

NOTES ON RECENT DISCOVERIES AT CARTHAGE.

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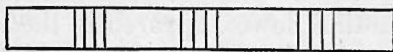
BELIEVING that nothing which tends to throw light on the antiquities of Carthage can fail to interest the archaeologists of England, I beg to submit the following brief notes to their consideration. On arriving at Tunis (on the 8th of January, 1866) I heard that since my former visit to Carthage in the previous April, some excavations had been made near the more perfect series of cisterns, and that the antiquities discovered there, as well as others procured from various stone-digging Arabs, had been appropriated and preserved by Sidy Mohammed, eldest son of the Khaznadar, or First Treasurer, Mustapha, who now wields almost supreme power in the Regency of Tunis. Through the kind intervention of Richard Wood, Esq., C.B., H. M. Consul-General, I received permission from the young Sidy (lord), to inspect his collection, which I found in a sort of garden-house in the grounds of his father's new villa, which is situated on the edge of the sea, close to the artificial piece of water that is probably the remains of the "Cothon," or port of ancient Carthage. This "Cothon," if such it be, is in fact enclosed within the grounds of the Khaznadar's garden, and recent excavations in the small island in its midst have brought to light two broken pillars, the one of breccia, the other of a yellow marble, indicating the former existence of some magnificent building. The villa itself stands about a quarter of a mile in a direct line from the village of Dowar Eshut, and less than a mile from the French chapel of St. Louis, which forms such a prominent feature amidst the ruins of ancient Carthage.

The Sidy's collection, which had not previously been seen by any European, has never been arranged or classified, the various objects lying about just as they were brought in.

I proceed to notice the more interesting specimens.

Seven stones, four of which bear inscriptions in Punic or Phœnician characters, belong to the period of the ancient Carthaginians.

1. This stone has a beautifully cut inscription, and under it an object resembling a caduceus, and a triangle surmounted by a disk. In this instance, as in No. 6, a kind of architectural ornament divides the inscription from the



objects below it. This is the only perfect inscription in the collection. I had unfortunately no materials with me to take a rubbing of this interesting relic, but I made shift to take an impression on wet paper, which I trust may lead to its decipherment.

2. A broken inscription, of which I took as accurate a copy as time and the defacement of the stone permitted.

3. An inscription, imperfect at top, but having below it a vase with handles, and on either side the latter a flower-bud resembling the lotus.

4. An inscription imperfect below; above it an open hand.

5. A broken inscription; below it an eye.

6. This stone presents a hand pointing up to an eye, from which it is separated by an architectural band, like that on No.

1. It would be singular if this well-known Arab symbol, a charm against the Evil Eye, known sometimes as the Hand of Providence, and otherwise as the Hand of Justice, could be shown to have its origin in Phœnician sculptures, or by tradition handed down from those remote times in the unchanging East. In these cases, it will be observed, the hand and the eye are found in juxta-position. The hand which appears over the great entrance-gate of the Alhambra at Granada, is a symbol in universal use amongst the peoples of Arabian descent. A silver hand of this description

Handwritten Punic script, likely a rubbing or transcription of the inscriptions mentioned in the text. The script is arranged in three lines, with some characters appearing to be stylized or broken.

exhibited to the Institute last year, I bought from the head of a negress in the Oasis of Biskra in the Sahara.

