and the Arabs had much to say of the malaria. I think we felt a touch of it before we left.

The sharp ridge to the south-west of the town, shown by Mr. Petrie to have been surmounted by seven feet of rampart, made a beautiful promenade, when one wished to see the sun go down after a day of hard work. Looking over the green sea of verdure I felt much as if I were pacing up and down the deck of a steamer. Life had the pleasant monotony of a voyage at Tell-el-Hesy, especially for the first six weeks, during which time the workmen, whom we may call the crew, did not change.

As far as I could make out, the mound is called Tell-el-'Helu, or the Sweet Mound, from the springs of sweet water, as often as Tell-el-'Hesy, which is spelled with the hard 'H and pronounced to rhyme with missy. Sheikh Harb, the head of the Jubarat Arabs of that district, told me that the term Muleihah, is applied to the part of the Wâdy several miles to the south-west, and is not used for the Wâdy near the Tell. He did not know the name Jizair which Mr. Petrie applies to the stream joining the Hesy at the mound, following the map I suppose which writes Jizair as a name of that stream a few miles to the south-west. Sheikh Harb called it Wâdy el Kaneitrah, from the mound, about a mile from Tell-el-Hesy.

I have never seen so strange an action of water as in this region. As Petrie points out, the soil is sandy with a cap of clay. I suppose that

after a heavy shower the water collects in the more level places, running off a slight incline until it reaches a place where the clay is thin, which suddenly gives way, when the water at once washes away the sand below, making deep irregular channels with almost perpendicular sides. The unusually severe rains of last spring altered the courses of roads. It was strange to find one's progress across a plain stopped by a sudden chasm twelve or fifteen feet deep, and thirty feet wide.

In the field west of the hill where Mr. Petrie dug, it was always possible to tell just where he had made a pit or trench by the luxuriance of the crop at any point. We turned over a lot of earth in this same Amorite field, and I daresay that next year's crop will be something very rich in consequence. The owners of the crops are an old man and his three sons, Bedawin. It was with the oldest son that we had our principal negotiations. They were at first very suspicious of us. After a day or two I asked the name of the eldest son, and after a little hesitation he said, "Hussein." "But," I said, "I have put it down in my note book as 'Nasul,' how is that?" The young man looked foolish. "That is what I gave as my name to the gentleman last year, for I was afraid to have him write down my real name." It was quite touching to see how devoted they all became when, thanks to Yusuf's diplomacy and real friendliness, we gained their confidence and affection; whereas at first they were always bothering us about harm done to crops; later they quite trusted that we meant to do the honest thing by them. The second brother, Jema'an, is a short, broad-chested fellow, with clear brown eyes, and a face as smooth as a girl's. It was a fine sight to see him stalk over the field, his cloak almost touching the ground, bristling with sword and pistols. The contrast between his abrupt and guttural speech and his winning manner made him an interesting anomaly. Salami, the son of Hussein, was the most comical little will-o'-the-wisp I ever saw. Though only five or six years old he used to pasture the cows. He was always bare-headed, and his hair was curiously cut with a long tuft hanging down behind. One moonlight night we visited the camp to see some dancing, and Salami's alert, active movements, as he sped from group to group, picking up the coloured matches we fired and threw, were most amusing. He declared his intention of coming off with me and becoming a Nusrani. He would often come to the tent for a tin or a lump of sugar.

We had many friends among the Bedawin. Sheikh Harb often came to see Ibrahim Effendi. He had a gentle melancholy manner, and an almost whining way of speech, nor is his dress at all rich as would befit the chief sheikh. Another principal sheikh we found more interesting. As he is an outlaw, I will not give his name. The Government have had a price set on his head for several years, as he shot a man dead in a coffee shop at Gaza for insulting the memory of his murdered sister. He is intelligent, and on the occasion of a discussion we found him truly eloquent. A theft had been committed, and arrests on suspicion having failed to bring to light the thief, it was decided to gather together all the sinners of the tribe at a certain willy, or tomb of a holy man, where

they should take their oaths that they were not guilty. It was all out on paper, as the man who had been robbed was from Jerusalem, and I heard the list of ten suspects read. Our Bedawy guard, Salami, told me that if a man took a false oath at the willy he would spit blood. The assembly met at the willy, but two of the sinners did not turn up—one being the man who had been arrested and released; so nothing was done. The man robbed had the right to demand restitution from the sheikhs, but refrained, as he was kind-hearted, and feared they would make a levy for twice the amount upon the people. This demand is according to Arab law. "You stole my money," said the man to the sheikhs, "I know no thief but you," and they accepted the responsibility.

