

THE DRAGON WELL.

By Dr. CONRAD SCHICK.

THE Dragon Well is mentioned only once in the Bible (Neh. ii, 13) at the examination of the ruined walls of Jerusalem by Nehemiah at night. He says he went out by the Valley Gate, even before the Dragon Well, and to the Dung Gate, to the Fountain Gate, and to the King's Pool, and turned back and entered by the Gate of the Valley. Most of the topographers, from Robinson down to Professor Dr. T. F. Wright, in *Quarterly Statement*, 1896, p. 172, put the Valley Gate in the neighbourhood of the present Jaffa Gate, which agrees fairly with Nehemiah xii, 31-39. Although the starting point of the two companies is not mentioned, yet it must have been the Valley Gate or its very neighbourhood, somewhat south of it, where they rose up to the top of the wall.

Now Nehemiah (ii, 13), after passing this gate, came to the Dragon Well, as he was going southward down the valley, and not westward; so the Dragon Well cannot be looked for at Birket Mâmilla, as so many writers have done, but with more probability at the so-called lower pool, or Birket es Sultan, as I have suggested in my recent paper written on this pool, where I say that in it was once a rock cave, out of which, at one season of the year, a spring may have risen, as in many places in this country. This spring gave the first motive to build here a pool, as was often the case with other springs in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem and elsewhere. This spring would be the Dragon Well. In the *Quarterly Statement*, 1889, p. 44, Mr. Birch remarks:—"Evidently on the west (of the Holy City) there was a spring called in Nehemiah ii, 13, the Dragon Well (really spring, 'ain')." And Robinson says:—"All these circumstances, as well as the nature of the ground, seem to leave little room for doubt that an open fountain did anciently thus exist somewhere in the vicinity of the upper pool west of the city."² This he erroneously identified with "Gihon," whereas it was the Dragon Well—which has not to be looked for near the "upper pool," or Birket Mâmilla, as done by Robinson and other writers. Nehemiah had no need to go from the Valley Gate westward to such a distance. He wanted to go round the city and hence down the valley (southward), where he soon passed the lower pool, or the Dragon Well. It caused much confusion that, in the Middle Ages and until modern times, this spring became connected with Gihon. The New Testament does not mention Gihon—as at that time this name was no more in use—but mentions instead Siloa, and so does the historian Flav. Josephus, speaking of Siloa, and at the same time also of a

¹ "Felix Fabri," Pal. Pil. Text Soc., Part II, vol. i, p. 200.

² "Biblical Researches," i, p. 347, Boston, 1856.

“Serpent’s Pool,” or Well (“Wars” V, 3, 2), telling us that Titus razed and levelled all the ground from Scopus to Herod’s Monuments, “which adjoined to the pool called “the Serpent’s Pool”—dragon and serpent are often synonymous; and from this notice we see that the old name was still in use and not changed, and, further, that the pool took its name from the spring. That it means the site of the present Birket es Sultan, we learn from what he further says (V, 3, 5), that Titus moved his original camp, and divided it into two parts, one making a fortified camp two furlongs distant from the north-western corner of the city, and the other more to the south, on the height opposite the Tower of Hippicus—the present castle, also two furlongs distant from the wall—at the end of the levelled ground, and so on the height west of Birket es Sultan, where recently Herod’s monuments were found, as reported in *Quarterly Statement*, 1892, pp. 116 and 205.

