

DEAD SEA OBSERVATIONS.

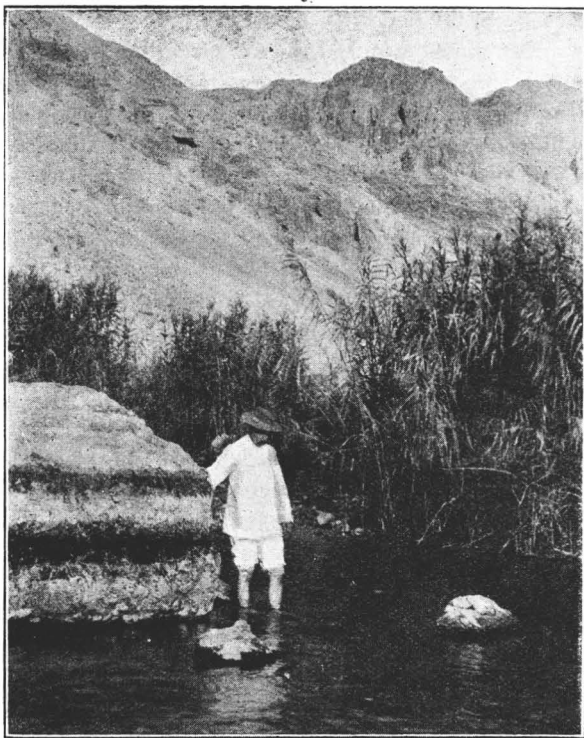
Spring Visit, 1911.

By DR. E. W. G. MASTERMAN.

MR. HORNSTEIN and I left Jerusalem on April 14th at 1.45 p.m. We had to leave by the *Bāb el-Mughārībeh* (Dung Gate) and cross the valley of the Kidron to reach the Jericho road, because of the crowds which blocked the road higher up on account of the *Nebi Mūsa* procession. Shortly before we reached the road we heard the loud strains of the Turkish band announcing the emergence from the *Bāb el-Asbāt* (St. Stephen's Gate) of the procession bearing the sacred banner which is annually sent from the Haram to decorate the supposed tomb of Moses for the week of this Feast. There were many Turkish soldiers on the road, and near the corner where it turns eastwards was the tent of the Pasha. We kept well in front of the procession all the way and so avoided the mass of the *Nebi Mūsa* pilgrims, but we passed many Russian pilgrims coming and going as well as a considerable company of Copts returning from their pilgrimage to Jordan. The weather was quite cool; there were many clouds, and rain appeared to be imminent. The atmosphere was clear. We reached Jericho about 7 p.m. The barley round Jericho, on the irrigated land, is late this year; it is just in ear, but will not be ripe till May.

April 15th.—We left Jericho at 5.10 a.m., and crossed the *Wādī Kelt*, in which was a considerable stream; we then followed the carriage road for two-thirds of the way to the Dead Sea. This road has been considerably improved recently by the private enterprise of several of the leading hotel proprietors. Soon after passing the neighbourhood of the *Deir Mār Yohannā Najleh*—the site of Beth Hogla—we left the road and picked our way across the plain in a S.S.W. direction, passing *'Ain el-Jeħīyir* on our left. The tamarisks and succulent plants were all unusually green. We started two quails and a fine bustard on our way. Near *Wādī Kumrān*, six Bedouin, suspicious in appearance because

wandering without flocks, camels, or donkeys, began rapidly approaching and dividing as they did so into two parties as if to surround us. A little manoeuvring to prevent this and a challenge to them, accompanied by the exhibition of a rifle, soon caused them to sheer off. In skirting the reeds of the Oasis of '*Ain Feshkhah*' two gazelles were seen—at some distance apart; this is an unusual



The '*Ain Feshkhah* Pool in 1903.

situation for such game, and Mr. Hornstein suggested that probably they had been driven from the higher ground by the commotion and the gun-firing going on around *Nebi Mūsa*. We also saw many sand partridges and a large hawk. The reeds looked, as is usual in the spring, very dry except in several extensive tracks where the Arabs have burnt the growth and young green leaves are rising. In crossing the *Haish el-Mukhdam* we found it dry in spite of the

full volume of water in the other springs; this seems to confirm the theory that the stream noted in May and July, 1903, was actually due to the earthquake (see *Q.S.*, 1903, p. 87 *seq.*).

