

which were cut at a different angle in connection with the scarp. As the levels are not given on the published plans and sections, it is at present impossible to understand what may have been the connection with the paved street (said to be Roman) further north. The masonry at AL, south-west of the Pool of Siloam, I saw when it was uncovered in 1881. It appeared to me to be too slight for a city wall, and to have belonged to some Byzantine building. Dr. Bliss does not attribute this, or the block of masonry further north, to the ancient city walls.

It is possible that the older walls were entirely demolished in 70 A.D., and their materials reused. They have disappeared on the north-west of Jerusalem, and some of the stones have there been reused to form the wall of a pool. But if the ancient rampart does exist on the south-east, as on Ophel and near the south-west part of the upper city, it will not, in my opinion, be found by continuing excavations close to the Pool of Siloam, but must be sought further north, or traced eastwards from the remains of ancient walls, in continuation of the south-west scarp, which remains Dr. Bliss has discovered.

In the absence of inscriptions, coins, seals, or well dated pottery, this appears to be all we can at present learn from the explorations on the south side of Jerusalem.

WEYMOUTH, *January 28th.*

NOTES FROM DAMASCUS.

By Dr. ERNEST W. GURNEY MASTERMAN.

The Well Sādreyeh.—If on coming to the *Bab el Berid* of the great Mosque of the 'Omayyades in Damascus one turns sharp to the left, instead of entering the mosque, one enters a narrow lane. This lane is bounded on the right hand side by the ancient western wall of the mosque. Following it, it is found to lead to a doorway, inside of which is a small courtyard. Almost the whole of this courtyard is filled by a large tank (or *Bahrah*) about 12 feet square. Rising from almost the centre of the tank to a height of about 5 feet is the mouth of a well surmounted by a windlass. This well mouth is connected with the west side of the *Bahrah* by a kind of solid stone bridge. This well is called *بئر الصادرية* (Well Sādreyeh), and connected with it is the following curious custom. If anyone here receives a severe fright, and he or his friends think he is going to be ill as a consequence—fright being a very commonly supposed cause of many illnesses—he or his friends go to this well and throw in *salt*. The usual method appears to be to put some salt into each corner of the *Bahrah* in turn, but if the case is very serious, and especially if death is feared, the friends in addition to the salt, put in barley, henna, and eggs. I have heard most about this custom

from the Jews, to whom it is well known, but they assure me that all classes of the community frequent this well in this way—the Moslems going especially on Friday, the Jews on Saturday, and the Christians on Sunday. Regarding the last, I cannot think the custom can be common, as many I have asked have never heard of it.

The iron grating of a window of a building on one side of the court—apparently a Wely—is covered with bits of rag, such as one sees as registers of vows made at various sacred trees, tombs, etc., in many parts of the country.

It is curious in connection with this to note that, if the Jews here are very anxious about anyone, they dissolve salt in water and throw it about the room. While I have been doing an operation the friends of the patient have done this in the adjoining room. It reminds one of the “libation” of heathen times.

Superstitious Custom Connected with the Building Up of a Door.—Amongst many customs with which the East has made me familiar, I have here come upon one which is quite new to me. I found it in this way: When passing along a narrow lane in the Jewish quarter, I noticed on several occasions a square stone, about 6 inches by 6 inches, with a round hole of about an inch in diameter, set in the midst of the wall about 4 feet above the ground. At length one day my curiosity was sufficiently aroused to make me thrust my walking stick into the hole, and to my astonishment I found it went in its whole length. Looking down the hole I found I was looking straight into a room. On looking, I found in the same lane (a narrow passage between high houses) a similar hole, but this time loosely stopped with some bits of rag, and less conspicuous because the stones around were covered with plaster. Since this I have seen many such places, chiefly in the Jewish quarter, but also among the Moslems. On enquiry I find there is a superstition (the more enlightened say “among the women”), that it is very unlucky to completely close up a door—death or some misfortune will follow, and as in the re-arrangement of houses here, doors are very frequently built up, a hole through the whole thickness of the wall is left. I need hardly say that this custom is not universal, but it is common enough to show that there is a deep-seated and probably ancient superstition. I can offer no explanation of the custom, but it seems to me it might (if it is really an ancient custom) possibly explain an obscure passage. In Ezekiel viii, 7-8, we read: “And when I looked, behold a hole in the wall! Then said he unto me, Son of man, dig now in the wall; and when I had digged in the wall, behold a door.” The hole was apparently only a small one, because the Prophet had to dig before he could enter, so it could not be as a substitute for a door. According to the above custom the hole would be merely the sign that the door there had been walled up.

Among other unlucky things, I find it is considered very unpropitious for a woman to draw water or borrow a *ma'oun* (a vessel for washing linen in) in one house and carry it to another after dark.

DAMASCUS, February 1st, 1897.