The attempts to make the arrested Bedawy confess were farcically amusing. Threats having failed, this sort of argument was employed: "Perhaps you are innocent, and we will give you a chance to prove it. Rise and search the ravines about here where treasure may have been hid, and if you are innocent God will guide you. If you don't find the treasure we will know that you are guilty, and persist in concealing it. Put your faith in God and hunt."

It is inconceivable to the western mind that such a transparently hypocritical argument can be advanced and listened to with perfect seriousness. It was delivered with a pious earnestness, and heard with respectful patience. It meant, "Give up the goods and we will let you off;" both parties knew this perfectly, and yet the pretence was kept up. The attempt having failed, threats and abusive language, with direct accusations, of course came into play again.

We found a great contrast between the demeanour of the Arabs and that of the fellahin. A fine free carriage, an air of independence, an offishness when they feel you are a stranger, and a rare sweetness when they find you are a friend, are characteristic of the Bedawin. The fellahin are heavy, less alert, and far less independent. Of course it is the immunity from taxation and conscription which gives the Arabs their sense of freedom and superiority. We found the women very friendly and chatty when they came to sell eggs (ten or twelve for a penny), or when we visited the camps. These Jubarat Arabs sow and reap, but usually get the fellahin to do the actual work. Though the tents of the tribe are scattered over a large territory it seemed always to be known where any given man might be found. If we wished to see this or that Sheikh or man we sent a guard out into the green wilderness, apparently so vast and empty, and presently he would return with the person required. I never got over the oddity of this. We seemed to be in the midst of a complex, invisible society. It was uncanny.

One day an Arab rode up on a horse and dismounted. My horse was grazing near by, and we agreed to exchange. Whereupon he gave me the rein of his horse, put his hand in mine and repeated a formula of transference, and I did the same with him in delivering my horse.

As I was riding towards Tell el Nejileh one evening, I stopped to chat with a couple of Arabs. Said one: "Don't bewitch the Tell." "What do

you mean?" "Oh, we know what you do. You come to a Tell that is full of gold and treasure and bewitch these into the form of potsherds. Then you dig out the potsherds, take them to your country, undo the spell, and they turn back to gold and treasure." I had heard something of this before, and indeed I do not wonder that the Arabs feel the need of some such theory from their point of view to account for our expenditure of toil and money. Said I: "Shall I tell you the real reason why I dig? Is it not possible for a man to go to Mecca as a pilgrim for a few pounds, but will not a man spend a hundred on a pilgrimage, with everything fine and grand, all for the sake of religion? Now you know this is the Holy Land. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, and Solomon lived here, and it is a matter of religion to come and unearth their towns and find out how they lived and what they did, if we can. Now, I don't expect you to believe me, but I am telling you the truth when I say that the purpose of the digging is not treasure, but one of religion." "Wullah, we believe you," said the man, "but what about the bewitched pottery?" Which, leaving us where we began, I rode off!

At first most of our workmen were from Bureir, a village six miles from the Tell. Before Ramadan most of the men slept at the camp, digging little shallow graves for a bed, when they covered themselves with their cloaks. The women and girls had the long walk both before and after work. Six miles' walk before 6.30 a.m., and six miles' walk after 5 p.m., with a hard day's work of carrying earth-piled baskets on the head in between, does not strike one as being an easy life, but more girls begged for work than we could employ. After a struggle between my sense of duty to the Fund and my general sense of philanthropy, I concluded that a Society for the study of the Holy Land would not object if these women and girls were permitted to reach their homes at sunset, although a half hour, or even an hour, of work might be lost. My belief is that the policy adopted secured the best possible work, and that the quality would not have been so good if we had kept them later. They worked splendidly for us, these men and women of Bureir, heartily and loyally, and I felt and feel grateful to them. At first they seemed a mass of indistinguishable fellahin, like a herd of cattle, but each developed an individuality. There was Sheikh Salim, a dear old gentleman, with a worn face, sweet and gentle, a patient and conscientious workman, who never needed to be watched. His only failing was a pardonable partiality to his little son who carried away the earth and was fond of play. As Sheikh Salim toiled in his deep trench who would recognise in this homely, quiet old man the wild figure seen at sunset dancing up to the grave of a holy man near the camp, shouting out guttural sentences, braying like a donkey, uttering the mingled roar and growl of an angry camel, then suddenly turning and darting off across country, to be brought back, swaying like a drunken man and almost as unconscious, by the young men who had rushed after him? It was whispered that this holy workman of ours would have kept on till he reached Mecca if he had

not been stopped, and that he did make nocturnal visits to the sacred city, being transported through the air !

