

JULIAN'S ATTEMPT TO RESTORE THE TEMPLE, AND OTHER NOTES.

By the Rev. J. E. HANAUER.

I.—FOR several years past I have often thought and puzzled over the story of the Emperor Julian's abortive attempt to restore the Jewish Temple and Temple-worship. The narrative rests on the authority of various ecclesiastical and other writers. Milman's version (*History of the Jews*, vol. iii, p. 18, *seq.*) is, briefly, as follows :—

“The Emperor's edict set the whole Jewish world in commotion. The execution of his project was entrusted to his favourite Alpius. The wealth of the Jews was poured forth in lavish profusion, timber, stones, lime, burnt brick, and clay were heaped together in abundant quantities (Socrates *H.E.* iii, 20). Already was the work commenced; already had they dug down to a considerable depth, and were preparing to lay the foundations, when suddenly flames of fire came bursting from the centre of the hill, accompanied with terrific explosions. The affrighted workmen fled on all sides, and the labours were suspended at once by this unforeseen and awful sign. An earthquake shook the hill, flakes of fire settled on the garments of the workmen and the spectators, and the fire consumed even the tools of iron.” (Socrates *H.E.* iii, 20; Theodoret iii, 20; Sozomen v, 22; Gregory Nazianzen, *in Judæos* iv.) On the following page, and in a footnote, Milman has the following quotation from the pagan historian, Ammianus Marcellinus :—“Cum itaque rei idem fortiter instaret Alpius, juvaretque provinciæ rector, metuendi globi flammaram prope fundamenta crebris adsultibus erumpentes fecere locum, exustis aliquoties operantibus, in accessum; hocque modo elemento destinatius repellente, cessant inceptum.”

After making all allowances for exaggerations, we cannot escape the conviction that some such occurrence as that described really did take place, and the mind at once enquires as to its natural causes. Gunpowder and other modern explosives were then unknown, how are we to account for the event? Milman suggests the accumulation of foul and inflammable vapours in the vaults and caverns of the Temple Hill. His suggestion is a very reasonable

one, and yet, to my mind, not altogether satisfactory. Why is it that during the extensive excavations carried on during the last half century everywhere in Jerusalem, and in the course of which many ancient vaults and cisterns were re-discovered, none have been found containing inflammable and explosive vapour? I have heard of several that, when opened, contained air so foul that men who went down to explore them became dizzy, ill, and even unconscious, but in these lanterns and candles, when lighted, *would not burn*, the vapours not being inflammable. Nor have I heard of explosive vapours or "fire damp" occurring anywhere else in Palestine. The *débris* accumulated on the Temple Hill is of the same character as that in other parts of the city—why then have there been no accumulations of explosive gases in other parts of the town?

I would therefore, with all diffidence, and solely from a desire to elicit information, take the liberty of making another suggestion. It may at first sight seem absurd and preposterous, but it has at least one very ancient tradition, going back to pre-Christian times, in its favour. It is this: The workmen did, indeed, tap some subterranean place; it contained inflammable vapours, which accidentally took fire. Was it, perhaps, an ancient cistern containing bitumen, naphtha, or petroleum? The ancient tradition in support of my suggestion to which I have referred is the well-known passage from 2 Macc. i, 19-23, A. V. :—

"When our fathers were led into Persia, the priests that were then devout took the fire of the altar privily, and hid it in a hollow place of a pit without water, where they kept it sure, so that the place was unknown to all men. Now after many years, when it pleased God, Neemias, being sent from the King of Persia, did send of the posterity of those priests that had hid it, to the fire; but when they told us, they found no fire, but thick water. Then commanded he them to draw it up and to bring it; and when the sacrifices were laid on, Neemias commanded the priests to sprinkle the wood and the things laid thereupon with the water. When this was done, and the time came that the sun shone, which afore was hid in the cloud, there was a great fire kindled, so that every man marvelled."

It seems clear from the description of this "thick water," which, as we read in verse 36, Nehemiah called "nephthar," that it must

have been something very similar to the naphtha of modern commerce. "The word water is here merely used for 'liquid,' as in *aqua vite*. Native naphtha is sometimes obtained without colour, and in appearance not unlike water. Various conjectures have been advanced in explanation of the name 'naphthar,' which is being interpreted 'cleansing,' and which has puzzled all the interpreters" (see article "Naphthar," and footnote, in Smith's *Bible Dictionary*). As a matter of fact, petroleum or naphtha, which in modern times was introduced into Palestine in or about 1865, is nowadays largely used by the lower class natives, not only for lamps, but also for *cleansing*, not only the woodwork, of lime and objectionable insects, but also dirty human heads, &c.

Supposing the story of the "naphthar" to be true, it would follow:—

(1) That the knowledge of the cistern containing it had been confined to certain of the priests, and that the reservoir had been hermetically closed for 70 years, and so securely that its contents were, at the lapse of that period, still in a liquid state.

