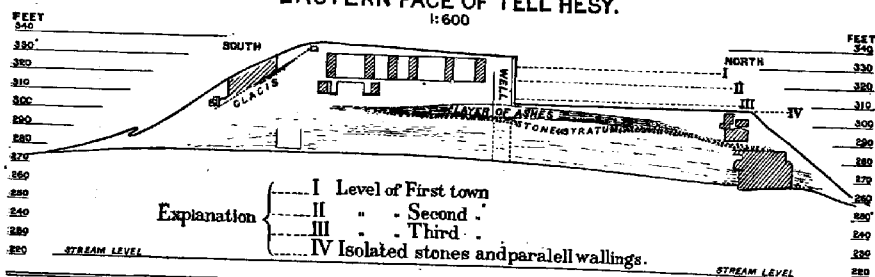


## NOTES FROM TELL EL HESY.

By FREDERICK JONES BLISS, B.A.

PENDING the full report, which cannot of course be drawn up until the end of the season, I am, under date of December 1st, jotting down a few random notes relative to our fortunes this autumn. Perhaps in this country it is better not to allow for delay, because some extra delay over and above one's calculations always must creep in. I left Beirut September 22nd, but, owing to calculated and uncalculated delays, Gaza was not reached until October 7th. The land journey is long and tedious, so I hired a sail boat, and leaving about noon we arrived at the landing beach at dusk. Our captain was the second of a family of boatmen in Cook's service, the elder brother, Suleiman, is the man who saved so many lives from the Russian wreck last spring, and is as modest as he is brave. His rigid total abstinence extends even to tobacco and coffee. His one idea is to see his brothers settled honourably and soberly in life. Finding camels on the beach, we easily transported our luggage to the hospitable home of

## EASTERN FACE OF TELL HESY.



Dr. Elliott. On Saturday, the 10th, we pitched our camp at Bureir, six miles from the Tell. Our old workpeople flocked about us, showing their welcome in active assistance in setting up the tents. We had heard so much of the malaria arising from the Wady el Hesya that it was necessary to choose a camping place with great wariness. Monday, however, found us established in a spot where we hoped the prevailing winds would bring us no harm from the odious green slime in the river bed. That very afternoon squares were measured off for the men in the former place of excavation, and early the next morning each square contained a man with pick uplifted and two girls with baskets ready, and at the sound of the whistle all fell cheerfully to work. It will be remembered that our last month of work was devoid of interest, so it was a pleasure that the first hour revealed plenty of walls in every direction, showing that we had reached the base of a third town, the town formed by "Manasseh's Wall." In our work here we have found that in some cases one generation builds

directly on the ruined walls of a former, while in others, the fallen and decayed brick of a lower town intervenes as one consolidated mass between the clear walls of a lower town and the clear walls of an upper town. The process would be thus : first we have a lower town, with walls originally, say, 10 or 12 feet high, these are ruined down to 3 feet, and are covered inside and out with the fallen brick to a height of from 3 to 4 feet. Now a new generation comes in which either clears away the fallen rubbish, building on the old 3 feet of walling, or else leaves the consolidated rubbish, building on it. It is the clearing away of this rubbish, which is sometimes found between town and town, that is so tedious to the excavator, although he must keep a sharp look out in hope that perchance something may have fallen in the rubbish. If we continue to dig down in this section, which is 100 feet square, until we reach the original soil, we shall successfully uncover three or four more Jewish towns, and three or four Amorite.

