

cubes. Inside this frame, and in a diagonal direction, are straight lines, of one black, one white, and one red stone forming quadrangular spaces, whose sides are about 8 inches long, not with regular angles but so that they are longer than wide. In the middle of each space is a kind of rosette or star. And in the middle of the whole is a circular band of black, red, and white stones, with four rosettes at equal distances. Inside this round band is an animal, some thinking it to represent a gazelle, on account of its long feet, others call it a lamb on account of its full body and the full long tail. I myself think it represents a lamb. It certainly had an allegorical meaning, as well as the two branches of some plant joined to it, as the drawing shows. I have the impression that this place was once a Christian chapel.

The monks have reported on these things to Paris, and their report was published in the *Revue Biblique*, No. 9, 1892.

The Superior was kind enough to give me a photograph of this pavement, which I enclose. It is certainly more exact than my drawing, but I made the latter in order to give the colours, and the situation, as it is connected with the other things described.

NOTES FROM TELL EL HESY.

By F. J. BLISS, B.A.

May, 1892.

THE month of siroccos is on us, and Friday is our unlucky day. May is a windy month, but the west and south winds do us but little harm, for the high walls formed by the part of the Tell at south and west still left standing protect the place of the excavations. However, when the north and east winds blow the interruption to work is sometimes serious. Imagine great slopes of lately-thrown earth to north and east, add to this the dust and earth thrown by fifty or sixty girls in the teeth of a fierce gale, and then gather some idea of the blinding dust which envelops the whole field of excavation when the sirocco is at its worst. Twice we have had to suspend work for some hours, following the double dictates of prudence and humanity. Noon is a crucial hour when the east wind usually shifts to the south. On these hot days the jar is on its way constantly to and from the stream, and we have to follow a military discipline of turns in watching the multitude, or the girls would fall upon the jar with much fighting.

Readers of Mr. Petrie's "Tell el Hesy" will remember his reference to the bed of ashes over five feet thick occurring in the stratification of the Tell. The lack of results this season is due to the fact that we have had to remove this awful, unprofitable layer in order to get at the Amorite town below. I cannot picture the tediousness of the job we have had in removing almost 100,000 cubic feet of this wretched stuff. Our finds are few, but include a small statue of a man in bronze, a few inches high, and a tiny bronze goat with two kids sucking. A full list of all finds

will appear in the report, but in the meantime I make a few notes on my general experiences and observations in this camp life.

Last year we had hardly any rain here after March 15th, but this year a violent storm occurred in April. Early in the morning of the 23rd I was awakened by the sharp pattering of rain on the tent. We hardly expected the workmen, but they appeared and went off to the excavations. More rain fell, however, and heavier, the wind rose, and as I was taking my coffee I saw the men and women flying from the Tell. I directed the men to take shelter in the guards' tent and the women in another tent that stood empty. But far from empty was this small, ten-rope tent, when sixty women and girls had packed themselves into it, sardine-fashion, overflowing at the door.

Yusif came to my tent to make the wages accounts, for it became plain that no more work could be done that Saturday. Hardly had I opened note-book when down crashed the tent over our heads, I escaping by the door, and Yusif still left within. The sudden gale which had threatened the destruction of all my breakfast dishes, had also overturned the Effendi's tent (he was away at the time), and the tent in which the girls had taken refuge. With an absurd mingling of amusement and apprehension I saw the poor creatures squalling, creeping, crawling out of the *debris* of the tent, falling over each other, laughing, crying, and finally running about like chickens terrified by the appearance of a hawk. Fortunately, no one was injured, and the only thing broken was my balance, while one gramme weight was lost.

I have been more successful in managing my small "labour question" than last year. Then, when the barley harvest began about April 25th, we lost almost all our good workmen, as we increased the wages only from nine piastres (a Gaza piastre is about 1*d.*) to 11½*d.* for a man and from 5*d.* to 6½*d.* for a girl. From that time to May 15th, when we gave up work, we had a varying set of wretched people, many being either too old or too young for work. This year, on about April 25th, I raised the men's pay to 15 piastres, and the women's to 8, with the result that I have secured as many as I care to have of the good old hands. We have thus successfully competed with the Arabs, who draw off the fellahin to the barley harvest. I hope we may go on with a few good workmen till about June 1st, when the wheat harvest will drive us from the field, as it would not pay to go on increasing the wages, though I must say that 15 piastres is better economy in the early summer than 9 in the deadly malarious autumn, when we must return to finish the task.

