

ACCOUNT OF A ROYAL NECROPOLIS DISCOVERED
AT SAIDA BY HAMDÏ BEY.

(From the *Revue Archéologique*).

I ARRIVED at Smyrna, on April 20th, 1887, with the object of taking part with my friend and colleague, Demosthenes Bey-Baltazzi, in the Archæological Mission that had been entrusted to us. It was necessary that we should proceed to Saida to study a valuable necropolis recently discovered, and to draw up from its deep vaults the series of sarcophagi which are about to be described. On reaching Saida (April 30th) we immediately repaired to the ground; and I descended by means of a rope to the bottom of the large shaft which gave access to the large vaults containing the sarcophagi. This shaft, sunk through a thick layer of limestone, was 13 metres in depth. I visited the vaults, which were seven in number, in succession, and was struck by the value, beauty, and variety of the marble sarcophagi found therein. Out of the seventeen sarcophagi nine were covered with very beautiful many-coloured sculpture.

On the following day we made every effort to proceed with the work of extraction without hindrance; but this was anything but easy, the largest of them measuring 3m. 30 long and weighing nearly 15 tons.

With the friendly help of Sakeh Bey, Governor of Saida, who placed everything we required at our disposal, and the intelligent co-operation of Beshara-Effendi, chief engineer of the vilayet, a tunnel with a drop of 12 per cent. was bored, and all the sarcophagi were drawn out without any accident. The whole work occupied twenty-five days. This valuable necropolis is to be the subject of a detailed monograph. One part of the contents is on the eve of being sent to the Imperial Museum at Constantinople. A second necropolis was discovered by us. With the object of elucidating the description which I am about to make, I add to this memoir a plan and a general plan of both these monuments, which are placed together (see pp. 140 and 141).

At the north-west angle of the vault V of the first necropolis, and above the No. 10 sarcophagus (see plan), we perceived an irregular hole, which hardly admitted of the entrance of a man. As I wanted to know what it could be and where it might end, I had a ladder brought and was easily able to reach it, and to get halfway into it so that I could well examine the interior by the light of a lamp. I easily recognised a Phœnician tomb, which had been despoiled by the violators of the necropolis, by means of this little hole which they had made.

These greedy plunderers struck the walls of the vaults with an iron, and wherever they heard a hollow sound they divined the existence of a tomb or vault on the other side, which they proceeded forthwith to open. This one was entirely empty, but prior to our arrival at Saida some fragments of shapeless bronze had been found.

The question naturally presented itself as to which way the tomb had been dug and from whence the dead, whose bones I there saw, had been introduced. On entering I examined the upper part and was able to see and count five large slabs which closed it above and which were placed transversely on the tomb.

I communicated my observations to my friend Baltazzi-Bey, and we decided on May 22nd to open a shaft in such a way as to fall directly upon these slabs.

The next day, after having cleared away 1m. 20 of vegetable soil, we came upon limestone grit, then making our workmen proceed 2 metres further towards the north we continued to excavate, and on the 24th we could recognise the four walls of a large rectangular shaft bearing marks of a pick-axe.

The large sides from south to north measured 4 metres, the little sides 3m. 20; it must be mentioned that the walls of this well were hewn with care. It went down across a layer of very friable limestone grit, and was full of rubbish of the same sort, occasionally mixed with vegetable soil, the workmen found placed in a hollow in the side of the shaft a lamp in the form of a splayed and twisted patera, and resembling those which M. Renan had collected at Saida, and which, according to M. de Saulcy, have been likewise met with in the tombs of the Kings at Jerusalem. At a depth of 5 metres we perceived the upper layers of a wall on the side looking north (see plan); evidently we had here a wall forming the entrance to a vault, and we were happy to find that it was perfectly intact.

Om. 50 lower, on the opposite wall, the upper part of a vault appeared, being precisely the one where the desecrated tomb was found. It was not walled, and we could see it was literally crammed with rubbish of the same nature as that which filled the well. The same day other lamps similar to the former one were found.

By May 28th we reached, at a depth of 7m. 50, the bottom of the well; here the layer of limestone grit (called in this country *ramle*) ended, and hard limestone appeared.

