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THE LOUISVILLE ASSEMBLY.

(Continued.)

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So far this review has treated of only two of the acts of the Louisville Assembly, the inauguration of the new scheme of Systematic Beneficence, and the "North Alabama Case." In connection with the latter it ought to have been noted that a strong "protest" against the Assembly's action is found in the Minutes, signed by the Rev. Dr. W. P. McCorkle and others. This protest covers substantially the ground taken in this review.

Proceeding with the study of the minutes we find:

III. The question of the proper mode of selecting commissioners to the General Assembly, which has been needing the attention of the Church for several years, now getting some consideration. It may be accepted as axiomatic that when Presbyteries select commissioners to the Assembly, their choice should be governed by a consideration of the qualifications of the men to take part in the serious business of the Assembly. The qualifications are such as these: sound judgment, knowledge of Church law and practice, aptitude for deliberative and ecclesiastical work, mature experience, acquaintance with the subjects that will probably come before the body, and, of course, representative Christian character. But what in fact is the practice of the Presbyteries? Are they controlled by such considerations? Has it not come to be the rule (with

AHAB'S PALACE AND JEZEBEL'S TABLE.

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Ivory palaces are spoken of in the forty-fifth Psalm, and Ahab is said to have built an "ivory house." It is not to be supposed that the palace, the foundations of which have been discovered at the site of Samaria, Ahab's capital city, was built entirely of this precious material. Its interior—and some think its exterior—finishings were probably of ivory, and its furniture may have been made of it, or adorned with it. Solomon had the most important of all pieces of furniture in his palace made of it. "The king made a great throne of ivory." (1 Kings 10: 18.)

It seems that the remains of this palace of Ahab have been discovered. Harvard University began, in 1908, the exploration of the site of the city of Samaria, where this renowned palace stood. It was probably begun by Omri, the father of Ahab, who founded the city of Samaria, and finished by Ahab. Additions to it were made, it is thought, by Jehu and Jeroboam the Second.

The *Harvard Theological Review* for January nineteen-eleven contains an interesting account of the results of the Harvard University exploration, up to that time; but what may prove the most interesting discovery of all has been made since the publication of that number of the Review; or, at any rate, is not mentioned in the article referred to. This is a letter to Ahab from a King of Assyria*. Full particulars of this last discovery seem not to have been published. While the publication of this letter is still looked forward to, and with no little interest, many writings and objects of various kinds have been discovered and described.

*There seems to be some uncertainty about the cuneiform fragment found. Prof. Sayce says of it (*Expository Times*, Aug., 1911): "A fragment of a cuneiform tablet has turned up, on which almost the only legible work appears to be the name of Ahab, so that it may be part of a letter to him from the Assyrian king."

The hill on which the city of Samaria stood was occupied in the days of our Saviour by a city built by Herod the Great—great in cruelty and infamy, but great in building too. Hence, as was to be expected, the first building discovered was one built by him. He named the city Sebaste (the Greek for Augustus), in honor of Augustus Caesar, his contemporary and overlord; and the remains of a building unearthed proved to be those of a temple which he built to this Caesar. It should be remembered that the Roman emperors were accorded divine honors. A marble statue, supposed to be that of Augustus, was among the objects laid bare by the explorers.

A communication, dated Jerusalem, March 15, 1911, contains the following statements, among others:

“Here, in 1908, was excavated an imposing stairway with a large altar at its foot and a mutilated statue of fine white marble and excellent workmanship, probably representing Augustus, lying near the altar. . . . The campaign of 1909 dug out the towers of the Herodian gateway and part of the Herodian city wall on the eastern side of the hill, and a portion of the Herodian basilica adjoining the forum near the village on the eastern side. South of the summit was discovered a maze of walls, Roman, Greek and Hebrew, and others of less certain designation. Near the base of a wall, in the Babylonian style, was found a fragment of a cuneiform inscription.” . . .

“The great wall found in 1908, running south from the stairway, proved to be the eastern foundation wall of a large Roman building. This was dug out in its entirety, and there seems to be no doubt that it is the Augustan temple built by Herod. In 1908 a coin of Herod had been found on one side of the foundation walls of this building.”

Professor George A. Reisner* was in charge of this Har-

*Prof. Sayce says, in the *Expository Times*, Aug., 1911: “Dr. Reisner has long been known as one of the ablest and most thorough of the excavators and archaeologists” . . . And adds: “But he is not only an archaeologist, he is a philologist and decipherer as well, who has edited Sumerian contracts and hymns and Egyptian Hieratic papyri. No more able scholar, therefore, could have been found to undertake the American excavations at Sabastieh, the site of Samaria.”

vard exploration at Samaria, and the article in the Harvard Theological Review, based on his official report, informs us of the finding of the remains of two round towers of the Roman period and two square ones of the Greek, built on yet older ones of Hebrew construction. Under these remains there was found part of a massive Hebrew structure, believed to be the palace of Omri and Ahab, consisting of a series of chambers grouped around courts. This building was found to have covered more than an acre and a half of ground, showing four periods of construction, "tentatively assigned to Omri, Ahab, Jehu and Jeroboam II."

