

The seal just found on Ophel by Dr. Bliss cannot be used for comparison, being undated, but appears to me to date about 450 B.C., or from the time of Ezra.

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## NOTE ON PIERRE BELON'S TRAVELS.

By Lieut.-Colonel CONDER, LL.D., R.E.

MR. WILLOUGHBY GARDNER having kindly lent me a book which I have never seen noticed elsewhere, an abstract is here given of the part referring to Palestine. Pierre Belon du Mans travelled in 1553, with the French Ambassador to Turkey—M. de Furet, in Egypt, Sinai, Palestine, Syria, and Asia Minor. His account comes between that of Breydenbach in 1483, and that of Quaresmius in 1616. Palestine was under the Turks, who conquered it in 1518, and the writer was a remarkably zealous observer of manners and customs, natural history, and other subjects not treated by the ordinary pilgrim. The volume of 422 pages, printed at Paris in 1555, contains numerous rough woodcuts of animals, plants, costumes, with a bird's eye view of Sinai.

Starting from Cairo the party encamped at the Twelve Bitter Springs of Moses (*Ayân Mûsa*) and followed the usual route to Pharagon (*Wâdy Feirân*) where they found three or four huts of palm branches, and thence by a rocky ascent with steps, reached the foot of Sinai. There were sixty monks, who entertained travellers both Christian and Moslem, and a small mosque is said to have existed inside the monastery, east of the Chapel of St. Catherine. The mountain is said to have three peaks: Horeb, on the top of which is a Chapel of St. Catherine; Sinai, with the rock stricken by Moses; and the Mount of Moses to the east. On the west was a site called Quaranta Padri (Forty Fathers). At the village of Tor on the coast was a small fort with four towers, and near it were forty palms. Jews and Christians—Greek, Arab, and Armenian—lived here, and the Christians are said to have lent one another crosses and vestments for mass. At Suez were forty galleys, sent from Constantinople and taken in pieces for transport from Cairo. Belon was shown embalmed bodies of flying serpents with two legs and wings (probably manufactured) said to live in the desert.

Gaza was reached early in November, and is described as having an old square castle, but no walls. Figs, olives, jujubes, and apples, pomegranates, vines, and a few palms grew here, and sugar canes were cultivated. At Ramleh the ruins, vaults, and cisterns are noticed, and the land was tilled for corn, barley, and vegetables, with a few vines. The terracing of the hills is ascribed to the ancient Jews.

Jerusalem was reached on November 8th, ten days after leaving Cairo. On the way from Ramleh a ruined church with Latin pictures is noticed (probably at *Kuriet el 'Anab*). On Sion were some thirty

Franciscans. Their church (*Neby Dádd*) had been taken as a mosque, but restored to them through the remonstrances of M. d'Aramont, the French Ambassador at Constantinople. The account of the holy places is very short. The walls of the city are said to be modern (they had been built, as known from their inscriptions, by Soliman I, in 1542). From Sion, by the Gallicantus Chapel, the visitors went over Kedron to Bethany, where the tomb of Lazarus was in a small vault (as now shown). Thence by Bethphage, and the place where Christ mounted the ass, they went to the top of Olivet, and descended by the Agony Chapel, and Virgin's Tomb, and Gethsemane. The two pyramidal tombs in the Kedron are attributed to Jeremiah and Isaiah (now Absolom's and Zechariah's tombs); the stoning of Stephen was placed near the Golden Gate, which was closed. Bethesda is said to drain into the Kedron (at the *Birket Isráíl*). The Holy Sepulchre Church is described, with its roof open above. The price of admission was 9 ducats each, and the farmer of this tax paid 8,000 ducats a year to the Sultan.

The Plain of Jericho was next visited. A tower existed at Jericho. After describing shortly the Dead Sea and Jordan, 'Ain es Sultan is said (wrongly) to be Callirrhoe, and the ascent of Quarantania follows, with notice of the caves and chapel on the summit. Returning to Jerusalem the party went to Bethlehem: the "Field of Peas" (a common legend still surviving near *Már Eliás*) is noticed on the way. The church is briefly noticed, and thence the way led to Hebron, where a mosque existed over the tombs of Adam, Abraham, and Isaac. Christians might not enter, but could look through a hole in the outer wall—probably that still shown near the south steps of the Haram, though it does not now give any view of the cave inside. The Field of Red Earth and Abraham's Oak are noticed, and on the return journey the "Sealed Fountain" and the birthplace of St. John the Baptist (at '*Ain Karim*') are just mentioned.

From Jerusalem the party went north, and camped at Bireh. On the way they found sesame and cotton cultivated. Passing by Jacob's Well to Nâblus, mention is made of the gardens of white mulberries, fruits, and olives, and of the trade in cochineal with Venice.

A picture of a Syrian peasant is given, and the dress described. The hat was high, and apparently of goatskin, with a turban (the Jews wore yellow, the Christians blue, Moslems white and green). The abba of black and white left the right arm bare for facility in drawing the bow, which appears to have been of horn. The shirt, with large, long sleeves, was confined by a broad leather belt, in which was a dagger. The figure also carries a shield (probably of leather), a quiver, and a sword. The shoes came to the ankles. The general effect reminds one of some of the Assyrian bas-reliefs.

