

# Baalbek, High Above Sea, City of Ancient Ruins

## GRANDEUR OF ACROPOLIS TEST FOR IMAGINATION

Rev. F. C. Stifler Tells of Huge  
Stones Used in the Building  
of Famous Structures

In the eleventh article of his series describing the wonders of the Holy Land which he recently visited, the Rev. Francis Carr Stifler, pastor of Wilmette Baptist church, tells of Baalbek, little known, but a city of grandeur and historical significance. He draws a word picture, and it is a picture to test the imagination.

By Rev. Francis Carr Stifler

WE shortened our time in Damascus not only because we were uncomfortable there but because we were anxious to have as much time as possible in Baalbek, the next stop on our itinerary. I had never even heard of Baalbek. I guessed from the first syllable of the word that it was an ancient Phoenecian or Canaanitish shrine. But not even the guide-books could begin to convey a tenth part of the grandeur and the historical significance of the place.

The trip of seventy miles was most beautiful—over the Anti-Lebanon mountains and up the valley between them and the mighty Lebanons. Baalbek is itself another oasis like Damascus, but with an altitude of 3,850 feet above the sea level it is in a cooler location. It is indeed somewhat of a summer resort. In every respect, except the food the Hotel Palmyra was excellent. It was run by old Professor M. Alouf who was curator of the ruins, had been many times mayor of the city, and who was in every respect a scholarly citizen of the utmost refinement.

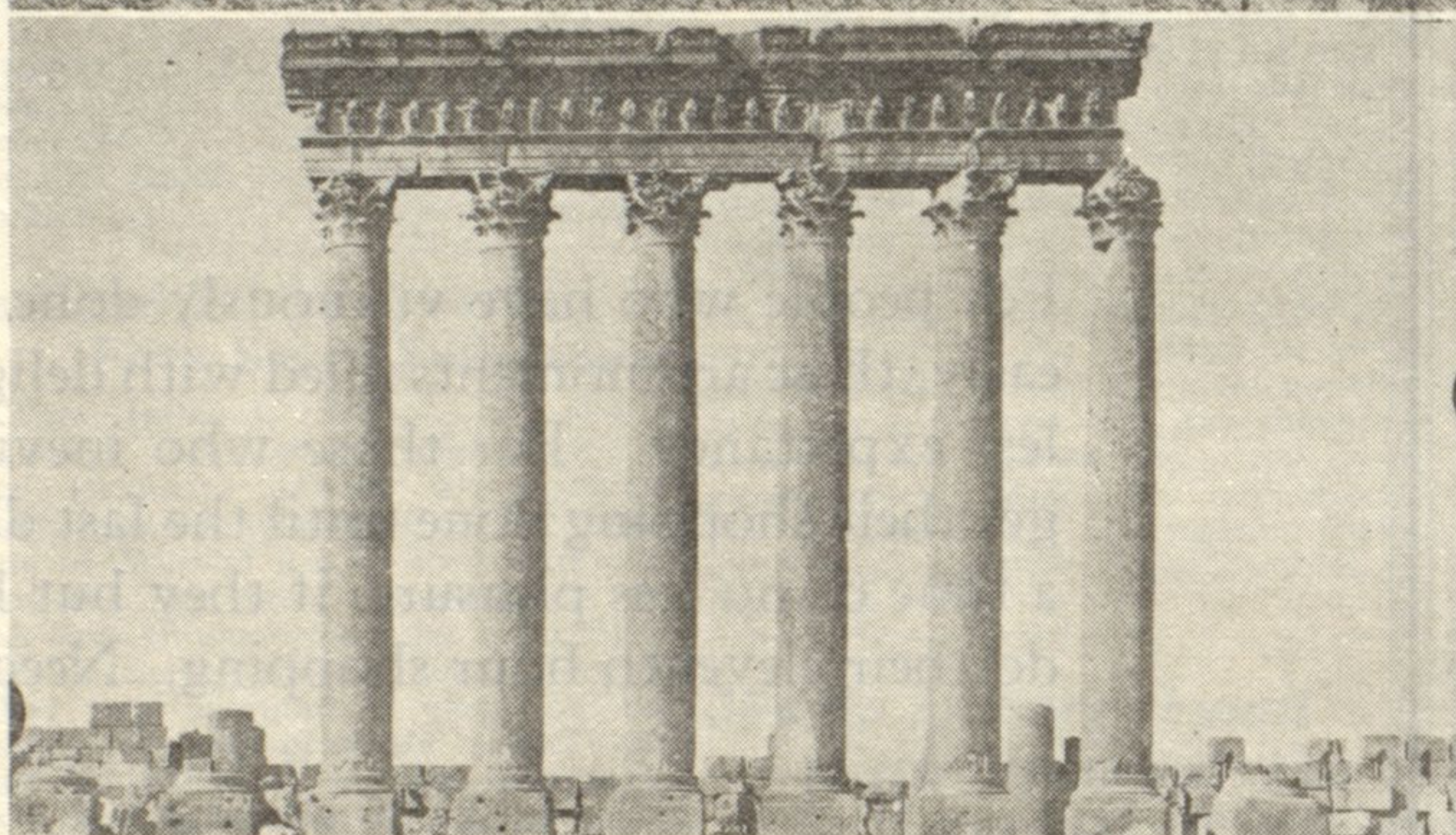
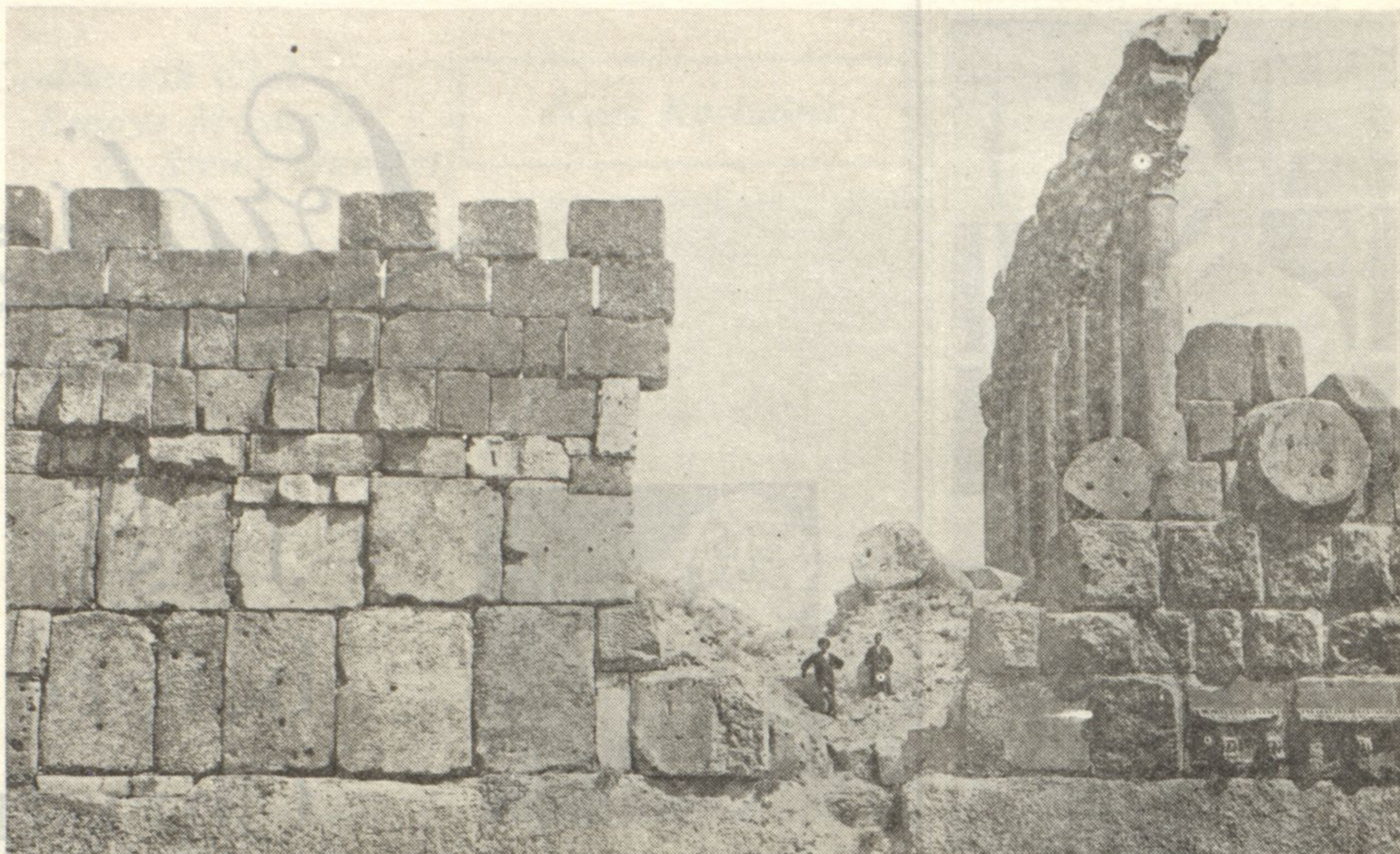
### Area of Roman Ruins

