

Ans G.W. Truery Expedition to Bêhân

Nov. 1899 - März 1900.

1.

S.52

Next ^(or) morn^{ing} (Feb. 6) we arose at day-break, had some coffee and got away at sun-rise. As we approached Kahlân I felt extremely anxious for I was ~~now~~ ^{soon} to know whether I had been justified in taking the steps I had done, or whether the whole expedition was to be a miserable fiasco.

We reached the site of the buried town at 7.30 a.m., and I was at once conducted to a ^{an} rectangular mass of huge blocks of granite much weathered & blackened (See Geolog. Spec. Nr. 15 e). Only ^{two} ~~few~~ ^{aces} were left intact and upon these were engraved some of the finest inscriptions which it has yet been my good fortune to see. It is needless to go into particulars here, as the Academy are already in possession ^{ion} of full details concerning them. (i.e. Abllabih & Foto.)

I ^{remarked} ~~it~~ remarked that a considerable fragment had been broken from the centre of one of the ^{clear} ~~el~~arest cut inscriptions, and from the look of the stone ^{was} ~~ar~~idently freshly done. I made enquiries but nobody seemed to know anything about it until one of the ^{= Seylân} Seylân ashraf came up and offered the missing fragment or most of it for Dofs 100/. He was a young man of such ^{coarse} ~~wide~~ and bestial features that at first I took him for a rawi ^{until} ~~until~~ ^{social} ~~social~~ ^{status} ~~status~~. He stated that he had found the stone some months ^{ago} ~~ago~~ but quickly refuted his statement by attracting attention ^{to} ~~to~~ the broken chips of stone which were lying at the foot of the inscription on the surface of the ^{sand} ~~soud~~. I asked him to explain how it was that these chips had not been buried under the sand during the time ^{he} ~~he~~ spoke of. He sulked and repeated his demand for Dofs 100/- Just then the Amîr rode up from ^{the} ~~the~~ Seylân to watch our operations. I ^{stated} ~~stated~~ the case to him pointing out that this covetous ^{more} ~~more~~ vandal had done ^{more} ~~more~~ to lessen the value of his inscriptions than I should by copying them, for

rectangular mass of -
* 1. C blocks
2. G.B. D.E

pio

* S.53

2
he

C

3.

Some?

his tale was palpably false and it was conclusively proved that he had been there ^{two} nights ago with a mattock and had deliberately hacked the piece out. The ^mmarks of the tool were plainly to be seen on the ^{face} face of the stone which fortunately was extremely hard and had resisted his efforts in other places.

The Amir gave the culprit a severe reprimand, but even he could not force him to give up the stone without ^{incur} incurring a quarrel with the Seylân ashraf.

I refused even to look at the fragment, saying it was utterly useless (Arab tactics) and my attitude was ^{imitated} imitated by the casâkir. Then the serious ^{work} work of the day began. The inscriptions which were above ^v ground were soon copied, and the inscription ^{(his Burg = Müller G) = SE 78} was photographed at a suitable moment when the sun was shining across it, throwing the under-cut portions of the letters into ^{deep} deep shadow.

obener Theil i. herden Sand

Inschriften sind im Sand verweht. Dig

The finest inscriptions however were buried under the sand and then followed a ^{wahnsinnig} tremendous spell of work as we ⁿ dug in frantic haste with our hands to uncover them. We were working against time for we feared that at any moment the usual diurnal ⁿ sandstorm would burst upon us but our luck was phenomenal, for the day was calm and clear throughout.

Tools for digging were unobtainable for naturally a narrow bladed native mattock was no use in that loose ⁿ sand, of ^{course} ~~wasse~~ the whole of the work had to be done by the ⁿ casâkir and myself. We ^{could} ~~would~~ not have ^R asked any of the chiefs to have joined us it would have been ^{inpa} ~~inpa~~ dig. Our finger-nails & fingers were soon considerably cut and lacerated for the sand was full of sharp fragments of the rock & flint, and most of these cuts came on the most painful spot i.e. the quick of the nail, and were aggravated by having sand forced into them. However we felt no inconvenience at the time for we were filled with the same &

3.

enthusiasm that men must experience when they dig for gold.

