

put stone slabs to form low partition walls. The cone-shaped top or head of these posts must have been a very favourite form with the Jews. As it is found so often, I think it represents in some degree the cap of the high priest, as the Oriental Arabic-speaking Rabbis have even to this day a similar one.

No. 3 shows three tombstones: (a) with an inscription in Greek; it has a cross in relief, as shown in the drawing; (b) is a similar one, but the cross is not in relief but engraved; (c) the same, but bearing only one letter.

C. SCHICK.

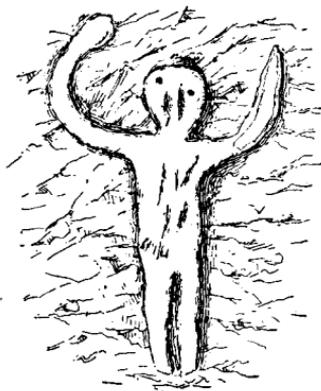
CURIOUS CAVE AT SARIS.

Some time ago M. Henri Baldensperger, of the well-known French bee-keeping firm of Baldensperger Brothers, who own an apiary near Saris, called on me, and in the course of conversation told me that some fellahin of the village of Saris had quite recently, whilst cutting firewood, discovered a cave in which were sculptured human figures.

Noticing the interest he had awakened, M. Baldensperger invited me to join him on a visit to the spot. I was yesterday (June 6th, 1889) able to avail myself of this kind invitation, and the following brief notes on the discovery may interest readers of the Palestine Exploration Fund's *Quarterly Statement* :—

On the hill to the south-west of Saris is a small pine grove called El Arb'aïn, which, like its sister grove at the shrine of El 'Ajamî, is one of the last relics of the forests which in ancient times covered this part of the country. From El Arb'aïn a bridle-path leads westward, and at about one-third of a mile distant runs along the top of a rock terrace, the edge of which is fringed with bushes. In the face of the low cliff behind these bushes is a hole by which we gain access to an artificial cavern 10 feet square, and at present from 3 to 4 feet high from earth-covered floor to flat ceiling. The entrance is at the eastern end of the north wall, and exactly opposite, in the south-east corner, is a rectangular hole or pit, lying east and west, 5 feet long and 2 feet 10 inches wide. It looks very much like the lower pit in the rock-cut wine-presses which are so frequently met with on our Judean hillsides. The walls of this pit or trough, which is almost full of earth and dried bones, rise from 3 to 4 inches above the floor, and are from 6 to 8 inches thick. In the centre of the north wall there is a channel cut just like those in wine-presses. The fellah who first showed the place to Mons. B. told him that there was writing on the top of these walls, but that a fellah who had dug in the cave in hopes of finding treasure, in his disappointment defaced it, lest it should reveal the exact spot to some more instructed and fortunate seeker. I noticed some marks or characters (?) here, which I copied.

About the centre of the east wall of the cave, which wall, being more exposed to the weather than other parts of the chamber, is much broken, is a rudely carved human figure in relief. The length of the body, in-



cluding the head, is 14 inches ; distance between elbows of uplifted arms, 9 inches.

On the northern wall at its western end, near the corner, is another figure, also with uplifted arms. Length of body, seen between present surface of floor and top of head, just 1 foot ; between the elbows, 7 inches. The legs, if it has any, must be dug for. We had no digging tools with us.

Excavation may show another trough in this corner. The whole place is dug out of the *nari* rock, which is soft to work, but becomes hardened by exposure to the air. I broke a fragment away from the eastern wall, and found it very hard.

Leaving it to others to fix the age of this cave, I would only remark that, judging from the way in which the figures stand out from the walls, I believe that they were cut at the same time that the cave was hewn out.

We saw no trace of cistern cement in any part of the chamber, nor could we find traces of a wine-press either on the terrace above or on that just outside it. Excavations may reveal more.

J. E. HANAUER.

INSCRIPTION AT BEIT EL KHÜLÏL.

ON August 1st, 1889, I for the first time visited the mysterious ruin on the plateau about three miles north-west of Hebron, known as "Ramet el Khülîl," or "Beit el Khülîl."

It was about 6 p.m. when we entered the place through a gap in the western wall, and watered our horses at the troughs at the north-west corner of the platform that surrounds the beautifully-constructed Roman

well in the angle formed by the southern and western walls, which are the only parts of the building still existing. Whilst doing so my eye fell on a stone in the southern wall. It was lit up by the slanting rays of the declining sun, which revealed traces of an old inscription on it, and on two other stones immediately east of it projecting from the southern wall. I had unfortunately nothing with me with which a squeeze could be taken, but I at once sketched in my pocket-book what could be seen.

The first stone is in a sort of recess close to the south-west corner. On it I could see three letters—

On the westernmost of the two projecting stones it was easy to distinguish the following characters—

On the next stone, immediately to the east, but at a lower level, were the characters—

I pointed out these vestiges of ancient writing to my companion, who saw them very plainly. We again visited the spot on our return journey, but as at that time the stones were in the shade we could not distinguish the inscriptions so easily. When I next go there, which will probably be soon, I hope to take paper and attempt a squeeze. The letters are large, but the stones weather-worn.

J. E. HANAUER.