Then there was Rahuma, our messenger to Gaza, a rather fussy man, with eyes of the poorest quality, which however never let the smallest object escape them. His daughter Fatmy worked with her brother Monsûr rather than with her father. It was a delicate arrangement, owing to the fact that Henda, Monsûr's sweetheart, wasn't allowed to work with him, but could help her prospective father-in-law. Henda settled down into a capital worker, though a bolder, wilder girl I never saw. Tall, straight, active, she made a picturesque figure in her slim blue gown, with stripes of figured crimson and her fringed white veil, as she darted, sickle in hand, from trench to trench, cutting down the rich barley before each digger. I was relieved to see the strength of will shown by Monsûr in rigidly keeping Ramadan, for he is a gentle youth, and I had feared that his prospects for matrimonial control over Henda were very frail. Suggesting this to him one day, I was answered, with a smile of mingled scorn and amusement that was very reassuring. When Monsûr thought he was on the scent of treasure, a bloodhound could not have been keener.

Quite a different character was the young Sheikh Mohammed. His title was a recognition that he could read and write ; in fact, he was an embryo theological student, and wore a white turban. His somewhat sanctimonious manner and generally meritorious air rather antagonised me at first, but he turned out to be a nice and simple lad enough. He brought to work with him a woe-begone old lady, his mother, in fact, who always spoke of him with pride as "the Sheikh." She used to sit at my tent door in the evening (she was too feeble to walk to Bureir) and drink a comforting and friendly cup of chocolate, groaning out her dismal thanks. When, in obedience to my conscience, I finally dismissed her, she exhibited an unexpected degree of spirit and departed in high dudgeon.

The child of the camp was little Ahmed, son of old Abu Jorul. He would play about the works all day, digging with a small pick of his own, tottering to the steep edge of the Tell under the weight of a basket of earth, and amusing himself in picking out pretty pieces of pottery. The east face of the Tell is very steep, and after a few weeks we had formed, with the earth thrown down, a fine slide, a hundred feet long.

One was at first rather nervous to see the girls so fearlessly approach the steep edge, putting so much force into the throwing. Indeed, one day a girl lost her footing and slid rapidly to the bed of the stream, but she took it as a good joke. I daresay if the solemn little Ahmed had gone over it would not have hurt him. He was very proud when he had earned a few coppers as wages, though he always promptly lost them. It was a great job looking over all the potsherds that turned up. These were all put aside by the men, to be examined by me at four o'clock, when I would mark with a pencil the pieces I wished brought to the tent. Nicer flints, prettier bits of ware, or bits of iron were usually concealed in the turban and brought out with great anxiety, for if I took anything a small

baksheesh was always given. This is Petrie's policy, and secures care on the part of the workmen. We found nothing important, but I feel sure that I saw everything found, and the baksheesh thus given for the season was under two guineas. The system (which I defend practically rather than theoretically) has one drawback—a man will sometimes bring a thing from a distance, and pretend to have dug it up on the spot. When a man declared he had dug up a coin of Constantine's, I was much puzzled for an instant, but I soon saw that the coin had been recently worn for some time by a pocket. I indignantly refused the coin, and dismissed the man at the end of the week. The case was easier when one old gentleman called me to his place of digging and delightedly pointed to an iron ring with two or three keys attached, which he declared he had found then and there! His dismissal was prompt, and had a salutary effect. As a rule, the men had a greater interest in digging out objects than in tracing walls, though there were half-a-dozen who were pretty good at this. The plan in my report gives a fair idea of how the section of the second town looked. It was with a strange, half-melancholy feeling that I ordered the workmen to clear away the remains, and the feeling grew stronger when they began to destroy the walls we had extricated with such care from the surrounding débris. My foreman Yusif never lost his enthusiasm for wall-hunting; and was to be trusted to destroy nothing in the search. His aid was invaluable in this.

Before and after work the women kept their faces modestly veiled, but attempted no concealment during work-time. The relations between the young men and the girls were freer and more natural than I have ever seen in this country, and it must be remembered these were all Moslems. When the girls had filled the trucks high with earth the boys would stick a bunch of wild flowers in at the top and roll the truck along the rails with great glee. As a rule the women got very good treatment. We used to get the men to relieve them by filling their baskets for them. The men would receive the pay both for themselves and the women who carried earth for them. But one week we had some extra girls, and I shall never forget the awful experiences of that pay-day, when, as usual, change being scarce, we paid two or three together with a gold coin. One virago declared with a look of great meaning that she must receive her money alone. When told that this was impossible, but that she must get it with two other women, she said: "Then I shall fight them," with the air of one impelled by a not-to-be-resisted fate: she must fight.