We found the pool much increased in area and depth: the rock in the centre is now well beneath the surface. The subjoined photograph taken in October, 1903, shows how shallow the water then was: now the large rock is entirely covered and the water around it is out of my depth.

The weather was fine, and in the early morning cool: there was scarcely any breeze to be felt while we were at the Oasis, but on our return along the Jordan Valley there were puffs from the south-east. The mountains on the east side were very misty: surface of the sea disturbed, but no white waves: a couple of broken "white lines" of foam some distance out. Along the beach we passed there was evidence that during the winter storms all the floating wood and other *débris* had been washed up a foot or more higher than the present level.

On our return the atmosphere grew very oppressive and increasingly hazy: when we reached Bethany we encountered a stormy west wind but a thick haze hid both the Jordan Valley to the east and the environs of Jerusalem to the west. The whole condition foreboded the storm which broke on us with great violence, with rain and thunder the next day.

We returned by *Nebi Mûsa* along the pilgrim road, meeting and passing hundreds of picturesquely-costumed pilgrims, including a large proportion of women, going to and coming from the shrine. The bright and variegated costumes, the various forms of palanquins, the camels, horses, donkeys, and mules, all made a very interesting moving picture. The length of the road for a matter of quite twelve miles was dotted over with pilgrims. We left *'Ain Feshkhah* at 11 a.m., reached *Nebi Mûsa* about 2 p.m., and arrived in Jerusalem at 6.30 p.m.

The state of the level of the sea shows a marked rise, which is only natural when we consider that the rainfall for the season up to that time (in Jerusalem) was 33.8 inches (3 inches more have fallen since). At the Observation rock the measurement was 11 feet 5½ inches from the "base line" a rise of 2 feet 2½ inches since the autumn, and a level of 1 foot higher than last spring. This is the highest level of the Dead Sea we have recorded since the measurements were commenced.

In the pool the rise was not so great as on the actual sea shore (as is usual): it was 1 foot 8 inches more than last autumn.

Barometer: April 14th, Jerusalem (1.45 p.m.) 27.5.

„ „ Jericho (7 p.m.) 30.69.

„ 15th, „ (4.30 a.m.) 30.7.

„ „ 'Ain Feshkhah (9.15 a.m.) 31.1.

Thermometer: April 14th, Jericho (7 p.m.) 66.2 F.

„ 15th, „ (4.30 a.m.) 61.7.

„ „ 'Ain Feshkhah (10.15 a.m.) 73.4.

Temperature of the 'Ain en-Nahr at the Pool 81.5 F. This temperature was taken by putting the bulb of a very long thermometer high up in the actual source, and is quite probably the regular temperature, summer and winter, if the observation is made in this way.

NOTES AND QUERIES.

1. *The Gezer Calendar Inscription: A Correction.*—I have recently had an opportunity of examining the cast of the tablet bearing this inscription. I saw clearly at the first glance that the final letter of the first line is \aleph . I, therefore, withdraw my suggestion, based on an examination of the photograph, that the letter might possibly be \beth . Those were right who even in the photograph discerned \aleph . Since the second letter of the next line is γ , the first letter in that line can scarcely be anything but \aleph , though the letter is badly formed.

For the rest I have nothing to modify beyond what I said in my notes in the *Quarterly Statement* for July, 1909, pp. 189-193. It seems to me no more probable now than then that the much disputed sign that occurs five times is \beth : it is \aleph .

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2. *Kh. Adaseh and Gibeah of Saul.*—From Dr. Mackenzie's timely report about Adaseh (*Quarterly Statement*, p. 99), two things seem probable. (1) That the older name of Beit Lidge is not due to any