

GENUINE AND FALSE INSCRIPTIONS IN PALESTINE.

(Reprinted from the "Times.")

THE Holy Land, among other privileges, possesses one not much to be envied. Among all the regions of the ancient world it is the one that, until now, is noticeable by the greatest sterility as regards the production of ancient monuments. And yet Palestine, that country so small upon the map but so large in history, occupies so considerable a place in the annals of humanity that it is above all there one would wish to exhume some of those contemporary documents of events, those authentic witnesses of the past, which arise abundantly from the soil of Assyria, Chaldea, Egypt, Greece, and Italy. What would we not give to be able to confront the Bible with such witnesses, and to call forth from the ground of Palestine stones or books that would speak to us of its history during the Jewish period, and would permit us to examine the Biblical narrations with the strictness required in these days by science! In spite of active and repeated researches, of considerable pecuniary sacrifices, it is only within the last twelve or thirteen years that a few happy discoveries have been made which have broken this epigraphical silence of the Holy Land, and encouraged the efforts of future explorers by showing that, if Palestine is sparing of her treasures, she is, nevertheless, not absolutely disinherited in this respect, and that one might reasonably hope to obtain others from her.

The number is unfortunately soon counted of the inscriptions of Palestine, discovered until now, which carry us back to the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, a decisive moment marking the end of political Judaism. As many as seven may be enumerated. The earliest in date and the most important is the Moabite Stone, which I had the good fortune to get out of the clutches of the Bedouins. This inestimable document, written in Phœnician characters and Moabite language, a dialect closely related to Hebrew, may unquestionably be considered as an original page of the Bible, dated with certainty the ninth century before our era. It gives a detailed account of the political and religious struggles between Moab and Israel, from David to Jehoshaphat, and furnishes us with a singularly instructive counterpart of the narratives of this period, contained in the Second Book of Kings. It further possesses the advantages, perhaps still superior, of giving us the most ancient known specimen of alphabetical letters; of those twenty-two Phœnician characters come to us through the Greeks and Romans—that is to say, the prototype itself of our A. B. C., of that universal instrument used by the greater part of the civilised world to express and fix thought.

The Moabite Stone is a Hebrew document; it is not, properly speaking, an Israelite document. The city of Jerusalem itself has furnished us with as many as four really Israelite inscriptions. They all four present this

peculiarity, that of being engraved in a cartouch or hollow framing on the rock; thus being localised with entire certainty. There are, first, two inscriptions, unfortunately much mutilated, discovered by me in 1870, upon the exterior wall of a cave, hollowed out of the rock, in Selwan, at the very gates of Jerusalem. They are also in archaic characters of Phœnician form, and anterior to the destruction of the kingdom of Judah by the Chaldeans, in 588 B.C. Afterwards comes an extremely curious inscription discovered about three years since by some Arab children who were bathing in the spring of Siloam, at the foot of Jerusalem. It is the narrative, in archaic characters, also engraved on the rock, of the operation accomplished by the Israelitish engineers, who had dug under Mount Moriah a tunnel more than 500 mètres long, and which is still in existence. It is, on a small scale, a work similar to the St. Gothard and Mount Cenis tunnels. Finally, in 1881, I ascertained the existence of a fourth inscription of a similar kind, engraved over the door of a pretty little monolith naos, of Egyptian style, cut in one piece out of the rock. This monument, erected in the midst of the village of Selwan, and which has always attracted the attention of travellers and tourists, without any one having suspected the existence of an inscription, may henceforth be by good rights considered as an authentic specimen of Israelitish architecture of the period of the Kings of Judah.

