

Where The Ancient Vies With The Modern



MORNING SHAVE by the New Zealand Broadcasting Unit on its way through the Jordan Valley to Syria. This photograph was sent by N. R. Palmer, officer in charge of the unit

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know of, they are very hot, stifling, and dry. This time I was also afraid that I would never get out — not because I would be murdered, but because I thought I would stick. At first we walked, then we bent, then we crawled. By this time it was too narrow to turn, so I had to go on; now no longer crawling but wriggling like a worm on my belly. There would be a sharp bend or a drop or a crawl up or round. We were in the place only about half-an-hour but it seemed a life-time.

THE most striking thing to a New Zealander in Palestine is the overshadowing past. There are antiquities everywhere, and of course a host of antiquarians, archaeologists, historians, Biblical scholars, Arab scholars, Hebrew scholars—all investigating this or that. I would stop by a fountain or gate and ask its age. "Oh, that is modern. Twelfth century I should think." My mind fitted to the ancient monuments of Britain a mere four or five centuries old. "What about this courtyard, or that wall, or those pools?" "Only Roman," would come the scornful reply. "The name Solomon's Pools is quite misleading. Now I will show you something really old and interesting," and I would be taken under the building and shown some ancient steps. "These are probably Nehemiah," "Here is the place where

David's Jerusalem stood," or, delving even further into the past, I would be taken to see the excavated mud walls of Jericho; or to the Gaza of the Philistines where Sir Flinders Petrie, still young in mind and active at 80, had uncovered a whole city; or to the cave where some paleolithic wanderer had left his skeletal remains.

EVERYWHERE in Palestine, past and present jostle together. On the one hand you see the Arab villages, the primitive hand-made tools, the domed stone houses; on the other, the communal farms of the Zionists and the modern Tel Aviv so near the ancient Jaffa in physical distance, so far away in time. In the streets, in the bazaars, in the houses on all sides, there is the war between the ancient and the modern. Already there are signs that the modern is winning. Woolworth hardware replaces the ancient pots and cooking bowls, and the modern maidens of Nazareth come to draw water with kerosene tins on their heads. One thing has been ever present in Palestine and that is the soldier—Egyptians, Syrians, Assyrians, Romans, Mohammedans, Crusaders, and Turks. And now New Zealand soldiers pass over Palestine from Egypt to Syria, exchanging the sand and flies of the desert for hills, not unlike our own hills of New Zealand.

—S.S.



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