

Literary and Archaeological Notes.

LAST week I was at Wissim,—or, more correctly, Aûsim,—a little village beyond Embaba, so much out of the way of the world as hardly to be known even by name to the inhabitants of Cairo, or even to the archæologists. And yet Wissim is the site of the capital of the second nome of Lower Egypt, and of an important cathedral city of the earlier Coptic period, about which Mrs. Butcher, who was one of my companions, has written in her *Story of the Church of Egypt*, i. 405-406. We found there, on the top of a high mound, a neglected mosque inside the walls of a ruined Christian church, the church itself having taken the place of an earlier temple. At the foot of the *tel* was the basin of the sacred lake. Among the stones that were lying about I fell across one with the cartouches of Nektanebo II., showing that he had repaired or added to the temple, and a lintel of granite with a broken inscription, which proved that it had once stood in a temple of Ptah. On another block of granite I found the figure of Isis with a dedicatory inscription by a certain Sikam. The modern name of Wissim comes through the Coptic Bûshân, from the ancient Sekhem, later Seshem, the Letopolis of the Greeks.

Opposite the spot where my *dahabia* is moored, in the northern part of the mounds of Memphis, a stone building has been discovered in a very perfect state of preservation, with court, doors, and chambers. There is no trace of an inscription, but the style of architecture indicates that it must have been erected in the first century of the Christian era. Professor Maspero believes it to be a private house, and not a chapel; if so, it will be the first ancient house of stone that has been found in Egypt.

At Thebes the fellahîn have just opened the tomb of a certain Zai, a little to the south of Dêr el-Bâhari. But a much more important discovery has been made there by Mr. Carter, the Inspector of the Antiquities of the Upper Nile. Beneath the house of the Egypt Exploration Fund he has found the entrance to a magnificent tomb, the corridor of which runs through the rock for a distance of 150 metres under the temple of Dêr el-Bâhari itself. In the chamber at the end is a statue wrapped in folds of mummy-cloth. The tomb is of the age of the eleventh dynasty, and what makes the discovery particularly valuable is the fact that it has never been opened or touched. Its very existence seems to have been unknown to

the builders of the temple of Dêr el-Bâhari. It is possible that it may turn out to be a royal tomb, and to contain papyri.

Mr. Quibell, the Inspector of the Antiquities of the Lower Nile, has been engaged in clearing a tomb at El-Khawâlid, on the east bank of the river, opposite Siût, which is of the age of the nineteenth dynasty, and in a wonderfully perfect condition.

A. H. SAYCE.

Helwân, Egypt.

The sea-serpent season being at hand, the publishers are rushing out the last of their books. Too late for review in this issue, but very appetizing for our next, we have received from Messrs. Longmans the new critical edition of *The Hexateuch*, edited by Estlin Carpenter and Harford-Battersby; from Messrs. A. & C. Black the second volume of Professor Archibald Duff's *Old Testament Theology*; from the Religious Tract Society, Mr. Holman Bentley's *Pioneering on the Congo*, in two richly illustrated volumes; from Messrs. Macmillan, *Israel's Messianic Hope*, by Professor Goodspeed of Chicago (a promising book on a pressing subject, see Mr. Gwilliam's striking sermon in this issue), and *The Christian Conception of Holiness*, by Mr. Askwith; and from Messrs. T. & T. Clark two volumes of Mr. Smeaton's series, 'The World's Epoch-Makers,' namely, *Wesley and Methodism*, by F. J. Snell, and *Luther and the German Reformation*, by Professor Lindsay of Glasgow.

We should like to speak of the last. It is the kind of book that bothers a reviewer, who loves to peep into the books as they come. It is not to be reviewed this month, and yet the peep becomes a reading, and the precious minutes pass. This kind of book needs an author brimful of his subject. He should write to the absolutely uninitiated, and the learned should not desire to skip a sentence.

There is extraordinary activity at present among the mounds of ancient Babylonia. Three nations are in hot pursuit of one another, as well as of clay tablets. First, the French in the far south have for twenty years been exploring the complex ruins called Telloh, some thirty miles due north from Mugheir, the ancient Ur of the Chaldees. The leader of the expedition is M. de Sarzec. Next the Americans, under Professor Hilprecht of Philadelphia (who tells the story in the *Sunday-School Times* of May 5), are in residence in their 'castle,'

as the Arabs call their formidable mud abode, at Nuffar, the ancient Nippur. Lastly, the Germans, under Dr. Koldewey, are busy on the site of ancient Babylon itself.

