

SIN AND SAD.

ACCORDING to the students of literary Arabic the distinction of these two letters is most carefully preserved in speaking, and they are never confused. Nevertheless, even in the dictionaries, a few words may be found which are occasionally written with either.

In our recent survey we found the native scribe, who was intelligent and well-instructed, sometimes unable to distinguish the two letters in the pronunciation by the Bedawin of local names : such as Wâdy Sîr and the ruin of Sûr, and it is commonly said in Syria that the nomadic tribes make no distinction between *Sin* and *Sad*. Even among the teachers of Nahu or correct speech there is a difficulty, for when hard pressed they are obliged to admit that a deeper vowel sound accompanies the *Sad* than that belonging to the *Sin*. Thus even to the present day we have a survival of the syllabary from which the distinction of some Semitic letters originates; and this is but one example of the importance of studying the local peasant dialect of Syria, which is very different in many respects from the polite Arabic of literature, preserving as it does archaisms which are of the highest value for archæological purposes.

C. B. C.

DISTRICTS IN PALESTINE.

THE hills north of Jerusalem are divided into various government districts, bearing ethnic names, viz. :—

<i>Beni 'Amîr</i>	....	....	....	Sons of Omar.
<i>Beni Hârîth</i>	....	....	....	Sons of Aretas.
<i>Beni Murreh</i>	....	....	....	Sons of bitterness.
<i>Beni Salîm</i>	....	....	....	Sons of peace.
<i>Beni Zeid</i> ....	....	....	....	Sons of increase.
<i>Beni Hamâr</i>	....	....	....	Sons of the ass.
<i>Beni S'ab</i> ....	....	....	....	Sons of stubbornness.
<i>Beni Hasan</i>	....	....	....	Sons of beauty.
<i>Beni Mâlik</i>	....	....	....	Sons of royalty.

These are not pastoral or nomadic, but agricultural districts, with a settled population of Fellahin. There are no Arabs in these districts, and historically the nomadic tribes seem never to have held them. I have never seen any explanation of these names, nor does their origin seem to be known in Palestine. M. Clermont-Ganneau has indicated the interest of the names, but has not explained their origin. Professor Palmer in revising my nomenclature has added the word Arabs to the title, apparently thinking that they applied to existing tribes in Palestine, but the districts are entirely free from nomadic tribes, nor are any existing Arab clans west of Jordan called by these names.

If, however, we turn to the map of Arabia in the days of Muhammed and of Omar, we find the following tribes represented :—

Beni 'Amir, a tribe of the Nejed near Yemana, or again south-east of Medina.

Beni Hārith, a tribe of Yemen north-east of Sana.

Beni Murreh, both east of Medina, and south of the Jauf Oasis.

Beni Suleim, east of Medina.

Beni Mālik, a division of the Beni Temim, who lived near Yemāna.

It was with the aid of these and other tribes that the famous Khaled defeated the Romans on the Hieromax in 634 A.D. ; and under Omar they swept over Palestine soon after.

It seems therefore probable that in these local names we have a trace of Omar's Conquest of Syria, and that the hills of Judea and Samaria were regularly portioned out among his followers. The noble families of Jerusalem still claim to have "come over with the conqueror" at this time. We have thus only another instance of the survival in Syria of early Moslem divisions, and the division of the Keis and Yemeni factions, which dates back to the early days of Islam, is still hardly extinct, and is well remembered in Southern Palestine.

This identification of the tribes presents a curious and interesting historic parallel to the division of Canaan by Joshua among the triumphant tribes who (as in Omar's time) entered Palestine from beyond Jordan.

C. R. C.

THE SAMARITAN TEMPLE.

Is there any satisfactory proof that the Samaritans ever erected a temple? Josephus speaks of Sanballat's Temple (2 "Antiq.," viii, 2-7), but gives no account of it, and his Sanballat cannot be the Sanballat of the Bible if he lived in the days of Alexander the Great. In the New Testament only the mountain is noticed (John iv, 20); and Epiphanius in the fifth century speaks of the Samaritans as worshipping in a circle open to the air—such an enclosure as they still use. The Samaritan literature is all very late, and makes Joshua erect a temple which Sanballat only restored. The twelve (or ten) stones which the Samaritans point out as part of their temple are probably terraced walls of Justinian's fortress. On the whole it seems to me probable that they never had anything more than at present, viz., a sacred rock with a well-marked cup hollow in its surface—probably their altar, and enclosures with dry stone walls, where they congregated on the holy mountain.

C. R. C.