To these five inscriptions may be added two others—the inscriptions of Gezer and the stela of the Temple of Jerusalem. The inscriptions of Gezer consist of a group of four bilingual epigraphs, Greek and Hebrew, also cut in the rock, in a part of Palestine which I had proved ten years ago to be the site, vainly sought until then, of the Royal Canaanite city of Gezer. Two years after having given this merely theoretical demonstration, which was then not received without objection, I was fortunate enough to discover, on the ground itself, these four inscriptions, which give an unhopèd-for confirmation of it, since they contain, at full length, this brief but decisive mention, repeated as many as three times—“limit (*tehum*) of Gezer.” The writing is less ancient than that of the preceding inscriptions, and brings us to the epoch of the Maccabees. But it is still a document plainly belonging to the true Judaic history. The stela of the Temple is a monument which, although less ancient than the Moabite Stone, and written in the Greek, and not the Hebrew language, is nevertheless on a par with it as regards historical value. If the Moabite Stone is, in some measure, an original page of the Old Testament, the stela of the Temple is undoubtedly an authentically original page of the New. This stela, which I discovered in 1871, in the foundations of an old Arab edifice, close to the Mosque of Omar, contains in reality the text itself of the famous law forbidding, under pain of death, to the Gentiles, the entrance of the sacred precincts of the Temple, reconstructed by Herod. It is, by virtue of this law, invoked by the enraged Jews, that the Apostle Paul, after having with great difficulty escaped tumultuary execution, was dragged before the Roman tribunal.

There are, therefore, as I have said, in all, seven inscriptions only, belonging with certitude to the old historical past of Palestine. By a piece

of good luck, six of these have fallen to my share. I do not take into account the Israelite seals, now tolerably numerous, of which I recently published some fine specimens,¹ neither the stamped handles of amphoræ, discovered in 1869 by Colonel Warren, R.E. These little intaglios and these fragments of pottery, which constitute, so to speak, the small change of ancient Israelitish epigraphy, are, in fact, by their nature, of too uncertain origin. I also exclude the Jewish ossuaries with Hebraic inscriptions, also the epitaphs in the Necropolis of Joppa, and of a few sepulchres in Palestine, of which I have collected and published a sufficiently large number. Their antiquity, according to my idea, has been exaggerated, and if some of these small epigraphs, otherwise without historical interest, can strictly be traced back to the commencement of the Christian era, the greater part of them are, in my opinion, subsequent to Titus.

Perhaps, strictly, one might add another (eighth) number to this too short list—the sarcophagus discovered by M. de Saulcy in the Q'bour el Molouk, and bearing a double epitaph in Aramæan and in Hebrew—"The Queen Saddan or Sadda." It is quite impossible to accept for an instant the conjecture of M. de Saulcy, who thought to have found therein the very body of a queen of the old kingdom of Judah. I think I am able to show that this Queen Saddan, quite unknown historically, is none other than the Queen Helena of Adiabene herself. This illustrious Jewish proselyte must have had, according to the fashion of those times, a double name—one Greek, Helena, the other, Semitic, and national, Saddan. This monument is, therefore, only indirectly connected with Jewish archæology, It is probably to remedy this dearth of ancient monuments that there were established at Jerusalem several years ago certain manufactories for the fabrication of antiquities at prices sometimes moderate, sometimes fairly remunerative, not only for the benefit of tourists, but also of *savants*, which is more serious.

First, there are the spurious antique coins. That is a trifling matter, and *Messieurs les faussaires* are here almost in their right, the more so as their industry is not fraught with danger to the real connoisseur. There are fabricated readily at Jerusalem apocryphal silver shekels for the delectation of tourists greedy after antiquities, who would return home disconsolate if they did not take back from their pilgrimage to the Holy Land as a precious souvenir some counterfeit specimen of the coins of the Maccabees. The forgers are not always satisfied with imitating more or less cleverly from real models. They sometimes invent. Some years ago there were to be found in the bazaars at Jerusalem bronze coins of Moses, which met with great success. They represented on one side the head of the Hebrew law-giver, adorned with magnificent ram's horns; on the other, Hebraic legends taken from Mosaic books. The legends were, it is true, in square—that is to say, modern characters, but the amateurs did not look into things so closely.

