

ARCHAEOLOGY

Sign Dealing with Biblical King Held Genuine Writing

THE NEW inscription found in Palestine dealing with the Biblical King Uzziah is not a forgery, as some critics have claimed, but is a genuine and important piece of writing from Bible days. This is the view strongly expressed by Prof. W. F. Albright, specialist in Palestine archaeology, of the Johns Hopkins University, in a communication to the American Schools of Oriental Research.

The inscription which is arousing scholarly debate is cut into a square tablet of stone, 14 inches to the side. The writing is Aramaic, a common language in ancient Palestine. Experts have with difficulty translated the curious symbols. It is now agreed that they mean:

"Hither were brought the bones of King Uzziah of Judah—do not open!"

King Uzziah was one of the eighth century, B. C., kings of Judah—southern Palestine. He reigned 52 years, and died a leper. The Bible says that he was buried with his fathers at the City of David.

After a time, the site of Uzziah's burial at Jerusalem became a matter of conjecture, and popular tradition said that Uzziah lay in a tomb in the royal cemetery outside of the city walls. About the time of Christ, Prof. Albright says, this traditional tomb of Uzziah was cleared out for some reason. The bones, which may or may not have been

Uzziah's, were transferred to a new location. Here the memorial tablet was erected to mark and protect the remains.

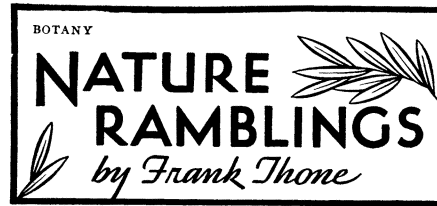
Few Hebrew and Aramaic inscriptions are known today, and most of these are of minor importance, Prof. Albright points out. The new inscription he pronounces of "outstanding significance."

"It is a most interesting illustration of the growing reverence paid to the graves and relics of great men of the past," the archaeologist states.

The Uzziah inscription was brought to light by Dr. E. L. Sukenik, field archaeologist of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. The square stone tablet has lain unnoticed for years in the Russian archaeological museum on the Mount of Olives. Collections there have somehow escaped close study by scholars. During the World War, the catalog of the museum vanished. Hence, it is now impossible to say where the stone tablet originally stood. This vagueness and mystery regarding the stone's origin has made some scholars suspect forgery.

"The inscription is written in the script of its time," Prof. Albright says, "and is so beautifully carved that one distinguished scholar asserted paradoxically that it is too fine to be genuine. However, there are unique linguistic features which no forger could possibly have hit upon independently."

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Bouncing Bet

AN ACCOUNT of this pretty pink flower should, perhaps, not be included in writing about wildflowers, for although this rurally named plant is wild, it is so in just the same way a buxom, handsome, bouncing country wench in pretty but slightly untidy pink ruffles might be characterized by a soul-dissecting Ladies' Aid Society: "just a little bit wild."

For Bouncing Bet is one of those immigrant flowers from the Old World that "is at home wherever her hat's off"—and she never wears a hat. Planted in old-fashioned gardens as a border ornament, she runs all over the place and finally off the place altogether, spilling over the edges of long-grassed ditches by unpaved village streets and country roads. If you are given to the mildly melancholy exercise of botanizing abandoned village lots and farm homesteads, you will certainly find Bouncing Bet. She outlives all the other untended flowers one commonly finds around such places—hollyhocks, lilacs, flags, yellow roses. Sometimes a patch of Bouncing Bet and a hollow where a cellar once was will be the only traces the inquiring archaeologist will find of a forsaken and demolished house.

Appropriately for one of her color, Bouncing Bet is a member of the pink family. Her generic name is *Saponaria*, which has been translated into another common English name, soapwort. It might be thought that this is due to her light-colored petticoat, which might be imagined as in frequent need of laundering. But the real reason is more prosaic than that. The sap of the plant is somewhat sticky and thick, and in water can be worked up to a lather.

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