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with unfailing vigour. . . . He was a man of wide culture. His early books dealt with animal morphology, and he was the author of numerous memoirs and text books for students in zoology and physiology. For a long time he was the editor of one of the chief anatomical publications. He was a pillar of the Presbyterian Church at Cambridge, and took a large part in the foundation of Westminster College, which is devoted to the training of Presbyterian ministers, and in the building of St. Columba's Church in Cambridge. He was also a well-known Egyptologist and had travelled extensively, especially in the East, where for a time one of his sons was Director of Excavations under the Palestine Exploration Fund. This son, Dr. R. A. S. Macalister, now holds the Professorship of Celtic Archaeology at University College, Dublin. . . . He was a man of singularly kind disposition, ever ready to help, and he will be mourned by a long series of Cambridge medical men."

THE IMMOVABLE EAST.

By PHILIP J. BALDENSPERGER.

(Continued from Q.S., 1919, p. 122.)

NATURAL HISTORY NOTES—(continued).

Serpents.

SERPENTS are called *heye[t]* (حَيَّة), “the living,” and, as already remarked, they are not very carefully distinguished, being thought to be all more or less poisonous. They are not made the subject of any special study, except by the Dervishes, and they keep their secrets to themselves.

In Gen. iii, 1, the serpent is called *nāhāsh* (נחש); cf. the brazen serpent made by Moses in the wilderness (Numb. xxi, 9, נָחָשׁ). The name seems to linger on in the dark bluish coluber (*hanash*, حَنَشَ), with that re-arrangement of consonants which is very frequently met with when we compare the Arabic and Hebrew

languages. This coluber (*Zamenis viridiflavus*, var. *carbonarius*) is the hero of many legends. Though it is harmless in reality, it is the longest but not the biggest of serpents.

On account of the confusion of colour, noise and activity of almost all kinds of serpents, it is very difficult to say which particular one is referred to in such and such a passage, the reason being that the Hebrews, like the modern fellahin, knew very little about them, yet distinguished some kinds as being less poisonous than others.

The deadly *Daboia xanthina* (za'ara[*l*] ؽّرّاء), with its short tail, and the *tarsha* (طّرّش), which is deaf to the charmer's verses, as the Dervishes say, is, no doubt, "the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear," (Ps. lviii, 4, Heb. *pethen*) and "those that will not be charmed" (Jer. viii, 17, Heb. *nāhāsh*). The *zifōni* (צִפּוֹנִי), mentioned in the latter passage, is no particular kind, but any stinging serpent. It is the best-known serpent in Judaea—the daboia; so, when the Sage says: "At the last the wine biteth like a *nāhāsh*, and stingeth like a *zifōni*" (Prov. xxiii, 32, adder), he means the same dangerous serpent.

The cobra, which happily only occurs south of Gaza, is as deadly as the daboia; in Egypt it is known as the *af'ah*.

The small viper which occurs near the Dead Sea, Engeddi, etc., and coils itself in small depressions of the road, is also called *af'ah*, and corresponds to the *eph'eh* (אֲפָעֵה) of Isa. xxx, 6. Probably this is also "the serpent of the wayside, and the adder (shēphiphōn, שְׁפִיפּוֹן) in the path, that biteth the horse heels" (Gen. xl ix, 17).

The cerastes or horned viper (*hantit*, حَنْتِت) is equally rare, and is only found in sandy places, where it can easily burrow, leaving nothing visible but its horns to attract small birds. This may be the *zaraph* (שָׁרָף), the fiery stinging serpent which did so much harm among the Israelites in the sandy wastes. Brehm, the eminent naturalist, says that these vipers hide in the sand, so that a place may be infested with them and nobody may know anything about their presence; but in the evening, when the camp fires are burning, they appear on every side coming towards the fire, seemingly to enjoy the sight. This may be another reason for calling them "the fiery serpents" (Num. xxi, 6, חַנְצִים חַשְׁרָפִים) which infested the country, and which stung the Israelites by night, although

in the daytime they had seen nothing of them in the place where they encamped. This viper may frequent the unexplored region north of the Gulf of 'Akaba.

The harmless snakes are more active and lively, and as they are snakes that appear during the daytime, whilst the others are night snakes, they are more often encountered.