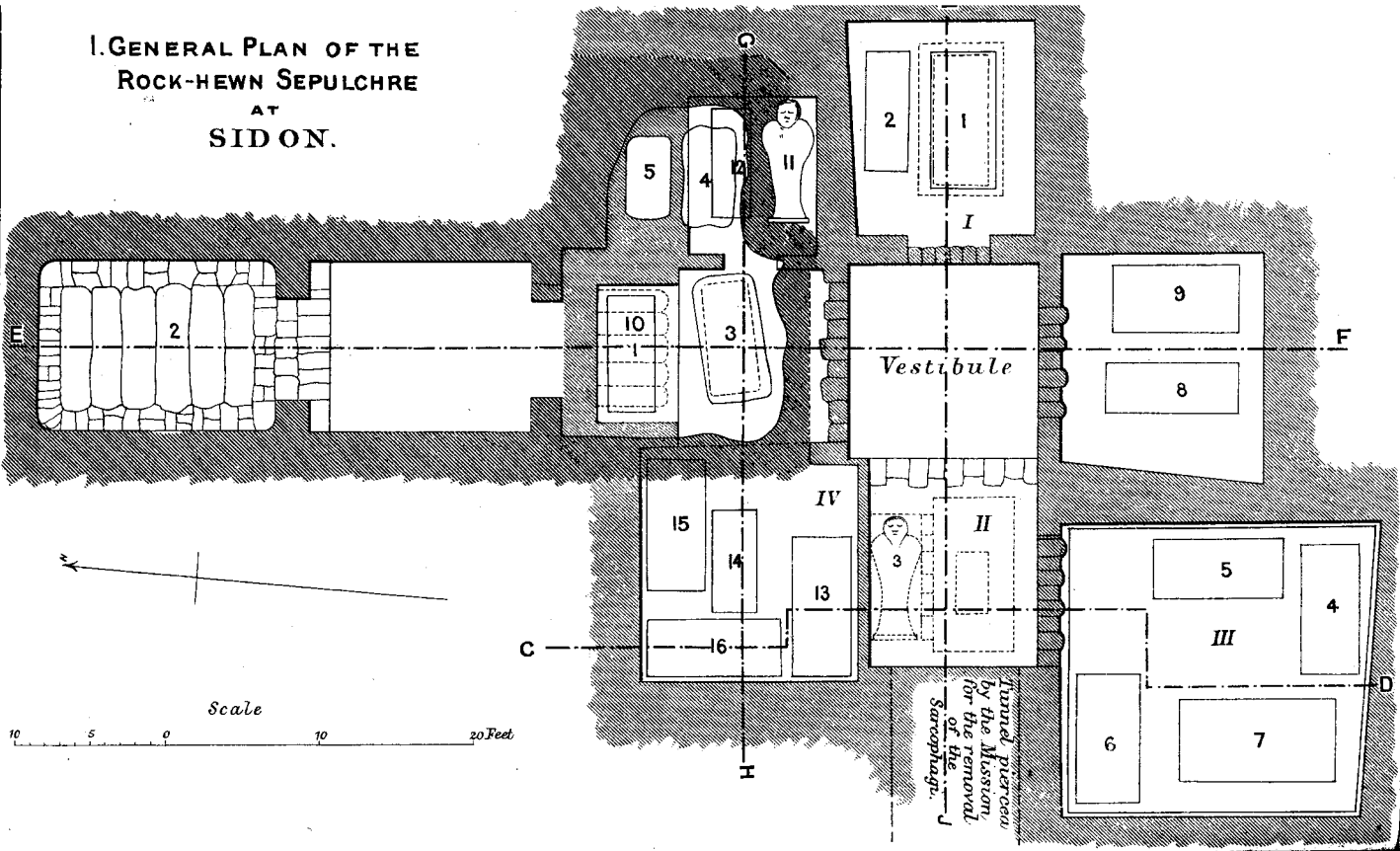
On the 29th, at an early hour, I descended into the shaft, accompanied by Beshara-Effendi, and some workmen; and I had a breach made in this intact wall by withdrawing some rows.

