

EXCAVATIONS AT JERUSALEM.

By FREDERICK JONES BLISS, M.A.

As we have completed only our second week of work, a detailed report cannot be expected. Readers of the *Statement*, however, will be glad to know that a beginning has been made, and that the long-talked-of excavations at Jerusalem have even thus early yielded some interesting results. An ancient tower of large, drafted masonry has been unearthed, the counter-scarp of a ditch has been followed for a long distance, and a pretty Mosaic pavement, with a curious rock-hewn path attached, has been discovered. Many other shafts have been sunk with valuable results, as the rock has been reached in every case.

I have been in Jerusalem since the last of February, awaiting the granting of the permit and helping in this as best I might. The time, however, has been profitably spent in studying the topography of the city, and in endeavouring to sift the undoubted facts from the mass of theory in which discussion has buried them. In this sense I have been steadily excavating! I was much struck by the attention paid to the subject by the inhabitants of the city, especially by the foreign colonies, although the natives are far from indifferent to the matter. The site of the Holy Sepulchre, the direction of the Second Wall, the date of this and that bit of masonry, these, rather than society gossip, form the subjects of chit-chat at afternoon teas and picnics. Especially enthusiastic are the members of the Jerusalem Association of the Palestine Exploration Fund. Among the French ecclesiastics are several earnest and serious scholars, notably Père Cié, professor of the Greek Catholic Seminary of St. Anne; Père Gelmer Durand, of the Augustinians; Père Lagrange and Père Sejourné, the Dominicans, all of whom are contributors to the quarterly "*Revue Biblique*,"¹ published under the direction of the professors of the Practical School of Biblical Studies at the Dominican Convent of St. Stephen. This school, which includes a good number of students, has many admirable features, among which I may mention systematic walks about the city with the professors, and two extended tours a year, which include the most interesting places between Gaza and the Lebanon, on both sides of the Jordan. This work goes on quietly and earnestly, and the English public ought to know more of it. I feel that the work in Palestine is one, and I am grateful to these learned fathers for the cordial interest they have already shown in the beginnings of our excavations.

On Wednesday, April 25th, while engaged in my room at the hotel on my Jericho plans, I received the joyful news from the Consul, Mr. Dickson, that the permit had arrived. To feel it actually in my hands was a sensation of satisfaction. On Thursday we took it to the Pasha for

¹ Paris, P. Lethielleux, Libraire Editeur, 10, Rue Cassette. 15 francs a year.