¹ "Sceaux et Cachets Israélites, Phéniciens et Syriens, suivis d'Epigraphes Phéniciennes inédites." Paris: E. Leroux, 1883. (With two plates.)

Generally this gang of Syrian forgers have no great imagination. They are not properly inventors; they are rather dull imitators. Their productions are generally connected more or less ingeniously, either by the external or internal conditions, either by the circumstances of time and place with some important archaeological discovery. If by chance some authentic and antique object is discovered, they at once set to work and reproduce it for better or for worse, often for worse, or imitate it servilely. Here is a curious and hitherto unmentioned example, taken from another ground than that of Palestine, but contiguous to it. I received some years ago from M. Mordtmann, of Constantinople, a small figurine in terra-cotta, very prettily modelled, and still retaining traces of ancient gilding. It represents a winged bull half kneeling. The figurine is hollow and shaped in the form of an antique lamp. In the middle of the back is a large hole intended to receive the oil; on the top of the head a smaller hole is disposed to allow the wick to pass, and the flame to shine between the two horns. The curved tail of the animal serves as a handle to hold the lamp. This little idol, apparently a reminiscence of the Golden Calf, bears on the left and on the right hip a double Phœnician inscription, engraved in the clay before the baking. The whole thing has really not a bad appearance. The Phœnician inscription begins on the right and continues on the left hip; it can be easily read—"Yehaumelek, son of Yirpel." The figure is a perfect forgery. I can prove it easily. The modern modeller has merely copied the name of Yehaumelek, King of Byblos, whose stela, found at Yebail, and recently published by M. de Vogüé, had made some noise in Syria. Upon the original stela, slightly defaced in this place, the name of the father, or rather the grandfather, is very difficult to decipher. The forger, puzzled, as have been the *savants* themselves, has read and transcribed it fancifully, being perhaps influenced by the existence of the Biblical name of locality Yirpal (Josh. xviii, 27). I have never been able to ascertain exactly the studio whence this little monument was issued, the execution of which betrays a far cleverer hand than that which formed the Moabite potteries.

The forgers execute inscriptions readily, and that can be understood; for an inscription is a *rara avis* in Palestine, and consequently much sought after. The discovery of the Moabite Stone and that of the stela of the Temple have given new scope for the activity of the forgers, over-excited by the powerful stimulant of cupidity. It may be said that in this respect the Moabite Stone, which gave birth to the false Moabite potteries of Berlin, thousands in number, has been a true *Mère Gigogne*. The Moabitica, as they are called in Germany, are, in fact, its direct offspring. It was destined at an interval of ten years to serve as a basis for a fraud of at least equal importance—that of the Biblical manuscript of Mr. Shapira. The first of these frauds was successful; the second was luckily a failure, after having, nevertheless, been too far on the road to success.

To those who might be inclined to think that it is taking a great deal of trouble, and conferring much honour on those archaeological frauds to

unmask and judge them publicly, that it is making much ado about nothing, that it would suffice to condemn and to execute them with closed doors among *savants*, I can only reply by quoting the words of a judge whose authority no one can question :—

“The precautions against spurious Oriental monuments have been superfluous until of late years ; in future they will become necessary, and add to the difficulty of studies already so full of impediments.”¹

“The forgers threaten soon to cause so many obstacles to the study of epigraphy and Oriental archæology, that we must place among the most signal services that of unmasking these kinds of fabrications.”²

These words were pronounced by the illustrious and incontestable chief of Semitic studies shortly after my having succeeded, not without trouble, in putting an end to the mystification of the Moabite potteries of Berlin. “It was fortunate,” added M. Renan, “that this regrettable error was overthrown by evidence, so to say, material. . . . With the same stroke M. Clermont-Ganneau has anticipated more than one mystification for the future.” It is a fact that the forgers, slightly discomfited after the heavy blow they had received, had kept quiet during ten years. With time they gained fresh courage, and organised the colossal fraud of the Shapira manuscript. Again unmasked, it is probable that they will leave us in peace for some years. But that kind of people are never disheartened. After a while, when their misdeeds are consigned to oblivion, they will set to work anew, and we must not despair of seeing, some day, spring from their inexhaustible manufactories the mended pieces of the Tables of the Law, broken on Mount Sinai, or the Blue Book from the Foreign Office of Mount Sion, the diplomatic correspondence of Solomon with King Hiram, and his private amatory epistles to the Queen of Sheba.