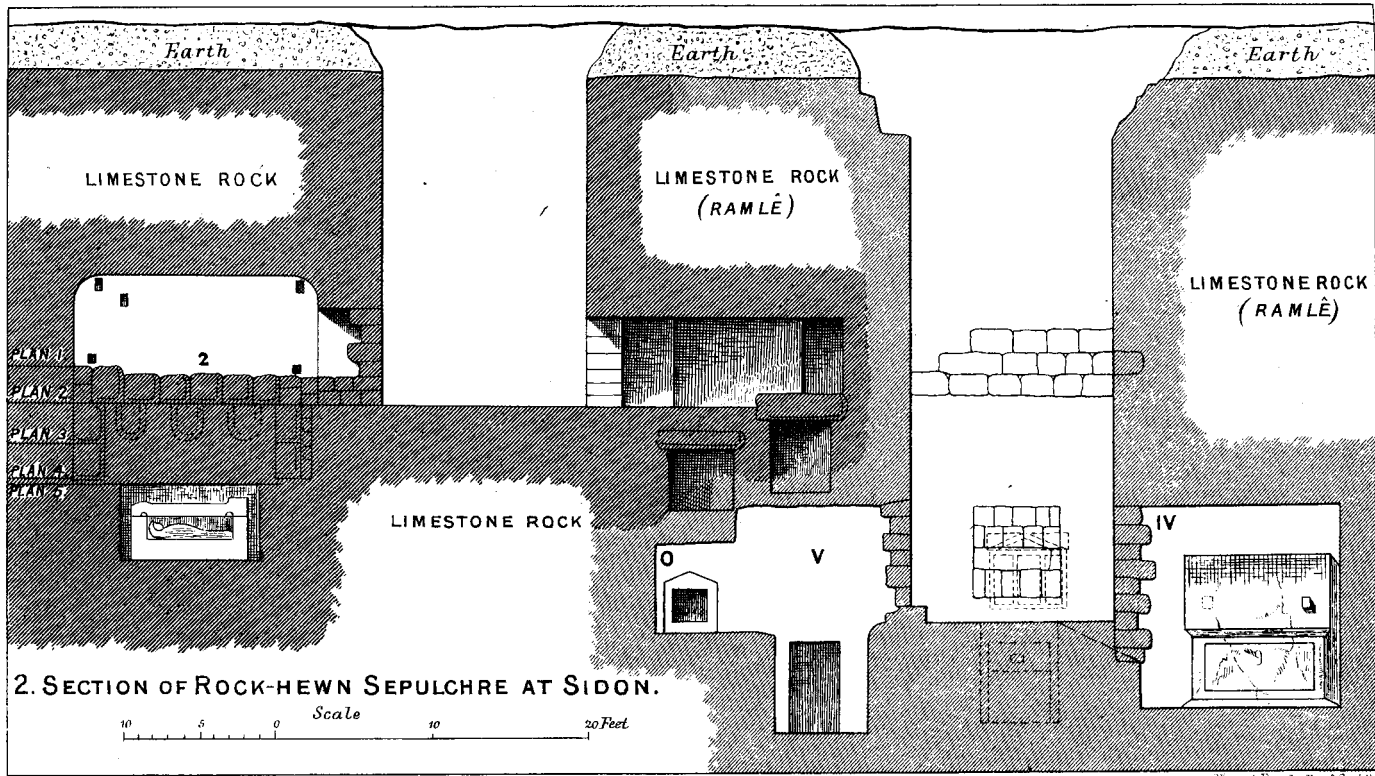
Then, by means of a magnesium lamp I saw that this vault did not contain any sarcophagus, that the ceiling was vaulted, and that it, as well as the walls, was faced with a thick plastering, which plastering had in great part fallen and completely covered the floor.

I also noticed on the walls of the vault large holes, which had been symmetrically bored at intervals, and which were intended for the reception of immense beams, by which, by means of ropes which were fastened on to them, sarcophagi or blocks of stone of immense size could be let down.

At the outset, therefore, I had reason to hope that once the vault was clear we should find slabs, and under the slabs some sarcophagi.

I. GENERAL PLAN OF THE
 ROCK-HEWN SEPULCHRE
 AT
 SIDON.





I had the door entirely freed from the wall, which blocked it up, and set the workmen to clear the vault.

The vault measured 4m. 60 by 3m. 40.

It was then that we discovered, in the north-west angle, two bronze candelabra and some terra cotta lamps, which were similar to the preceding ones, and which had been thrown down by the fall of the plastering off the walls and ceiling.

This plastering occasionally reached a thickness of 0m. 20, and was covered over with a thin gray-blue coating.

The candelabra are in good preservation, and have a fine patina; they are not of equal height. The largest measures 1m. 70, and the other 1m. 55. They are each composed of three parts, and were bound together by a stick running inside the stem; this wood has completely perished.

The vault being now clear of its incumbrances, I saw that it was paved with six immense blocks in a transverse direction of its length.