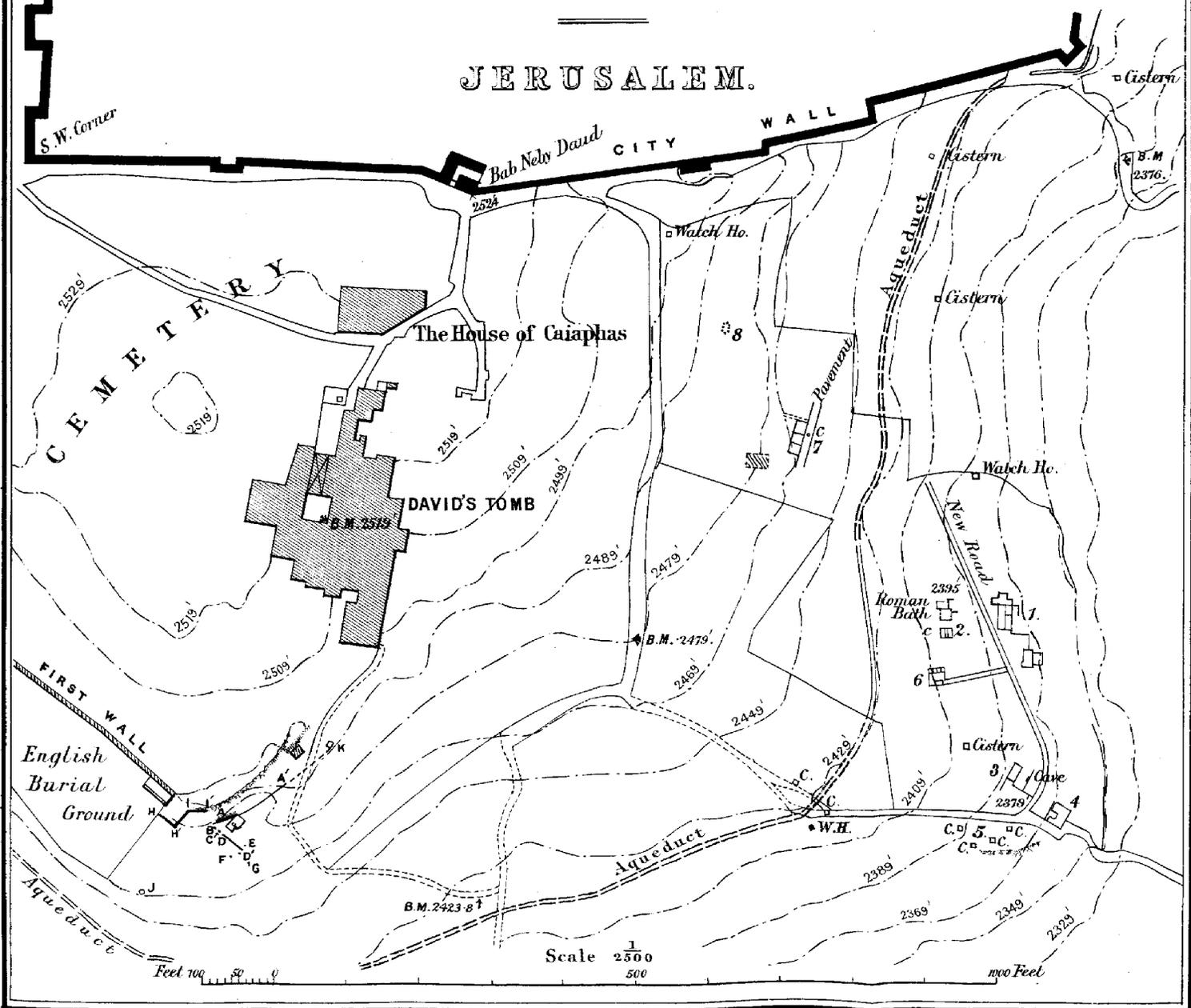
registration, and on Friday I started for Beyrout to collect my goods and chattels, as the permit would not be available till May 14th. A few days after my return on May 4th, Mr. Schick, who has quite recovered from his severe illness of the winter, accompanied me to the slopes at the south of the city, and we talked over the best sites for shafts. Ibrahim Effendi, our Commissioner, returned from Hebron on the 14th, and we doubtless would have begun work in a day or two had we not discovered that it was necessary to get his local appointment confirmed from Constantinople. I anticipated a tedious delay, but, owing to the prompt action of Ibrahim Pasha, the Governor, who takes a most kindly interest in the work, a reply came in a surprisingly short time. We had, however, to wait till Monday for a committee to be appointed by the council who should visit the field of our proposed excavations and decide whether it came within the terms of the permit. Our tents had already been up for a week, just outside the English cemetery. Accordingly, Tuesday morning, with delightful promptness, the committee appeared, consisting of Yasin Effendi, the relative of our Commissioner, and 'Arif Bey, the head of the Public Instruction. They surveyed the site, and seeing that there was no possible danger to sacred or military buildings, made a favourable report and authorised us to begin the next day. We have every reason to be thankful that we had a delay of nine days only, and that in the ordinary course of business.

My instructions from the Committee were to take up the "Rock Scarp of Zion," just outside the property of the English School and Cemetery, and attempt to trace it eastwards, in accordance with the description of Josephus. Full descriptions of Mr. Henry Maudsley's valuable work inside the English property are given by Major Conder in the numbers of the *Quarterly* for 1875. I may note here that the scarp was traced by Mr. Maudsley continuously for over 650 feet. Beginning at a point about 100 feet north of the school, the scarp runs south; at the school it makes a right angle, in order to form the north side of the solid base of a tower, some 45 feet each way and over 25 feet high. Beyond the south-east corner of the tower the scarp continues south for 50 feet in a line with the scarp as first observed, and then, turning through an angle of some 40°, runs in this direction to the eastern wall of the English Cemetery, where it again turns at right angles, as if to form the base of another tower, forming the foundation of the modern wall. Midway between these two towers Major Conder sees indications of a third. The scarp presents many interesting features, such as cisterns, stables, steps, &c. Outside the cemetery the supposed site of the tower was covered by a huge mound of rubbish, and the scarp was lost for over 100 feet, when it appeared again running north-east for about 175 feet. Opposite the scarp at its re-appearance a counterscarp was traced for some 40 feet, leaving a ditch some 40 feet wide. In the rock south of the counterscarp cisterns were found.

