

that the "buckler" was an old bronze shield of Persian manufacture.¹ In 1881, when I next visited Jerusalem, the "buckler" had disappeared. On receiving the photograph from Dr. Wheeler I took it to the British Museum, and was at once informed by Mr. Read, F.S.A., Keeper of Mediæval Antiquities, that the supposed "buckler" was in reality a Chinese mirror of, probably, the early part of the sixteenth century.

The presence of a highly ornamented Chinese mirror in a Muhamadan mosque is difficult to explain. In the early part of the sixteenth century there was considerable commercial intercourse between the Arabs and Chinese, and it is possible that the mirror was brought to Jerusalem and given to the Sheikh of the Ḥarâm by some Arab trader on a pilgrimage to the Holy City. It was almost certainly placed in the "Dome of the Rock" before the occupation of Jerusalem by the Osmanli Turks (A.D. 1517).

M. Clermont-Ganneau describes the "buckler" as "a great metal mirror of exceptional size," like the ancient metal mirrors of the Arabs. He refers to an allusion to it by Ibn Batûta, 1355 A.D., and considers it to be of Persian origin, and that it descends, perhaps, from a Sassanid prototype, possibly of Byzantine origin (*Archæological Researches in Palestine*, i, 219).

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DEAD SEA OBSERVATIONS.

By Dr. E. W. G. MASTERMAN.

(Continued from p. 407, 1902.)

September 19th, 1902.—*Fall of Dead Sea level* since May 30th, 16½ inches.

October 24th, 1902.—*Fall of Dead Sea level* since September 19th, 8 inches.

December 31st, 1902.—*Rise of Dead Sea level* since October 24th, 6½ inches.

February 6th, 1903.—*Rise of Dead Sea level* since December 31st, 8 inches.

A Rain Storm.—On October 22nd we had our first rainfall, beginning with a thunder-storm, and a total fall of .32 inch in the 24 hours in Jerusalem.

On the 23rd, when on my road to Jericho, I saw rain falling all around me, but scarcely a drop in my actual path. The fall on the previous day must, however, have been exceedingly violent in the region traversed by

¹ The position of the "shield" in 1864 is shown on the O.S. plan of the "Dome of the Rock." See also *Notes to the O.S. of Jerusalem*, note, p. 35.

the Jericho road, for in the *Wâdy es-Sidr* I found on all sides signs of violent flooding. Although at this time there was no running water in the torrent bed, it was quite clear that but a few hours previously there had been from 5 to 6 feet of water over a great part of its course, overflowing the usual banks into the surrounding fields in many places; deposits of sediment, weeds, and dried grass lay high up along the banks. Where the road crosses the torrent-bed on bridges the water had been unable to get through fast enough, and accumulations of water to the depth of 15 to 20 feet, and of considerable surface area had formed, leading to the partial destruction of one of the bridges. In one place the water, after making a great pool, which must have been 30 feet across, had flowed across the road carrying numbers of large stones in its course. These I found scattered across the road, and down an adjoining field mixed with sandy deposit. All this must have occurred immediately after the "cloud burst," and probably the flood disappeared with equal rapidity. This fully explains what I know has occurred several times—the sweeping away of cattle, and even whole encampments situated in a torrent-bed, suddenly flooded by a thunder storm in the hills.

While I was at the "Samaritan's Inn" a few drops of rain fell, accompanied by heavy thunder; on proceeding on my journey I soon found that a violent downpour had occurred between the inn and Jericho. I passed numbers of donkeys and camels and men soaked through. At the point where the path turns off the carriage road to the little monastery in *Wâdy Kelt* I saw a magnificent and most unusual sight. On the opposite side of the *wâdy* the water was descending at one point in an unbroken column for perhaps 250 feet into a pool, and thence flowing across the path which here traverses the *wâdy*, and descending in a series of cascades to the bottom. The volume of water was enormous. My *mukarri*, who has spent much of his life on this road, says he has never seen such a sight. On my return on Saturday not a drop of water was to be seen there. Those who have seen these *wâdies*, as is the rule, quite dry, often wonder at the evident signs of torrential force (great rocks thrown about, banks cut away or undermined, deep channels cut in the solid rock), and are tempted to think it the work of a past age, when the rainfall was much greater, but such violent action as occurs after these sudden storms does more in a few hours than many years of the quiet even action of a steady, flowing stream.