(2) That though the spot had, subsequently to Nehemiah's purification, been "enclosed" and "made holy" (2 Macc. i, 34, A.V.), yet in the later political troubles the knowledge of its position was lost,¹ for we read that when the victorious Hasmonæans recovered the temple they obtained fire for their new altar by "striking stones" (2 Macc. x, 3).

The means used for making the reservoir vapour proof may have been stone-hard cement like that found by Sir Charles Warren in the Birket Israel, and by Mr. Maudslay in the Bishop Gobat's School.

I would, in conclusion, remark that I have found that there exists a tradition amongst the native Christians of Jerusalem, to the effect that a great many years ago there was discovered in the Armenian Convent of Mâr Yakûb (St. James), at Jerusalem, an ancient cistern full, not of naphtha, but of oil so old that it had coagulated and thickened. It is said to be most efficacious in the treatment of wounds and bruises. When about thirteen months ago my right hand was badly maimed by the bite of a donkey, some Armenian women of our acquaintance told my wife this tale,

¹ Or does verse 31 mean that Nehemiah ordered the whole supply to be used up and none left?

and urged her to try this ancient oil, or ointment, which they offered to furnish, for my cure. This story I have verified by personal enquiry at the Armenian Convent. The find of oil is said to have happened about 80 years ago. There is no one now living who remembers the event.

II.—In the *Quarterly Statement* for January, 1902, p. 102, it is remarked that when Zuallardo was here and visited "Pilate's house," in the modern barracks north-west of the Ḥaram Area, it was believed that the groans of Jews awaiting the Day of Judgment could be heard there. This tradition is now located in two places in the Church of the Sepulchre:—

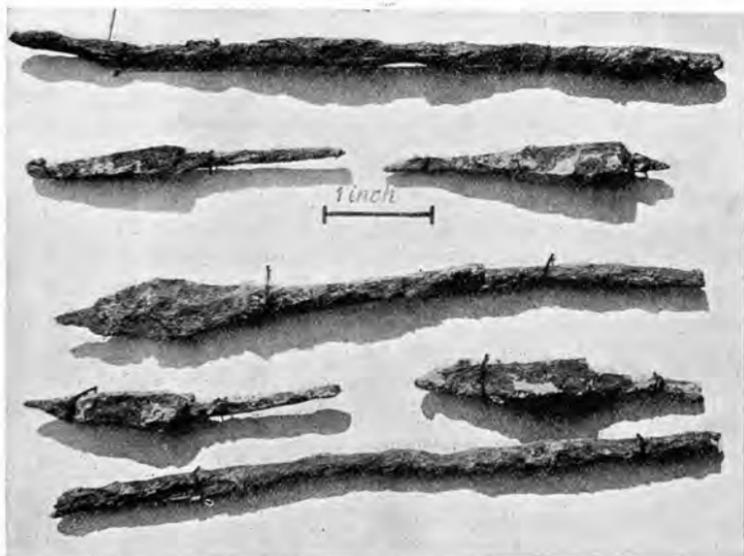
(1) An old Greek priest has told me that in ancient times there was a hole in the middle of the floor of the Keniset Nusf ed-Dunya, and that the present low pillar, marking "the centre of the earth," was placed there in order to prevent the wailings of the lost from disturbing the worshippers.

(2) On the northern wall of the Chapel of Helena is shown the spot where, it is said, there was once a window, now closed for the same reason.

III.—A few months ago I had the pleasure of conducting the well-known Church Missionary Society's veteran medical missionary, Dr. Henry Martyn Clarke, of Amritsar, over the Ḥaram Area. I showed him the cuttings described on pp. 206-7 of the *Quarterly Statement* for 1891. The earth in the circular basin had been recently quite cleared out. Dr. Clarke told me that he has often seen exactly the same thing in India in many places. The basin was, he said, intended to receive a rolling millstone (like those used in Palestine for crushing olives), but in this case to crush lime, &c., and that the curiously polished cup-hollows and gashes in the rock had been formed by the sharpening and polishing of workmen's tools, &c.

IV.—I enclose herewith a photo, which Mr. Macalister was so kind as to take for me, of some arrow-heads to which I have previously referred. They were dug up about 12 years ago, when the excavations for the enclosure wall of the L.J.S. Mission property at Safed were being made. There is, however, no record of the depth

at which these wrought-iron arrow-heads were found. The mission property is situated just outside the moat which surrounded the old, and now utterly ruined, castle. It lies at its W.N.W. corner. The



small photo is an attempt made by myself with a small instrument of my eldest boy's.

THE NECROPOLIS OF MARESHAH.

PRELIMINARY NOTICE.

IN his report on the excavations at Tell Sandahannah (*Quarterly Statement*, 1900, p. 336), Dr. Bliss proposes to identify the city situated there with the Mareshah of the Old Testament, the home of the prophet Micah, the Marisa, Maresa, or Mareisa of LXX, of 1 and 2 Maccabees, and of Josephus, an identification already in part proposed by Dr. George Adam Smith (*Historical Geography of the Holy Land*, p. 233).¹ An inscription found by us in a tomb in

¹ [See the forthcoming memoir, *Excavations in Palestine during the years 1898-1900*, pp. 67-70.]