(Page 144, plan 1).—These slabs were of limestone grit, and of different widths, varying from 0m. 50 to 0m. 80, with a length of 2m. 60.

The last at the further end of the vault was varied 0m. 18 above the others, and formed a sort of bench.

In removing the small hewn stones which edged the four sides, I ascertained that they were 0m. 65 thick, and themselves rested on other blocks placed in a reverse direction.

It took more than a day to break up and remove this first row of slabs.

In arrangement, the second row was quite different to the first. It consisted of an immense rectangular slab, placed in the middle of the vault, measuring 3m. 62 by 1m. 80, with a border of six slabs; these latter did not extend to the wall from which the plaster continued to fall (page 144, plan 2).

In removing the six blocks which served as a border, I was most astonished to find below a third layer, and to note that the middle piece reached still lower than this latter (page 144, plan 3).

The following day I had this third and last row of bordering removed, and the vault then contained nothing more than an immense rectangular monolith, with a length of 3m. 42, width of 1m. 70, and thickness of 1m. 60, cubing 9m. 30 (page 144, plan 4).

The monolith occupied the centre of the vault in its longitudinal direction.

It bore on the upper part of its thickness eight horse-shoe shaped grooves: three on each of its large sides, and one on the small one; the grooves were 0m. 12 in width, and of an equal depth. They had served to hold the cables used for letting down this colossal lid, at first to the bottom of the shaft, and afterwards into the vault.

It was perfectly obvious, from the grain of the stone, that this large block, as well as all the slabs surrounding it, had been brought from elsewhere.

The lid now being clear on every side, we had two lifting-jacks brought, and, setting them in action simultaneously, managed to lift it

on one side from Om. 10 to Om. 15, and it was only then that I was able to perceive, by means of a jet of magnesium light, that this monolith concealed a magnificent black marble sarcophagus, anthropoid in shape, admirably preserved and covered with inscriptions. It was only the day after the 30th of May that I began to have this monolith sliced off horizontally, so as to reduce two-thirds of its thickness, in order to be able to lift it and turn it up against the wall of the vault, so as to allow of the passage of the fine sarcophagus. This operation ended, we could finally examine at our leisure this almost unique and in every respect remarkable object.

Eleven lines of hieroglyphic writing in longitudinal lines covered the base of the lid, starting from the large collar, which ended in a large winged globe, having on its left and right other hieroglyphic signs. A Phœnician inscription, carefully engraved, covered in its turn the horizontal portion of the legs.¹ This inscription occupied seven and a half lines. As in the sarcophagus of Eshmunazar, the collar is fastened to the shoulders by two hawks' heads.

Here are the respective measurements of the lid :—

| | | | | |
|---------------------------------|------|------|------|--------|
| Length from head to foot | .... | .... | .... | 2m. 30 |
| Width of shoulders.... | .... | .... | .... | 1m. 10 |
| Width of feet | .... | .... | .... | 0m. 80 |
| Thickness of feet | .... | .... | .... | 0m. 40 |
| Length of hieroglyphic lines | .... | .... | .... | 0m. 70 |
| Width | .. | .. | .... | 0m. 10 |
| Length of Phœnician inscription | .... | .... | .... | 0m. 57 |

A circle of hieroglyphic writing runs outside the circumference of the sarcophagus, and is of the same form as that of the sarcophagus of Eshmunazar.

The trench in which this precious object was deposited is admirably hewn, peculiar care having been devoted to this result.

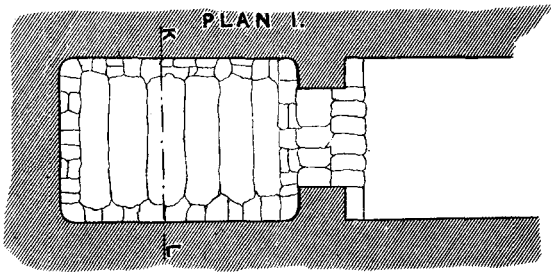
The edges and sides are remarkably clearly cut ; a parallelepiped 2m. 60 by 1m. 20 by 1m. 50 deep. They had not forgotten to take the centre of each of the small sides by marking it with a red arrow before placing the sarcophagi exactly on the longitudinal axis. On the shoulder side it nearly touched the walls ; and they had further filled in the small space that remained all round with small stones and a sort of mortar. All this rendered the opening and extraction of the sarcophagus very difficult. We, however, succeeded in doing this without any abrasion or mark resulting therefrom.

