Substance of Second Report from Captain Wilson, dated Banias (Ccesarea Philippi), January 2.

G. Grove

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THE PALESTINE EXPLORATION FUND.

A SOCIETY FOR THE ACCURATE AND SYSTEMATIC INVESTIGATION OF THE ARCHÆOLOGY, TOPOGRAPHY, GEOLOGY AND PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY, AND MANNERS AND CUSTOMS, OF THE HOLY LAND, FOR BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATION.

PATRON.

HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN.

Substance of Second Report from Captain Wilson, dated Banias (Cæsarea Philippi), January 2.

The party left Damascus on the 28th December, and travelling by S'as'a and Jeba reached Banias on the 31st. They had very bad weather, with sleet and snow every day. The country between Jeba and Kuneiterah was half under water.

Topography.—The position of Damascus, Kaukal, Jeba (not marked on the maps), Banias, and the junction of the Hasbany and Banias Rivers, have been fixed astronomically, and the calculations made both for latitude and longitude. A reconnoissance sketch of the route from Damascus to Banias had been made, showing great discrepancies in the best maps. A reconnoissance sketch was in progress of the district round Banias, to show the junction of the three streams of the Jordan, and the course of the Wadys near the town. The snow was, however, so thick and so low down as to prevent much being done in the Wadys themselves.

Archæology.—Plans have been made of the great Mosque at Damascus, of Bab Shurky (the Roman Eastern Gate), and of the Mound of Tell-Salhiyeh. Excavations had been made in three places in the mound, but with no decisive result except the discovery of one sculptured slab of quasi-Assyrian character. The mound was originally formed of a compact mass of sun-dried bricks, with terraces of which traces still remain. It is now much ruined, and the masonry has probably been used in the buildings at the foot of the mound. Mr. Consul Rogers has undertaken to transport the slab to Beyrout, and the further exploration of the Tell will probably be carried on by him.

Photographs have been taken as follows:—of the Mosque at Damascus (8), which, with those taken by Mr. Bedford at the Prince of Wales's visit, will afford a very good illustration of this remarkable basilica; of Bab Shurky: of the city wall opposite Tomb of St. George: of arch and pediment in book bazaar: of house in the city: of Banias from Wely Khudr:

of the niches and grotto: of the fountain head: of the castle from various points (5).

The *Geology* of the country passed through had been carefully observed and noted.

It was intended to leave Banias on the 6th of January for Deir Mimas, at the bend of the Litâny, and thence to follow the ridge to Kedes: proceeding from Kedes by Kefr-Birim, Meiron, and Safed, to Tell Hum and Khan Minyeh on the Lake of Galilee. This would give opportunity for surveying the ridge dividing the Hasbany and Litâny, and the district round Jebel Jurmuk and Safed, whilst excavations, plans, and photographs were being made among the ruins at Tell Hum.

*Substance of Third Report from Captain Wilson, dated Mejdel,
January 27, 1866.*

Topography.—Astronomical observations have been made at Tell-el-Kady, Hunin, Kedes, Safed, Tell Hum, and Khan Minyeh. A reconnoissance sketch has been made of the district around Banias down to the junction of the Banias and Hasbany Rivers, across the valley to Mtelleh, and thence following the dividing ridge between the waters of the Litany and Mediterranean and those of the Jordan down to Safed, embracing also a large portion of the country on either side. The bad state of the weather, cold and wet, drove the party from Kefr Birim, but they have to return to investigate the ruins there and at Meiron and Yarus, and other places not previously described, and will have an opportunity of getting in the topography of Jebel Jurmuk, and connecting it with the former work. A reconnoissance has been commenced of the country bordering on the Lake, and this Captain Wilson hopes to carry right round, and also to trace out the whole of the Wady running into the western side of the Lake.

Archæology.—A sketch has been made of the Castle of Hunin, the northern portion of which is surrounded by a ditch cut in the solid rock to a depth of, in some places, twenty feet, a work apparently of great antiquity. At Kedes some excavations were made on the site of the ruins: the western building is a tomb containing eleven loculi, the eastern one is a temple of the sun of about the same date as Baalbek; the richly-worked lintel over the main entrance was dug up. Close to the temple, and evidently belonging to it, an altar with a Greek inscription was found, which has been squeezed and copied; a finely-worked buried sarcophagus was dug up, in better repair than those exposed to the air. Detailed plans have been made of the mouldings, &c., on both the buildings and the sarcophagi, sufficient to reconstruct the former with great accuracy. On the same hill some curious tombs were found; of one of which a plan was made. A little more than two miles south-east of Kedes, on an isolated hill called Tell Harah, were found the remains of a large city of very ancient date; the walls of the citadel and a portion of the city wall could be traced. This Captain Wilson regards as the long-sought-for Hazor, in preference to Tell Khureibeh. At Tell Hum, the White Synagogue had been so far excavated and its plan and ornaments carefully recorded, but nothing else

had been found. The ruins of Chorazin at Kerazeh turn out to be far more important than was previously suspected; they cover a much larger extent of ground than at Tell Hum, and many of the private houses are almost perfect, with the exception of the roofs, the openings for doors and windows remaining in some cases. All the buildings, including a synagogue or church, are of basalt, and it is not till one is right in amongst them, that one sees clearly what they are; 50 or 100 yards off they look nothing more than the rough heaps of basaltic stones so common in this country. Drawings have been made of the mouldings, &c., and a plan of the large building as far as it could be made out.

Photographs.—2 views of Niches and Fountain of Banias.

7 views of Castle of Banias.

3 views of Town and Citadel of Banias.

1 view of Hazor, Oak Grove.

3 views of Sarcophagi at Kedes.

1 view of large Tomb at Kedes.

7 views of Temple at Kedes.

4 views of Ruins at Kerazeh.

5 views of Ruins at Tell Hum.

The broad cutting in the rock above Ain et-Tin proves to be a portion of a large aqueduct which formerly conveyed the whole of the fountain at Tabighah into the plain of Gennesareth for irrigation; the water was raised in a tank and carried round the contour of the Tabighah valley to the plain. The aqueduct still stands in small portions at several points, and can be easily traced the whole way by the number of stones with cement adhering to them lying on the surface of the ploughed fields. Specimens of the waters of the fountains have been kept, and their temperatures taken.

At Irbid some progress had been made in excavating the synagogue. Two additional photographs had been taken, one of an aqueduct hewn in rock, and one of the plain from above Khan Minyeh. The reconnaissance had been advanced to Mejdal, and observations made at Khan Minyeh. The maps are all greatly in error in this district. The whole of the ancient system for irrigating the Ghuweir had been traced; though on a smaller scale, it was as perfect as that of the Damascus plain. The mounds at Khan Minyeh had been excavated for two days, but without much result. The pottery and masonry appear to be comparatively modern. The maps promise to be a valuable addition to the topography of Palestine.

GEORGE GROVE,

Hon. Secretary.

SYDENHAM,

Feb. 20th, 1866.