Block (s. u.)

By 4 p.m. we had finished all this block with one exception and were ready to move on to the obelisk where two rāyâ (sent for by the 'Amîr) were working desperately (with their hands and a small palmetto basket) to excavate the column

*Obelisk
very
high!*

While they were thus usefully employed we snatched a few minutes to wash our hands and eat some food. Fortunately there was plenty of water handy in the skins we had brought for we had been drinking most copiously all morning. (not at all a wise thing to do by the way).

While at our hasty meal, the Naudal came up and again tried to sell the fragment of stone. We had seen him coming and had soon decided on a plan of action. To all his offers to sell we replied by a running fire of skaff, one genius advising him to send it down by the first steamer to Aden, where he would doubtless get its weight in silver for it! He then asked what I would give him for it, and I again assured him that I did not require it, but one of the 'asâkir in a spirit of badinage offered him a sheet of our "squeegee" paper. To my surprise he did not reject the proposal altogether but asked for twenty sheets. Personally I would have closed with this offer as we had plenty of paper, but my head askari begged me in private not to do so as he wanted to teach the man a lesson. I agreed and on our return to work a most amusing farce began. It appears that this would-be speculator had already been deeply impressed by the ardent care which we bestowed on our leather case of paper. This attention was now redoubled and the effect was not lost upon our victim.

*chaff over scuff
from the paper*

* 55

For what?

*Rectangular
block
S.O.*

One inscription was still left to copy at the rectangular block. How to get at it was a difficult problem for the inscrip-

→ Eine, nâml. B. After der ganze Stein also g. B. E. D. S. I. 2

4.)

tion itself was almost entirely ^{beneath} ~~below~~ the surface of the sand and worse than all a gigantic boulder ^{Rollstein} lay right across its face. So huge was this mass of rock that at first I feared it was part of a metamorphic out-crop, protruding through the sand. This, however, on examination proved not to be the case, it had evidently fallen from the main block, ^m and showed signs having been 'dressed' by human hands. (Müller's Theol von G. B. - J. 1605)

The thru Ahl Farid and the Hamami 'akil (a tall powerful man) came to our assistance and under the united efforts of eight men the boulder was slowly rolled over in its bed until we had almost got it on its edge. At this point it ~~refused~~ ^{refused} to budge any further (a small rock underneath was bearing against its outer edge) and for one awful moment it seemed that it would come back upon us, for our strength had been taxed to the utmost to get it ^t in that position. Fortunately the Hamami ^{*} and myself, who were both much taller than the others managed to plant our ^{feet} ~~feet~~ on the face of the inscription and were thus able to exercise very great force. After a brief but desperate effort the boulder tottered forward, and fell over onto its face, the 'akil and myself sprawling across it. One of the 'asakir raised a general laugh by remarking reflectively, 'What gan (genii) assisted the Merzuki to remove this stone when he ~~it~~ copied these inscriptions, and why did he trouble to replace it?' ^{s.o. dressed by human hands}

In point of fact I am in a position to state that at all events those inscriptions which were below the surface of the sand (including of course the obelisk) have certainly not been uncovered by any one for a very great length of time. The sand itself, as we got below the surface was firmly set, slightly damp, and had a peculiar mouldy smell about it, which it never

main block

three?

* 56

die heben sich nicht
für ein Stein
Bijou
Stein

ganii

See here
Abklatzung?

5)

~~could~~ ^{could} have had, if it had been recently disturbed.

