

occurred. As yet, however, there is less archaeological material from Palestine which has vital meaning in relation to the Bible than from Mesopotamia. The principal reason for this is that comparatively little written material has been found in Palestine. Being so near Egypt its people were able to secure ample supplies of papyrus, and only rarely used clay tablets; in the damper climate of Palestine the papyrus usually deteriorated rapidly. Palestinian archaeology would be in a very unsatisfactory condition if it had to stand entirely alone. Fortunately that is not the case. Palestine was on the high road of commerce between Mesopotamia and Egypt, and its ruins contain many signs of contacts with both lands.<sup>5</sup> It is well that excavation was slower in getting started in Palestine than in either of these regions. Without the great help which inscriptional material would afford, it needed to profit by advanced methods of digging, and also by knowledge of the meaning of objects imported from countries whose cultural history was already worked out to some extent.

A great step forward was made in 1890 when Dr. (later Sir) William Flinders Petrie, already a veteran of Egyptian excavation, spent six weeks excavating in southern Palestine, and in that brief time discovered two principles which have been of incalculable importance in all subsequent Palestinian archaeology.

The first of these was the importance of the "tell." Previous excavators had frequently been disappointed by the fact that a place bearing the name of a Biblical city would prove to have no remains earlier than the time of the Roman Empire. Petrie found the reason for this. In early days in Palestine it was most vital that a city be capable of defense. Hence it was always desirable to build it on a hill, provided the hill had a good source of water. Here walls would be

<sup>5</sup>The Egyptian monument pictured on Fig. 21 was found in the heart of Palestine at Beth-shan.

built, and within their confines houses would be constructed, consisting largely of undressed blocks of stone, set in a mud mortar. Rubbish would accumulate in the streets, and would be covered over with dirt washed from the roofs or sides of the houses. When one of these houses fell, the projecting rocks might be pulled out, the rest of the ruin flattened off, and a new house built on top. Thus even in normal times the hill tended to rise appreciably.

Inevitably the time would come when an enemy would prove strong enough to conquer and destroy the city. It might have lasted as little as fifty years, or as much as five hundred. Eventually either the destroying people, or some later group would desire to build a city of their own in the neighborhood. Since the number of situations capable of good defense and containing a suitable source of water was limited, the same place was apt to be selected for the new city. The ruins would be flattened down, and new buildings placed on top of them. The same wall might be repaired and enlarged, or a new one might be constructed. Thus constantly the hill grew higher, and the inhabitants lived above the ruins of many previous settlements.

This continued until the time of the Roman Empire, when the legions put an end to banditry and established such peace and security as had hardly been known before. By this time the series of ruins had generally become quite high, and the daily trip down to the fields in the level country and back to the top of the hill at night was most irksome, particularly when the walls seemed no longer to be needed. Frequently the inhabitants of a town became so dissatisfied that they established new homes in the valley and carried the old name along with them. The hill was deserted and soon all appearances of habitation on it disappeared. Rain washed down its sides and in time it was completely forgotten that it had ever held a town.