

THE LATE MR. JAMES FERGUSSON.

IN the death of Mr. James Fergusson the Society has to lament the loss of one who was not only largely instrumental in its foundation, and has been upon the Committee since its foundation, but was the first writer in this country who seriously questioned the genuineness of the sacred sites. His first book on Jerusalem appeared in the year 1847, while his latest, which strictly maintained the same views with some slight modifications, was published only a few years ago. It will be remembered that he advocated the south-west corner of the Haram Aera for his site of the Temple, and maintained that the Dome of the Rock, so far from being an erection by Byzantine architects at the order of Abdel Melek in the seventh century, was really no other than the church supposed by himself to have been built at the order of the Emperor Constantine over the site of the Holy Sepulchre. He advocated these views in Smith's "Bible Dictionary" in the year 1865, and at one time he had a large following of those who believed in his arguments. At the same time there has always been a respectable section of scholars whom he could not convince, and, on the whole, it may be said that the literature of the subject has of late years leaned decidedly more towards some modification of the traditional view than the adoption of Fergusson's opinions. The extension of his views has also been greatly checked by the fact that Sir Charles Warren first, and Captain Conder afterwards, openly joined the opposite camp. Among the more important works which came from his active and untiring brain were an "An Inquiry into the True Principles of Beauty in Art," and his "History of Architecture." For a short time he held a post under Government in the office of Her Majesty's Works and Public Buildings. He died, at the age of 78, at his residence in Langham Place.

Captain Conder writes—

"Will you allow me to say with what regret I notice the death of a valuable original member of the Palestine Exploration Fund, Mr. J. Fergusson? His great work on architecture was my mainstay in studying the antiquities of Palestine, and in reading it again just at the time I heard of his death I found my admiration of it greater than ever. Although in particular points Mr. Fergusson's views may have been superseded by the results of further discovery, we should be guilty of great ingratitude if we forgot that he was among the first to lay the basis of a scientific study of architectural antiquity. He was to this important subject what Dr. Birch was to the study of Egyptian antiquity, and it is on the shoulders of such men that the present generation of archaeologists stands.

"On the few occasions when I had the honour of meeting Mr. Fergusson, I have had to thank him for his cordial encouragement and indulgence. He first looked over in 1874 my architectural sketches now published in the Memoirs, and gave me an opinion on the dates of various buildings which I had discovered, which was most valuable to me in the classification of the ruins I found later. I have read all he ever wrote about Palestine, and have learned much therefrom.

"Chatham, 14th January, 1886."