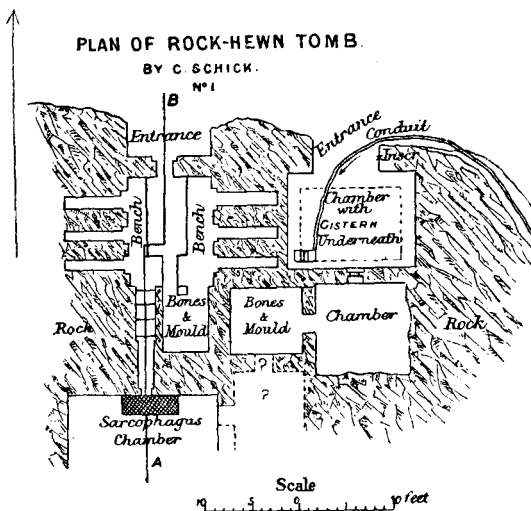


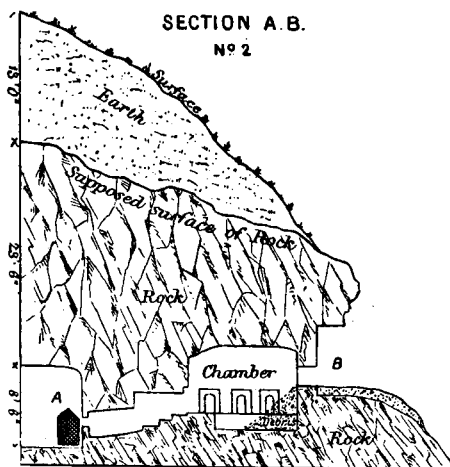
A REMARKABLE TOMB.

WHEN I was last autumn digging in order to discover, if possible, the first canal of Siloam, the workpeople told me that there were some interesting rock-hewn tombs, with a curious stone curve down the valley on its slope, about fifteen or twenty minutes' distant. I took little notice of the story, as they always speak in such terms about localities, and when one goes to visit them they are found to have no interest. But always when meeting me in town they repeated the same thing, so I resolved one day to go down with a few assistants and the necessary instruments for measuring, a level, with candles, &c. I was guided into the Wâdy Yasul marked on the large map. We passed Bir Eyub and 'Ain Lozeh, went over the foot of the hill, and entered into the Wâdy Yasul, coming down from the western height, east of the Bethlehem road; going up a few minutes in the same, and crossing, ascending on its southern slope about the third part of its height, there is a cliff of soft rock, and in it some rock-hewn tombs. The first (or eastern) has a cave-like opening, 7 feet wide, and more than a man's height, hewn in a square, formed like a gate; on its eastern shoulder is an inscription engraved. It is in Arabic: "There is no God but God, and Muhammed is the Apostle of God." Entering, one is in a square room (14 feet by 10 feet, and about 9 feet high), with straight walls and nearly horizontal (slightly arched) ceiling; in the south-west corner is, on the bottom, a hole, or well-mouth, with a few steps in it, so that one may be able to go down: it is about 5 feet (or more) deep, extending nearly under the whole bottom of the room, and a small water conduit comes down the brow of the hill, and entering under the door into the mouth of the well (see No. 1).

Opposite the entrance door, in the southern wall, is another small door,



with a recess to receive a closing slab, and, inside, marks of the hinges and the bolt of a once existing movable door, leading into another square room (9 feet 4 inches by 9 feet 10 inches). It seemed as if it had been at one time the lodging of a living man, and not a sepulchre for depositing dead bodies; near the bottom, on the east wall, there is in the middle a door-opening of another square room (about 7 feet by 7 feet), with a great mass of bones and mould: its ceiling is about 3 feet lower situated than that of the lodging room, also is its ceiling towards west declining downwards. It may be, as I suppose, that from it a door may lead to other rooms inside, as by pointed lines shown in the plan; but this is only supposition, and cannot be proved until the room is cleared. When coming out in the open air again, and going westwards, we come 11 feet from the large entrance to another one, partly destroyed, 9 feet wide and still about 4 feet deep, and of the height of a man. In the entrance are recesses outside to take up the closing stone slab, and entering, one comes to a square room, 9 feet wide by 11 feet 10 inches long, and in the middle 8 feet 6 inches high, the ceiling slightly arched, and the full height only in the centre part, as on three sides there is left a stone bench, $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet broad and 2 feet 2 inches high; level with its top are on these three sides loculi, or single tombs, three on each side. These loculi are 7 feet deep, 1 foot 8 inches wide, and 2 feet high, on the top rounded; in front of each is a square, 4 inches deep recesses to take up the closing slab. Towards the south, by having broken out the dividing wall, two are now connected and made one small room, 5 feet wide and 6 feet long, and the bottom lowered to the level of the bottom of main room, and a trench through the bench cut to it, so that the middle opening represents a door of 4 feet high; this inner and small room is full of bones and mould. The third (the western) opening on this side is rather a passage and not a tomb (or tomb behind tomb, as one thinks first), for the first part has three steps, and they themselves are a



