

NOTES BY PROFESSOR T. F. WRIGHT, PH.D.

I.—NEHEMIAH'S NIGHT RIDE (ii, 12-15).

THE aid which the recent excavations give us in understanding the night ride of Nehemiah is a strong proof of their utility. On this subject commentators have blundered down to the present time, but now we may feel safe. It may be well to point out the result of the work of Dr. Bliss so far as regards this hitherto insoluble problem.

The passage reads in revised form :—

“ And I arose in the night, I and some few men with me ; neither told I any man what God had put into my heart to do for Jerusalem : neither was there any beast with me, save the beast that I rode upon. And I went out by night by the valley gate, even toward the dragon's well, and to the dung gate, and viewed the walls of Jerusalem, which were broken down, and the gates thereof were consumed with fire. Then I went on to the fountain gate and to the king's pool : but there was no place for the beast that was under me to pass. Then went I up in the night by the brook, and viewed the wall ; and I turned back, and entered by the valley gate, and so returned.”

Nehemiah, of course, was trying to ascertain the exact condition of things, in order to set forward the rebuilding of the wall. As he had approached the city by the northern road, he had no doubt gained some knowledge of the walls, except on the southern side. To see these, a special expedition was necessary, and he was obviously wise in making it secretly and maturing his plans before he spoke of them. The only question has been as to the locality of these gates, and a brief look at the attempts to place them may be useful.

In Schaff's "Lange," Professor Howard Crosby placed the valley gate south of Jaffa gate, made the Birket-es-Sultan to be the dragon's well, and took Nehemiah all round the city.

In the Cambridge Bible for Schools, Professor H. E. Ryle placed the valley gate where the Jaffa gate is now, and made it open on the Tyropœon, which he identified with Hinnom.

Professor E. W. E. Reuss, of Strasburg, also placed the valley gate where the Jaffa gate is now.

In "Buried Cities and Bible Countries," the Rev. George St. Clair says :—

“ The valley gate was at the head of the Tyropœon valley, and at the same time close to the valley of Hinnom. It could not be far from the present Jaffa gate. The dung gate came between the Jaffa gate and the south-west corner of the city.”

I may also refer to his statements in the *Quarterly Statement* for January, 1888, when he placed the valley gate at David's, the dragon's well at the Virgin's Fountain, and the fountain gate inside the present wall. In the *Quarterly Statement* for April, 1889, he printed a map showing the valley gate where the Jaffa gate is now, the dung gate south-west of David's, or at David's, the fountain gate high up the Tyropœon, the king's pool higher yet, and the king's gardens west of Ophel. The Rev. W. F. Birch combatted all this, and Mr. St. Clair rejoined that "appeal to the spade is necessary."

That appeal having been made, it is seen at once that all the geographers have greatly erred, from being unable to see beyond the present gates. Let the plan in the *Quarterly Statement* for January, 1895, be consulted, and a new gate appears at once, leading directly into the valley of Hinnom. According to the common understanding, the three periods of construction shown at this gate represent the work of Hezekiah, Herod, and Eudocia. Nehemiah was surveying work of Hezekiah, then in ruins. There he would naturally come out and turn eastward.

The dragon's well has not been found, but it is plain that water was not far off. A reservoir filled from a pool above by an intermittent flow would be so called, from the idea brought out in the uncovering of the pool of Bethesda, *Quarterly Statement*, 1888, p. 123. This well will not be ascertained until the water passages are more fully investigated. As to the LXX calling it the fig fountain, this is probably due to the similarity of the Hebrew words, but the place may well have been a place of figs. Compare 'Ain-et-Tin.

The dung gate is said in Nehemiah iii, 13, to have been about 1,000 cubits east of the valley gate. Turn to the plan in *Quarterly Statement* for October, 1895, and there it is called by Dr. Bliss a "small gate," and so placed as to lead directly to Tophet. With all previous and imaginary views the passage, Nehemiah iii, 13, is nonsense, but now it is perfectly verified.

The fountain gate seems also to have been found by Dr. Bliss. See October plan. It is at the south-eastern angle, close by much water, and leading to Bir Eyub; the king's pool was Hezekiah's Siloam.

Beyond this Nehemiah could not ride, because the path was so obstructed with fallen stones. He, therefore, went on foot up the brook, that is, the Kedron, probably until he saw the Temple wall along its length; and then he turned back and re-entered by the valley gate.

It may be of advantage to suggest that now the whole account of the rebuilding in chapter iii is quite plain. The account began at the sheep gate, where sheep were brought for the temple, went on northward, and so westward into the south, where we find mention of the valley gate, the dung gate 1,000 cubits east of it, "the gate of the fountain and the wall of the pool of Siloah, and the stairs that go down from the city of David, and the place over against the sepulchres of David, and the pool that was made, and the water gate, and the horse gate," until the sheep gate is reached again.

II.—THE KOLONIEH INSCRIPTION.

In the *Quarterly Statement* for January, 1887, Herr Schick gave an account of a tomb uncovered by him at Kolonieh having unusually elaborate frescoes on its ceiling and sides, with figures, cherubim supporting wreaths, in which are two Greek inscriptions, which he gives, and says that the Russian Archimandrite read the first as meaning "God and His anointed (Christ)," and the second as meaning "Lord, remember me," "the words of the malefactor on the cross."

The first is—

Εἰς Θεοῦ καὶ οὐ Χριστοῦ(ς) αὐτοῦ

"one God and His Christ," as the Archimandrite may have said, and Herr Schick omitted "one."

The second, just as given, is—

Ω C Z H
M N H C Θ H
B A P Ω X I C

This, it seems, the Archimandrite read as from Luke xxiii, 42. He was clearly wrong, yet I do not find that any other came to Herr Schick's rescue in a subsequent number. Thus, so far as I know, the very erroneous reading stands unchallenged and uncorrected. Respect for authority may have brought this about, but on general grounds it is obviously well that every newly-discovered inscription should be brought, if possible, to a solution which is not open to question at first sight.

In order to obtain, if not already given elsewhere, a final interpretation of this inscription, let me give what seems to me to have been intended:—

ᾧ Ως Ζῆ
Μνησθῆ
Βαρῶχίς

"As Barochis lived, let him be remembered." We might perhaps understand the sense as, "Let it be remembered how Barochis lived." Or we may read, "That he may live, let Barochis be remembered," that is, as we say, "may he live in memory."

The proper name presents a problem of its own. It is not *Βαροῦχος* (Baruch), nor is it *Βαραχίας* (Barachias). It may have been intended for the former, or it may be a feminine form, but I am inclined to think that, in copying the inscription, Herr Schick may have made out the last word imperfectly. It would seem idle to trace to any historical character this name, Baruch, so common on account of its meaning of "blessed."