

## DEAD SEA OBSERVATIONS.

By DR. E. W. G. MASTERMAN.

UNFORTUNATELY from a variety of causes, the regular sequence of the observations on the seasonal rise and fall of the Dead Sea level, which had been made without interruption from 1900 to 1908, was suspended during 1909. This spring the observations have been renewed and it is hoped that they will be continued with regularity.

The heavy rainfall of last March (10½ inches) added to the late rainfall of the previous season 1908-1909 (20½ inches) has resulted in a considerable rise in the level of the Dead Sea as, I observed in April, it had also done at the Lake of Galilee. The actual level as measured directly at the P.E.F. mark (made Oct. 9, 1900) is actually higher than ever previously recorded. The distance of the water from this mark was originally 14 feet; in March, 1901, it was 12 feet 9½ inches but subsequently fell considerably; the distance this spring was 12 feet 5 inches—11 inches higher than the *spring* measurement of 1908 and 2 feet 9 inches higher than the *autumn* measurement of 1908.

The extreme limit of variation lies between the lowest recorded in October, 1904, and the height this spring: this is a difference of 4 feet 10 inches.

The visit was made by Dr. Corbett and Mr. Hornstein, and the notes are from information supplied by both of them.

*April 29.*—Left Jerusalem at 1.20 p.m.; Bar. 27·5; slight N.E. breeze. About a dozen storks seen near “Khan of the Good Samaritan”; Bar. at khan 29·2. Left there at 3.30 p.m., and reached Jericho 7.0 p.m.; Bar. 30·75; Temp. (at 10.30 p.m.) 70° F.

*April 30.*—Left Jericho at 5.30 a.m.; Bar. 30·81.; Temp. 63·5.; Wind N.E. A good deal of water still running down *Wady Kelt* beneath the stone bridge newly built for the high road; corn around Jericho ripening. The route taken to ‘Ain *Feshkhah* was a new one pointed out by the soldiers who had been sent as guards by Suragha Effendi, the Ma’mour of Jericho. The whole district has been very unsettled and there had been a robbery of a number of donkeys, loaded with wood, in this very part a few weeks before. The new route was by the ordinary tourist road to the north end of the Dead Sea as far as *Deir Hajlah* and then by a track running to the right—in a direction S.W.—as far as ‘Ain *el-Jehelyir*, which was reached at 7.30. From this spring the route runs among bushes to ‘Ain *Feshkhah*. A bustard was sighted near Jericho: wood pigeons and crested larks were everywhere. Among the shrubs on the

latter part of the way many boar-tracks were passed and a hare was started.

The reeds at 'Ain Feshkhah were, as usual at this season, rather dry-looking.

The pool was reached at 8.30.

*State of the Weather.*—Fine, a few cirrus clouds; a N.E. breeze; Temp. of air 76° (water of 'Ain 75°); Bar. 31.25; the "white line," running N.W. to S.E., was faint and much broken up.

Level of sea was 12 feet 5 inches *below* the Observation mark and 3 inches *above* the mark at the pool.

The return journey, made by the same route, took just under three hours.

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#### NOTES ON NEW LITERATURE.

In the *Biblical World* for June, Dr. Luckenbill continues his account of the Early Religion of Palestine. He points out the numerous traces of intercourse with Egypt, the scarabs and other amulets, making it probable that "the religion of the common people of Palestine in the Canaanitish period was, in many respects, the same as the religion of the common people of Egypt; that is, it consisted largely in the worship of local 'saints,' and the use of the proper charms and the wearing of proper amulets to ward off hostile powers." He contrasts the few traces of Egyptian influence in the Old Testament with the numerous parallels which the latter has in the Babylonian literature, but is careful to observe that many of the ideas in common were shared by the Semites as a whole, and were also the common property of all peoples. This leads him to a discussion of the theory of a comprehensive Babylonian influence, and of the expansion of an old Oriental doctrine of monotheism, which, it is held by some, was part of Canaanite thought long before the time of the prophets. He shows the hazardous character of this theory, and draws attention to the fact that the famous cuneiform letter unearthed at Taanach, which appeared to prove the recognition of a single supreme god, merely proves the recognition of a "lord of the gods," which, of course, excludes the idea of true monotheism. As Dr. Luckenbill remarks: "scholars will insist upon jumping from a discussion of *monotheistic tendencies*, which are common to most religions which have advanced beyond the primitive stages, to *monotheism as 'Lehre'* [Doctrine], without showing any proof that this development has occurred." It is as strange as it is unfortunate that a great part of the modern speculations of writers who combine the Old Testament with the evidence for Oriental religion is illogical, and contrary to the Biblical evidence. Finally, as regards the Babylonian ideas which are "clearly traceable,"