If the question is who shall find most tablets, the Americans have it easily. Excavating in the series of mounds south-east of the temple of Bel, they have 'within the last six weeks' exposed over sixteen thousand cuneiform tablets. Eleven years ago Dr. Hilprecht conjectured that these mounds covered the temple library of ancient Nippur, and his conjecture has been verified. In long rows the tablets were lying on ledges of unbaked clay, serving as shelves for these imperishable old Babylonian documents. Altogether more than twenty thousand volumes of this library have been recovered in this season alone. What do they contain? Nearly everything that the Babylonians knew three thousand years before Christ. Professor Hilprecht mentions with especial satisfaction lists of Sumerian words and cuneiform signs, so arranged as greatly to increase our knowledge of Sumerian, which can no longer be denied to have been a pre-Semitic language of Babylonia. Not only as regards tablets, however, but 'as regards portable antiquities of every description, and their archaeological value, the American expedition stands readily first among the three expeditions at present engaged in the exploration of ancient Babylonia, and the restoration of its past history.'

The Germans have been busy during the past year on the huge mound called *Elkasr*, under which lie the remains of the palace of Nebuchadnezzar, where Alexander the Great died after his famous campaign against India. They have discovered a new Hittite inscription and a neo-Babylonian slab 'with an interesting cuneiform legend.' They have also laid bare the temple of the goddess Nin-Makh, and a little terra-cotta statue of the goddess. Before them lies a task of enormous magnitude, a task that will require 'several decenniums of continued labour.' But the German Government is likely to grant a yearly sum of £4000 to its accomplishment.

Of the French we hear least this season. But they have explained one historical puzzle. In Gn 11² we read that the Tower of Babel was built in 'the land of Shinar.' Where is that land? It is Babylonia itself (or at least part of it). The most prominent of the complex series of mounds called Telloh is known by the name of Sugir or Sungir. It used to be read Girsu, but Sungir is right. And Sungir is Shinar. The Hebrew consonants are almost identical (שנער). So this

biblical note is the last historical reference to the early Babylonian kingdom of Sugir or Sungir, which the later Assyrian kings referred to under the dialectical form of Sumer.

But where is the ubiquitous Briton? He is in Egypt. Professor Flinders Petrie is the head of the band sent out by the Egypt Exploration Fund. Their principal site is Abydos. Here 'a large quantity of potsherds, clay lids, and pieces of stone vessels of all kinds have been found, many of them covered with inscriptions.' It has been discovered that Eb-sed, hitherto known only from his Horus name, is the Semempses of Manetho's list in the first dynasty, and the full name of another king of the same dynasty, Miebaïs, has been ascertained. A temple of Osiris has been discovered and entered, and among many things found in it is a splendid limestone sarcophagus, dating from the time of Nektanebus of the thirtieth dynasty, with hieroglyphics and pictures of gods painted in blue.

The ubiquitous Briton is also in Palestine. Mr. F. J. Bliss, the leader there, has contributed an article on 'Pottery' to the new *Dictionary of the Bible*, which shows that our knowledge of old Israelite and pre-Israelite art is not so scanty now. And there is much more than that, for every number of the *Statement* of the Palestine Exploration Fund is filled with the record of exploration and discovery.

Under the title of *The Wind of the Day* (writes Dr. Adamson of Glasgow) Mr. George Allen has published a book of word-pictures for children by that preacher and poet-mystic, the Rev. J. M. Blake, M.A. He quotes two specimens: 'The edge of the black night turns grey with fear, as from afar it sees the sun come up over the barriers of the world. He slowly breaks the darkness into narrow clouds, which catch fire along their veins and burn away; and strews the new sky he makes with gold that was hidden in the mountains of the country of the dark.' 'The shadows one by one are roused, and stretching themselves to fullest length along the fields, they claim the soil on which they slept, and grasp it, until inch by inch it is taken from them, and they hide themselves.' Well, we must see the book.

The Master of St. John's College, Cambridge, has finished his edition of the Cairo fragment of the Hexapla, all but one of the Appendixes. The Appendix that is finished contains facsimiles of the three folios of Aquila's Psalms. Dr. Taylor has already given us half of one of these folios in the new edition of his *Jewish Fathers*.