

A VISIT TO THE EXCAVATIONS AT JERUSALEM.

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A RECENT visit to Jerusalem gave me an opportunity to examine the excavations carried on for the Fund by Dr. Bliss and Mr. Dickie. I have long desired to do this, but did not find it convenient until this month. My long acquaintance with Dr. Bliss and his work in various lines gave me an additional impulse to make the visit, and my own interest in the archæology of this country led me to seek a fuller acquaintance with the work.

I arrived at Jerusalem on Tuesday the 21st inst., and was most cordially received by Dr. Bliss and Mr. Dickie, who gave me every facility for examining the work already done, and following up that in progress. During the week I spent there I was daily in the excavations, accompanying Dr. Bliss as he made his rounds to the different shafts and tunnels, spending a good share of each day underground. I was enabled to get a much better insight into the work, the methods employed, and the difficulties to be overcome, than I had previously obtained from reading the reports, and I appreciated more fully the puzzling questions an excavator meets with underground, and the importance of deciding these questions rightly, in order to obtain the maximum of results with a minimum of expense. Dr. Bliss showed his constant anxiety to economise for the Fund, and spend no labour where it would not be profitable, and he constantly watched every clue that might lead to a right decision.

While I was there, work was being carried on in several different places, some on the hill within the Augustinian property, and others in the Tyropean Valley below. It required much travelling up and down the steep hill to visit the various gangs of workmen, give directions, and keep everything fully in hand. The sun that beats down into the Tyropean Valley in August is merciless, and the odours that rise from the open drain that pours its fetid stream down from the city are most pungent, especially when reinforced by the carcasses of mules and donkeys which find there a resting-place. It is a relief to escape from such an atmosphere, and burrow in the shafts and tunnels. Those which were being pushed in the lower part of the valley were most interesting, and were yielding valuable results. The depth of *debris* there, one shaft showing 65 feet, indicates repeated destruction in this portion of the ancient city, and excavation in this quarter promises the richest results. Wherever a shaft may be sunk, or a tunnel driven, ruins of walls, arches, floors, and paved ways are met with. It would be worth while to explore the whole valley, if funds could be found for it, so rich it seems to be in the remains of old Jerusalem. While there, I watched the uncovering of the scarp and wall along the west side of the valley, the

series of steps descending along the side of it towards Siloam, a large cistern and fine arch in the valley, and the magnificent paved way on the eastern side near Ophel.

It is to be hoped that these excavations will soon determine definitely the disputed question as to the site of the City of David. Some most interesting developments I feel sure are in store for Dr. Bliss and the friends of the Fund during this coming year. The work is being pushed rapidly, and each day yields important results. The workmen are interested as well as the director, and all work together with a will. Dr. Bliss and Mr. Dickie are on the best of terms with all their people, and have the faculty of getting the most work with the least friction. Mr. Dickie is acquiring the colloquial, and is already able to make his way among the workmen without an interpreter. This *entente cordiale* between the directors of the work and their men is of the greatest advantage, and not always easy to be gained in this country without a free use of money. The men of Siloam seem to have a warm attachment and genuine regard for Dr. Bliss and Mr. Dickie. The latter's injury at the hands of ruffians aroused their sympathies, and his re-appearance among them was the occasion of sincere congratulations.

During my visit, Mr. Dickie was busy in preparing his case for the trial of his assailants. The affair seems a strange one, no sufficient motive for the attack being evident. It is to be hoped that the aggressors will receive such sentence as will deter others from similar assaults. The authorities are no doubt anxious to see justice done, and the case is a clear one.

I was glad to find the health of Dr. Bliss and Mr. Dickie so good. The climate is rather trying, and the work exacting, but Dr. Bliss says it agrees with him far better than his two months of enforced idleness. His next report will be awaited with interest.

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ARMENIAN DESCRIPTION OF THE HOLY PLACES IN THE SEVENTH CENTURY.

Translated from the Russian by R. NISBET BAIN, Esq.

THE fragment here communicated, presenting a short description of the Holy Places in Palestine, attracts our attention by its undoubtedly great antiquity, although it appears impossible to give an exact or even approximate date of its first appearance in writing. Moses Kagankatvatsi, the author of the "History of Agvan," translated into the Russian tongue by Professor K. P. Patkanov,¹ in which the description

¹ "History of Agvan" of Moses Kagankatvatsi, a writer of the tenth century. Translated from the Armenian. Sb., 1051.