Such, then, was the condition of things at this most interesting spot 19 years ago, when described by Major Conder, and such was its condition

PLAN TO ILLUSTRATE THE EXCAVATIONS ON MOUNT ZION.

JERUSALEM.



two weeks ago, when I took up the long-suspended work. No place could have been more favourable for a beginning. We began in no chance place, but in one that furnished the clearest indications. The work was continued in true archaeological succession. The results of my work I place on the accompanying plan.

The first digging occurred at the point A. The men worked both north and south, the object being to determine the extent of the counterscarp. Northward it was followed to the point A'. There the work got very deep, and if continued would have passed through the garden in front of a new house, which may be seen to be built against the scarp. The owner of the house told me that for the foundation of the north-east corner he had to dig 25 or 30 feet. This suggested that it had been built out into the ditch. I took him to the point B and told him that there I should find the rock at a depth of a few feet. We sunk a shaft, finding the rock at 9 feet, with a scarped face descending. This would give the depth of the ditch at this point at 15 or 20 feet, if we can trust to the figures of the owner of the house.

The men who worked southwards followed the counterscarp for a few feet only, when it turned a sharp angle to the south-east, and was lost. At K we unearthed a room, built in the rock, with rough walls covered with plaster, and with a Mosaic pavement of a somewhat complicated pattern, with tesserae in red, blue, yellow, and white. This will be photographed later. It is evidently late work. Could the counterscarp have been cut down to have made place for this house? Just before this point the counterscarp is only 4 or 5 feet high, with a shallow channel running north along its base for 15 feet or more, when the rock drops another 5 feet. Thus from the Mosaic pavement¹ we traced the counterscarp north-east for 110 feet to the point A', from that point to K is about 75 feet, where we found it again, making a distance of 185 feet. The counterscarp is not exactly parallel to the scarp, the ditch being at different points 40, 49, 54, and 65 feet wide.

At C we found the rock at a slight depth. Here was a curious cutting in the solid rock 5 feet deep, 13 feet long, 8 feet wide at one end, and 5½ at the other. The north end had a platform about 3 feet high, occupying half of the room; it had been arched once, and contained a fireplace, which had a low rounded roof of its own. Channels for water led into the lower part. Against the south rock-wall of the chamber there was what I must describe as the *silhouette* of a stairway, as the steps projected only an inch or two from the rock, which was cut away to form the three steps. These, of course, will be drawn when a proper plan of the whole place is made. It looks as if they had been intended as rests for a wooden stairway. Many Roman tiles were exhumed. Near by was one bearing the stamp of the tenth legion. The place was probably a bath connected with the room with the pavement.

We dug trenches along the line D—D', finding a wall of medium sized

¹ From the corner at B (?).—Ed.

masonry, with no particular characteristics. At E there is a cistern, 14 feet deep, which we have not yet completely cleared out. Many skulls and bones had been thrown in. Two of the skulls bore marks of hard blows; what was the battle that took place here, and who were the antagonists?

I was anxious to trace the scarp of the tower, the north side of which was visible under the wall of the cemetery. It was not long before we found the west scarp at the foot of the great heap of rubbish referred to above. That I should find remains of the tower itself I did not hope, though it might have been inferred from the mass of *debris*. However, we had not worked far along the trench H—H' before we found a large drafted stone set back a few inches from the top of the scarp, which is chamfered. Another and another appeared joined together by strong mortar. A second course soon appeared, and when we reached the corner (a distance of 39½ feet from the cemetery wall) three courses were in place. The masonry was missing at the north end, the entire length of the lower course still in place to the south corner is 27 feet.

We are now opening up a trench along the line H'—I. The rock is visible at I, 11 feet above H'; the distance from H' to I is 32 feet, being the length of this side of the tower. We have not as yet reached the sloping rock all along the trench, but the masonry thus far uncovered appears to be of the same character as that below. It is, however, extensively but irregularly plastered over, and the plaster is everywhere curiously indented with marks made by a small wedge-shaped tool whether for ornamentation or for securing the plaster I cannot say. Squeezes will be sent. I have seen nothing like it.

