

NEW DISCOVERIES IN THE NORTH OF JERUSALEM.

By C. SCHICK, Architect in Jerusalem.

If we leave Jerusalem by its present North Gate, which is called by the Arabs Bab el-'Amud, "Gate of the Pillars," and by Europeans, the Gate of Damascus, and journey a short distance in a northerly direction, we shall come to a place where the road branches off into four different ways. One of these turns to the right, and the second to the left, running parallel with the town wall. The third goes straight on towards the north through a depression of the ground past the burial-place of the kings; it is the Sultani, or highway, leading to Nabulus and Damascus. The fourth road has a north-westerly direction. To the east of the third, or Nabulus, road, is a broad rocky hill, containing the old quarry and the so-called cave of Jeremiah, known to the Arabs el-Edhamejeh. Opposite this, and to the west of the Nabulus road, is another rocky hill, resembling the first, but on a smaller scale. At the western foot of this second hill the fourth road, which we mentioned before, runs towards the north-west. Travellers in Palestine have of late years bestowed particular and repeated attention on this hill, because it was believed to have been the site of Golgotha. Excavations were made there last year, and they have provoked a desire for further research.

This rocky hill rests upon an undulation of the ground, and is 190 metres in circumference. It is of circular shape, and has upright walls of rock on every side. These show traces of having been once quarried and of having had graves hewn in them. They are, however, only raised a few metres above the surrounding ground. The hill has been artificially flattened on the top, and is now overgrown with olive trees. On its western side alone a bit of the original rock rises in a sort of hump to the height of from three to four metres. It slopes gently down towards the west, but to the east it is very precipitous, and in this part an open cave is to be found in which the remains of old sepulchres may be recognised. The entrance to this cave is on its western side. In the summer of last year (1878) the owner of the cave determined to use it as a room or magazine. For this purpose he had a wall built in front of the cave, and then proceeded to lay out the lower ground to the east as a courtyard. When the trench to form the foundation of this wall was being dug, it was discovered that the ground was composed of rubbish containing many pieces of hewn and even of richly carved stone. The excavation was therefore made deeper than was necessary for the purpose for which it was begun. In doing this they came upon a perpendicular wall composed of small cubes of 0.10 metres. These cubes were not placed horizontally, as is usually the case, but diagonally; and thus they formed a pattern of which this is the first example I have met with. Curiously enough this wall was built in a curve, whose radius consisted of about 12 metres. When I first saw the wall I imagined it to be a winding stair leading to a sub-

terranean cave. But as no steps were to be seen at what was apparently its upper end, I came to the conclusion that it was the remains of an old circular wall inclosing a court, in which there had been some monument or building made of the carved stones which had been found before. I did my best to persuade the man to continue his excavations. At first my entreaties seemed to have some effect; but he soon discontinued the work. He did not dig deep enough to show the flooring, which probably was either made of flags or was a tessellated pavement. The owner of the ground pulled down the thin circular wall which had been excavated, and used the square stones composing it to pave the courtyard. The middle of this place is 256 metres distant from the Gate of Damascus.

I made two drawings of stones that were dug up in this place. The architecture, and perhaps the age of the building of which they formed a part, may, to a certain extent, be determined by the testimony they afford. In my opinion the stones belonged to an old church. Still it is possible that they may have formed part of the building of a Jewish synagogue, for the rosettes, as they are given in the drawings, are to be found on ancient Jewish sepulchres in the rock. The so-called water-drops are arranged like steps and stairs. The carvings on the few remaining pilasters resemble triglyphs. Of the other pieces of sculpture, one reminds me of an incomplete form of the egg and dart; probably, however, it stands for something quite different. The upper row might be taken for palm-leaves twisted into a spiral pattern. The stone is very good; the workmanship is somewhat rude, and is not always exact in detail.

I am inclined to regard these stones, and the piece of wall also, as belonging to the church of St. Stephen, which, according to overwhelming testimony, was situated to the north of Jerusalem. The Empress Eudoxia, wife of Theodosius, built "a temple outside the North Gate, and not quite a stadium from the city, in honour of Stephen the First, deacon and martyr; it was remarkable for its beauty and splendour; however, it was not until the 15th of January, 460, that the whole building was consecrated. The empress died four months before the consecration, and was buried in this temple." There was a cloister near the church. Both church and cloister were destroyed after the invasion of Chosroes I., or Omar. The Crusaders probably found nothing of the building but its memory and its ruins. In the later times of French rule another church was erected before the North Gate; it lay to the right of the road as one came from without towards Stephen's Gate and close to the town wall, while to the left (opposite St. Stephen's Church) was a large building called *l'asnerie*, which served as stables for the asses used in the cloister, and later on, after the Saracen victory, for the pilgrims. The foundation walls of this building, as well as a number of crypts, were discovered in the year 1875. Even then the idea was started, in consequence of this discovery, that the remains of St. Stephen's Church would be found under the rubbish on the western

side of the Nabulus road.* In the same year (1875) a hole was dug for making a cistern in the ground to the west of this road, 112 metres nearer to the town, or in other words, 144 metres distant from the Gate of Damascus. The workmen came upon several sepulchres in this place, and in one of them was a large stone chest. Dr. Chaplin, whom I took there to see it, has described it in the *Quarterly Statement* of the English Palestine Exploration Fund. He was of opinion that the chest was intended as a protection for the wooden or leaden coffin placed inside. Its presence seemed to him to indicate the grave of some person of rank, perhaps of the Empress Eudoxia herself, and at the same time he pointed out that St. Stephen's Church must have been close to this spot.†

The discoveries which I have just described are calculated to prove the truth of these suppositions. But in order to arrive at a decisive conclusion on the subject, it must be seen whether the wall indeed formed a circle, and what the space within it really was—whether other objects worthy of interest are to be found amongst the rubbish, and whether there is an as yet undiscovered cave hidden underneath. Excavations on a large scale are necessary for this purpose. Perhaps the German Society for the Exploration of Palestine may find this a problem worthy of solution.

* Compare Palestine Exploration Fund *Statement* for 1875, p. 190 ; 1876, p. 143 f.

† See Palestine Exploration Fund *Statement*, for 1876, p. 9.