The account continues :

"The belief that the building was erected by Omri and Ahab was based on archaeological grounds, and seems greatly strengthened by the discovery of an alabaster vase inscribed with the name of Ahab's contemporary, Osorkon II of Egypt."

On the same level with this vase of the time of Ahab, and therefore, almost certainly, of the same period, were found a large number of pieces of inscribed pottery, showing us the prevalence of the practice of writing in the time of Ahab, and the character of that writing. The writing was like that found on the Moabite stone erected by Mesha, King of Moab, referring to the reigns of Omri and Ahab. The same kind of writing is found also in the Siloam inscription, supposed to have been written in the time of King Hezekiah, and was discovered by a schoolboy playing truant, and wading in the tunnel which leads from the Fountain of the Virgin to the Pool of Siloam. Fortunately for the boy, his teacher was an archaeologist, and the lifted rod is said to have been stayed by his promptness in mentioning, at the moment, that he had seen an inscription in the tunnel, and the teacher lost no time in going to the pool to make sure of the fact.

This Siloam inscription, that on the Moabite stone and the many on pieces of pottery in the excavations at Samaria, are all in the old Hebrew, or Phoenician, script. Some had contended that the Siloam inscription could not have been made in the time of Hezekiah, because the characters used were of

too late a date. Such an objection to the antiquity of the inscription is now shown to be entirely without reason, as the Moabite stone and these inscriptions at Samaria, which are much older, are written with the same characters as those found on the rock of the Siloam tunnel.

Of these inscriptions the writer of this article says:

“They are the earliest specimens of Hebrew writing that have ever been found and in amount, exceed by far all known Hebrew inscriptions. Moreover, they are the first Palestinian records of this nature to be found.”

These records are written with ink, while the other two mentioned were both engraved on stone. The ink was doubtless of the same character as that found in the tombs of Egypt, in inscriptions, some of which are more than a thousand years older than these. It is marvelous that any ink could have so long withstood the influence of the soil of Samaria for twenty-six centuries, even the best “indelible ink”; but we are here reminded that with all our modern inventions and discoveries there are some lost arts.

These tablets seem to have been labels attached to vessels or groups of vessels of wine and oil, describing their contents as to age, donors, etc. All but two are said to have been dated with the years of the King's reign.

From a later account, it seems that a great many inscriptions of a different character have come to light. Besides jewels, amulets and inscriptions, utensils of cookery and house-keeping have been found—more than five thousand of them—giving the impression of entertainments on no small scale. The places where these are found may well have been the royal banquet hall, and “Jezebel's kitchen,” as Dr. Davis, of the *American Antiquarian*, puts it. We hear (1 Kings 18:19) of “four hundred priests of the groves (Asheroth) who eat at Jezebel's table.” There must have been many other guests, too, at the royal table, and here we find the very utensils for the cooking and serving of the great feasts, along with some of the jewels which adorned the persons of those who feasted, so long ago, at Jezebel's table.

An interesting thing about these inscriptions is that they contain the names of more than forty men of Ahab's time, and that these names show in their composition a nearly equal use of the name of Israel's God, and that of Baal, the Phoenician deity, whose devoted worshiper Jezebel was.*

There could hardly be a stronger confirmation of the accounts of the deplorable prevalence of Baal worship in the northern kingdom which we have in the books of Kings and Chronicles than this fact shows.

Should these explorations, which are now only fairly begun, be carried on to completion, the opinion has been expressed that the Israelitish life of the times of the four kings who occupied the royal palace of Samaria from the tenth to the eighth century before Christ will be as clearly revealed as was that of the wealthy Romans of the first century A. D. by the excavation of the ruins of Pompeii.

This discovery has something of interest for the architect as well as the archaeologist. The character of the part of the building ascribed to Ahab and his successors is a surprise. The *Journal of Biblical Literature* for June 1911 speaks of "the excellent workmanship of Ahab's palace," "the well-cut and well-joined blocks of stone" equal to those of Herod's buildings (we should remember that the temple at Jerusalem was of Herodian architecture), and remarks that:

"The palace itself, with its enlargements, gives us an entirely new conception of Jewish architecture, and its discovery marks a new epoch."

But the most important result is that such discoveries make us see more clearly and feel more forcibly the reality of the characters and stirring events which we have set before us in the Old Testament.

*The following are some of the names found: Ahinoam, Abiezer, Asa, Baalmeoni, Baalmazar.