The drafted stones vary in size; the three largest seen measure—(1) 4 feet 11 inches long by 1 foot 4 inches high, the top draft is 2 inches wide, and the right side draft 3 inches; (2) 3 feet 6 inches long by 2 feet 3 inches high, top draft 3 inches, side draft 2 inches; (3) 2 feet 11 inches long by 2 feet 3 inches high. This latter has a rough centre projecting 9 inches from the draft. The projections of centres of the stone vary, some being almost flush with the draft. Thus far the depth of the stones has not been seen. The courses are regular in level, the lesser height of (1) is due to its being in the lowest course where the scarp is not level. The drafts bear no sign of the comb-pick, but of what Petrie calls the "pock-marking" dressing, which was used in Phœnician times. How much later it came down I am not prepared to say. Our stones here are similar to the masonry at the south-west angle of the city wall. Mr. Hanauer pointed out to me that the lowest stone of the corner projects considerably beyond the corner, as if old masonry *in situ*, which did not follow the exact lines of the new wall, had been taken advantage of. A shaft would determine the question.

On Conder's plan, parallel to the north side of the tower on which the school is built, is marked a "Modern wall of old masonry." These stones were found during the excavations, and are supposed to have fallen from above. Conder thinks them to be of Roman date. I have compared

them with the stones of our new tower and find a considerable difference. As a rule the drafts upon them were produced by a fine comb-pick, used diagonally in the style associated with Crusading work. I measured several, finding the length to be 2 feet. Some seem to have the "pock-marking," but their general appearance is different to ours, the centres being in most cases flat, and there is no example of a huge irregular boss.

The heap of rubbish above our tower I hope may yield us other results. We may find where the 36 steps, explored by Warren, lead to, and whether they terminate at a gate. The owners of the land say that in digging in the rubbish they found things of interest. One of these was a vase of a cluster of pillars of Crusading work, the fellow to which we found fallen to the bottom of our tower. Of course we hope for earlier objects. We are also following the scarp from its junction with the tower from I to I'. One stone may be seen *in situ*, the drafts worked with the comb-picking. I have this moment visited a curious angular cutting in the scarp, plastered, but not a cistern, which may develop into anything, as it seems to have a platform in front of it. We must find the depth of the face of the scarp at corner H'. From this corner we will be able to secure a good photograph when the cuttings are complete.

Beyond the point I', the scarp follows the steep contour 2489 in a north-easterly direction and disappears beyond the new house referred to above. Beyond this point this contour is no longer a lofty cliff. The distance between it and contour 2479 is 100 feet. Unless the ground has greatly changed, the wall would not have occupied an advantageous position. Why should the gently-sloping ground to the south as far as contour 2469 or 2449, even, have been shut out of the city? From point I, why does the scarp take a north-easterly direction, when, according to Josephus, we expect it to take an easterly direction to its bending above Siloam? Was there an inner wall, and was there also an outer wall? Or was the ground between contours 2489 and 2509 occupied by a great inner fortress, with its ditch as followed by us? These questions have greatly interested me. General Forestier Walker and his staff, who visited me, agreed that from a military point of view a wall would be expected on the lower and steeper contours. Accordingly I sank a pit at J to a depth of some 20 feet, and we are now tunnelling inwards to see whether there are signs of an outer wall along the contour 2469, which passes through the branching to right and left of the road from Bab Neby Da'ud, where Sir Charles Wilson suggests we may expect a gate.

The pottery we have recovered from this pit and tunnel I recognise as late Jewish, similar to what we found at Tell el-Hesi, belonging to the fifth and sixth centuries, B.C. Thus far we have reached no wall, but we expect to find something. We also sunk shafts at F and G. At F we found the wall of a house; at G a fine doorway, and we are now exploring the walls of the house to which it belongs. They were probably within the city wall of their time, as of course were the remains explored [at

B, C, D, and E. It will be thus seen that we have not sunk a single shaft which has not had some bearing, direct or indirect, on the question of the walls. A clue will probably appear before long. At any rate, we can attempt to follow the counterscarp beyond the point K, although, from the nature of the ground, houses, &c., this will be difficult.