The real cause that this spring and pool were connected with a dragon, and hence so called, we do not know, and various suggestions have been brought forward, as that the aqueduct goes on the slope of the mountains in a serpentine line, and therefore its outlet was called the Serpent’s or Dragon’s Well, in which case the aqueduct must have existed in Nehemiah’s time, which is most likely, as it is believed that Solomon made the first aqueduct, bringing water to the Temple. My idea was always that the outlet of the aqueduct¹ or of the spring here, the water pouring in a basin and further on to the pool, had the form of a dragon’s head—as often may be seen, even in modern times, and without looking for it, in China or Japan. The Orientals are accustomed to give things the name of some characteristic feature of it, and so here the head of a dragon. Other people think that the name originated in some fabulous saying—that a dragon lived in the spring—as at the Well of the Virgin in the Kidron Valley, holding the water back sometimes and sometimes letting it flow, as the ancients explained the intermittent springs. If this is the case, then the Dragon Well was an intermittent spring, like Siloah. Further, a few years ago, a lady pointed out to me that in Birket es Sultan are, in summer time, black and long worms, in such great numbers as are not seen elsewhere, and asked whether this circumstance would not account for the name of this pool, “Serpent’s Pool or Dragon’s Well.” I mention this merely to show the various suggestions, and leave it on its own merits. At the old Temple site or the present Haram esh-Sherif, some distance from the north-east corner

¹ The proper or end outlet of the aqueduct was in the Temple area, but that there were also outlets at fit places between, and so here at Birket es Sultan, is as much as certain.

“May not the aqueduct, with its long winding course from ‘Solomon’s Pools,’ have been called the ‘Tannin,’ ‘Dragon,’ or ‘Monster,’ as the winding ascent to the fortress of Masada was called ‘the Serpent.’”—Sir Charles Wilson, in Smith’s “Dictionary of the Bible,” 2nd edition, 1893, vol. i, Part I, p. 803.

of the platform, is a round-shaped cistern, called Bir el Hanish, which means exactly Dragon Well. When examining the place, not one of my attendants was willing to go down, fearing the *Hanish*, or Dragon. It may be that one day a fearful serpent was seen there, and so the cistern was henceforth called by this name, probably it was also so with the Dragon's Well, spoken of in this paper. Jeremiah, chap. ix, 11, predicted that Jerusalem should become a "den of dragons," which certainly was fulfilled, and dragons, or fearful serpents, were, as one clearly sees, not in ancient times such very rare creatures as they now are.

HEBRON AND ITS NEIGHBOURHOOD.

By Dr. CONRAD SCHICK.

AFTER more than a score of years I recently visited this old city again, and found it much altered, enlarged, and in some degree modernised; and on looking at the large Map and "The Memoirs," I felt the duty and the desire to give a more complete plan than that in "The Memoirs," iii, p. 352. I had at the same time in my hands the map and description of Dr. Rosen, of which Colonel Conder speaks in the *Quarterly Statement* for 1881, p. 270, *et seq.*¹ I have divided this tract of land into 30 squares, each of one kilometre, in order to find easily the names spoken of in the description. Some of the names are uncertain, and I followed in general "The Memoirs" and "Name Lists."

The Names of the Places.

Abraham's stone (5 D)—Rosen.

'Ain Bussah or Hameidan (1 A).

- „ Darib (Rosen), or Magaribeh (4 B). Not described anywhere, but mentioned by Rosen, p. 15.
- „ Deir Bahhah (3 A)—*see* "Memoirs," p. 320; "Name Lists," p. 385.
- „ Fesfus (3 B). Mentioned by Rosen, p. 15.
- „ Hasan (4 A)—mentioned by Rosen, p. 15, and Conder's map.²
- „ Heskah (6 C)—Rosen, p. 16, and Conder's map. Rosen calls it a large spring, forming a brook.
- „ Ibn Islim (4 E)—"Name Lists," p. 386; Conder's map.
- „ Jebel Amba (4 B). A small spring, according to Rosen, p. 15.
- „ Jedideh (2 D)—"Memoirs," p. 307; "Name Lists," p. 386; Conder's map.

¹ Issued in the "Zeitschrift der Morgenländischen Gesellschaft," vol. xii, p. 477 (I think of the year 1857, as Dr. Rosen prepared it in the year 1856).

² The map referred to by Dr. Schick as "Conder's map" is that published in the Survey of Western Palestine, "Memoirs," iii, p. 352.—Ed.