

Palestine Exploration Fund, will be able to examine the question more satisfactorily.

There is another point which appears to me worth noticing. Tell es Sarem, a mound about 3 miles south of Beisan, and the same distance west of the Jordan, has been identified as the site of the ancient Zarethan, and it is in the vicinity of the marl gorge through which the river flows. If this identification is correct it would add still greater force to the conclusions of Monsieur Ganneau. If the passage in the third chapter of Joshua is read: "The waters which came down from above were dammed up beside Zarethan, that is far above the city Adam," the place thus described would correspond exactly with the place where the temporary dam was formed in the time of the Sultan Beybars. It is for Hebrew scholars to consider whether the verse might be thus translated.

THE SEPULCHRES OF DAVID ON OPHEL.

By Rev. W. F. BIRCH.

PERSEVERANCE is irresistible, while swiftness is not often accompanied by accuracy. Careful research in Palestine, begun by Robinson, has at last brought us near to the discovery of the sepulchres of David. Many will be extremely disappointed if the present excavation work at Jerusalem does not end the dispute as to the correct site of the City of David, by the actual discovery of the long-lost tomb of David.

As soon as Dr. Bliss turns the southern extremity of Ophel and begins to follow the wall of Jerusalem northward towards the Virgin's Fount, he will have two most important points to settle. On his right hand there will be Schick's aqueduct (*Quarterly Statement*, 1889, p. 35; 1891, p. 18) to be traced to Gihon (Virgin's Fount), and on the way to it he ought to alight on the old pool (Is. xxii, 11), which possibly may be the perplexing "pool that was made" (Neh. iii, 16). On his left hand, before reaching this pool, he will pass "over against" (*i.e.*, if the rock was bare, in sight of) the sepulchres of David (Neh. iii, 16). It is much to be desired that ample funds should be at once forthcoming, to enable Dr. Bliss to make a successful dash at the magnificent catacombs of Israel's greatest and wisest king. He must, in due course, certainly pass in front of them, and not improbably very near to them. All that is practicable ought to be done to find this grand treasure. The present golden opportunity of making such a splendid discovery must not be lost for the want of a few hundred pounds, as such a good chance may not occur again for years.

Let me therefore earnestly appeal for aid to the Palestine Exploration Fund, that it may this year gain a glorious victory in its topographical campaign. The contest raging when I entered the lists 18 years ago, has been long, as well as keenly and obstinately maintained, on the one side

by tradition and numbers, on the other by patient investigation. The small body of the Ophelites, like David's three mighty men after the fall of Zion, makes little account of the numerical superiority of its opponents. Our constant watchword is: "No peace with error." We rely on sound consistent Biblical evidence, and are as thoroughly convinced that Ophel is the site of the Royal Sepulchres, as we should be if amid its labyrinthine recesses we had already actually gazed on David's empty *loculus* and threaded the maze to Solomon's costly rock-hewn house where he lies in glory; or had examined Asa's sarcophagus, "which was filled with sweet odours . . . prepared by the apothecaries' art," and explored the sepulchral chambers of venerable Jehoiada, *pater patriæ*, or of Jehoshaphat and other honoured kings of Judah. It remains for Dr. Bliss to find and describe these monuments of ancient Jerusalem.

The desired discovery seems to me practicable enough. Money, however, is necessary for carrying on the excavations. Surely a Bible-reading land will not grudge it; while, further, the valuable experience gained by Dr. Bliss in his past work well qualifies him to turn the right stone and discover the entrance to the right tomb.

Meanwhile, if need be, let me encourage to this task our explorer of happy name, and try to win some interested waverers' money for the work, by showing that Mr. Samuel Bergheim's proposed (April *Quarterly Statement*, p. 120) stronghold of Zion at the north-western part of Jerusalem is only a castle in the air, and by pointing out once more that the trustworthy evidence for the site of the City and Sepulchres of David cannot possibly admit of any other site than one on Ophel (so called). See *Quarterly Statement*, 1885, pp. 100, 208; 1886, pp. 26, 152; 1888, p. 42; 1890, p. 200; 1893, pp. 70, 324; 1894, 282, &c.

Let any should despise the Ophelites because they are few, let me add that we are a growing party. Indeed, since 1879 some notable recruits have dared to join us, coming over Jordan in the first month. Besides, we have excellent testimonials even from opponents, *e.g.* :—

(1) Sir Charles Warren in 1871 ("Jerusalem Recovered," p. 303) said: "The principal difficulty I find is, that in the Book of Nehemiah the City of David, the House of David, and the Sepulchres of David, all appear to be on the south-eastern side of the hill of Ophel, near the Virgin's Fount."

(2) Professor Robertson Smith ("Jerusalem," "Encycl. Brit.") observed: "A third view places the City of David on the southern part of the Temple Hill, and this opinion is not only confirmed by the oldest post-Biblical traditions, but is the only view that does justice to the language of the Old Testament."

To pass over favourable remarks from Thrupp, Lewin, Fergusson, and Major Conder, I come to Sir Charles Wilson.

(3) He says (*Quarterly Statement*, 1893, p. 325) on Neh. iii, 16: "This passage, when taken with the context, seems in itself quite sufficient to set at rest the question of the position (on Ophel) of the City of David, of the sepulchres of the kings, and, consequently of Zion; all which

could not be mentioned after Siloah, if placed where modern tradition has located them."

With such splendid certificates in black and white, why should we Ophelites hide our heads, as if we were detected imposters? We know that we speak sober truth, and do not wish opponents to be silent, as the more they say (*e.g.*, Mr. Bergheim's fresh theory) the worse their case is seen to be. Therefore I say, Give! Excavate! and the *Bellum Topographicum* will end.

"Hæc certamina tanta
Pulveris exigui jactu compressa quiescent."

THE CITY OF DAVID.

ZION NOT AT "GOLIATH'S CASTLE."

By Rev. W. F. BIRCH.

As I invited (*Quarterly Statement*, 1883, p. 151) any one to upset "Zion on Ophel," let me point out how Mr. Samuel Bergheim's "fresh theory" utterly fails.

It ought to be premised that in the controversy about Old-Testament Jerusalem, the quality of the evidence is of more value than the quantity. One verse of the Bible is better than a page of Josephus or a tome of Jerome.

Mr. Bergheim accepts on p. 120 (above) the A, B, C, of Jerusalem topography by admitting that the three terms Zion, the City of David, and the stronghold, are equivalent. That they are such is clear from the Bible (1894, p. 282), and ought to be cheerfully admitted, but is often ignored.

The locality to which the most reliable evidence assigns even but one of these three terms ought to be the right site.

I have pointed out repeatedly (1) that in the Bible Ophel (so called) is referred to as the site of the City of David, of the House of David, of the Sepulchres of David, which were in the City of David; and (2) that the Akra of Josephus, which was the Akra of the Maccabees, which was the City of David of the Bible, is consistently placed on Ophel.

Mr. Bergheim makes no attempt to meet these practical demonstrations. He could not wisely do so. I know well that the Ophel position is impregnable, and that the attempt would be useless.

Error, however, has as many lives as a cat, and must be met as often as it reappears.

I have therefore to show that what Mr. Bergheim alleges in support of his fresh theory that Zion was at the north-west portion of Jerusalem, and more precisely at Goliath's Castle, carries no weight at all, or at least not enough to prove his case.