

CLARENCE S. FISHER

On the 20th of July in the Government Hospital in Jerusalem there passed away one of the great field archaeologists of our time. The services of Dr. Fisher to the cause of scientific archaeology in Palestine are difficult to enumerate. Before 1909 the methods of digging used by most of the archaeologists were largely those of treasure hunters. Trenches were dug hither and yon across the mound for the purpose of discovering spectacular objects of art and architecture. The result was that when excavations were completed the life history of the town was still ill defined. Various objects and plans were published, but for the most part they could not be accurately dated. As a result there is much we should like to know about those early excavations which we shall never know.

In 1909 two Americans, George A. Reisner and Clarence S. Fisher, arrived on the scene and began their work at Samaria, the capital built for North Israel by Omri and Ahab. During the course of their excavations they developed the method of excavating now used throughout the Near East. This method is known as the stratigraphical method of digging. A mound is surveyed and blocked off into squares which are numbered. Sub-numbers are given to the rooms of buildings unearthed inside each square. Every object discovered is marked with square number or room number or both. When the first floors are reached, the buildings are photographed and drawn on plans with the aid of surveying instruments. The excavation then proceeds to the next buildings and floors below. When the digging is finished, it is possible to draw to scale cross sections of the mound and place on them every object and building discovered: that is, reconstruct the ruins as they originally were. Only by digging in this way has the tremendous advance in archaeological knowledge during the last two decades been made possible. (The most convenient description of this Reisner-Fisher method of excavating as adapted to a particular site is that of W. F. Bade, *A Manual of Excavation in the Near East*, Berkeley, 1934.)

After the close of the last war, Dr. Fisher was associated with various archaeological undertakings in the Holy Land. In 1925 he joined the staff of the American School of Oriental Research in Jerusalem as Professor of Archaeology, and his influence upon the scientific character of excavations has been most important and beneficial to the cause of Biblical archaeology. For some years he has been engaged in the preparation of a *Corpus of Palestinian Pottery*, a necessary and much needed work. His passing brings to a close the career of one of the great pioneers in the archaeological world.