From Nâblus to Nazareth occupied only one day's ride, and the Chapel of the Annunciation was visited. Thence they descended to Capernaum, where were five fountains of water, and by Bethsaida and Corozaim (*Kerázeh*) reached the Jordan Bridge (*Jisr Benát Y'akób*), where they

fought the Arabs. The Jews had settled on the north shores of the Sea of Galilee, and had recently established fisheries. They remained at a Khân beyond the bridge, and crossed the Jaulân to Damascus, which was reached in six days from Jerusalem.

At Damascus was a Venetian Baillie or Consul, and Venetian artisans. The city had double walls, iron-bound gates, fine bazaars, and gardens. On the walls were carved two fleur-de-lis and a lion, which were supposed to be Frankish arms, but the Franks never held Damascus. There were many square and round towers close together. Silkworms were fed on the white mulberries. Cotton was carded. Many Jews lived in a separate quarter, and Greeks and Armenians in all parts. The departure of the Hâj was witnessed; and the portrait of a gentleman on a horse is given. The horse is adorned with a yak's tail on the neck: the rider has a high turban and furred robe. The raisins (*Zebib*), the Damascened steel and brass work of the city, are noticed as highly prized.

From Damascus they proceeded to Calcous (Chalchis, in the Buka'ah Plain) and to Baalbek, where were Jewish inhabitants. Nine pillars of great size are mentioned in the citadel, and another in the plain (still standing north-west of Baalbek). A fight with the Arabs followed near Lubon, where were Roman ruins; several of the travellers were wounded, and made only a short journey north on this day. The decay of agriculture is attributed to the people being slaves of the Turks, but the country was well watered, and had many villages; and silk was made. At Lubon elms and walnut trees are noticed.

Homs was next reached, and an ancient masonry tomb (still standing) is mentioned outside the city, with a Greek epitaph of Caius Cæsar. The walls were standing, and the town had gardens of mulberries for silkworms, and figs. Hamah was next reached, and is wrongly identified with Tarsus. The ruins of a Church of St. John are noticed, and a stone bridge, and the water-wheels for which Hamah is still notable. Sesame, cotton, walnuts, and other fruits were found near.

Proceeding by Ma'arah the party reached Aleppo, near which city were olives, apples, pears, plums, and almonds. Here they stayed with the Venetian Consul. The city traded with Persia, India, and Mesopotamia in rhubarb, gums, spices, &c. The castle on its mound and the old walls are noticed. There were eight gates.

From Aleppo they returned by Hârim (the Castle of Harenc), the great ditches of which were admired; and by a bridge (*Jisr Hadid*) they proceeded to Antioch, which is more fully described. The population included Turks, Greeks, Armenians, and Jews. A covered way in the west wall led to the citadel.

The rest of the journey to Constantinople gives an equally interesting account of Asia Minor. They crossed the Amanus to Adana; and by Heraclea, and over the Taurus, reached Iconium, Angora, Achara, Caracar ("Black Castle"), and apparently arrived at Broussa.

The work is divided into three books. The first treats of Crete,

Lemnos, Mount Athos, and Constantinople. The second of the voyage by Rhodes to Alexandria and to Cairo, with the subsequent journey as here noted. The third is devoted to a very good account of Moslem manners, a fair description of the Korân, of the traditional life of Muhammad, and of the beliefs founded on the Sunna, or Commentary on the Korân. It concludes with notes on Turkish manners, and those of the Jews and Christians under Turkish rule. The observations are accurate and valuable, and, as a whole, it is a very interesting account of the state of the Levant in the reign of Edward VI of England and Henry II of France, written by a man of education, who gave little credence to the ignorant beliefs of Europeans in his own age, or to the legends of the ancients concerning the East, but, instead, furnishes a faithful description of all that he had noticed during his travels.

WEYMOUTH, *March 29th*, 1897.

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## NOTES ON THE APRIL "QUARTERLY STATEMENT."

By Lieut.-Colonel C. R. CONDER, LL.D., R.E.

### I.

P. 113. The stone *Hat-Toim*, where lost property was cried (Taanith iii, 8), seems to have stood in the lower part of the city, since it was liable to be flooded over. The block figured seems to be the base of a Byzantine pillar.

P. 119. There seems no reason why the *Jeshimon* of Num. xxi, 20, xxiii, 28, should be east of the Dead Sea. The region was the "desert" round En Gedi, and the places in Moab described as "facing" the *Jeshimon* are in view of this western desert. Beth Jeshimoth ("house of deserts") has long been placed at *Suweimeh*.

P. 123. In connection with Mr. Baldensperger's useful answers to my questions as to the *Fellahîn*, a few remarks may be made. The peasants of Bethlehem and Nazareth certainly have Italian blood in their veins, which I believe is of quite recent origin; and the reasons are well known, but need not be specified. Neither of these towns were Venetian property in the Middle Ages.

*El Khudr* (الخنزر), wrongly spelt الخندر, is identified by Christians with St. George, but by Moslems this "green one" is the mysterious figure connected with the Water of Life in a Korân legend. His shrines are, however, often at sites of Crusader towns and chapels, as at el B'aneh (St. George of Labaene of the thirteenth century).

The killing of peasant women in caves is found to be a practice both in the Antilebanon, near Bludân, and also at the *Mughâret Umm et Tuweimîn* ("Cave of Twins"), near Beit 'Atâb (the Rock Etam).