I have hereto presented a rather rose-coloured view of the character of our workpeople. There is, however, another side. The fellahin here are terribly profane, and indulge in cursing freely. "May God not have mercy on your father!" is constantly heard. Men, women, children, all swear. "Wullah!" is used in assertion, interrogation, admiration. Some oaths have peculiar sanctity. The Faluji, a local saint, will not permit his name to be taken in vain. "Are you fasting?" I asked a lad in Ramadan. "Wullah, I'm fasting." "By the life of the Faluji, are you

fasting?" The lad's face fell. "No," he said, "I'm not." The Faluji's name practically more terrifying than the Almighty's.

The freedom and foulness of the language is extreme. Forbidden subjects are discussed most freely before the girls, who seem to see no impropriety. This licence seems to be entirely confined to speech, however, but it is certainly shocking. Major Conder's observations on the peasantry are capital, but I must disagree with him on one point. He found in them little sense of the ludicrous, but I have seen a good deal of fun in them. One fellow we employ has a dry humour about him that is very popular with his fellow-workmen. They are very quick to appreciate any little caricature I may give of their characteristics. They also give nicknames, striking sometimes for their aptness, at others for their satire.

We have had a very pretty instance of family affection in the case of Khalil and his two elder sisters who work with him. He is a pleasant, amiable, easily-led boy, but a spoiled darling. His sisters try to ease his work in every way. Once he had a very slight chill and fever. They were inconsolable, would not eat or sleep, and went about their work distracted, begging to know if I thought he would live!

The custom of paying a man a large sum for his daughter on her marriage is well known, but I note some odd effects of it. For instance a boy's sister is a most valuable bit of property. When he wishes a bride he can trade off his sister, and so gets the bride for nothing. I asked if a certain girl were married, and the answer was: "No, her brother is with her alway." Which meant that she must remain single till her brother should return to use her as an exchange for a bride of his own. I have referred once or twice to the nice lad Monsûr and his bold bride-elect Henda. My fears were justified: she proved too much for him, and after a brief but stormy union she went back to her people. Now comes in a singular complication. Monsûr traded for Henda by marrying his sister Fatung to Henda's uncle Rizq. Fatung and Rizq proved a happy couple, but when Henda ran home, poor Rizq had to lose his bride, who was ordered to her old home to bake and draw water. Her hostage having failed, she had to be returned. Admirable business, but indifferent romance. So Henda, who had been basketing earth for Monsûr before the brawl, worked after her uncle Rizq, within a few paces of her estranged husband; while Fatung, with easily imaginable rebellion in her heart, filled her basket with the earth dug by her brother Monsûr. But she said never a word nor cast a look at Rizq. "She has been well brought up," said her brother proudly; "The trouble with Henda is that she had no one to beat her." A thing a girl must get used to in her youth as Monsûr found to his cost when he tried to supplement the imperfections of her early training.

Monsûr was talking of a divorce (for the separation thus far was tentative), when the inevitable middleman stepped in—the peacemaker, the reconciler—and the original *status quo* was restored. This functionary plays a most important part in the East. The protagonist of one quarrel may be

the peacemaker of the next. Indeed, I sometimes suspect that the fighting parties do not care to come actually to blows until they see the peacemaker advancing around the corner!

