

grouped together, they would not in volume or extent equal the ruins of Baalbek. Seen at first in all their colossal grandeur, these ruins are magnificent, stupendous, awe-inspiring, unique, desolate.

'No, not in Egypt's ruined land,
Nor 'mid the Grecian Isles,
Tower monuments so vast, so grand,
As Baalbek's early piles.'

On the watershed, dividing the rivers Litany and Orontes, nearly 4000ft above the sea rise the ruins of Baalbek. The Baal-god of Joshua, the City of the Sun, or Heliopolis of the Greeks, was once a magnificent and flourishing city.

'All are gone once by one,
Save the temples of our sires.'

Though poverty, lethargy, decay are written big on the brows of those who eke out life round about the fallen city, still the Cyclopean masonry, the mammoth columns, the fluted pillars, the tracery of pediment and capital, the bold and noble arches—all tell in no halting language the magnificence and competency of those who in days gone by ruled and lived in Baalbek—Persian, Greek, Roman, Arab, Tartar—all have passed here in turn—all have left footprints on the sand. For centuries the Temple of the Sun, the Temple of Jupiter, and the Circular Temple have been the wonder of the world, and even now—at the end, in the last and dying hours, of a century of seething energy and mechanical and scientific progress—these fallen columns, and lonely pillars, keen cut against the sky, the ghosts and shadows of departed greatness, rising still in mute ambition on the slope of the Anti-Lebanon Hills, extort from the traveller the ungrudging tribute of awe and reverence.

'Baalbek is included among the most ancient cities of the world. All the nations that in turn took possession have dated its foundation from time immemorial. According to the legends passed down in the ages, Adam and the Patriarchs inhabited the country round about Baalbek. Adam lived in Damascus and died at Zébedani, quite near; Abylène, as the name shows, was the scene of the murder of Abel; Nôbi Schitt was the residence of Seth; Noah was buried at Karak-Neuh and his son Shem at Ham; Cain, in consequence of the curse fallen on him, constructed the tower and fortress of Baalbek to serve him as a place of refuge.' 'While Moslem tradition asserts that Abraham reigned at Damascus, and that Baalbek was his residence; that Solomon too had a magnificent castle built at Baalbek, the Christians of the Levant recognise in Baalbek the forest of Libanus where Solomon had a magnificent edifice constructed.'—(Alouf).

From the above it will be gathered that for its ancestral claims the ruined city of Baalbek has a proud pedigree to boast of.

'The huge blocks of these primeval constructions (Baalbek), without any claim to architectural style and capable of defying the onslaught of every century, carry us back to the remotest era of time. Such marvellous edifices in question only teach that here at Baalbek a race of giants worshipped the Sun God. Hidden at the foot of mountains, protected by Libanus against pirates from the sea, and by Anti-Libanus against the surprises of buccanera from the East, Baalbek was a city and sanctuary for the worship of Baal, whose mysteries must ever remain hidden by an impenetrable veil. Baalbek was ever a great religious centre, a renowned sanctuary of Baal, the capital of a priestly state. Reluctant to surrender its position of grandeur and activity to the neighbouring towns, it profited by the religious veneration with which it inspired them, and by their gifts and their resources, whereby were erected these gigantic, enduring monuments, the ruins of which are to all generations a source of admiration and wonder.' (Alouf). Baalbek has long been, and as I surmise, will long continue to be the favourite tilting ground of archaeologist and antiquarian, and while their researches have shed so far no fierce white light of historic truth on the origin of the ruined city, still much gain has accrued to our store of ancient knowledge from the untiring efforts of those whose leisure and taste lead them to devote to a fascinating subject their undoubted industry and ability. As Horace wrote:—

'Grammatici certant et adhuc sub judice lis est!'

The acropolis, commonly called Kalaat, composed of a series of temples, showing five terraces of deft and splendid sculpture, is a masterpiece of Greek architecture. The perfection of art and proof of prodigious strength are here seen at their best. Running underneath is a subterranean passage 28 feet in height. Several keystones of vaults bear inscriptions and figures of deities; and niches without end testify to the numbers of gods set up here for minor adoration and cult.

SOME OF THE RUINS.

'The great Temple of the Sun, the largest and most celebrated of antiquity, and magnificent still in its ruins is the structure that gave its name to the town of Baalbek or Heliopolis. Measuring 310ft in length from east to west by 148ft in breadth, it was enclosed by 54 unfluted columns in Corinthian style, 8 columns in front and 19 on each side. Of these, however, only six are standing. The others are lying on the ground, shattered and broken. Each column is composed of three enormous blocks, resting on a huge base, and is surmounted by a Corinthian capital of entablature, frieze, and cornice glistening with sculpture in which acanthus leaves, miniature lions and bulls, and tiny roses are well in evidence. To describe the great court or Pantheon, the small Temple of Jupiter, the Arabic Citadel, the Temple of Venus, the Necropolis, is beyond the purpose of these notes. Let me only add, as showing beyond yes or nay, the stupendous proportions of these structures, that the Cyclopean Wall of the Temple of Baal is a "trilithon," composed, as its name indicates, of three blocks of hewn stone of phenomenal size, laid on a basis of six blocks, nearly as large, at the height of 28 feet above the level of the ground. The first of the three, on the right, measures 65ft in length; the second, 64ft 10in; the third 63ft 2in, all 13ft 6in in height and doubtless the same in depth.