After this inscription had been copied (i.e. an impression taken with squeegee paper), We made a searching investigation all round the main block to see if there were any further traces of inscriptions. At the foot of every inscription we dug down to a considerable depth to see if any more ^{or} occurred. I will not go so far as to state that there may not be more inscriptions further down below the sand, for I have no idea how deep this massive pile ^{goes} ~~goes~~ down, but they were certainly out of reach of the appliances and labour at our disposal. At this juncture the fragment of inscription was again offered us for sale-price six sheets of paper. As its luckless owner had ^{or} been waiting in the sun th for about 6 hours (there is no shade at Kahlân) I thought ~~he~~ ^{he} had been sufficiently punished for his crime and told the head askari to close the bargain. He did not do so however until he had beaⁱfen ^{*} down the price to 4 sheets of paper when the ^m ~~missing~~ ⁿ fragment became the ^t property of the expedition.

Of course our conduct in this matter was, ethically speaking, ^(indisp) ~~inde~~ ^{an} ~~ensible~~ but it must be borne in mind that we had never actually told our victim that the paper was of any commercial value, but had merely used his own habitual shrewdness, as a weapon against himself. Personally I think he deserved the punishment he got, for wilfully defacing a monument of the past for such unworthy motives, but that is only from my point of view, he probably looked on the affair in a different light when he ⁿ ~~tried~~ ^{to} to realize his paper or better ~~still~~ ^{to} attempted ~~to~~ ^{to} write on it.

On reaching the obelisk which is about 200 metres distant from the other inscriptions we found that the ^{cap} ~~cap~~ had collapsed owing to the heat, so we sent them off to get some food while two of us got down ^(into) into the shaft they had excavated

main block

Tiefe der
Spalten

C

* 57

indifensible

Obelisk

in

6)

round the obelisk and resumed their work.

rs. 2

Legible character^c commenced about (1 metre from the top of the monument, viz, all that portion which had been exposed to the weather had been ~~worn away~~^{worn away} - probably by sand - attrition. After excavating to a depth of 3 metres we came to the end of the inscribed portion, and after digging down for some distance all round the obelisk to make reasonably sure that there was nothing within our reach^h further down, we began to take impressions, a task much^h impeded by the sand^h which at ~~every~~^{every} movement, came streaming back again into the pit we had dug.


Ouchmalatshu

h/lc

We had exposed a ^h ~~pit~~^{title} over 3 metres of the obelisk which proved to be a neatly hewn shaft of intensely hard granite (See Geolog. Spec. Nr. 15 f) its dimensions being as follows

* 58

Northern face 41.3 centimetres across
Southern do 31.7 " "
Eastern & Western do 54.6 centimetres across each

The apex of the shaft was brought to a four - sided pyramid (if I may use such an expression) thus 

10

The eastern face was utterly illegible and would neither yield an impression ~~or~~^{cc} show any out-line which could be successfully photographed.

The weather still continued ^{el} clear so I took the opportunity to make a brief survey of the surrounding ^{un} country and also a prismatic compass field sketch of the site of Kahlân which I here append. The fierce heat had long ^{since} ~~been~~^{iv} dried away the rest of our party to the shelter of a deserted hush on the near bank of the wâdi about 400 metres south of the obelisk, so my observations were unmolested. In this vicinity (i. e. between the obelisk and the main block of inscriptions, the formation of the ground consists of a series of small sand hills dotted here and there with stunted rāk bushes. This evidently indicates

Skizzen

deserted hush
p. 8

main block of inscriptions

h

7c

diates the encroachment of the great sand-dune system which lies to the north & NW towards Harib, for the eastern/southern portions of Kahlân which border on the wâdi show hardly a vestige of sand, but are covered for the most part by debris of building material and afterwards heard from reliable sources that one village after another had been built here by the mediaeval Arabs and even by a more recent generation with material taken from ancient Kahlân. I have had ^{no} opportunity of obtaining any definite idea of the actual extent of the buried town but from what I ^{could} see * it must have covered a considerable area, and native report ascribes to it great wealth and importance. Now the sole denizens of its barren site are lizards of remarkably repulsive aspect (apparently Mastigures) and a few sand-grouse.