Coluber aesculapii—the *hamrat* (حمرات), so called on account of the red which is about its neck and its brownish colour, is the fiercest serpent. I have been attacked by an enormous one measuring over two and a half metres in length in the Dom Forest in the Jordan Valley. But just as it was darting at me, with the peculiar whistling characteristic of serpents, a bedawy shot and killed it. Another one actually flew at me near Rubine (Philistia) and bit me in the ear. I was able to capture it. The bite is very insignificant, hardly as strong as the bite of a mouse and not so dangerous, but it needs good nerves to stand up to one, for although we know it is harmless, we cannot escape a certain feeling of aversion. I have known my horse to tremble because of a coluber of this size. Men have even been known to use the sword against them, so daring are they when they attack; on the other hand the deadly *daboia* is lazy, and cannot so much as coil itself and reach the arm when held by the tail with the arm stretched out, because its weight is too heavy for it.

The *Zamenis viridiflavus*—the *heyet el-beit* (حية البيت), “the house-serpent,” is so called because it is very often found in houses where it feeds on rats and mice. It is grey with black spots, resembling the *daboia* and the *Zamenis*, var. *carbonarius*, the beautiful bluish serpent. Both are very easily angered, and this disposition has also given the latter of the two the name of ‘*Arbed*’ (عربيد), “the quarreller.” Though more showy because of their colours, they never live very long in captivity in the small leather bag of the Dervish; nor do they like to take food—live lizards or small serpents—so readily as does the *aesculapius* serpent, which is easily tamed and accepts food very willingly. The *aesculapius* does not change its skin so often as the *carbonarius*, which is also a great advantage to the serpent charmers.

In view of the above-mentioned three kinds of serpents, it is easily understood why they were called “flying serpents” (Isa. xxx, 6).

The *Coluber quadrilineatus* (four-lined coluber) is called *nashâbe*[t] (نشابة), “the arrow-serpent.” But I must aver that I never saw one fly as an arrow, though it makes short leaps, which, however, are nothing to be compared with the aesculapius and others. The hydra (*Tropidonotus hydrus natrix*—*Heyet el-Ma*, حية الماء) is spotted like *Viridilavus*, and can easily be confused by the casual observer; but it is always either in water or in damp and marshy grounds. In Solomon’s Pools there are thousands to be seen enjoying the water, as long as there is any, and hiding below the tall grass, or in cracks formed in the mud in summer. They are not bad-tempered and retire very quickly, though, when in a fix, they sometimes defend themselves, especially by blowing. This is, perhaps, more due to fear than to anger. I used to handle them by the dozen as a boy, but they have a fearful stench about them, and are, perhaps, the most disagreeable to touch.

The *rabda* (رَبْدَة), a grey snake, and the *naksha*[t] (نَقْشَة), “the painted,” and the *rakta*[t] (رَقْطَة), “the spotted,” are various names which are given to several snakes indifferently, according to the colour.

The *Eryx jaculus*, the beautiful little sand serpent, called *barjil* (بَرْجِيل), is supposed to be very dangerous, but is, in fact, the most harmless of all snakes.

They are all supposed to eat dust, as was thought by the Hebrews (Gen. iii, 14; Micah vii, 17), though lizards, birds and smaller quadrupeds form their principal nourishment.

The lizard tribe is very well distinguished each one by its name. The biggest of all is the *Psammosaurus scincus* (*waran*, وَرَان). It sometimes attains a length of $1\frac{1}{2}$ metres. It lives chiefly on serpents and smaller reptiles in the maritime plains from Jaffa, which is its furthest point in the north, to Egypt. The Sand Arabs protect them because they destroy serpents. A bedawîn woman near Rubine of whom I asked information concerning a *waran*, whose traces I had seen in the sand, in spite of my offering her a mejidi merely to tell me where it lived, refused, saying that she would not be a traitor to her protector not even if I doubled or trebled the price. She called him “her *waran*” who cleared the neighbourhood of venomous animals. When the *waran* is approached and is not able to escape, it blows itself out and then empties itself like a

bellows, darts at the person and bites him. Its teeth, though very sharp and about $\frac{1}{2}$ of an inch long, break very easily, but its jaws are very strong, so that it is difficult to stop it when it is biting. Another very disagreeable feature is the stroke it gives with its strong tail, measuring about half the length of the whole animal. It is with its tail that it kills serpents, as with a whip. It swallows its victims alive and whole as the serpents do.

The existence of the crocodile in some rare marshes about Caesarea and the *waran* or *waral* have perhaps given rise to many fabulous creatures, such as the often mentioned *tannin* or dragon. The *tannin* most probably was the *waran* in some cases and the crocodile in others. When Ezekiel (xxi, 3), speaks of Pharaoh as the great dragon, he means the crocodile. But when the inhabitants of the plains speak of it, they mean the *waran*. Job says "he is a brother to dragons and owls" (Job xxx, 29); but the R.V. translates "jackals" and "ostriches" respectively.