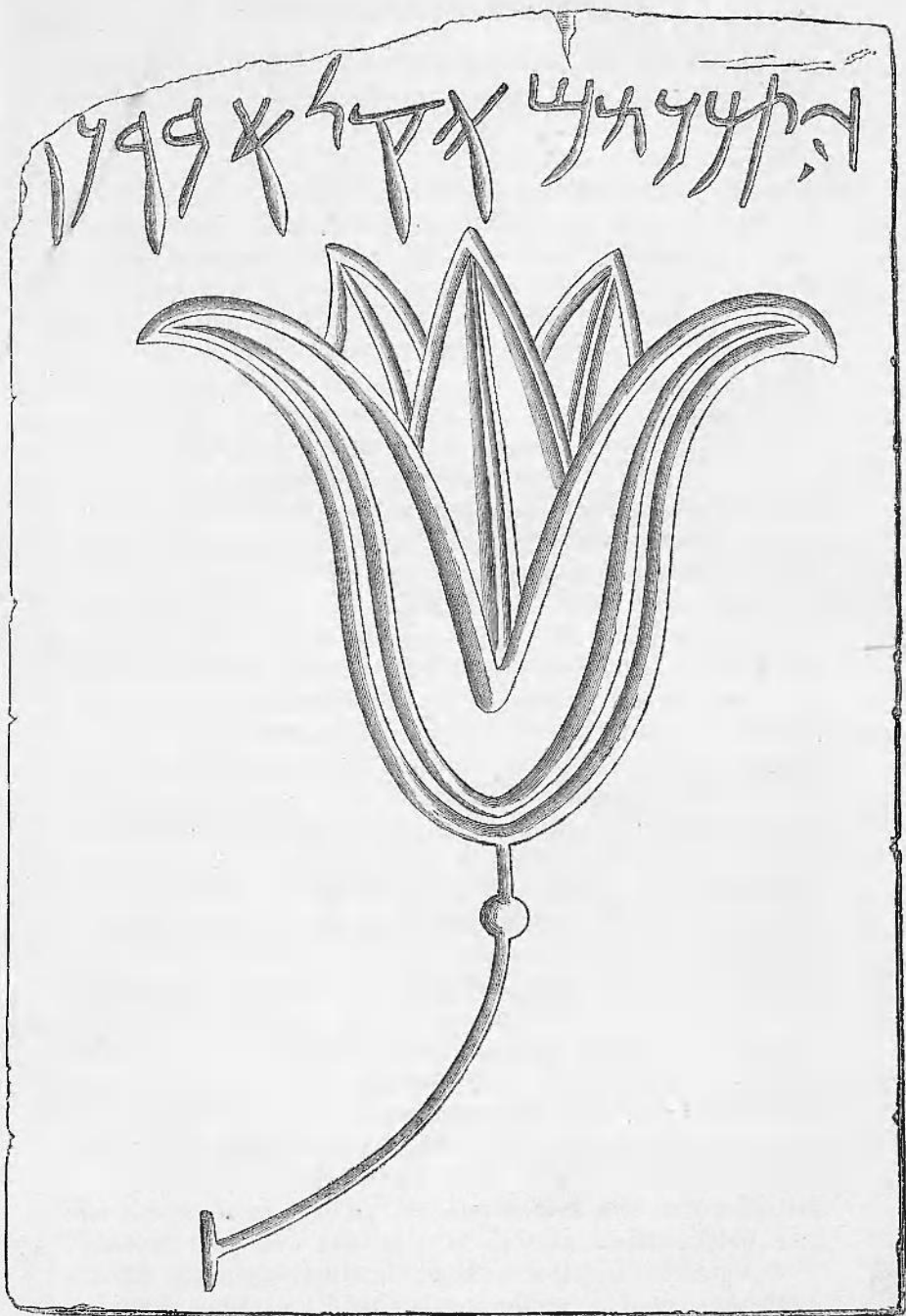
7. This stone exhibits a well-executed palm-tree in fruit.

The already-named carvings and inscriptions are all cut on a kind of close-grained limestone. In this connection I may mention that the Rev. Mr. Fenner, missionary to the Jews in the Regency of Tunis, possesses a small stone found at Carthage, with one line of a Punic inscription, and beneath it a beautiful flower, apparently the lotus, as in No. 3. See the accompanying representation of this interesting relic.

To these may be added a small headless figure in a sitting posture, something like a Japanese idol, but which I am able to assign to the period of the ancient Carthaginians, from its very close resemblance to six small stone figures, also headless, found in the Phœnician temple of Hajar Kim in the island of Malta, and now preserved in the Museum at Valetta.

Of Greek art I saw nothing, unless indeed I may except a small partially-draped torso of good work, and a beautiful little vase of black, fine-grained pottery, elegantly ornamented with white lines.