We first raised the lid, which we immediately placed in a temporary box until a passage should be prepared for it across the opposite vault and the violated tomb, No. 1 (p. 141), which the workmen were already clearing out.

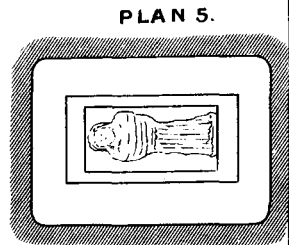
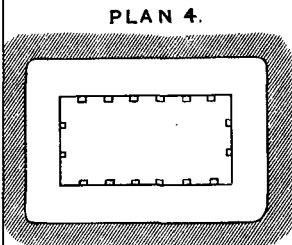
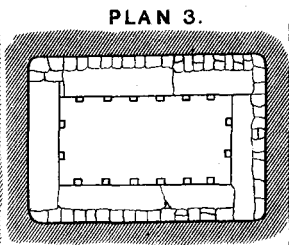
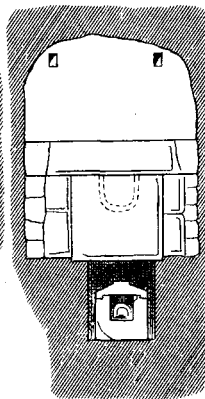
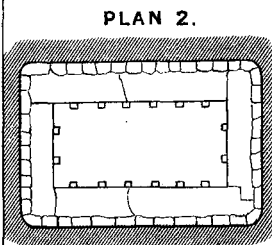
The sarcophagus contained the body of a man in fairly good preserva-

¹ This is the inscription whose translation was given in the last number of the *Quarterly Statement*.

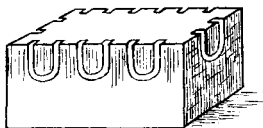
3. PLANS AND SECTION OF THE SEPULCHRE.



SECTION K.L.



GREAT STONE COVER
OF THE
SARCOPHAGUS



Scale
10 5 0 10 20 feet

tion. In the entire upper part, emerging from a yellowish mud which filled the bottom of the sarcophagus, the flesh had disappeared. The breast was staved in; the sternum and the toes and fingers had disappeared. A fillet in very thin gold leaf, 0m. 20 long, was on the left clavicle. I had the body brought out, stretched upon a plank, and carried outside. Murad Effendi, the municipal doctor at Saida, charged himself with cleansing it, and putting it into a condition to allow of it being conveyed to Constantinople. All the muscles of the posterior parts are perfectly preserved, as well as the interior organs of the thorax and abdomen. The corpse was laid on a slightly concave plank, which occupied the bottom of the sarcophagus, and assumed its shape. This plank, in complete preservation, is of sycamore wood, and is 1m. 84 long, 0m. 32 wide, on the side of the head, and 0m. 21 on the side of the feet. It was furnished on every side with six silver rings, one of which still remains on the plank. They were fastened with nails, the points of which, after passing right through, were forced back by the blow of a hammer.

They fastened the corpse from head to foot firmly along this plank, upon which very distinct traces that the ropes have left are to be seen near the rings.

In another large anthropoid and perfectly preserved sarcophagus, which was given us to open, we likewise found the body extended on a plank of similar shape, but instead of rings they had been content to simply make holes with which to keep the body in place. I must mention that we found in a third sarcophagus, which was anthropoid and of white marble, the same kind of plank bearing bronze rings fixed in the same manner. In several other Phœnician tombs we collected from round the corpse, which was completely destroyed by the damp, numerous fragments of fillets. The Phœnicians, following in this the Egyptian fashion, endeavoured to mummify their dead, but they carried out this operation very badly.

In the tomb in question we did not find any trace of bandelets. It would appear, therefore, that the body was simply embalmed. I ought to add that in this sarcophagus we noticed the existence of a certain quantity of very fine sand, which we had likewise found in the three other anthropoid sarcophagi which had been given us to open previous to this.

Whilst we were occupying ourselves in extricating this fine royal sarcophagus from the deep trench in which it was found, several of our workmen had already cleared the vault from the south; we were then able to immediately open the second tomb. It was exceedingly badly constructed, and altogether similar to the one that the violators of the other necropolis had ravaged. In this tomb—the body as well as the plank to which it was attached had entirely disappeared—we collected the following objects:—

- 1 fillet of gold leaf.
- 1 gold collar.
- 2 gold bracelets.