The affairs of the Moabite crockery and that of the Shapira manuscript are now too well known to be again discussed here ; they belong henceforth to history. I wish to speak of other less known forgeries, which I have met with during my explorations in Palestine. Although of minor consequence, they are, however, deserving of notice, if only to throw a full light upon the manœuvres of the “*bande noire*,” which has taken the Holy Land as the scene of its exploits. I intend, moreover to publish shortly a book³ containing a detailed study of the whole of the Palestinian forgeries, great and small.

In the month of May, 1871, I discovered at Jerusalem the stela of the Temple, of which I have previously spoken. I exerted myself to the utmost to obtain the original ; in spite of considerable sacrifices, unfortunately, I failed, in consequence of the obstinacy of the Mussulman possessors of the house under whose foundations the stela was built up. I was obliged, just at that time, to leave Jerusalem, having been summoned to our Embassy at Constantinople. The negotiations were, therefore,

¹ E. Renan. “Rapport Annuel,” *Journal Asiatique*, Juillet, 1876, p. 37.

² E. Renan. “Rapport Annuel,” *Journal Asiatique*, Juillet, 1874, p. 30.

³ “*Les Fraudes Archéologiques en Palestine*,” with engravings. Paris : E. Leroux, 28, Rue Bonaparte.

forcibly broken off. The rumour had, meanwhile, reached the ears of the Turkish governor. He was convinced, from the interest taken by me in the matter, that this discovery must be a great treasure. The very day of my departure, he gave orders to remove the stela, without more ado, and to deposit it in the Serai. It was to be forwarded to Constantinople. In fact, after having lain a few months in the Serai, it was despatched *via* Jaffa, but it never reached its destination. It is now some twelve years since this event, and the stone is still looked for at Constantinople. It must have been sold for a good price to some European, and I have no doubt that it will one day reappear from its hiding-place, after a lapse of time sufficient for the prescription, in some great public collection. What I am certain of is that substantial offers were, after my departure, made to the governor by the representatives of certain foreign Powers at Jerusalem, and I have it from a reliable auricular witness, that the governor had asked one of them the sum of £2,000 sterling. A little later, he would have been satisfied with 1,500 Turkish pounds. I also know that his secretary had written to a well-known Parisian Israelitish financier, proposing to him the acquisition of this unique monument of Jewish history. But this appeal to the national feelings fell on deaf ears, and the governor was obliged to go elsewhere. The fact is, that the stela of the Temple has disappeared from the horizon, and that no one knows, or is willing to tell, what has become of it.

As for me, I had given up all hope, when, scarcely arrived at Constantinople, I received from a friend of mine at Jerusalem, an unexpected piece of news. A Christian Arab, of the Holy City, named Martin Boulos, whom I had employed in the unsuccessful negotiations for obtaining the monument, called upon him on the 30th of September. He brought him the rough copy of Greek letters, engraved, he said, on a stone, quite similar to the other, and built up, like it, in the wall of an Arab house. He undertook to take it away, and to deliver it up to me for a good round sum. The thing was not, *à priori*, as unlikely as might be thought, for we know from authentic sources, from Flavius Josephus, that there were several stelæ identical with that discovered by me, not only in Greek, but also in Latin, erected at intervals along the sacred precincts surrounding the area of the Temple. This might, therefore, possibly be a second stela that Martin Boulos had picked up. Nevertheless, the almost simultaneous discovery of these twin sisters was, it must be confessed, a most astonishing coincidence. Moreover, I knew that Martin Boulos was, by profession, a stone-worker, that he had often engraved epitaphs upon tombstones for the cemetery in Jerusalem, added to which I knew from experience his unscrupulousness, and I had the firm conviction that he had betrayed me in the very transaction in which I had employed him as an agent.

