

NEW TRACES OF THE OLD LEBANON FOREST.

By ASAD RUSTUM, M.A.

IN the course of his work in Syria, 1860-61, Ernest Renan came across a number of Latin inscriptions scattered up and down the hills of the Kasrawan district of Mount Lebanon, in between Tula and Tannurin on the north and Smar Jbail and Afka on the south.¹ Some of these inscriptions consist of nothing more than the name of Hadrian and his two titles—IMP HAD AUG. The IMP and H are almost always combined in the usual way, possibly to save space and labour. Other inscriptions in the same zone have the words ARBORUM GENERA IV CETERA PRIVATA added; while others still have the letters DFS.²

The attempts at the interpretation of these inscriptions have been plentiful, almost as many as the inscriptions themselves. The Lebanon "fallah" still thinks that these signs on the rocks are nothing less than directions for the location of hidden treasures. He has therefore been, and still is, suspicious of the travelling student and antiquarian; so much so, that he has often denied any knowledge of them when he really knew the places where they were found. I have had to get over this suspicious attitude of the peasant more than once whenever I wanted to know local traditions. I have often began my inquiry with a statement of surprise at the archæological insignificance of the peasant's home, as contrasted with that of a neighbouring village, and in this way have succeeded in getting around his suspicion. In this particular connection it might be well to state that education is certainly doing its part in making at least one kind of material accessible to the archæologist.

¹ Renan, *Mission de Phénicie*, p 258.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 261, 268.

Until recently, it used to be always the feeling of some that a number of these inscriptions were nothing more than the "Carte de Visite" of the Emperor. Hadrian was a well known traveller, and the IMP HAD AUG was nothing more than a souvenir of his visit to Mount Lebanon. Renan himself shared these views with a number of others, and gave expression to them in his famous work on Phœnicia.¹

Père Martinus, of the Jesuit University of Beirut, thought the DFS, that appears in more than one of these inscriptions, stood for D(eae) F(ecit) S(acrum).² Sections of the forest were, by order of the Emperor Hadrian, made sacred to the goddess he was so fond of—Venus. The inscription of the Wadi Kur with its ARBORUM GENERA IV CETERA PRIVATA nicely fitted in with this interpretation, and Martinus thought he had hit upon the correct theory. When, however, a new inscription was found that read very fully IMP HAD AUG DEFINITIO SILVARUM, the Martinus Theory was discarded and a new one had to take its place.³

In his *Bell. Civ.*, Caesar says that Pompey made a fleet out of the Lebanon wood to fight the corsairs,⁴ and Vegèce, in his book, refers to the four kinds of trees in the Lebanon that were good for ship construction.⁵ If we add to this information the two kinds of inscriptions we have had occasion to mention before, namely, ARBORUM GENERA IV CETERA PRIVATA and DEFINITIO SILVARUM, we would have right to make at least three inferences: (1) Part of the Lebanon was covered with trees in Roman times; (2) Four kinds of trees were reserved for the Government; (3) Possibly, these four kinds of trees were the same as those mentioned in Vegèce. I do not think we can go as far as Père Lammens, of the Jesuit School in Beirut, would want to take us, in affirming positively that the Roman Government reserved the same four kinds of trees mentioned in Vegèce.⁶

In the course of my walks, last summer, I came across four new inscriptions that have never been published before, in so far as

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 280.

² Lammens, *Tasrih ul-Absâr*, vol. I, p. 33.

³ This inscription was found by Dr. William Jessup. It is now preserved in the Museum of the American University of Beirut.

⁴ Caesar, *Bell. Civ.*, III.

⁵ Vegèce, V, 4,

⁶ Lammens, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 33.

I know. They all belong to the same category as the ones mentioned above, but at the same time have a special value in themselves, in so far as they add to our information regarding this old forest.

The first of these inscriptions I found on a big rock at *ḲanaḲ* Bakish, near the summit of Mount Sannin of the Lebanon Range. It is made up of twelve letters, whose height is everywhere between 18 and 22 cm. It reads as follows: IMP HAD AUG DFS, *i.e.*, IMP(eratoris) HAD(riani) AUG(usti) D(efinitio) S(ilvarum): In its meaning, in the way it is written, and in the general shape of the letters, it is very much like other inscriptions at Wadi Tannurin and Kartaba; but in its elevation above the sea level—some 7,000 feet—and in its proximity to the summit of the mountain it is, in so far as I know, unique.

I was able to find two other inscriptions close by the one already mentioned: one is in the bottom of the valley down below the Sannin River, and is nothing more than the name of Hadrian and his two titles; while the other is very near the village of Shwair, and is made up of the same name and titles.

At 'Ain ul-Ḳabu, near Baskinta, I discovered a fourth inscription reading as follows:—

IMP HAD

N II

AUG

IMP(eratoris) HAD(riani) AUG(usti) N. II. The number at the end may possibly have stood for a similar number cut on the trunks of the trees themselves, pointing out the ones that were to be cut down. It cannot possibly be the number of the inscription with which it is associated, in the sense that the boundary stones of the old forest were all numbered, for the simple reason that inscriptions that are very near to one another have very divergent numbers, when others that are miles and miles away happen to have the same number.¹

These four inscriptions have another value in themselves. Together with others found near Majdel—midway between Shwair and Zahlah—they show that the forest, in Roman times, was at

¹ *Mélanges de la Faculté Orientale, Beyrouth, IV, pp. 209-215.*

least twice as big as the one indicated by Renan's inscriptions.¹ Its southern limit is no longer Afka but 'Ain ul-Kabu, Shwair and Majdel. I have heard of other inscriptions further south, but have not been able to visit them.

[Mr. Rustum sends with the above a photograph of the first of the above inscriptions and a map indicating the new limit of the forests. Renan's line runs from a point midway between the two Tannurins, W.N.W. to a point south of Batrun, and from the former point almost due south to Afka. The new line runs from the last mentioned south-west to Majdel, and then north-west towards Mar Elias.—ED.]

BRONZE WEIGHT FROM PETRA.

By E. J. PILCHER.

PETRA is a city whose history cannot be traced before the Nabataean period, although it has been well said that a site with such natural advantages must surely have been inhabited from very ancient times. The Nabataeans themselves are first heard of in 312 B.C., when they successfully resisted the attacks of the Greek Athenus, the general of Antigonus (*Diod. Sic.*, XIX, 94-100).

Some scholars are inclined to the opinion that Petra is mentioned in sundry passages of the Old Testament under the name of *Sela* (עֲלֵא), which properly means "cliff" or "crag"; but it is extremely doubtful whether *Sela* is intended to be read as a proper name in any of these places (see *Encyc. Biblica*, vol. IV, col. 4344); not to mention that the context is usually against any geographical association with Arabia Petraea. As a consequence, we cannot assume that we have any real clue to the Semitic, or original, name of the city.

¹ Renan, for some reason, did not succeed in seeing any of the Majdel group, although he had read about them. See Renan, p. 278; Guys, *Relation d'un séjour de plusieurs années à Beyrouth et dans le Liban*, II, p. 19. For a full description of this Majdel group, see *Mélanges de la Faculté Orientale*, Beyrouth, III, 2, pp. 549-551.