little sloping. It has the width of the others, and is 5 feet 6 inches long, and is like another opening 2 feet high, and a little narrower, going in 5 feet, bottom and ceiling sloping down. Its end is a rock, but has a little hole, by which one can see that the wall is only $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches thick—whether broken accidentally when the passage was made or on purpose, I cannot say. What one sees when looking through the hole is the most important thing of all. There stands across before the thin rock wall a large smooth coffin-shaped stone (see No. 2). The hole and all is too narrow for a man to put in his arm, only his hand; but by a thin iron rod with hooks on both ends I could ascertain that the sarcophagus, if it is one, or rather its cover, is 6 feet long; the one side of the cover is 2 feet, and from the edge of that down to the bottom where it stands, 2 feet 10 inches, but it may be more, as there between the stone and the wall may have in the very narrow space accumulated some earth. Pushing the iron rod of 5 feet long to the right and left it touched no wall, nor the roof of the room in which the sarcophagus stands. It must be of some larger size. I have also to say that although I clearly saw the edge caused by the perpendicular side of the sarcophagus and its sloping top, I could not observe any joint, so, if there is one, it must be lower down than the hole permitted to see. All the work hewn in the rock described in the above is as nicely and correctly done as it is in rock tombs round about Jerusalem, except in the tombs of the kings.

The question now arises, Where is the access to this room with the sarcophagus, and in what way was it brought in? Once there was found a similar one in such a rock-hewn tomb room, with a little door, through which it could not have been brought in; I found a large hole in the top or roof of the room, and so it might be here. I levelled, therefore, and measured exactly, but the mass of rock and earth is so great that I hardly think it possible to get access to the room by digging a shaft down to it (see No. 2). So I think very probably the access might be through the lodging-room, as I have called it (see above), when all the bones and mould are taken out. It is curious that an extra passage was made to the hole, through which it might be seen, and one gets the idea that here was a kind of oracle. People came, perhaps, to the hole and asked their questions or uttered their prayers, and inside the inhabitant of the lodging-room might go secretly there and give answers. It may be that originally the first part of the passage was a common *loculus*, like the others. But later on, when some illustrious man was put there in a sarcophagus in the neighbouring room, it was found best to get an easy access, although still separated by a rock wall, to the holy relic, and the second part and the steps were then made.

In case it would be found interesting enough to ascertain more details of the stone and the mysterious room, I think by breaking off from the rock—*i.e.*, enlarging the hole upwards—it might be made very likely so wide that a man might go in and thoroughly search the room. It may be that there are even other tombs or sarcophagi, and at least found the place of entrance to it. Before I hear from you on this matter I will do nothing, as it is not a pleasant thing to disturb tombs. Yet by the suggested way there will be no disturbing.

The inscription, being Arabic, says nothing than the usual expressions of the Moslems, and the name of the Wady Yasul may derive from the man or Moslem Sheikh, once residing in these rooms, considered by his fellow believers to be a messenger or Apostle. The tombs and excavations are not Mohammedan, but Jewish, in later times only used by a Moslem; and even this is now forgotten.

The water-pipes mentioned in 2 Sam. v 8, probably refer to a subterranean channel near the citadel of David, for we find in the Jerus. Talmud (Tractat Nasir, chap. ix, § 4), that such a channel existed close by the sepulchres of the kings, and terminated at the brook of Kedron. Jerome, in accordance with the rabbinical explanation, renders the clause, "et tetigisset domatum fistulas."

It is still a matter of speculation where the ancient City of David was situated, and whether the flight of steps in the rock discovered by the Anglican Bishop below the English cemetery are the remains of those mentioned by Nehem. iii, 15, as going down from the City of David. Supposing the ancient, like the modern, Zion was S.W., why does it say in Psalm xlvi, 2, "Mount Zion on the sides of the north?" Sir Charles Warren's and the Rev. John Forbes's theory, that Zion was identical with the northern hill, Acra, has some support by Josephus ("Ant.," xii and xiii), who calls the stronghold of Zion *ἀκρα*, and the Syrian fortress on Mount Zion is called Acra in the Maccabean books (1 Macc. iv, 60; i, 35; ii, 31). We meet again with Acra as a denomination of Zion in the very ancient Talmudic book, "Megillath Taanith," chap. ii (this book is sometimes quoted by the Talmud, and was compiled anterior to the time of Josephus). We may therefore venture to suggest that Zion was not an isolated fortress, but included a large part of the city. Yet the royal tombs were in the near vicinity of the Temple (Ezek. xl, 7-9), and it appears from Nehem. iii, 16, that they were on the western side of it. Though the burial-place of the Kings of Judah (except Ahaz) was well known, until the destruction of the Temple (see Josephus, "Ant.," xvi, 7, § 1), yet according to the above-quoted Talmudical passage, Tractat Nasir, the sepulchres had been removed afterwards from the former burial-place, and the problem has now to be solved, where they are at the present time, and whether the now called David's sepulchre is the true one, or merely bears its name? The discovery of tombstones seems therefore to be a matter of the greatest archæological interest. There is a certain subterranean passage mentioned in the Talmud (Tract. Erubin, p. 61b), and in other ancient records, such as Midrash-rabbah and Midrash Tanchumah (on Numb. iii), which was originally excavated by the King Zedekiah, leading from his royal palace northward towards Jericho. This passage is said to have been twelve miles in length, and was alluded to by Jeremiah (chap. xxxix, 4, and lii, 7), and it seems probable that the sepulchres of the kings had been removed from their former burial-place, which was west of the Temple, into the said passage in the north.

C. SCHICK.

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