Roman objects, as might be expected, are numerous. Of these the principal is a beautiful statue of the youthful Bacchus, the size of life, crowned with grapes and standing beside a stump or pedestal, wreathed with the same fruit. I observed also in the villa itself a small recumbent statue, holding a kind of cup. This figure has unfortunately lost its head, but it is apparently a river-god. I saw also a mutilated bust of some imperial personage of the later empire, two or three heads of statues, an inscribed altar, and several fragmentary inscriptions, mostly of a memorial or general character. One of these inscriptions only seems to merit a detailed description. This stone is of a yellowish-brown sandstone, and exhibits an altar, approached by a step and surmounted by a large cone of some kind of pine. On either side this altar is a large five-pointed star, and below each star a ram. Below, to the left, is a kind of casket or box, and underneath it a vase, while the corresponding space to the right is occupied by a wall. Below is the inscription—



Inscribed Stone found at Carthage.
In possession of the Rev. Mr. Fenner, at Tunis.

S · D · AVGSAC · L ·

VIBIVS DATVS

V · S · L · A

The whole of this carving is in low relief, and of peculiar workmanship. The Roman pottery is all of a coarse and common kind, with the exception of some interesting Christian lamps, to be noticed hereafter. There is not a single perfect specimen of the so-called Samian ware, although fragments of it are by no means of uncommon occurrence amongst the ruins. There are also a large number of small disks of various-coloured marbles, and of the beautiful green Egyptian porphyry, which the Romans have shaped out as pieces for a game resembling draughts.

I now proceed to mention a class of monuments, which I regret I am unable to appropriate with any degree of certainty. In the collection of Sidy Mohammed are six upright stelæ, from five to six feet high, of which some have triangular tops. They are covered with sculptures in low relief, of a very debased style of art, and are stated to have been found in a place called "Tooboorsook," some two days' journey from Carthage, in the direction of the Algerian frontier. Upon each is a rude representation of a temple enclosing a statue, round the latter of which, in one instance, are numerous circular holes, with a deeper perforation in the centre of each, and apparently intended to contain disks of bronze or some other metal. On other portions of these singular stones are sculptured various conventional ornaments, and rude figures of men and animals. In one instance only is there any sign of an inscription, and in this the letters *ι—vs*, in the midst of a small square, can alone be deciphered. If it were safe to conjecture, I might suppose these monuments to be the work of some rude Carthaginian sculptors from the interior, who were trying to imitate the debased handiwork of late Roman times. Of the numerous pieces of mosaic pavement I need make no lengthened mention, as, like those discovered by Dr. Davis, and now in the British Museum, they are evidently of Roman workmanship, and present nothing remarkable in their material or design.

I now come to Christian antiquities. These comprise a large number of lamps, and a most curious baptismal font made of *lead*. The lamps present the usual types, and closely

resemble those found in the catacombs of Rome or Syracuse. Amongst other designs I noticed various crosses, the monogram of our Lord, the seven-branched candlestick, the peacock, the dove, the lion, the sacred *Ivθvs*, and, what is perhaps the most interesting of all, the "Three Children," Hananiah, Hazariah, and Mishael. I may add here, that two lamps from Carthage, belonging to Richard Wood, Esq., C.B., present, respectively, a martyr contending with a lion, and a figure holding a cross and treading underfoot a dragon.

The font is indeed an extraordinary vessel, and it is much to be wished that it could be rescued from the profane hands of Moslems, and placed in our National Museum. It is, as has been already remarked, made of lead, a comparatively rare material for a font. It measures fifty-six centimetres in height by fifty in diameter. In shape it is circular. Immediately below the brim, before the inscription, is the early Christian or Byzantine symbol of the Resurrection, two peacocks feeding out of a vase. The treatment much resembles that of the same subject represented on marble tablets let into the brick walls of Coptic churches in Egypt. The inscription is enclosed in a sort of fillet or frame, and reads as follows:—

ΑΝΤΛΗ[ΣΑ]ΤΕΥΔΩΡΜΕΤΕΥΦΟΡΟCΥΝΗΘ

The letters s and A, which I have supplied, as in the original they have corroded away, show the whole inscription to have read—*Ἀντλήσατε ὕδωρ μετ' εὐφροσύνης*, being the LXX. version of Isaiah, c. xii., v. 3 : "Ye shall draw water with joy (*ἐκ τῶν Πηγῶν τοῦ σωτηρίου*) from the wells of the Saviour."