- 2 gold symbolic eyes.
- 13 gold beads.
- 1 bracelet ornamented with coloured stones, with a catseye in the centre.
- 1 onyx cylinder, one end of which has a golden cage.
- 13 cornelian beads.
- 1 symbolic eye in cornelian.
- 7 small beads in blue enamel.
- 2 large silver *halkals*.
- 1 silver pin, the tip of which bears the head of a serpent.
- 1 smaller silver pin.
- 1 broken silver box.
- 12 slender silver rings.
- 1 bronze mirror, joined by wrists.
- Different ivory objects (broken).
- 7 bronze rings, belonging to the plank on which they had stretched and fastened the body.

The two tombs, No. 4 and No. 5 (p. 140), had neither slabs nor covers. The trenches were simply covered with earth and stones, nearly to the arch of the vault, and the entrance of this latter was walled. Except some fragments of bones which crumbled into dust directly they were touched, we found nothing. The southern vault, as well as the tombs which it contained, were of very defective workmanship. The piece of ground on which these tombs were discovered, is found in the plain below *Hilaleh*, between the aqueduct and the gardens. These latter, which border it, are called *Bostan-el-Mazara* (garden of the grottos). In fact, the entrance to two grottos running from west to east and uniting beneath our ground can be seen.

The ground is known by the name of *Ayaa*; this word is not Arabian. I was informed that the inhabitants of Meppo speak of a legendary Jewish queen who was called *Ayaa*.

Thus, a woman who gives herself airs in walking is said to walk like *Ayaa*.

I noticed here that in speaking Arabic they replace the letter caph by ain. Accordingly, instead of *Kaleh*, *Kassir*, *Karib*, they say *Aaleh*, *Aassir*, and *Aarib*. Assuming then the same corruption in the word *Ayaa*, we must seek to discover whether *Kayaa* has an Arabic signification. The ground plot of the necropolis is found 34 metres above the level of the sea, and is 1,250 metres distant from the same.

With the exception of tomb No. 1, which had been ravaged by the violators of the great necropolis, all the others had happily escaped the greed of the desecrators of the burial places. I must state, to my great regret, that these to-day are no less terrible than those of preceding ages. The same rapacity and vandalism continue their work of destruction, and, what is the more distressing, is that the so-called Europeans, representing certain great Powers at Saida, in their own interests and the most mer-

cenary spirit, head these devastations. We are assured that, not content with this clandestine speculation, they patronize a manufactory for articles of antiquity and false inscriptions, which is in a village in the outskirts of Saida. But in the interests of science, and so that archæological explorers should no longer be liable to be duped by them, I did not fail to take the most severe administrative measures in order that this deplorable state of things might be stopped. Finally, I must add that, in spite of Saida and other surrounding country having been ransacked, there still remain treasures to be discovered.

Beirut, June 29th, 1887.

A PERSONAL EXPLANATION.

I.

In the October number of the *Quarterly Statement*, p. 197, appears the following :—" Among other points he [Mr. Schick] shows that Dr. Merrill was misled when he stated that a rock scarp existed there."

This positive assertion of the Editor does me great injustice. In the first place I never stated that "a rock scarp existed there;" secondly, I have always maintained that *no rock scarp* existed there; thirdly, I can say, without boasting, that at the time I took more interest in this second-wall matter than any other European or foreigner. I was there every day, and frequently three or four times a day. I reported only what I saw and measured.

About 25 feet west from the line of the second wall there was a scarped wall from 10 to 15 feet in height; its top was 4 feet out of line with a vertical line drawn from the base of the same wall. What this had to do with the second wall I do not know. I never said that it had, or that it had not, anything to do with it. I mentioned and described simply a fact and never expressed any theory about it. The stones were faced like those of some large fine building. They were smaller than those in the scarped wall at the base of the present Tower of David. It may have been the wall of a building that in some general ruin inclined in towards the city, the bottom remaining in its original position. Among the ruins East of the Jordan I have seen walls perfectly intact but inclined as I have described this underground wall in Jerusalem to have been. Whatever may be the explanation of the existence of this wall at this point, I should describe it as "a scarped wall." Curiously enough, between this wall and the second wall there were no ruins, stones, &c., at least nothing that could be described as ruins, only *débris* of earth.

II.

At the bottom of p. 219, Mr. Schick says :—" Dr. Merrill has, it appears, written what he was told by the masons;" and on p. 220, "the