On returning to the obelisk I found the 'Amir had returned and was regarding operations with interest.

He asked me if I had got to the foot of the obelisk, I replied that to do that I would require about a month's time and an ample supply of labour, as the man who accomplished that task might at the same time excavate the town. He particularly wanted to know whether the inscriptions had led me to believe that there was any gold at foot of the obelisk, as tradition stated that there was. I replied that if he would supply me with the labour requisite to excavate the whole obelisk I would make him a present of any gold I might chance to find. He was however evidently not of a speculative turn for he laughingly shook his head and suggested that I should return by and by with a strong party & excavate the town. He seemed to be perfectly willing for this to be done, providing his own interests were considered, but it is impossible to say what this would really mean.

* 59

no opportunity

We finished the obelisk at 4 p. m. and made towards the hujn where the rest of the party were awaiting our arrival.

The ground over which we passed was much encumbered by debris of ~~building~~ material, the remnant ⁿ - so the 'Amir said - of ~~former~~ ^{rm} Arab villages, and in some places deep gullies had been formed by water erosion - these all leading into the main wâdi.

An immense quantity of baked red-clay fragment ^{occurred?} occurred at ^{*} several spots, and these, I was informed ^{rm} were the remains of Hamyarita drinking vessels, pitchers etc. I have heard the same explanation ^y given of a similar phenomenon in various parts of the 'Abdali country near 'Aden. I do not think this supposition can be correct, so far as drinking vessels are concerned, for in that case many of the fragments would necessarily present a very marked convex and concave surface, which is not the case (See Geolog. spec. No. 156)

Tradition, however, ascribes these fragments of pottery to the Hamyarites and not to any subsequent race of Arabs.

At one spot we saw a number of peculiarly shaped mounds of baked yellow-clay which occurred at wide and irregular intervals for some distance. It was impossible to ~~form~~ ^{rm} any definite conjecture as to their original shape, as in every case large portions had crumbled away, but local tradition declares these to have been black-smith forges used by the Hamyarites. In this locality ²⁾ I noticed a quantity of ^{rm} small fragments of flint littered about (See Geolog. spec. No.) and here & there ²⁾ I found some curiously - marked stones (invariably of small size) which I took to be Serpentine (See Geolog. Spec. Nr. 15 c) On reaching the hujn (^h known as H. Tawêkah) we made a short halt to drink coffee which had been prepared ^{us} for us, and during the interval I was enabled to complete ~~to~~

9.

my survey and also examine the Geological ^mfoundation of Kahlân.

H Tawêkah is ⁿ on a level (or slightly above) the site of Kahlân which slopes very gradually upwards towards the wâdi. The husn itself stands on the edge of a bluff about 20 metres above W. Behân and thus from the highest point of the Kahlân plateau which in either direction, towards es- Seylân or ed- Durb gradually slopes ~~downward~~ ^{downward} to a level with the surrounding country.

There is no corresponding ridge on the other side of the wâdi ~~which~~ would be the case if it had cut its way through the plateau, but in this direction the country extends in a broad open plain, dotted here & there with villages, isolated husûn and palm-groves. The geological section exposed at this bluff is composed entirely of marl conglomerate, the pebbles in this mass being of large size, well rounded and ^vobviously metamorphic.

Small conical hillocks of similar formation reaching from this point some distance across the wâdi denote where an out-lying spur of this plateau has been subjected to fluvial erosion. I here append a rough field-sketch of the site of Kahlân, it must however be observed that I dared not attempt to measure a base which would at once have been remarked from the husn where the ashraf were awaiting us and ^would have probably led to complications.

*61

Muzza za 13

p. 8

Lobby Arab V. 74.

At 6 p.m. we started towards Seylân where the ^casâkir and myself had again to change quarters, this time being housed by a râwi in the southern part of the town.

~~As our work being~~ ~~As our work being~~ now finished, all arrangements were made for an early departure the following morning.

