

Tell el-Kheleifi May 10, 1938,

News-Letter No. 5.

After most of the staff left on April 17, on their way home to America, or back to work in Jerusalem, Labes and I remained on here till the morning of the 24th, levelling, labelling pottery, digging out corners, etc. Meanwhile, I sent Ylias with several carloads full of pottery to Maan. Arriving at Maan about noon on the 24th, we packed all the pottery in a freight-car, to be attached to the train making its weekly return trip to Amman every Monday morning. It comes down from Amman every Friday. There were about 170 boxes and baskets of pottery to be loaded. It would have cost a small fortune to ship ^{them} by car to Amman, and would not have been worth very much after it had arrived there. The desert track along the railway line from Maan to Amman is one of the worst that I know of in this part of the world. It is surpassed in its bumps only by the new road down through the Arabah. The pottery arrived in Amman without anything at all being broken. In general, transportation charges have been one of our biggest expenses during this campaign. I have found that the transportation expenses increase almost geometrically with the distance from Jerusalem. We transferred the pottery to the museum in Amman, where it will remain till we get a permit to take it to Jerusalem for study purposes. That means a lot of rigmarole in Transjordan because everybody from the Chief-Minister ^{down} has to sign it. If Harding alone were able to issue the permits, I would have it in five minutes. He has been extremely helpful in every way. He is making a splendid Chief-Curator of Antiquities in Transjordan. I hope for the sake of archaeology that he remains here for a long time. I did get a permit to bring several baskets of sherds with me, on two of which are, if I am not mistaken, two Midianite characters. They are certainly not Canaanite, and seem to me to be characters which could well have been Midianite. There is, I believe, a definite similarity to early southern Arabic letters.

In Jerusalem, I tended to School matters, and above all looked for, and obtained a new architect to take Beaumont's place. He is Mr. Jacob Pinkerfeld, who was the architect for the Samaria dig, among others, and who has also worked for Dr. Albright. On the 28th, he, Iliffe of the Palestine Museum, Ylias and I returned to Tell el-Kheleifi. We went with an armored car escort as far as Dahariyeh, and thence via Beersheba, Kurnub, Ain Hosh, and the new road straight through the Arabah to Mrashrash, and to our camp half-way between that place and Aqabah. It took us about ten hours to make the trip, while it takes about fourteen hours to make the return trip from here to Jerusalem via Transjordan. The new road through the Arabah runs along the west side of the Arabah. "Runs" isn't the word. It hops, skips, and jumps. Iliffe spent the next day with us, and then Hamilton, the Acting Director of the Palestine Department of Antiquities, joined us. Both of them left on the third day. Their visit was very helpful, because I was able to discuss some puzzling details with them, and they made some stimulating suggestions.

The weather here, especially since the beginning of the month has been very much like the little girl who, when she was good, was very, very good, but when she was bad, she was terrible. The weather has on the whole not been very good. A fairly nice day or two, and then a blinding sandstorm and terrific heat. And always, the sand is borne southwards into the gulf, and piles up along its shores. I am convinced that the gulf retreats about ~~ten~~ centimetres a year. When I come down here again, I shall bring something like a rain measuring box with me, to attempt to measure the amount of sand that falls during a given time, and a thermometer to record the degrees of heat.

Since our arrival here, we have been working on details of the smelting plant, and they seem endless. We have measured the bricks in every wall, and know a good deal about how they made the walls, and the different types of brick used in different periods. Particularly difficult has been the post-mortem on the flue- and canal system in the walls, which was a very intricate one. We believe we have it almost worked out now, but it cannot be absolutely definite, because the tops of the walls are too destroyed.

In addition, it has now been possible to determine that there are three periods represented in the use of the smelting plant, ~~and that the first main development of the rest of the site is contemporary with the last period in the history of the smelting plant.~~ At first there seems to have been a very large compound, with some rooms, and the smelting plant. It is possible that serfs and slaves were used to perform the smelting operations. The town gradually grew in size, and when smelting operations ceased in the main plant, they were carried on in some of the houses on a smaller and primitive scale. There was a large amount of home-industry, with as many as five or six hearths in one room, with unusually large numbers of rubbing, grinding, and beating stones near them. Pinkerfeld, with whose work I am very satisfied, and who is a nice fellow, is making a splendid isometric drawing of the smelting plant.

I forget whether or not I wrote in my last news-letter that the new High-Commissioner and Lady Macmichael, and their daughter, visited our excavations. Peake Pasha has just telegraphed me that he is coming down here on the 14th. We are planning to return to Jerusalem on the 15th. I shall mail this letter from Jerusalem, inshallah.

Jerusalem May 16. We finished our work for the present yesterday morning. A promised visit from Peake Pasha did not materialize, because his car got stuck in the sand on the "new" Arabah road. It was not till 8 p.m. that we learned he could not come. By 12 p.m. we had finished striking our tents, packing and storing most of our equipment in the Aqabah police-post - a matter which Peake Pasha with his usual helpfulness had arranged for us. A few minutes after midnight we started for Maan. The moon was out, a cool breeze blew, and we drove straight through, Ylias and I alternating at the wheel. At 4.30 a.m. we were in Maan, and at 11.30 a.m. we reached Amman. There we deposited more pottery in the museum, had lunch. At 4 p.m. we reached Jerusalem, in time for tea.