

is full of such words, as is also modern Turkish. But every word compared is a true Semitic word, and it would be vain to attempt to build a theory on this basis as to Hindi, which is a degraded mixture of several languages on an Aryan basis. The sounds of the Malula vowels are probably indefinite, like those of Fellaḥ dialects, and to apply to them the rules of book Arabic would be hypercritical.

NOTES BY DR. SELAH MERRILL.

PITS IN THE SHITTIM PLAIN.

As public attention has recently been called anew to these singular remains, I will quote my original description of them from the "Fourth Statement of the Palestine Exploration Society," 1877, pp. 97-99 (*see also* "East of the Jordan," pp. 225-227).

"About one hour north of Wady Nimrin, there is a series of pits running in a straight line across the plain from east to west. This series meets another running from north-east to south-west, the line of which is not exactly straight. The pit where these two lines intersect is larger than any of the others. At the extreme eastern end of the longest line, and just behind the end pit, there is a single pit which is very curious on account of its position. Each pit is 30 feet in diameter and perfectly round; while at present the depth of the pits varies from 3 to 6 feet. The distance from one pit to another is in general about equal to the diameter, although in exceptional cases it is increased to 50 or 60 feet. There are 31 pits in the longest line, and 20 in the other. The line probably extended somewhat further towards the Jordan, but the pits in that direction have been obliterated in some way. . . . Further south, and near what is now the bank of Wady Nimrin, there are the remains of another series of pits of which I counted about a dozen."

In the *Quarterly Statement* for April, 1890, p. 130, Mr. Neil describes these pits "as three rows of basin-like circular mounds, about 5 or 6 feet high and some 30 feet in diameter. . . . In the longest row there are no less than 31 of these hollow basins. . . . They are generally 30 feet apart, but in some instances 50 to 60 feet."

I have read Mr. Neil's "Palestine Re-peopled" and "Palestine Explored," the only works of his accessible to me, and I find no mention

of these pits. He states that he "was on a journey to the highlands of Moab in 1873," and to have visited these pits must have gone far out of his way. It is remarkable that he should have carried in his memory for seventeen years details of these pits, which tally almost word for word with my own measurements.

Mr. Neil says, that within the edge or rim "the actual pits themselves once yawned deep and wide." Can this be true? If the basins are 4 feet in depth (for an average) and the edge is still perfect, where did the material come from that has filled them, for a considerable amount of earth would be required? Dust, rain, and the winter grass are the only means by which the pits could have been filled. Had the edges of the pits been washed for the required filling material, they would not be perfect in shape as they now are. Again, had there been piles of earth about the pits and this earth been washed in, the rims would not be in perfect shape. No, friend Niel, these pits never "yawned deep and wide." I doubt if they were ever much deeper than they are at present.

Were they used for irrigation, or were they connected in anyway with a water supply? This I doubt. They are 30 feet apart; while those on the Damascus Plain are said to be (p. 131) "50 or 60 yards apart." Moreover, they are close to Wady Nimrin, a large living stream. Canals to-day carry water south of the stream, and were water ever wanted north of it why would it not be carried thither in the same way? The cost of leading water by means of canals from this stream to the region where the pits are found, would be trifling compared with that of digging a large number of pits that "yawned deep and wide," to say nothing of the underground connecting tunnels.

At the time of my examination, my impression was that these pits were used for military purposes, and since then I have learned that similar pits are sometimes used in such a way.

CASTLE AND ROCK-CUT CHANNEL AT KHAN MINTEH.

On p. 178, *Quarterly Statement*, July, 1890, Mr. Brass speaks of "exploring" near the Sea of Galilee, and the inference is that what he mentions immediately, *i.e.*, "the remains of a fortification," is a *new discovery*. But these remains have been familiar to Palestinian scholars for many years past, for upwards of thirty years at least.

VISITS TO M'SHITA.

The reference by Mr. Hill, on p. 174, is probably to the exploration of the Dead Sea by Lieutenant Lynch. As a matter of history, I will state that we visited M'Shita twice (1875, 1876), and both times under the

escort of the Adwan. On the first of these visits we took several fine photographs, and on the second I brought away specimens of bricks, of which I noticed three different sizes.

WAS CHOSROES II EVER IN PALESTINE?