One difficulty in the work here arises from the crops with which the Tell and its approaches are planted. This spring we found a crop of lentils on the Tell, and barley all about it. I made a liberal estimate of the value of the crops in the actual place of excavation and made allowance for the damage to crops in the paths we would have to make for the labourers. I told Yusif to offer the Bedawy Hussein three Napoleons, and, if necessary, to advance to four. I knew the preliminaries would take some time, and retired to my tent to watch the battle from afar. In a shorter time than I had expected, Yusif appeared with Hussein saying that they had inspected the Tell and that he had agreed to accept three napoleons. I said to Hussein; "Does your father agree?" "He does," he replied. So the money was handed over, and I was congratulating myself that the last interruption to the work had been removed, when the farcical drama really began. For, lifting up my eyes to the door of the tent I beheld the Patriarch striding over the fields firmly grasping his stout staff. Was this the feeble old man we had never taken into account, and who usually seemed too weak to crawl along? He entered, and I knew mischief was brewing. Hussein handed him the money. He looked at it, laid it on the table, and then delivered himself of a masterly speech, which I wish I could reproduce. He repudiated the money—he wished to know our rights to work in his land—he grew stormier and stormier. Meanwhile Hussein, with as masterly an appearance of disgust, reproached his father for stultifying him in this manner before the Khowaja. Washing his hands of the whole matter he made a dramatic exit, and the old gentleman rushed off in the other direction. The money remained on the table. I saw in the affair, merely a trick to get another Napoleon out of us, and told Yusif to manage it as well as he could, for delay to the work could not be allowed. Then followed various colloquies: Yusif and Hussein—Hussein and his wicked old father—Hussein, Yusif, and the old man; and finally they all reappeared with a paper having the old man's seal, and declaring that he would be entirely satisfied with four Napoleons. So ended the negotiations; but to this hour I cannot tell whether Hussein was in the game or not. If so, then he is a most accomplished actor. About the old gentleman there can be no doubt. After his temporary robustness he subsided into his usual decrepitude for a couple of months, but he has had another revival of strength, and has just started off with the pilgrimage to Mecca, taking with him wheat, semen, cheese, lentils, and twenty napoleons as provision for the journey.

The tricky methods of the Syrian peasantry are a constant source of surprise to me; not so much because of their cleverness as because they themselves are so easily taken in by them. If Ahmed wishes to get something out of Mohammed, he cajoles him by the very same wiles that Mohammed would successfully use against Ahmed. Mohammed grossly

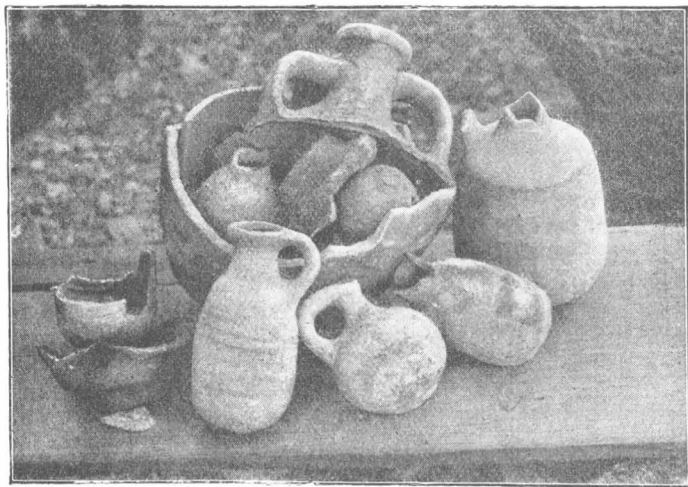
flatters Ahmed and makes his point, while next day Ahmed will grossly flatter Mohammed and make his. I suppose the philosophy of it is this : a man plays upon the weakness of his neighbour, and, sharing the same weakness, may be played upon in return. It is cunning, not cleverness, in many cases, while of course it may rise into real diplomacy. But after all diplomacy is very much the same thing the world over, and the only sure diplomatist is the man who has conquered his own weakness.

The present season has been a disappointing one. Of course I knew that the bed of ashes existed and had to be removed, but the event in this case was more vivid than the anticipation. The autumn should be our most interesting season as the entire work will be in very early periods. We shall certainly need some exciting discovery to cheer us in the gloom of the malaria that hangs over this district before the winter rains. Negative results are often valuable in the field of discovery, but the discoverer himself may be pardoned for longing after the stimulus of something positive.

NOTES BY G. ROBINSON LEES, F.R.G.S.

JERUSALEM, *February 11th*, 1892.

1. *Pottery from the Saris Cave*.—The Rev. J. E. Hanauer, on page 72 of the *Quarterly Statement* for April, 1890, mentions in his account of



POTTERY FROM THE SARIS CAVE.

our visit to the Saris Cave, that I found an old lamp, and on the same page speaks of the Freemasons as having been to the same