Hence each block has a volume of from 323 to 328 cubic metres, and a weight of about 707 tons. Putting seventy of these stones end to end they would extend close on a mile in length. In spite of their immense size these stones are so accurately put in position and so carefully joined that it would be almost impossible to insert a sheet of paper between them. No description can convey a shadow of the over-weighting effect produced by their stupendous size, or a tithe of the veneration felt for the hands which in the long, long ago adjusted them in permanent position. Though shaken by earthquakes, notably in 1759, many of the pillars still remain in position monuments of power energy and mechanical force. Five minutes' walk from the village is still seen the quarry from which these stones for the temple were hewn. Still seen there are blocks vertically hewn, which were intended for the temple and ramparts. At the entrance to the quarry, not far from the road, is the enormous stone Hagar-el-Houbia, never lifted from its resting place, though hewn and squared. It measures 69ft in length, 15ft 10in in breadth, and 13ft 10in in height, making a solid weight of 915 tons. How and by what mechanical means these stones were moved to the city and accurately and elegantly put in position is a problem that still exercises and defeats the ingenuity of scientist and expert. To move the last-mentioned stone, it has been calculated, would need the united efforts of 40,000 men. Our astonishment still grows when we look at the high position these miniature mountains were moved to, and the accuracy with which they were laid in position.

In the silence of the evening, when darkness was faintly dispelled by the struggling gleams of pale moonlight, fascination prevailed, and we gravitated towards the pile of ruins that, like giant spectres, gaunt and towering, stood out across the hill. The picture and the effect were intensified in the shadows of night:

'For the gay beams of lightsome day
Gild but to flout the ruins grey.'

Pillar and column and arch and broken wall, dismantled, crumbling, defiant withal of the ravages of ages, wrought an impression not soon to be blotted out. As under a spell we gazed 'and still the wonder grew,' as though the flickering shadows mantled betimes in sable pall of night, lintel and frieze and architrave, and peristyle and entablature and grinning gargoyle looked down from the fixity of ages in gloomy triumph over the havoc of time, 'majestic tho' in ruins.' In fancy we peopled the courts with the busy forms and busy brains and deft hands and brawny arms that away in the dawn of ages left to feeble generations monuments that stand out as imperishable memories to heroes of toil.

On our way to our hotel, we called on the local Maronite priest to make arrangements for morning Mass, for was not the morrow to be the feast so dear to us, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of Our Blessed Lady? With Syrian courtesy he received us in his humble room, made us welcome, passed us the cigarette of peace and conversed with us for a time in broken French. The church was at our disposal. Early next morning, while the dim dawn had hardly broken, we were at the church and satisfied our devotions before resuming our three hours' drive to Muallaka.

THE CORONATION OATH.

NEWSPAPER PROTESTS.

THE *Weekly Argus* (Greymouth), of March 8, in the course of a leading article on the subject of the Coronation Oath, asks: 'What need can there be for putting into the mouth of Royalty expressions that cannot but jar on the feelings of all Catholic subjects.' 'It is really inexplicable (adds our West Coast contemporary) that the Crown, under which Catholics hold the most exalted offices in the public service, should be subjected to an unnecessary slur because of a particular form of religious faith and especially in an age in which religion counts for so very little in the conduct of public affairs.' Having quoted the words of the Coronation Oath, the *Argus* says: Any impartial person not desirous of flouting or insulting fellow-Christians serving the country as well as their neighbors will admit that no section of Christianity should be subjected to a humiliation that is altogether needless, and agree that it is time the coronation oath should be recast and the useless, unnecessary, and offensive expressions altogether eliminated. The British Government have always been particularly careful to avoid offending the caste customs and prejudices of their Indian soldiers. Surely they are entitled to do as much for their Catholic subjects.

The *Free Lance* (Wellington), of March 2, having quoted in a leader the clauses of the Oath which denounce the Mass and the veneration of the Blessed Virgin and the Saints as being 'superstitious and idolatrous,' goes on to say: 'It is a deep and gratuitous outrage upon the most sacred and cherished beliefs of a large and loyal and eminently law-abiding section of His Majesty's subjects. It is a flagrant violation of that spirit of toleration, and freedom of opinion, of which it is our perpetual boast that we, as a people, are the peculiar champions. It is repugnant to our ideas of liberty of conscience, and absolutely out of keeping with the age in which we live. Just as well might the King be required to take an oath denouncing as an impostor and a charlatan the founder of Mohammedanism, whom sixty-five millions of British subjects revere and hold in highest veneration as the Prophet of God. If the King must publicly brand certain cardinal doctrines of the Romish Church as 'superstitious and idolatrous,' why should the King stop there? Why not also call upon him to declare that the rite of baptism by immersion, as practised by the Baptists, is heretical; that the Wesleyan system of itinerancy is opposed to the safety of the State; and that the Presbyterians' substitution of a Confession of Faith for the 39 Articles, and their preference for the Geneva gown and bands as a badge for their clergy, rather than the surplice, is at