I immediately suspected a fraud, coupled with an attempt to swindle me. I lost no time in writing to my friend, to put him on his guard, at the same time urging him to let the fellow entangle himself to the utmost. He appeared again; after the copy he brought the squeeze of the stone. Then a comedy began, which lasted no less than three months before

arriving at the anticipated catastrophe, and amusing details of which are not wanting. I received regular information from my friend. First, there were all kinds of difficulties made to show the pretended original, which happened to be in a house adjacent to that where I had discovered the stela. They feared to rouse once more the attention of the governor. The landlord was afraid, and he and his Mussulman confederates made incessant demands for money, to indemnify the one or purchase the silence of the other, &c. On the 24th of November, my friend at last succeeded in being taken to the place where lay the treasure. He was conducted to it most cautiously, at 5 o'clock in the morning, to a little dark stable, where a donkey was stalled. The ass began to bray, and threatened to denounce to the neighbours the presence of visitors who walked stealthily. Feigned terror of the bystanders. The unlucky animal was silenced by having its tail pulled, an infallible recipe, it appears, for closing the mouths of loquacious donkeys. The alarm over, my friend was shown the famous stone, fitted into a recess in one of the walls of the stable, and partly loosened. It was placed in exactly the same position as the other—that is to say, the line descending vertically.

Some days after this little got-up play, which seemed to have produced the desired effect, Martin Boulos, thinking the affair ripe, succeeded in taking away the stone, and took it in triumph to my friend. It was then that an unexpected thunderclap occurred. My friend told him plainly that the stone was a mere forgery. Martin Boulos was forced to confess his guilt, and went away, leaving his pretended stela in the hands of him he would have cheated, only too glad to have got off so cheaply.

When I returned to Jerusalem in 1873, I found the stela of Martin Boulos deposited in the Franciscan Convent of St. Sauveur. I took a photograph of it as a curiosity. The false stela has much the same dimensions as the original, only the impostor has chosen, as less difficult to work, a softer limestone. The inscription is copied line for line and letter for letter. But the modern engraver has committed numerous errors, either in confusing one letter with another, or in joining together separate characters, or in leaving blank spaces in the parts too much defaced to be deciphered by him.

The false stela of the Temple was not long without its pendant. I find in my note-book the following lines, written before my departure for Constantinople, proving that Martin Boulos was already busy preparing his forgeries: "Martin had found in the village a stone with inscription, half buried; only two lines were visible above ground." I left Jerusalem without having had the leisure to verify this statement, which, at this time, I had no reason to suspect. It was, in fact, a false monument, as I afterwards acquired the material proof.

The reason which determined the impostor to localise it at Selwan was that I had discovered some months before at this place, and had cut from the rock, the two archaic Hebrew inscriptions before mentioned. This tit-bit was apparently reserved for me. My sudden departure baffled Martin Boulos, who sought other dupes.

It appears from a letter addressed to me by Brother Lievin, on the 25th of February, 1872, that the pretended inscription was introduced into the Jerusalem market about this time. Negotiations were entered into on the matter with M. Mourad Hilperu and Mr. Shapira, antiquity dealers in the Holy City. The latter had had, at least, a squeeze of the inscription in his hands. I do not know whether it is through the medium of one of these persons that it was sold or re-sold to its final purchaser. At any rate, a very learned and honest man living in Jerusalem was taken in and induced to buy the stone. When I returned to the Holy Land in 1874 I had occasion to examine the monument itself, and I took a photograph of it. It was not without trouble that I succeeded in undeceiving its possessor, who firmly believed in the authenticity of the inscription. It is a very hard block of limestone. The inscription is composed of eight lines of Greek characters, not deeply engraved, out of which it is impossible to make any sense. Scarcely can here and there be recognised a few incoherent and barbarously spelt words. It is probably this puzzling feature which raised the curiosity of the buyer, and made him fall into the trap. He is a clever Greek scholar, and it is certain that put before a translatable inscription, such as the clumsy reproduction of the stela of the Temple, he would have recognised the imposture at first sight.

