

The Vote of Thanks having been carried by acclamation,

Sir EDWIN PEARS said,—I can only say I am very glad to be of use. I was a little alarmed when I received a note from Mr. Crace asking me to take the Chair, because the last Chairman whom I saw here was the Archbishop of Canterbury. I regret my imperfections as Chairman, but sincerely thank you for listening to what I have very imperfectly said.

The proceedings then terminated.

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## THE FUND'S EXCAVATIONS AT 'AIN SHEMS.

### I.—SUMMARY OF DR. MACKENZIE'S WORK, APRIL 6TH— MAY 17TH, 1911.<sup>1</sup>

THE excavations of the Palestine Exploration Fund at 'Ain Shems were commenced on Tuesday, April 6th, at 6 a.m. A short recess at Easter was prolonged a few days by the stormy weather, and on May 12th a strong sirocco prevented operations. A start was made with 36 workmen, including a few women and boys, but as the work progressed the number was largely increased, and on May 17th the number of hands was 167. In view of the approach of harvesting operations, when labour will be more scarce, it was wisely decided to make the most of the available help while there was opportunity. Yusuf Kanaan, who for several years has been employed by the Fund as foreman of the works, again acts in the same capacity. The Imperial Commissioner, Ibrahim Bey, arrived from Jerusalem on the first morning.

As will be seen from the sketch plan (p. 142) a considerable amount of the area has already been attacked. As usual, trial pits were first sunk in order to get a preliminary idea of the possibilities. It was soon perceived, and afterwards fully proved, that the area between the Byzantine church and the wely did not contain pre-Roman

<sup>1</sup> [Based upon the daily record of the progress of the excavations kept by Dr. Duncan Mackenzie, who is not responsible for the form these paragraphs take.—Ed.]

remains, and in due course it was found that the wall, running north and south, marked the border line between relatively late Arab remains and *débris* on the east, and the city area on the west. The eastern space, after having been carefully examined, served as a useful dumping-ground, its close proximity to the more important site on the west being a great saving of time and labour. The eastern portion of the latter, "the Byzantine area," revealed traces of an Arab settlement, and it appeared that the Byzantine remains had been utilized and adjusted in the Arab period. The older strata are to be looked for here, whereas in later times life seems to have moved eastwards, "to give us at length in the fulness of time an 'Ain Shems which is no longer locally identical with Beth-Shemesh." 'Ain Shems itself, as Dr. Mackenzie learned, has only ceased to be a place of local habitation within the last fifty years, and its latest inhabitants migrated to Deir Aban only three years ago. The eastern area was unoccupied in Semitic times, and the pottery, apart from a few stray "Semitic" sherds, is Byzantine or Arab, and to the latter period probably belong the remains of various rather poor houses. Through this movement eastwards no part of the new city coincided with the old: no part of the ancient city existed anywhere east of the caravan route crossing the hill to the west of the wely. As for the wely, it seems to be entirely late, and anything ancient that may exist is likely from the indications to belong to the necropolis of the ancient city and not to any city of the living.

Much has been ascertained in regard to the great wall which seems to mark the limits of the old city. This outer wall had bastions, and is megalithic. The southern gateway has already been found. Here and there were traces of later repairs, and this combines with other evidence to suggest that after some severe siege, during which the city suffered badly, extensive rebuilding was needed. The southern boundary wall of the Byzantine area also proved to be partly megalithic (also cemented) and partly ashlar, due apparently to the use by later inhabitants of older material.

The Byzantine church itself is being thoroughly examined. Its position was probably in some measure due to the close proximity of older building material, and possibly to the existence of an earlier building on the same spot. This somewhat complicates the strata, and from the point of view of the preservation of the remains, it would be undoubtedly better if the principal residential buildings at 'Ain Shems turned out to be towards the west end of the site where

so far as known at present there are no Byzantine or post-Semitic remains at all. A very interesting feature in the church-area was an arched corridor running within the eastern wall of the Byzantine area. This suggests monastic arrangements, and, in fact, a monastery, church, and other buildings would afford an explanation of the unusually large area covered by these Byzantine ruins. It is tempting to conjecture that the Byzantine religious house was founded in connection with the famous tradition associating Beth-Shemesh with the Israelite ark. In throwing out this tentative conjecture, Dr. Mackenzie observes that there are indications of an interval in history between the last pre-Christian occupation of the site and the construction of this Byzantine edifice. In any case, we need some explanation of the motives which led to its erection.

An extremely favourable result has been the recovery of a considerable portion of the "Semitic" and earlier strata. Some of the pottery next the rock was of the Bronze Age and may perhaps be associated with the people that built the megalithic walls and also the well-known megalithic monuments on both sides of the Jordan. Dr. Mackenzie, indeed, suggests that it was the megalithic people who first taught the art of fortification to the Semites, and remarks that it would be strange if the civilization represented by them did not leave widespread records of itself in Western Palestine as it has done in Moab and East of the Jordan.

In confirmation of the early character of the deposits next the rock was the occurrence of the imported Bronze Age pottery from Cyprus alongside of other native fabrics of "pre-Semitic" date. One fragment with characteristic matt white geometric band on a purplish black semi-lustrous glaze slip on fine dark grey clay was of a character to suggest Aegean connection if not Cretan influence. An analogous style of pottery in Crete has been assigned to about 2000 B.C. Dr. Mackenzie also found other fragments of vases not of native origin, apparently Cypriote originals of a fabric which was dominant in all parts of Cyprus about the time when the late Mycenaean vases began to be imported. These were found in a cave which was evidently used therefore about the twelfth century B.C. A second cave, discovered on 6th May, also contained pottery belonging to the Bronze Age period; along with native Semitic pottery were vases clearly imported. "The fragments of imported pottery when allowed to drop give a peculiar metallic clink quite distinct from that of the native wares. The pottery is much thinner

in section and harder in texture. The paint pigments are also very different from those that occur on native wares." All the pottery from the caves is being kept apart for later more complete investigation. Further excavation revealed in one of the caves a true painted "Mycenaean" sherd of some Aegean fabric (classed in Crete as Late Minoan III) which would equally fit the twelfth century date independently reached before. A few days later, Dr. Mackenzie was able to ascertain that these two important caves had been used for burial. Human bones were repeatedly found, but no skeleton was in position; and such indeed was the extent of the confusion in the deposit that it would seem that the burial caves had been disturbed and systematically searched by treasure hunters. None the less, finds of exceptional interest continued to be made. An early type of Semitic lamp and an Egyptian alabaster vessel of about the XVIIIth dynasty, were found above a sort of floor of pale mortar plaster. Beneath this level were Bronze Age types, and where this stratification of earlier and later deposits was not disturbed, it was possible to obtain a good idea of the distinctive features of the two distinct phases of culture.

Finally, Dr. Mackenzie reports among various "finds," stamped jar-handles, a figurine of Bes and an Astarte plaque. A spear-head and arrow-head in bronze were found against the face of the outer wall. The latter may be regarded as an indication of some attack upon the city, and it is very interesting to notice that in many places there were signs of a conflagration, the distribution of which could be best explained on the assumption that the whole city had been burned down. This would also account for the heaps of sun-dried bricks which apparently had been thrown outside the walls when the city was rebuilt. At present this evidence for some destruction of the city is the most noteworthy feature for its history, and provisionally, Dr. Mackenzie is inclined to suggest that the Philistines may have been responsible for the disaster.

*(To be continued.)*

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