"The Virgin's Fountain," Nazareth

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Zogora, it is the Djar of Seti I's South Palestine war, and other Egyptian records, shown in reliefs as a fortress upon a river, or canal bank with a bridge and stated in the Egyptian text as leading to Kanaan. Coming from the South Palestine desert to the Egyptian boundary river, or canal, of Shihor and looking across it from the road as a traveller along it was approaching the entrance to Egypt by passing through Djar, or Zoar, the border city, all beyond the Shihor would be irrigated land, fertile and verdant, a striking contrast to the Kanaan side of the frontier. Hence the appropriateness of Lot's remark when viewing the Jordan valley, it was "like the garden of the Lord, like the (view of the) land of Egypt as thou goest unto Zoar."

IV. *Galbanum.*

In the last volume (No. XXXIV) of the *Recueil de Travaux*, edited by Sir Gaston Maspero, in some notes upon newly-found cuneiform texts, the Rev. Père Scheil publishes a small Babylonian tablet bearing some twelve lines of writing, containing medical formulae. Two of these he translates as Caroub and Saffron, but the third is of special interest because it reads *Kal-ba-ni*, which Père Scheil, doubtless correctly, considers to be the Galbanum (χαλβάνη, חֶלְבָּנָה) of Exodus xxx, 34, the *Ferula Galbaniflua* of Boissier. It would, therefore, seem that the Hebrew *Khelbēnāh* is closely connected with the Babylonian word, and that the Greek title is practically a derivative from the old Mesopotamian name.

"THE VIRGIN'S FOUNTAIN," NAZARETH.

By THE REV. ASAD MANSUR.¹

It is most probable that the spring water in Nazareth has always been scanty for the needs of the inhabitants. This is evident both from the many ancient cisterns which have been and still are

¹ A translation from an Arabic book, now ready for the Press, by the Rev. Asad Mansur, Pastor of Christ Church, Nazareth, and entitled "The History of Nazareth up to the present time."

found in every direction, and also from the large ancient reservoirs which have been found near the fountain. The Virgin's Fountain is the main supply of the town, and is so-called, not only because the Virgin Mary used to draw water from it, but also, according to a tradition, the source and time of which are unknown, because the Angel Gabriel announced to her, while she was filling her water-pot at the fountain, the fact that she should conceive the Saviour. Hence the fountain became very precious to Christendom because of its connection with the Holy Family and with Nazareth—the home of our Lord. I believe that this fountain was first found at the foot of a cliff near the present Greek Church, and was the cause of the place being inhabited. A village was built near it, and later when it grew into a city, the rock was cut farther in, in order to increase the water, and it became a cave, and reservoirs were built to store the overflow.

Two of these ancient reservoirs have been found at a distance of about 100 metres from the source of the fountain, in the house of Mr. Salim Kavar. One of them has been converted into a cistern and the other lies below it, separated only by a wall; the two were connected by clay pipes, and clay pipes also conveyed the water away from the lower one.

Since coming to Nazareth in 1905, I have been very anxious to collect particulars about this fountain, especially with regard to its source, but have been unable to procure much trustworthy information. However, the present Governor, Amin Abdu el-Hadi, a native of Nāblus, and a member of one of the leading families in the whole district of Nāblus, had been formerly connected as a Turkish official with the German excavators at Megiddo, and he, in June, 1911, called a conference of the leading people and officials in Nazareth to confer with them as to the possibility of conveying the water in iron-pipes from the source of the fountain to its present site. The money was collected and the work began. It was dedicated on December 21st, 1911, and has been a real improvement and a great success, for the water increased as much as 40 per cent.

A ditch 4 metres wide by 10 metres deep was dug over the source of the fountain and by this means and with the help of a ladder, it was possible to descend to the source. I went down three times and would describe it thus: the water gushes out of an elliptical cave 4 metres in diameter and 2 metres in

height. The nature of the rock is of two kinds—the top of soft limestone called *Narī* (ناري) and the sides of hard limestone in which the marks of the axes are still to be seen on both sides of the entrance. The water springs, near the bottom of the cave, from three sources: the first and the more copious comes from the north-east, the direction of Jebal Sikh and *el-Khānūk* (الخانوق); the second is about a metre to the north-west of the first and is the least abundant of the three; the third is 35 centimetres from the second and both flow from the north. This is how it appeared in the autumn, but during winter the water gushes out from all sides of the cave. This can be easily inferred from the holes in the rock which though very hard is like a sponge, the holes ranging in size from 25 centimetres to 1 centimetre.