The forger had this time very cunningly placed himself on the footing of untranslatableness. These tactics have been employed with full success in the fabrication of the Moabite crockery, whose purely fantastical epigraphs have deluded the most learned interpreters of Germany, and have, just on that account, determined their conviction. The characters of the false Greek inscription of Selwan visibly proceed, moreover, as regards shape, from those of the stela of the Temple. Although the forger has carefully refrained from reproducing the same words, he has unconsciously fallen again into certain combinations of letters, betraying the model placed before his eyes. At the same time Brother Lievin sent me the squeeze, or the copies of a series of pretended ancient monuments, recently discovered, and stored in the shop or the back shop of M. Mourad Hilperu and of Mr. Shapira. I immediately perceived that they were apocryphal, and I hastened to put my friend on his guard against this attempt, where I easily discerned the working of a bold and enterprising band of forgers, whose leaders were personally known to me.

It was, first, the reproduction, pretty well executed, on stone, of a Nabathean inscription from Oumm-er-resâs, of which I possessed, since 1869, a squeeze. This squeeze, offered by me to the Commission of the Corpus Inscriptionum, Semiticarum, through the medium of M. de Vogüé, has been the object of a learned study by this latter and by M. Renan. I at once recognised my old acquaintance. Afterwards came the copy, in pencil, of a second inscription, not less fantastic than the first. It is the one which Mr. Koch, in his work¹ on the Moabite pottery, represented on his Plate IV, No. 2. The eager champion of the authenticity of the

¹ "Moabitisch oder Selimisch." Stuttgart, 1876.

Moabite crockery has not seen that this inscription is another reproduction, extremely disfigured, of the inscription of Oumm-er-resâs ! It is sufficient to reverse his drawing, which he has placed upside down, and to compare it letter for letter with the said inscription, for the thing to become immediately obvious, although the characters are interpreted in the most artless manner, and several of them have been omitted.

Next appeared a grotesque head of a statue in limestone, ornamented on the neck and on the skull with unlikely Moabite inscriptions. In 1874 I took a photograph of this head, which, it was asserted, had been dug up at Jerusalem itself, and was estimated by its possessor at £20 sterling. It presents a curious particularity in its coarseness. The features recall in a striking manner those of Martin Boulos himself. This unconscious imitation is a well-known occurrence in the primitive arts, where the artist reproduces, so as to speak, unconsciously, his individual or ethnical type. Again, there was produced an illegible inscription, engraved on a fragment of a porphyry column, an inscription of Medeba, containing it was asserted the account of a victory gained over the Moabites by the Israelites, under the command of Moses.

J'en passe et des meilleurs. I will, however, make an exception for the following case :—In a letter, dated October 28, 1871, Brother Lievin sent me, from Jerusalem to Constantinople, the copy, in pencil, of an inscription which had been forwarded to him by Martin Boulos. The latter pretended to have obtained this copy from a Bedouin. The original existed, according to him, in a locality situated beyond Jordan. Shortly afterwards I received a squeeze. The inscription is composed of four lines of Phœnician characters, clumsily imitated from those of the Moabite Stone, and pleasantly intermingled with Greek letters. Underneath are three lines of cuneiform characters. The presence of the cuneiform on this new specimen of forgery was in no way surprising to me, for I had obtained, at Jerusalem, some months before, the copy, made by an Arab, of a brick with a cuneiform inscription of respectable appearance. This brick, which I have every reason to believe authentic, had fallen, I know not by what chance, into the hands of the Bedouins beyond Jordan. I had, nevertheless, not succeeded in seeing the original. In any case, it was this brick that had partly served Martin Boulos as a model for the fabrication of his bilingual text. It is needless to add that this fresh attempt was not more successful than the preceding ones, and that the Moabitico-cuneiform inscription remained on his hands.