The old Romans never tried to obliterate the native religions of people they conquered. They rather absorbed those religions. They kept at least a part of the rites and developed the ideas in harmony with the Great Roman faith. This is what they did at Baalbek and as a consequence we found there the largest single area of Roman ruins ever been unearthed.

Pictures made out of the whole cloth by Professor Alouf give some idea of how the great Acropolis of Baalbek looked centuries ago. One can readily see how the student of antiquity could spend months in research among the ruins. I will convey if I can to you, the two or three deep impressions made on me as I viewed these mighty stones.

My first impression was of the beauty and skill embodied in them. We were told that the Roman architect did not carve his stone until it was set in place. A great pillar for instance was erected in the rough and then hewn and polished where it stood. As a result of an earthquake a great section of cornice had fallen a distance of 20 feet but with little damage to its tracery.

Under the curator's direction we studied it in detail. It challenges one's imagination to picture some artistic slave perched high on a scaffold for days to do such marvellously exquisite work as we found on this great block.



The Pictures: Here is presented a fine view of the ruins of ancient Baalbek (top)—Six remaining pillars of the famed Temple of Jupiter which stand over 60 feet high and are crowned with elaborate Corinthian capitals (left center)—The leaning column, Temple of Bacchus (right center)—Artistry of Romans demonstrated by perfect lion's head gargoyle serving as a water spout (bottom, left)—Last huge block of stone remaining in ancient quarry. This block weighs 1200 tons (bottom, right).

There were grape designs with elaborate undercut leaf tracery, eggs, formal figures and best of all a perfect lion's head gargoyle that served as a water spout.

The great stones were all fastened together with bars of bronze. The

bars were in most cases cemented into place by hot lead poured into the socket through a groove in the stone. The surfaces of each stone that were to face other stones were finished and polished more carefully than the surfaces to be exposed and the stones, no

matter how large they were, (I shall speak of their size later) were so perfectly fitted together that a knife blade could not be inserted between them.

The best preserved part of the ruins is the Temple of Bacchus. Experienced travellers tell us there is nothing finer in all Syria than this great shrine. Nineteen of the original fifty-six

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