Many English writers refer to Chosroes (meaning Chosroes II) in such a way as to lead one to think that he was in Palestine. Such references are not of infrequent occurrence, and there are two in the *July Quarterly Statement*, pp. 173, 179. I shall be grateful to anyone who will indicate the work which contains the evidence that Chosroes II was ever in the Holy Land. My impression has been that he was never in that country, and that the Persian army was there but a very few years. To me it is very doubtful if Chosroes II, Shahr Barz, his greatest General, or any other Persian of that period had anything to do with the building of the M'Shita Palace.

NATURAL BRIDGE, HOT SPRING, AND ROMAN ROAD AT PELLA.

On p. 182, Conder states that "the Hot Bath of Pella" mentioned in the Jerusalem Talmud, "is evidently the springs at Tell Hamma." It is not clear what place he means by "Tell Hamma." Tell el Hammam is on the Shittim Plain. El Hamma is the name of the hot springs at Gadara on the Menadireh (Yarmuk). Thirty-five minutes from Tubakhat Fah'l (Pella) I discovered a fine natural bridge, and beside it a hot spring. This is on Wady Hammet Abu Dhaleb, and is the spring to which I suppose reference to be made in the Jerusalem Talmud. In "East of the Jordan" (Bentleys, London), p. 183, *et seq.*, will be found a sketch of both the bridge and hot spring.

The Roman road leading from Pella to Gerasa past Jabesh Gilead, I traced and made a sketch of the ground.

INHABITANTS OF BASHAN.

On p. 188, Conder says that the inscriptions from the Hauran, "show that as late as the time of Agrippa I the inhabitants of Bashan were living in underground caves, and had not begun to build houses." This statement, nearly identical with that of Waddington, Inscriptions No. 2,329, appears to me to rest on a very slight basis. Of this Inscription (No. 2,322), De Vogüé has given a translation found in his Essay on the Hauran in the "Recovery of Jerusalem," p. 324. I will reproduce this translation, placing in brackets the parts which he has supplied:—

"[King Agrippa, friend of Caesar, [and friend of the Ro]mans, says . . . of a life like that of wild beasts. . . I am ignorant how, up to the present time, [in many] parts of the [coun]try dwelling in caves . . . nor altogether."

In my judgment there is nothing here on which to base any statement respecting the inhabitants of that country, and I would not be so rash as to attempt to read history into these fragments of sentences. To me it is much more likely that the inscription refers to robbers. It is well known that Bashan has had its full share of periods of prosperity. Fourteen and a half centuries B.C. a single section of this country had "threescore cities, all of which were fenced with high walls, gates, and bars; besides unwall'd towns a great many" (Deut. iii, 4, 5). Eight and a half centuries B.C., Shalmanezar II invaded Bashan and "pulled down their houses without number." Would a great Assyrian King with a powerful army have gone into this region to hunt out people who lived in caves? We have also the Nabathean and the Roman periods. My view has been that the Bashan country has from the remotest times been occupied by strong and wealthy people, that the building material was always of stone, and that in the case of Shalmanezar II *pulling down houses* implied *stone houses*. The statement quoted from Conder I regard as without historical foundation, and furthermore, as actually contrary to history.

PHœNICIANS IN DEVONSHIRE.

By H. B. S. W.

THE occurrence in various parts of Palestine of clusters of Dolmens, or Cromlechs, and the survival of a few examples of these erections in Devon and Cornwall, leads to the enquiry as to the identity of the race by which these stones were erected in such far distant places.

There has recently, however, been published in the "Western Morning News" an article entitled "Phœnicians in Dart Vale," a copy of which I append, which, as it appeals to the experience of the Palestine Exploration Committee, should, I think, be laid before readers of the *Quarterly Statement*.

I should certainly like to know whether such scholars as Professor Sayce, Dr. Ginsburg, Herr Khitrovo, Major Conder, &c., have really accepted the statements respecting the Ballhatchet of Ipplepen?

That the name is not confined to that locality I am quite certain; there is now, and has been for many years past, a family of that name resident in Plymouth.

What connection there may have been with those residing in the neighbourhood of the Dart in former times of course I do not know, but I never heard of the Plymouth family being noticeable for any peculiarity of their physiognomy:—