At the end of 1873, or at the beginning of 1874, during the mission confided to me by the Palestine Exploration Fund, I picked up a curious specimen of the industry of these Jerusalemite forgers. A certain Mr. Albengo accosted me one day in one of the streets of the Holy City, and taking me aside, offered me for sale a little intaglio, a red carnelian, if I recollect rightly, in the form of a truncated cone. On the widest side was engraved an inscription of four lines in Hebrew archaic characters of rather strange aspect, copied somewhat coarsely from those of the Moabite Stone. The inscription was reversed like those of the ancient Phœnician seals

intended to reproduce by impression the letters in a right sense. It could be read without difficulty, in spite of the intentional or accidental anomalies of several letters:—"The servant of Jehovah, David, King." The very own seal of King David! and that for the modest sum of ten francs! It was really given away. It is unnecessary to say that I did not avail myself of this tempting offer. I contented myself with taking an impression and a sketch of the object, of whose future fate I am quite ignorant. Perhaps it will reappear one day in the collection of some less sceptical amateur.

I now come to another series of forgeries. In 1874 I purchased from an Arab mason, as a curiosity, an inscription on limestone, alleged to have been found in the Wadi-Qaddoum, one of the little valleys on the slopes of the Mount of Olives. The inscription, glaringly false, is a hybrid mixture of square Hebrew and of Himyaritic or Sabaean characters. One must not be surprised beyond measure at this borrowing from the Himyaritic alphabet. The forgers had had at their disposal as early as 1870 authentic samples of it. For a certain Jew, named Aron Aorcias, had brought from Yemen a few Himyaritic monuments, among others a very beautiful stela with inscription and figures, which I have published formerly in the *Journal Asiatique*. This last circumstance may also help to explain the presence of letters belonging to the same alphabet of South Arabia in some of the inscriptions on the false Moabite pottery.

On the 4th October, 1874, some Arabs from Jerusalem, of whose names I am ignorant, brought me very mysteriously the cast of a pretended antique inscription. This cast was curiously enough moulded in dough. I feigned to be taken in, and I told them to show me the original, which they asserted to have taken away from I do not know where. The next night they came to my house most cautiously, like conspirators, and solemnly produced a white marble slab. Upon it was engraved, on a gigantic scale, a servile imitation of a Jewish shekel of the year 1, with its well-known Hebraic legend in archaic characters, "Shekel of Israel." Nothing was wanting, not even the vase called Manna vase, figuring always on the obverse of this type of shekel, in the centre of the circular legend. The letters are not too badly imitated. The shape of the slab seems to indicate that it had previously served as a casing wedge in an Arab arch. The stone smelt strongly of petroleum. I offered half-a-sovereign for it. This paltry sum was rejected with scorn, and the indignant fellows retired with their unappreciated *chef d'œuvre* to seek some more credulous amateur.

Why the forgers had fixed their choice upon this model of a shekel is easy to guess. Just about this time a great many silver shekels had been found in Palestine, piled up in a vase sealed with lead. These shekels had been brought to Jerusalem, and I had acquired a good number of them. It will be seen that the principle is always the same, the forgers take as a basis of operation authentic antiquities to which their attention is attracted by a recent discovery.

In 1874 I published a handsome crowned and bearded head of a statue,

picked up close to the sepulchres of the Kings at Jerusalem by some Arab workmen who were collecting stones for a building. I suggested to identify it with the head of the Emperor Hadrian, whose statue formerly figured in the Temple on the very site of the Holy of Holies. This information did not fall upon deaf ears, and the forgers lost no time in setting to work on this new *datum*.

