

NOTES ON PLACES VISITED IN JERUSALEM.

Silwan.—The Isaiah tomb is now in custody of the Franciscans, who have made it into a chapel, kept locked up. The published inscription is not quite correct ; apart from the curvature it is

ΚΤΥΤΗΦΕΡΩΙΘΑΙΑ
ΠΡΟΘ ΤΟΥ

There is no trace of a letter between *προφ* and *του*. The surface is rough picked, and rubbed down partly, before inscribing. Greek inscriptions were used till crusading times here (as in the Anaruph inscription), but such have the *α* made in the Coptic form Δ Α, φ as φ, and not as here Θ. Professor Lewis noted some small corrections in the restored plan of Herr Schick.

Absalom's Tomb appears to be of several periods. From the position of the entrance it was probably a rock tomb descending in the surface of the open field originally ; the steps and rough chamber being of this age. Secondly. It was cut around and isolated in the Herodian age. Thirdly. the side recesses for bodies were cut in the sides of the chamber ; certainly later than the moulding round the top of the chamber, which is cut into by them. That the entrance at the top of the steps was used in the second period, is shown by the relief circle carved on the stone over it, which does not occur in any other part of the top.

The tomb of St. James, near it, has also been originally different, as there are signs of a square shaft as the original entrance, altered by being cut away on one side to form the present steps.

Church of St. Stephen outside Damascus gate. There can be no doubt as to the general form and size of this building. A pier was found by us just where it was required to match an existing one, so that there are now four known, in two pairs. The apse was plastered over on the outside with plaster, with irregular flakes of limestone imbedded in it. This plaster remains against the outer earth, after the stones have been removed, and shows all the joints of the wall which existed there. The present blocks around the apse have all been roughly placed there by the friars. They have also made up part of the apse outline with loose blocks, but the steps leading up to the apse on either side are quite undisturbed, and are of fine red clouded marbled limestone. The great excavations in the rock are later than the church and its destruction, as they are cut askew to it, and were filled with rubbish ; moreover pieces of the broken columns of the church were used in the filling up of low parts of the sides of the hollows.

A tomb lately opened there has the stone door, with iron ring for the pivot, and iron nails for the lock. The inscriptions over these tombs are—

ΕΠΙΣΥΚΕ̄ and ΟΚΔ + ΤΟΙΚΣ
 ΗΛΠΙΩ ΕΝΒΟ, ΤΟΥ
 ΜΗΚΑΤΣ Υ Υ

Mosque of El Aksa.—With regard to the age of this, the irregular use of materials which are of the age of Justinian, the capitals which do not match, the stumpy columns built up of odd material, and unsuitable proportions of the monolith columns in parts, seem to conclusively show that it must have been built after the Arab conquest, as Professor Lewis maintains. But it appears that its original form was totally un-Arab, a pure basilica, of nave and two aisles, with the clerestory arcade work, above the nave arches, which is purely Roman in design; a Christian architect was doubtless the constructor of this. The special point to note is the extraordinary thickness of the piers which bound the aisles; these seem to me to be the thick outer walls of the original basilica form, pierced through with arches so as to extend the mosque into the Arab type of a large number of low colonnades, or forest of columns. Professor Lewis does not see any objection to this view of the independent basilica form being the first, and extended later on, though he strongly holds to the large area of the colonnades in early Arab times.

Rock Tombs. The regularity of many of these tombs suggested that they were cut to measure; and on measuring them it is found that the same lengths recur frequently. Thus (in metres, the only measure I happen to have here) there are lengths found of 2·22, 2·23, 2·24, 2·27, 2·28, 2·29, 2·30, and 2·31, all evidently intended for the same quantity; again, there occur 2·81, 2·83, 2·83, 2·84, 2·84, 2·84, 2·85, 2·87, 2·88, 2·90, 2·91, 2·93, 2·93, and 2·94 metres; and this extent of variation is not more than is often found in one single chamber owing to accidental errors in the excavating. From those tombs which I have already measured it is certain that more than one cubit was used, and in two cases there is valuable evidence of a part being cut by one cubit, and a later chamber being cut out with a different cubit. The cubits found are—

Inches ±

- 25·12 ·1 One chamber of tombs of Judges, with other chambers cut later with 22·5, leading from it.
 23·83 ·06 Four chambers of one tomb, near Judges, with later chamber on 22·5 cut from it.
 22·55 ·04 Eighteen tombs, tomb of Judges and others by it, and tombs of Hinnom. No variation in amount in different places.
 15·46 ·08 Six tombs in valley of Hinnom, one with moulding and therefore late. (Herodian.)

The 25.12 is already known to be probably the sacred cubit of the Jews ; and 22.5 is the double of the Phœnician foot. I should say that all the results were worked out in metres, in which form I could not recognise the resemblance to known measures, which I am familiar with in inches ; hence I could not have the faintest prejudice or inclination to adapt the results to cubits already known. I hope to obtain more material and work out these results more fully in future.

Future Work required in Jerusalem.—A great deal of clearance has been made in Solomon's stables by the late Pasha here, and the inner ends of the triple gate opened out on the Haram area. Thus much more can be seen of the masonry ; and four periods are traceable, probably ranging from Herod to Justinian. I am told by Professor Lewis that the lowest blocks of the great wall on south-east are dressed with the "claw tool," or *comb pick* as it may better be named. This tooling is, in Egypt, characteristic of Greek work, and is well known early in Greece (Parthenon, &c.) ; hence it gives a strong presumption that the whole of the south-east wall is of Herodian work. If so, it is very unlikely that Solomon's wall occupied that line, as if it did its lowest courses would have been buried in the rubbish, and used by Herod for his foundations. Hence the most urgent question is whether any trace of Solomon's wall can be found *within* the line of the present wall. To settle this, some excavations in Solomon's stables are needed. Probably the best place would be in the internal angle between the great corner tower and the east wall where two sides of the pit would be of masonry, with ledges to fix timbering, &c., upon ; thus we should learn whether the wall is backed (1) with earth, (2) with vaults, or (3) with a rock scarp ; also (4) whether there is any sign of Solomon's wall or foundations. Other pits might be sunk to find the rock, and search for walls or masonry, between this and the outcrop of the rock in the triple gate.

It is also very desirable to open and examine the vaults beneath the raised platform of the Haran, but these are jealously guarded from any chance view.

W. M. FLINDERS PETRIE.

EXPLORATIONS IN PALESTINE.

EARLY in February a vizierial permission was granted for excavations about Khurbet 'Ajlân, and an area of .9½ square kilometres in that neighbourhood. And as soon as the packing of my Egyptian collections was finished, and they had been inspected by the Government, and a bad attack of influenza had been overcome, I left Egypt for Syria, arriving at Jaffa on March 9. The season was unusually late ; no rain had fallen till Christmas, and the spring rains lasted heavily till the beginning of April ; the last day of March there was a furious storm over all south Palestine ; a white squall, which I saw tearing along over Jaffa at the rate of an