

II.

DESCRIPTION AND HISTORY OF THE MOABITE STONE.

THIS Stone was a monument of black basalt erected by Mesha king of Moab, c. 850 B.C., to commemorate his victories over Israel. It was first heard of by M. Clermont Ganneau through reports of natives, but was not actually seen till it was discovered somewhat later, in 1868, by the Rev. F. A. Klein, a Prussian in the employment of the Church Missionary Society. It was found amongst the ruins of the ancient Moabite city of Dibon,¹ probably at or near its original site. Mr. Klein's discovery consisted of the upper

¹ The site is now called *Dibân*.

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portion of the monument, a slab rounded at both ends, about $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet high by 2 feet wide, and 2 feet thick. Unfortunately Prussian and French authorities bid against one another for its purchase, so that its Arab possessors perceived that the Stone was of great value, and conceived the happy idea of breaking it in pieces, in order, probably, to make more money by selling it in portions. Fortunately before this act of vandalism was carried out, copies of parts of the inscription had been taken by means of squeezes, notably two by Arabs employed by M. Clermont Ganneau. Ultimately a large proportion of the fragments was recovered, making up altogether about half the inscription. Of these, two large fragments and a number of smaller ones were purchased by M. Clermont Ganneau and the rest by Sir Charles (then Capt.) Warren. The whole set were presented to the museum at the Louvre in Paris; the surviving fragments were com-

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bined with reconstructions from the squeezes of the missing portions; and thus a restoration of the Stone was produced, and placed in the Jewish Court of the Louvre. There is a facsimile of this restored Stone in the British Museum. In the accompanying plate the dark portions correspond to the fragments of the original Stone, the lighter portions to the reconstructions from the squeezes.

This important discovery was made known to the world in 1870, by letters, articles, and monographs by the Rev. F. A. Klein, M. Clermont Ganneau, Prof. Nöldeke, Dr. Ginsburg, and others.¹

The inscription is written in a dialect of Hebrew, in the ancient Hebrew character.²

The statement of Mesha,³ "I saw my desire upon him⁴ and upon his house," *i.e.* Mesha's desire for revenge was gratified

¹ Cf. p. 64.

³ Stone, line 7.

² See § x.

⁴ Ahab.

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by seeing the ruin of Ahab and his dynasty, probably indicates that the Stone was erected after the extirpation of the House of Omri by Jehu, about B.C. 843.