Some time after they brought to a European residing at Jerusalem a head of a statue of hurried workmanship, in soft white limestone, that had been carefully blackened, pretending to look like basalt. The following inscription was engraved round the head :—

AVSVITVSHASPIANVS

It is easy to reconstitute the intended words, oddly mutilated—

AVGVSTVS HADRIANVS

I little expected, I must confess, this astonishing epigraphic confirmation of my conjectures. The author of this beautiful masterpiece was again the aforesaid indefatigable Martin Boulos.

In October, 1881, a large massive silver ring was offered to the Russian Archimandrite of Jerusalem. It measured 4 centimètres in diameter, and had a circular bezel of the same metal, upon which was engraved in a round, an inscription of a star with six rays, formed by two intersected triangles. On the centre of the bezel was represented a sort of vase on a foot, a cup or lamp, or rather a censer, suspended by a triple chain, and recalling singularly the censer that exists upon certain mediæval monuments of Palestine. The object, at least so it was asserted, had been found at Siloé. It was not without reason that this origin was attributed to it. Attention had just been drawn to this locality by the discovery of the well-known Hebrew archaic inscription of the aqueduct of Siloé. The ring had been secretly brought to the Archimandrite, and its immediate acquisition was urged, otherwise it was threatened to be offered elsewhere. The antiquity makers and vendors who are working in Jerusalem, are perfectly well acquainted with the rivalry existing between the Europeans living in this city on the subject of antiquities, and they know how to turn it to good account if occasion requires.

I was then Vice-Consul at Jaffa. The Archimandrite at once sent me impressions and a good drawing, requesting me to give him my opinion by telegraph. I had no trouble in convincing him that he had to deal with a shameless impostor, and the possessor was begged to take his merchandise elsewhere. The inscription, of whose apocryphalness there could be no possible doubt, seemed to me rather difficult to decipher. The characters appeared to have been partly borrowed from the alphabet of the Moabite Stone, and partly from that of the ancient shekels, or Jewish coins, of the period of the Maccabees. It began by the word "izk," seal—a word rare and even unknown, under this Hebrew form. It was visibly borrowed from the Chaldean text of Daniel (Dan. vi, 18), where it is said that Darius sealed with his seal the lion's den, into which the prophet had been thrown. Afterwards came, as it seemed, the name of Jairus. The remainder was hardly intelligible. I only recognised with certainty the word "Kahal,"

assembly. But such frauds are really not worth the trouble of seriously disputing the meaning intended by their often most ignorant authors. I shall merely point out that the maker of this pretended old Hebrew silver seal seems to have taken his first idea from the mediæval seals and bulls of the order of the Knights of St. John, of which he must have had some specimens at hand. The incenser engraved in the centre, the circular disposal of the legend, the star substituted for the cross, which, on the mediæval bulls, marks the beginning and the end of the inscription, are so many characteristics betraying the servile imitation of the model.

Among the few antiquities existing in the Greek convent of the Holy Cross, near Jerusalem, I noticed a Jewish ossuary, in every respect similar to those, tolerably numerous, collected by me in Palestine. It was a small box of soft limestone, on four feet. The front was ornamented, as usual, with roses, traced with a compass. The ossuary, perfectly authentic, came, it was said, from Málha, a short distance from Jerusalem. Upon the ornamental front was engraved, in two long lines, partly on the edge, partly on the side itself, a splendid Moabite inscription, perfectly false. I greatly astonished the possessors of the monument by revealing to them the fraud, which they did not in the least suspect. This time the system is different; we no longer have to deal, properly speaking, with a forgery, but with a falsification. I have taken a photograph of this Moabited ossuary.

These few examples will suffice, I think, to show us under new aspects the activity of the Palestinian forgers, to whom we owe the production of the Moabite potteries, and of the Shapira manuscript. They prove to us that these two memorable mystifications are far from having been sole attempts; but that they form part and parcel of a series of systematic facts, which have preceded, accompanied, and followed them. The forgers, I repeat, have not said their last word. We may expect to see them renew the attack. The public is to-day amply edified, and we hope will receive them as they deserve. Such is the principal aim of this article, which is, so to speak, the epilogue of the history of the Shapira manuscript.

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