Two more tasks, however, were still left to do, one was to obtain some record of the small inscription in the wall of the sherif's husn and the other - to examine the inscribed capital of a Hamyaritic pillar said to be in possession of a neighbouring râwâ.

As regards the former, the owner of the husn flatly refused to let us take an impression or even examine the inscription from superstitious motives, so I determined to take a snap-shot at it with the camera as we passed on our way out. It seemed an almost hopeless chance as I knew by experience that side of the husn would be in shadow all morning, but fortunately the stone itself was almost white, and the character being deeply cut would appear black. We opened negotiations with the râwi who owned the inscribed capital and by mid-night had beaten him down to \$ols 5 to allow us to take an impression of the inscription. I did not mention photography to him for fear of arousing suspicion when I photographed the other inscription and as it afterwards proved this was a wise precaution. Next morning (Feb. 7th) we were all astir at day-break loading up our camels and when the sun had risen high enough to give a practicable light, I took my camera and went off with an Askari to examine the capital & if possible photograph & take an impression. An unexpected hitch however occurred.

Inscription in the wall of the sherif's husn J. 2.

1. J
p. 11.

2. H.

1/2

e?

11.

It appears that our rawi had a brother who was joint-owner of the stone and he appeared upon the scene, cancelled his brother's bargain and insisted on receiving Dols 100 before he would let us take an impression. A look of mutual understanding passed between myself and the askari (Sâleh bu Abdullâh), a most intelligent man, who had some idea of the capabilities of the camera.

H

We asked to have the capital brought out into the light where we ~~do~~ ^{could} obtain a better view of it. This was done and Sâleh then entered into a spirited discussion with the two rayâ concerning the prices ^{ce} they had demanded. I took no part in the argument, but under pretence of dusting the camera had placed it on the ground and got it focussed upon the stone. ^{Or} ~~Being~~ to the wall behind me ⁱ ~~would~~ ^{could} not obtain a distance of quite 2 metres which is ^t the shortest distance to which the camera can be focussed, but as the light was good I determined to chance it, and made three exposures of about 10 ^e seconds duration with a very small stop.

H:
Photo, this
absolutely!

The rawi was obdurate, so after ^h little further ~~bagging~~ to ^{main} ~~maintain~~ the deception we departed expressing well-simulated disappointment and rejoined our party who were just starting.

Fortunately the Amîr and ashraf were some distance ahead with the Ahl Farid and as we passed the last inscription, I was able to obtain two exposures unmolested. The ^{both} had to be instant aneyus as there was nothing on which I ^{could} ~~would~~ rest the camera, but in spite of the light, the result proved to be fairly satisfactory.

F
p. 10.
Photo, this
absolutely!

Tu

74

A 10 30

It appears that our raw had a brother who was joint-
owner of the store and he appeared upon the scene, cancelled
brother's bargain and insisted on receiving \$100 before he
would let us take an impression. A look of mutual understand-
ing passed between myself and the man (Salim bin Abdullah) a most
intelligent man, who had some idea of the capabilities of the
camera.

We tried to have the optical brightener into the light
but we could not obtain a better view of it. This was done and
Salim then entered into a spirited discussion with the two
boys concerning the price that had remained. I took no part in
the argument but under pretense of wanting the camera had placed
it on the ground and got it focused upon the stone. ^{could} being to the
wall behind me ^{could} not obtain a distance of quite 2 meters
~~...~~
and that as the light was good I determined to make a
series of exposures of about 10 each duration with a very
small stop.

The sawt was returned, so after little further bargaining
to maintain the reception was reported expressing well-
disposition and returned empty who were just starting.
Fortunately the film and camera were some distance ahead
with the film and as we passed the last inscription, I was
able to obtain two exposures unobscured. The door had to be
instantaneous as there was nothing on which I could rest the
camera but in spite of the light, the result proved to be
fairly satisfactory.

H:
Feb
P. 10
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