The *waran* is perhaps the easiest to tame and bring up of all the lizard tribe. My two girls, aged 2 and 5 years, had a pet one which they carried about like a doll; it never attempted to bite or blow at them after it had been tamed. The *waran* has beautiful yellow-brown eyes, and a yellow hue incrusted with brown, black or grey designs. It has a long cloven tongue, which it darts out continually; this double tongue gives rise to many fables. As serpents have a double pointed tongue they were thought to be poisonous. Many people have thought that reptiles sting with their tongues; even Job says: "The viper's tongue shall slay him" (Job xx, 16), and we also read of the "poison of dragons."

The *hardōne* (حردون), or stellio-lizard, is one of the best known among Palestine lizards, and in spite of its shy character is a constant companion of man. It lives everywhere; rocks and fields afford it shelter and food, but nowhere is it so numerous as about the fellahīn villages, where it finds plenty of flies, ants and small insects, so necessary for its sustenance. It may be called the ugliest reptile in Palestine. It is grey or dark, with spiny tail, a flat and broad arrow-shaped head, and low eyes hidden under projecting eyebrows of bone. It runs on the flat ground as well as up and down walls, trees and especially olive-trees. It is best known for its habit of shaking its head when on an eminence. It then looks as though it were rising from prayer. It then lies down again. The boys, therefore, call out to it:—

“Say your prayers, O Hardōne!
Your mother died in the oven.”

*salli sallatak ya hardōne,
imak matat fit tabone.*

صلی صلاتک يا حردون
امک هاتت في الطبون

The *hardōne* cannot be tamed but remains savage. It is another of the best known lizards, and in spite of its shy character, whence its name, *harada* (حرد), “to be effeminate,” all kinds of stories are told about it. It brings fire to the grave of believers, whereas the slender green lizard quenches the fire. It is also accursed because, at the flight of the Prophet, it was above the cave where Mohammed hid, and, being asked whether he were inside, it affirmatively wagged its head (its natural movement).

In the villages of the plain, it is employed to help to steal tobacco by being bound to a long string and then thrown on the roofs which are filled with tobacco. With its long claws it takes hold of the plants and, on being drawn back, brings a bundle of the weed.

Serpents are very fond of all kinds of lizards, and as the *hardōne* is very commonly found, it often falls a victim. A man told me—though it is exaggerated—that a *hardōne* was running for its life, but seeing the serpent at its heels, it picked up a piece of wood in its mouth and turned towards the serpent with the wood across. Whenever the serpent opened its mouth to swallow it, the wood hindered the swallowing process, till at last the serpent gave up the job, and Master *hardōne* went victoriously away. Many other stories are told of him.

A *waran* that had swallowed several *hardōnes* for its dinner had had enough, so left one of them, as the meal was sufficient for several days. In the meanwhile the two became friends, and lived on intimate terms months afterwards. The *waran* would put its arm around its friend by night, and although strange *hardōnes* were eaten, this one remained untouched. As a rule the *hardōne* shows no emotion, but the *waran* manifests its feelings by darting its tongue or, if angry, by making a puffing noise. The word *hardōne* is always masculine.

The chameleon, *herbā* (حربا), is considered to be feminine and, though also well-known, is by far not so common as the *hardōne* and

only appears when the leaves are out. It is remarkable for the peculiar structure of its body, the queer toes made to hold the branches or twigs in climbing, the monkey-like tail, and the tongue coiled up in a pouch below the chin—it darts out its tongue like an arrow four or five inches towards a fly—the movable eyes, such that it can look with one pyramidal eye up and with the other down, or before and behind, and last but not least the power of changing its colour according to the occasion. It is believed to be very poisonous when it darts out its tongue—*even to the distance of forty yards*, as an old learned man very seriously insisted. Needless to say, it is harmless and has a tongue not exceeding the length of the body.

I had dozens of chameleons in a cage, all mixed together, males, females and young. The males alone have the power of becoming quite leaf-green; and when several males are in one cage, the chief or strongest male *alone* allows itself the luxurious distinction of becoming green. Like a monarch among the harem it surveys the herd of subjects, and the insolent youngster, who dares to put on the sacred colour, receives a furious correction from the master, and immediately, as a sign of submission, turns grey and lies down flat; for this is another peculiarity of the chameleons, that their body is higher than broad, with a sort of camel's back—whence the name. For several hours it will remain grey, till the memory has vanished, and then it tries again.

The females have not the power to become so vividly green as the males, but they have peculiar greyish and yellowish spots which they produce on the sides in a coquettish way to please the master; they are also jealous, and will not allow young rivals the privilege of having colours. They change colours from what is almost white to an almost dark black, but the above-named spots can be detected if carefully examined. When angry they blow like the *waran*. This curious reptile may be the *hōmet* (חֹמֶת) of Lev. xi, 30 (R.V., however, “sand-lizard”).