The water is conducted to the present building by an aqueduct 150 metres long with a downward grade of 160 centimetres, 90 of which occur within 6 metres of the fall, thus showing the very slight descent of 70 centimetres for the remaining 144 metres of its course. The first 17 metres of this aqueduct are cut in the rock and divided into two parts: the first, a distance of 10 metres, is 150 centimetres high and 2 metres wide; the second, a distance of 7 metres, is a cave 4 metres wide through which the channel, 50 centimetres wide, passes. At the end of this part of what may be called the second cave there is an opening to the sky which was nearly forgotten, and it was through this opening that the descent was made to the aqueduct before the pit was dry over the source—the pit at the mouth of the cave was built in the form of a vault and filled up again—the opening, too, is now covered. This opening is built entirely of masonry and is 1 metre square, its distance from the outside wall of the Greek Church being 4 metres. Here, where I believe the fountain first appeared, the rock ends, and from this point the aqueduct is of masonry and passes under the outer wall, and through the churchyard. It then proceeds under the wall of the church itself, away under the altar in the Cave of the Annunciation where there is a hole, from which the sexton draws water for pilgrims, and about 2 metres farther on to the left of the aqueduct, there is another hole which is open to a sort of small pool supplied from the channel and from which water is drawn also.

The masonry of this part of the aqueduct is of much older date than the section which follows it. The church, 15 metres long,

stands almost in the centre of the yard, which has a length of 48 metres, and the aqueduct after leaving both, passes under the ground in the open field, till it pours into the reservoir. About 15 metres from the wall of the churchyard, a reservoir was discovered about a metre under the ground.

Robinson, in his article on Nazareth in his *Bible Researches*, says : "In the century before (Pocock's day), instead of the aqueduct, travellers describe here a reservoir, of which there is now no trace." It is not clear whether this reservoir is meant, or the first-mentioned in the house of Mr. Salim Kavar—most likely the former.

Twice I descended to this reservoir—it is 8 metres long, 4 wide and 6 high—there are four openings on the top from which it is evident water was drawn by rope and bucket. On one side there is an opening by means of which the reservoir was supplied from the aqueduct, but now it is built high enough to prevent any flow of water into the reservoir. It seems that in years of much rain and when the spring was at its highest, the water overflowed and filled the reservoir to such an extent that when the depth of the earth on the top was not so great, the water gushed out of the top openings. Old men still remember how, in their childhood, they used to throw sticks into the openings and watch them rebound after their plunge into the water. Probably for some important reason—maybe for the sake of cleanliness, or perhaps because of some accident—the reservoir fell into disuse. It is now covered in again and no trace of it is to be seen.

That part of the aqueduct extending from the above-mentioned altar in the Greek Church to this reservoir, is of much later masonry than the first part. I believe that this section of the aqueduct and also the reservoir both date from the first use of the church in the beginning of the seventeenth century. It seems then, after the destruction of all the churches, after the time of the Crusades, the peasant inhabitants of Nazareth drew water at the end of the first part of the aqueduct under the altar, and then when the church was used, the water was conveyed through the second part of the aqueduct, away from the church to the discovered reservoir.

It is my opinion that if the surroundings were excavated thoroughly, important remains would be found. After the disuse of this reservoir, the aqueduct was turned to the east and then south-west to the present reservoir, and this part of it is of a

much more recent date. Originally there was no reservoir at the end of this third section, and the water poured out on the ground day and night. However, in 1862, the present reservoir was built with two stone gutters out of which the water poured continually. Later on, in December, 1911, these were replaced by four self-closing pipes.

The native committee of the Greek Church is carrying on at the present time some slight excavations near to the source of the fountain towards the south-west, and some ancient vaults about 2 metres underground, have already been found.

From what has been said it is clear that the aqueduct is divided into four parts—the first cut in the rock; the second of ancient masonry, and extending from the rock to the cave in the Greek Church; the third, of later masonry, extending from the cave to the discovered reservoir; and the fourth, of modern masonry, from the reservoir to the present place of drawing water.

REVIEW.

Publications of the Princeton University Archaeological Expeditions to Syria in 1904–1905 and 1909. Division II: "Ancient Architecture in Syria," by Howard Crosby Butler. Division III: "Greek and Latin Inscriptions in Syria," by Esmo Littmann, David Magie, junr., and Duane Reed Stuart. Section A: "Southern Syria," Part 3, "Umm idj-Djimâl"; late E. J. Brill, Publishers and Printers, Leyden, 1913.

The Library of the Palestine Exploration Fund has in previous years been enriched by the earlier volumes, illustrating the valuable observations of these Expeditions in the little trod regions of Northern Syria, and we have now to acknowledge gratefully the new volume in which Mr. Howard Crosby Butler deals with the Ancient Architecture of Southern Syria, as found in the remains of one of its most important towns, probably the chief town of the district, and now known as "Umm idj-Djimâl" (Mother of Camels). Mr. Butler suggests that this is probably the "Thartia" of the