With the exception of the Jewish pottery turned up in shaft J, the objects found seem to be Roman. A couple of dozen coins have turned up which I have not had time yet to clean and identify. Roman glass and potsherds abound. One whole lamp was found; also fragments of iron and bronze, the latter including an adjustment for hanging up a lamp, probably. We have exhumed great quantities of stone, to the delight of the owners of the land, who also rejoice in the new cistern we are clearing out, the Sheikhs of Neby Dafid, who were naturally somewhat suspicious at first, but have grown friendly. At sunset a dozen of their people are usually hanging about the works.

Our workmen, at present, number only 15, but they are most competent and energetic. Two of them worked with Sir Charles Warren, as boys, here and at the Jericho Tells. Our carpenter, who makes the mining frames, also worked for him. The ever-faithful Yusif presides over the labourers with his usual efficiency. Our tents are pitched within a few yards of the work. This certainly has its advantages, but it is like living in one's office—one never gets away from the work. As a rule I am here the whole of the day. Sometimes after dinner I get a stroll to the town, unless I am tired enough to go at once to bed. Ibrahim Effendi's tents are on the terrace below. The position is a glorious one, with the ground sloping down steeply to the Valley of Hinnom. I can look out from my tent and see the Mount of Olives and the ever-changing Mountains of Moab. The weather is very changeable. We have had in the fortnight quiet days of burning heat, boisterous days of fierce winds, days of simply charming weather, and one day of real cold. The nights are always delightful, except when the winds pull the tents about. My duties are varied, including laying out and constantly superintending the work, writing my reports, attending to our simple commissariat, with the daily accounts, and keeping things generally smooth, which is a strain on one's patience and diplomacy. When I hear the railway whistle, the military band, and the many bells, I confess to rebellious longings for the genuine camp-life of my beloved Philistia. There is something illogical in camping just outside a city.

Mr. Schick takes a friendly interest in the work, and his two visits have been of much profit to me. He advises me to search for signs of an outer wall. He kindly promises assistance when I come to my detailed plans. The work attracts numerous visitors. While very pleasant, this is, of course, a tax on one's time, especially when they appear towards the end of the day when one is supposed to have earned a little rest. We were honoured the first Saturday by a visit from three Consuls, the English, Russian, and Austrian. The work begins soon after five and ends at half-past six; the men stop for half an hour for break-

fast at eight, and for about an hour at noon. The eight hours' movement has not yet been inaugurated in Jerusalem !

In conclusion, I must repeat that this is not intended to be a final and detailed report of the work begun during the last fortnight. Several interesting particulars I have left till the work is more developed. Thus far we have every reason for encouragement. The Government is most friendly. We are especially fortunate in having Ibrahim Pasha for Governor. He is a man of great intelligence and unquestioned integrity, and during his administration the country has been free from disturbances. The cool nights will, I hope, make it possible for us to bear the heat of the day, so that we may expect to work through the summer months, instead of being forced to lay by as we were obliged to do in our work on the plains. I hope (though I know this is not my province) that the work will be generously supported both in England and in America.

The excavations should set at rest a few at least of the controverted points of Jerusalem topography. And who knows but that we may make some unexpected discovery? When I think of the immense amount of *débris* turned over by Warren, when I visit the extensive excavations made by the Augustinians, and by the Dominicans, and remember how few interesting antiques and inscriptions the turned-over soil of Jerusalem has yielded, then I confess to a feeling of discouragement. But then I think of the *chance* discoveries; I remember how the Siloam Tunnel, after having been measured by Robinson, Warren, and other great explorers, revealed its treasure to a run-away school boy; I realise that we hope to turn over the soil of the past ages in various places for a period of two years, that hid away somewhere in this soil there *must be* treasures and inscriptions, and I dare to indulge the hope that at the moment when we find ourselves the most discouraged a kindly fate may lead us to the object of our desires.

CAMP NEBY DAÛD,
June 6th, 1894.

NOTES ON THE PLAIN OF JERICHO.

By F. J. BLISS, M.A.

DURING my stay in Jerusalem, awaiting the arrival of our new Permit, I ran down twice to Jericho, and was able to make some interesting observations. Our camp is pitched within a few yards of the work, and it is pleasant (though a trifle distracting) to write this report in my tent and look out occasionally at the diggers. At Tell el Hesi it was different; after the first few days our work was not in sight of the tents, and during the last season the camp was pitched three miles away from the Tell.