

NOTES AND QUERIES.

The Walls of Gaza.—Prof. Garstang's paper in the last issue interested me greatly, and especially its final statement "that the town Gaza really occupies the site of the historical fenced city of Antiquity." I published the same view, based substantially on the same evidence that Prof. Garstang presents, in the second volume of my *Nippur* (p. 356) in 1897: "I had the good fortune to discover at the base of a mound, supposed to be a natural hill, near a mosque in the outskirts of Gaza, an ancient wall of unbaked brick. The entire mound proved to be composed of debris. This seemed to show that the modern town of Gaza occupied the site of the ancient city. I have no doubt that excavations in this mound would result in interesting discoveries."

In the summer of 1890 I was the guest of the Church Missionary Society in Gaza. I had recently come from two years' work of excavation in Babylonia, which had made me very familiar with ruin mounds and mud brick walls. The day before I had visited Tell Hesi and studied Petrie's work, his scraping down of the steep side of the hill, and the walls and debris thus exposed. My friend took me to visit the Sheikh of a mosque, the Jâmi' es-Said Hâshim, if I remember the name correctly, on a hill at the north-western edge of the town. The Sheikh took us out to show us around the fairly extensive grounds of the mosque. Standing on the edge of the steep hill looking east and north, I observed a landslide below me which had exposed the whole side of the hill at that point, very much as Petrie's scraping had exposed the strata on the side of the mound of el-Hesi. In my excitement I unceremoniously precipitated myself down the hill. At the bottom there was a small piece of mud brick wall laid bare, and the entire hill above was debris. From the character of the wall, and its position under many strata it was clearly very old. I could not make a detailed examination at the time, and my attempts to make arrangements for private sondations unfortunately fell through. At that period the "authorities" located ancient Gaza on the shore about three miles from the present site. What I had seen of this mound, supported by my observations of the region about, convinced me that the "authorities" were wrong, and Gaza right.

Revisiting the site this spring, I told the Governor, Maj. Mills, of my experience of thirty years before and my conclusions. I found that the wall was still exposed, although the scar on the hill above it was long since healed, and skinned over, that he recognized it as evidence of the existence of the old town at that site, and that a few tentative borings had been made, with the results which Prof. Garstang has described. The place is most promising for excavation, with a fair chance of elucidating in some measure the Philistine problem.

Conferring with Père Gatt, who knows Gaza and the Philistine country better than any other man, I found him familiar with the wall, and that he had long since reached the conclusion that the modern Gaza occupies the ancient site, but that Askalon and Ashdod, as well as Gaza, lay in the early Philistine period not directly on the coast but about three miles back, just across the sand-dunes. Gaza and Ashdod are so situated to-day, but the ruins of Askalon are directly on the coast. However, just over the dunes is Mejdél, a name which suggests an ancient town. This Père Gatt suggested to me might represent the site of the early Philistine settlement, Askalon of the newer town.¹ My examination of the region has caused this suggestion to seem plausible, and I hope that Prof. Garstang will arrange to make some examination of the region behind the dunes at Askalon.

¹ It is worthy of note that in a similar way behind Joppa lies Dagan or Beit Dejan.

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