Alas ! the warnings of the people in regard to the malaria proved too well founded. Our camp consists nominally of nine : the Effendi, his servant, my foreman, my cook, four guards, and myself. Of this original nine I alone have escaped the fever, and the sick list must also include substitutes who came in as later victims. One tent has had to serve as hospital. Epsom salts and quinine here have numbered among our chief imports. And as to the workmen, their results have been continually broken by fever. We have had several taken ill while at work ; they beg for "shulphata" (their title for quinine), having faith in it as a cure-all. Those who may remember the people I mentioned by name in my last paper will regret to hear that Sheikh Mohammed, the embryo theological student, has died of the fever. Munsoor's nuptials with the bold Henda have been postponed on account of an illness, which has reduced the nice lad to a shocking shadow. Rahuma, his father, has been a victim. In fact, it has been a very sober sort of season. Nor has the fever been confined to this region. All over Syria it has prevailed. They say here that a season of excessive rain like last winter is always followed by an unhealthy autumn. Now that the winter rains have begun we hope for better things. Sober also is the landscape about us. Last spring we had a cheerful contrast between the rich greenness of the crops and the reddish soil, but now both green and red have faded into a pale monotonous monochrome of brown. Until quite recently we have been alone in the dreary desert, for the Arabs have kept away from the poisonous river bed. Only at noon large herds of melancholy cows are driven to the wells in the stream-bed for their daily drink, to be driven away again on a hopeless search after nourishment from the barren fields. In revenge they refuse to yield us a drop of milk. Our own drinking water is brought six miles from Bureir, as we dare not drink the local water until after heavy rains. The Arabs keep civil, and we are constantly asked to give them rough foundation stones for building. Some mischievous boys finding a truck standing on the rails one Sunday could not resist the temptation of rolling it down the hundred feet of earth

which forms a slide to the river below, fortunately without damage to the truck.

We have at last found something that looks like a public structure. I can hardly call it a building, for only the very curious foundations remain. I reserve a careful description and plan for my report, but I will here give a general idea of it. The structure, or series of structures, consists of parallel lines of brick-wallings and isolated stones. Beginning at the east we have first a wall, then two lines of stones, then another wall, then two lines of stones, then two walls, then two lines of stones. Exact measurements were not made by the planners of this structure, but they are in general these:—Between two lines of stones, or two lines of walling, or between a line of stones and a wall, the distance is about 8 feet from east to west, between stone and stone from north to south the distance is on an average  $3\frac{1}{2}$  feet. Roughly speaking, the length of the structure from east to west was 100 feet, and from north to south about 40 feet. The isolated stones (which are sandstone), are roughly squared, and of irregular sizes. That they are in place is shown by the rough order and by the fine white sand that occurs under each one and nowhere else. They were originally, probably, below the floor of the place, as rough river pebbles, as if a pavement were formed either at a level with their top or a little higher. Hence they may have been the foundations of small columns of mud-brick work, now decayed. I know it is the archaeologist's temptation to call every new thing a temple, but it seems more probable that we have here a series of chambers, like a modern bazaar. This, however, is not my last word on the subject. This curious structure was found at a level of about 306 feet, a few feet under "Manasseh's Wall" in the north-east part of the Tell. As in our large section of work we could not hope to reach the Amorite level this season, I selected a platform about 50 feet by 20 in front of the pilaster building at the south-east of the Tell, with the idea of digging down to the Amorite levels more rapidly in this smaller section, which might furnish us with samples of what we might hope for in the larger excavation. We have now reached the Amorite level, indeed we are within a few feet of the natural hill, and have been rewarded by finding an interesting collection of iron objects, large spear heads, and axes or hatchets, as well as a cylindrical seal, and another seal. The iron work is better than what we have found in higher levels, and we may hope to find still other evidences of civilisation when we reach the Amorite level in the large excavation. These objects were found in a large room, with walls of excellent brick, which had been fiercely burnt. All the varieties of Amorite pottery with nothing more modern were found in connection. As Mr. Petrie has shown in his plan of the east face, the Amorite levels are higher in this part of the mound than in the north-east part. I am constantly astonished at the accuracy of his observation during the short time at his disposal here. Thus far we have lost only one whole day and two half days on account of rain, but the real winter storms have not yet begun. I expect to extend the season of work, of course as long as it is prudent.