The English version, following more closely the Hebrew, has the less striking rendering : "Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation (*τῆς σωτηρίας*)."
The imperative form of expression rather than the future tense is perhaps intended in the present instance.

I cannot refrain from remarking that the occurrence of this verse in such a connection affords an interesting independent proof of the high estimation in which the Sacrament of Holy Baptism was held in the church of S. Cyprian.

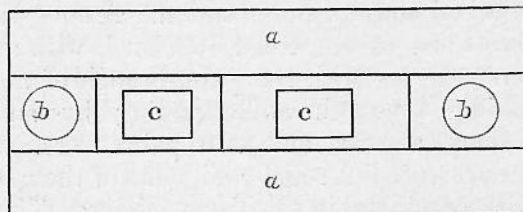
Immediately after the inscription follows a group corre-

sponding to that of the peacocks, and representing a female figure supported by a sea-monster, and plainly intended to set forth the efficacy of the element of water in the Sacrament of Regeneration. Below are various groups, of which some are in a bad state of preservation. Among the perfect ones are our Lord as the Good Shepherd, with a sheep on His shoulders, a figure with the palm-branch of martyrdom, another holding a wreath and standing by an altar, a combat of lions, a bear, and two palm trees. All these groups are represented in relief, and some of them, especially the bear, with considerable spirit and fidelity. The shape of the Greek letters indicates that this most curious font belongs to a late period ; but it may be questioned whether a leaden font of so early a period has hitherto been discovered. It merits the most careful study, and, considering the place of its discovery, its inscription and the style of art which it exhibits, it must be regarded as an object of extraordinary interest.

While on the subject of Christian antiquities, I may mention that, in the shop of a Hebrew shoemaker in Tunis, I found a large piece of white marble bearing the effigy of our Lord as the Good Shepherd, which had been brought from Carthage, and I was informed that a duplicate fragment had been bought and carried away to Spain by a late Spanish consul. The Rev. Mr. Fenner, who has travelled through the remoter parts of the Regency, informs me that he has discovered the remains of several Christian churches, and has found several Christian sepulchral inscriptions in some remote situations. The remains of African Christian art are not, therefore, so rare as Dr. Davis would lead us to suppose.

It may interest some persons to hear that, during the recent excavations, the entire roof of the second largest series of cisterns at Carthage has been laid bare, and that it is even proposed to restore them to their original purpose. The six circular chambers with cupolas, which Davis says "may have contained statues" or held the guards of the cisterns, are now plainly shown to be cisterns themselves, since, like the other cisterns, they are plastered up to a certain height, the better to contain the water. At present they look like gigantic boilers. Dr. Davis has omitted to mention that between each pair of circular chambers there

are two square tanks, as shown in the annexed diagram. At the extremity of the cisterns, towards Sidy Bosaid, a paved chamber with three tribunes or apses has been laid



a, a, cisterns; b, b, circular chambers; c, c, tanks.

bare, and several marble mouths of well-holes have been ascertained to have led down into each cistern from above. Many of these are still *in situ*. That the tribunes were of an ornamental character is proved by my having found several tesserae of blue glass mosaic, which had evidently fallen from the coved roofs above. Several large pieces of Roman mosaic pavement have been found in the past year in the vast mass of confused ruins which lie beside the sea below the cisterns; and at the present moment huge stones, beveled like those in the Celtiberian walls of Tarragona, or the Phœnician walls of Syria, are being conveyed to Tunis from a spot below the hill of St. Louis.

In conclusion, I desire to remark that there is nothing either in the present political state of Tunis, or in the character of the oriental mind, to lead to the expectation that the collection of Sidy Mohammed will long remain intact. Made without knowledge of antiquarian researches, it is at any moment liable to be dispersed, destroyed, or given, in a moment of impulse, to the most worthless adventurer. Would it not, therefore, be desirable that our Consul-General should receive instructions from the Foreign Office to watch for a favorable opportunity to acquire it by purchase, or otherwise, for the British Museum, where it should be incorporated with the Carthaginian collections which were made by Dr. Davis at the expense of the nation?