They often sang at their work, and when things were going slack, if one would call out some word of encouragement, another would take up the cry and soon all would heartily respond. One day I was counting the number of baskets a certain girl emptied into the truck. Noticing my attention, she began to work faster; soon other girls caught the idea and redoubled their work; the men, stimulated by the girls, dug fast and furious. Abdullah, who managed the train, stood by his truck

shouting and gesticulating like a London omnibus conductor, and soon the whole place was in a perfect whirlwind of work; the most sluggish caught the wild infection, laughter resounded on every side, and in a quarter of an hour certainly over an hour's work was done. The effect of the fun lasted all day in increased good nature. These people are very easy to manage. I knew all their names. They like to be treated as individuals, and a little notice of them, if not vitiated with partiality, has a good effect.

On a moonlight night the men would dance for us. They formed a row and began to clap in time to a rude chant with refrain, bending one knee and throwing the body forward at intervals. The chant alternated with a fierce grunting that was weirdly rhythmical. When they had worked themselves up sufficiently we would call for Salami, our negro guard. Sword in hand, cloak flowing from his shoulders, this hideous creature would creep up like some beast of the forest; when in front of the line he would flourish his sword, crouch before the dancers, suddenly advance upon them with a thrust of the sword, retreat, fall on his knees, sway back and forth, advance again still kneeling, sway back once more, and all the time emitting terrible guttural cries.

More than half the men kept Ramadan rigidly. Those that did not fast were chiefly young men about twenty, who one would think could have borne the fast better than the older men. The first day, one girl who tried to fast almost fainted. Seeing one stalwart youth eating one day, I reproached him with the title of *Kafir*—that is, infidel; whereupon he severely replied, "Oh, no, if I eat in Ramadan, I'm not an infidel, I'm only a hog!" They understood that as long as they remained Moslems we respected them more if they kept to their rules. The last day of the fast the fields about the Tell were gay with *Bedawin* merry-makers. The women had cast away their sombre garb of indigo, replacing it with dresses and veils of crimson silk with long, flowing sleeves. A girl would stand on the shoulders of a woman, who would grasp her ankles and execute a slow, circling dance, the girl standing perfectly straight. Men and boys dashed about on horses, firing pistols to encourage the women. At sunset the bachelors of the tribe gave a dinner to the maidens in the bed of the stream. I was invited to the feast, but a look into the pot was enough, for I recognised therein every part of a sheep's anatomy in one unhappy *melee*. While the pot was boiling I was asked to assist in the accounts, as the bachelors were somewhat anxious to know the amount each one had to pay. My pompous little friend Jema'an was there. I asked him if he was going to show me his bride, for on this feast occasion the women were closely veiled. A fierce young fellow stepped up and declared that it was none of Jema'an's business, and I should not see her. Jema'an explained to me later that on the first feast day after the wedding the bride reverts to her relatives, and for that day the husband has no control over her.

Our good Bureir workmen stayed with us for only six weeks and

then verily the Philistines were upon us. It was very discouraging to have to begin with a raw, rude lot who cared nothing for us and for whom we cared nothing. With the Bureir people we had the advantage of Petrie's picked men and we had the pick of the town besides. The Fâltjeh horde was an untried one, and tired us in consequence. Their laziness, dulness, and incapacity soon taught me to understand the strictures made by Petrie on the Syrian workmen, criticisms which I had resented as severe during our blessed Bureir period. However, in time we secured some good results even from the Fâltjeh people. Hassan, who began as a labourer and ended ~~as~~ a guard, was a real addition to our camp force. He had a splendid physique, was honest and gentle. Years ago when journeying among the Arabs he took the fancy of a Bedawy who offered him his little girl in marriage. Hassan could not refuse the offer, and paid a camel and fifty goats for her. She was then under ten, and for several years he was a father to his little wife, caring for her with all tenderness, dressing her and putting her to sleep. He is still very fond of her, though he is now engaged to a second girl and is preparing to extend his harem. He already regrets this, but when asked why he did it, he smiles apologetically, shrugs his shoulders, and says, "What shall I do? The man would offer her to me."

We had several visitors at the excavations. My father came for ten days. Mr. and Mrs. Gray Hill called on their way from Egypt to Jerusalem, and four other parties saw the place. As I have said before, we made many friends among the Arabs, and it was very pleasant the last evening to hear from the distant camps the improvised chants sung in our honour, full of wishes for a safe journey.

ADDITIONAL NOTE ON THE CHURCH OF ST. STEPHEN.

By Professor HAYTER LEWIS, F.S.A.

SINCE I wrote the description of the church at Jerusalem which I believed to be that of St. Stephen, I have learned from Dr. Edwin Freshfield that another example of the receptacle for liquids which I there described as being level with the paving and occupying the usual site of the altar, exists in the church of St. Eirene at Constantinople. This church is specially alluded to by me in a note to the P. P. Text Society's translation of Procopius (page 14) and it was, no doubt, rebuilt by Justinian late in his reign.

It has three aisles and an apse at the east end.