The chameleon also serves as a fortune-teller for the boys. They put it under a cap and then go round in a circle, saying three times: “Oh! Chameleon, my sister's daughter, tell me my luck! Is it red, black or white?” They then take away the cap, and draw omens—white is luck, black is sorrow, red is enmity, and so on.

The *Gongylus ocellatus* is called *rajdā'a[t]* (رَجْدَاءٌ), i.e. “the sucker,” because this beautiful lizard, which is often among the herds in

order to catch insects, is believed to suck the milk of the goats. There is some ground for the belief. Its chief characteristics are: a very smooth body, long neck and bright colours—yellow with orange and green stripes. The tail grows with astonishing rapidity when cut off, and is said to become another lizard, and if the tail is only badly bruised, a second tail will grow out of the bruise.

The sand lizard (*Lacerta agilis*), *zahliye[t]* (صَحْلِيَّةٌ), is a small grey-yellow lizard, blood-red underneath the tail. This small lizard is rarely over five inches long, and swarms in the maritime plains. It makes its holes in the sand. When it comes forth it stretches itself out and shakes its two hind legs as though it were learning to swim. It is not very shy, and can easily be seen in the fields running after grasshoppers, or stopping to look quite astonished as if to ask what interest have you in looking at it? The prophet Micah, in his meditations, must have certainly watched this lizard, and it suggests the idea of comparing it to the nations: “they shall come *trembling* as the *lizards* of the earth in their holes” (Micah, vii, 17).

The mastiguer (*Uromastix spinipes*), *dab* (ضَبَّ), somewhat resembles the *hardōne*, but has a smoother body and more spiny tail. It is only found in the south of Palestine. Its name is derived from its slow movements. Being, at the same time, very fat, the bedu of the Judaean desert eat it. It is the *zab* of Lev. xi, 29 (A.V. tortoise; R.V. great lizard).

The gecko (*Ptyodactylus hasselquistii*) has several names, *jeckah* (جَكَّةٌ) from the sound it emits when pursuing the female; *sām baraz* (سَامٌ بَرَّصٌ), from the belief that it is poisonous, and has leper poison in it, *abu brez* (أَبُو بَرِّصٍ), “father of leprosy.” It lives in town houses, not in the houses of the fellahīn, probably because of the smoke which fills the room. It also haunts the clefts of rocks. It lays comparatively large eggs, about the size of a small hazel nut, yet, itself, it is not more than three inches long. It sticks them to the roofs of the houses where it lives or of the rocks or caves.

The gecko changes its colour according to the place where it lives, not in a few minutes—as does the chameleon—but in the course of months. A gecko in a white-washed house will become almost white, and one on grey rocks will become grey, on dark rocks dark, and so forth. Having small paws adapted specially for

climbing and adhering to walls and smooth surfaces, it is always found there, never on the ground or in an open field. It is the *kōd̄h* of Lev. xi, 30; it is so called for the same reason as the *jeekah* of the Arabs, the sound being thus: *jec* in an undertone, and *kah* louder, separated by a slight pause.

The *Scincus officinalis*, a brilliant little lizard, called *halābe*[*t*] (حلابه), in Judaea, haunts houses and ruins, and lies almost motionless in the sun. With its tiny feet it glides away rather than runs, and, when taken in the hand, seems to be covered with some slippery though quite dry substance, so easily does it slip from the hand. It seems as polished as the finest granite. This is, perhaps, the *leṭaaḥ* (לטאה) of Lev. xi, 30.

(*To be continued.*)

STONE ALTARS AND CUP-MARKS IN SOUTH PALESTINE.

By DOUGLAS P. BLAIR, Capt. R.A.M.C.

I. NOTES ON SOME STONE ALTARS IN PALESTINE.

THE following notes were made during the recent operations in Palestine in 1917-18. They refer to engraved rocks which appear to have served as altars in early times.¹

1. The first was observed at Deir Eyūb on November 25th, 1917. This rock is situated on the south-western slope of the hill upon which the village is built and to the right of the small path running from the Wadi Ali across the hills to the village of Yalo. It is reniform in contour, and has a perfectly horizontal surface engraved with cups and grooves. The principal part of the engraving is composed of three parts—a shallow cup, a circular groove, and a deep basin. A short straight channel connects the small cup with the circular gutter, while the latter leads directly into the larger reservoir. The long axis of the design lies almost exactly north and south.

¹ [Only a selection of the illustrations sent by Capt. Blair have been reproduced. The rest are preserved at the offices of the Fund. The scale is approximate.]