

the rest ; at the same time it does not follow that because our line of research leads away from these bitter controversies to the safer path of contemporary monumental evidence, we are therefore ignorant of what has been written in these matters. I have studied the works of Kuenen, Ewald, Colenso, Robertson Smith, and other critics, and have become generally acquainted with the views of Hitzig, Wellhausen, and other German critical writers, and I have read Renan's great work, as well as numerous books of Lenormant ; but there are many other branches of study which must yield their contributions to the study of Syrian antiquity, and to which Professor Socin does not refer. Such are the publications of the Biblical Archæological Society, the "Records of the Past," the Sacred Books of the East, the works of Smith, Layard, Rawlinson, Boscawen, Taylor, Sayce, Chabas, Brugsch, Birch, Mariette, De Rougè, and many more. There is so much to do in collating all that these great scholars have written respecting Syria, that the study might well fill a lifetime without leaving time for exegetical works. I think Professor Socin will agree, that time is better spent in trying to learn than in trying to pick holes in other men's work. As regards the word already spoken—that is past. If there has been error or shortcoming, all that can be done is to amend in the future, and to strive through the aid of one's critics to avoid the perpetuation of error. In the end, the true lives, the false dies away. All we have a right to require of every writer is, that he should be honest, well-informed, and open to conviction, conscientious in doing his best, and conscious of his own fallibility.

STONE DOORS.

I.

WE have been long familiar with the Stone Doors of Bashan, but Mr. Oliphant's discovery of a couple of these old portals, built into the house of a Jew at Tiberias, gives a new interest to the subject. In Palestine stone doors belong to the past, but I write to state that while lately accompanying the Afghan Boundary Commission through Persia I saw doors of that kind still in use at the present day. The necessity for them in that country may, perhaps, throw light on the conditions which required such protection in Palestine in times gone by. For centuries back, and up till only about two or three years ago, Persia has been liable on its north-eastern frontier to incessant inroads from Turkoman raiders ; these raiders came at times in small bodies, at times in large numbers ; their plan of action was necessarily hurried, they swooped down on villages and carried off whatever they could pounce upon. Men, women, and children, as well as houses, cattle, and sheep, were all prey to the Turkomans. The human spoil in such cases were carried off and sold as slaves in the

bazaars of Khiva and Bokhara, where almost all chance of escape was cut off from the great desert of Central Asia being thus placed between the victims and their own country. The Persians had to protect themselves from such inroads as best they could, and with this object every village was walled, towers of refuge were erected in the fields: these had a narrow passage to creep up through, so that if a raider tried to follow, the refugee could batter his head as he emerged upwards. On similar towers watchmen were placed on the look-out, and when an "Alaman," as such forays were called, was seen approaching, guns were fired and every one rushed, either to seek protection within the walls of the village, or, if that was too distant, to find safety in the nearest tower of refuge. These raids were sudden, and rapidity was the essential part of the tactics. If the rush on a village failed, there was no delay to make an attempt by other means; the party darted off at once to try their luck at the next village before news of the foray could reach it. Such being the case elaborate defences were unnecessary; shelter for the moment was all that was required. It would not have taken long to burn a wooden door, and thus gain an entrance where there were few defenders. The villages could defend their gates from being burned, for they had loop-holes so placed as to protect them; but in some of the larger towns there were houses with gardens outside the walls. The walls in such cases were high, and the only entrance was by means of a small stone door. There was a defensive strength even in smallness, and they were often of most diminutive size, some being less than 3 feet in height. I only saw one village which had a stone door. This place is called Lasgird, about 100 miles due east of Tehran. It is a very curious spot; the outer wall is a circle, but it is a thick mass, being wide enough to contain the houses of the villagers in it; these are in the upper part, about 30 feet from the ground, where the people are out of danger from attack. There are rude balconies all round, by means of which the people can communicate from house to house; the central space within the circle has houses for the storage of grain and for the horses, cattle, &c., and there is only one small gate to this place, with a massive stone door, the dimensions of which are 45 by 37 inches and $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches in thickness. The village is supposed to be very old, and the tradition is that the circle, or "gird," which forms its plan, was originally traced on the ground by *Las*, or *Last*, the son of Noah. This character will no doubt be new to most readers of the *Quarterly Statement*,—he was so to myself; in all my travels in the East I never heard of such a personage. Most probably there may be other legends regarding him, and I for one would feel obliged if any person can throw light on this fourth son of Noah.

This stone door of Lasgird is a very rough piece of workmanship; I have put the thickness at $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches: this was about its greatest depth, but it was so rudely made that this varied considerably. It wrought on pivots, the same as the doors of Bashan; the smaller doors I have described did the same. It will be noticed that the stone doors of Bashan, as well as the pair of doors found at Tiberias, have been copied from

models which had been beautifully fashioned in wood: the panels on them are clear evidence of this; they had also been ornamented with metal bosses. The stone doors of Persia speak for themselves, and tell of danger from sudden attacks. This suggests that the transformation on the east of the Jordan from wood to stone implies a change which had taken place at some former date in the condition of the country, that a peaceful state had been succeeded by an unsettled period, during which the use of stone for doors became, as we find in Persia, a necessary precaution. The substantial form of the original wooden, as well as the elaborate reduplication of them in the lithic material, is not consistent with the idea of a hasty or momentary adoption, but points, in both cases, to a considerable duration of time when each of them had been in use. We may thus derive a hint from these peculiar portals which may be of some historical significance.

WILLIAM SIMPSON.

II.

THE STONE DOORS OF TIBERIAS.

THE stone door at Tiberias figured and described on page 79 of the last *Quarterly Statement* is the same that I saw in 1880, and which I described in my "Sacred Palmlands" in the following words:—"Tiberias, March, 31 I long to know the date of a pair of massive old stone doors which we saw inserted into the gateway of a modern Jewish house as we passed through the town this morning. No sooner had we stopped to notice them than the Jewish proprietor, accompanied by a number of his relatives and friends (belonging to the Askenazim and Polish Jews), came out and gathered in a group around us. They told us that the doors had lately been discovered buried under the present edifice. They are carved in imitation of wood, the design on them being bosses arranged quincunx fashion, alternating with panels. In the upper inside panel is a projection hollowed out apparently for the reception of the bolt which kept their massive folding doors securely fastened. I observed a block of stone also with bosses carved upon it, built into a house further on, and other remains of this sort are to be found here. I fancy by the style of workmanship they belong to the same period as the giant cities of Bashan." The sketch of the stone door made on the spot by my mother (who was travelling with me) is identical with the engraving on page 79 illustrating Mr. Oliphant's paper.

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