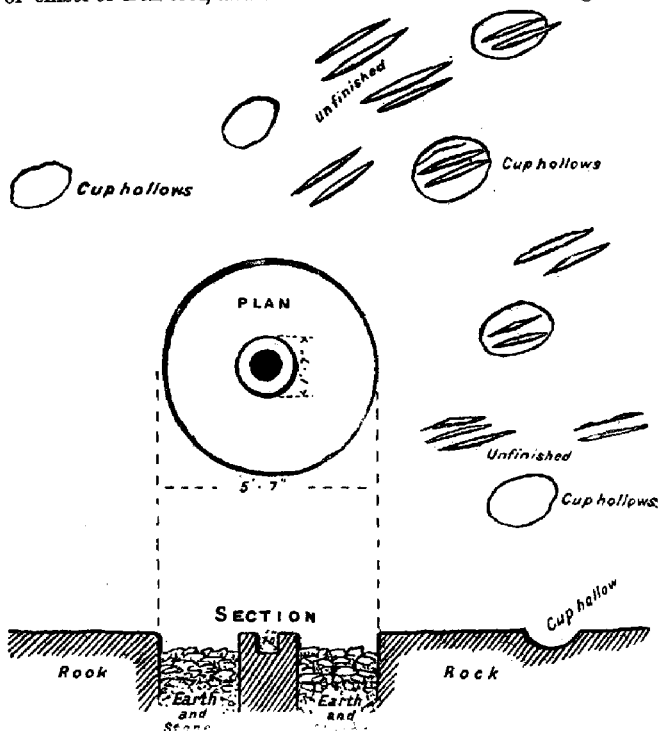


sign of chisel or iron tool, and the insides and bottoms of the gashes and



PLAN AND SECTION OF CUTTINGS IN THE ROCK IN HARAM AREA.

hollows are perfectly smooth and rounded, almost polished. I got measurements of the fountain-like cutting, and I enclose a sketch of it.

REPORTS FROM MR. F. J. BLISS.

TELL EL HESY, April 6th, 1891.

You will see by the account that I have had to buy out a lot of crops, and got them for the price paid only after a tremendous amount of talk and bother. The beans we got cheap, but the barley was dear. You see the crops are rich this year, and the owners justly wish to be recompensed for the damage done to the adjacent crops not bought by us, and yet more or less encroached upon by our workpeople, who number about 100 at times.

The work has now gone on for three weeks. The first eight days I worked over the north section of the west town. I turned up all the

varieties of Amorite pottery; found burials of Phœnician jars similar to those found in Petrie's "cemetery," only very much deeper—quite 6 feet—found painted Phœnician pottery at all levels, except the lowest, with Archaic Amorite above it in some cases; thought I was finding walls over and over again, but a careful investigation always failed to prove face and direction in the consolidated and ruined mass of brick; uncovered a concrete wine press two or three feet deep, and found one house at the same level.

The consolidated state of this place, together with the failure to find small objects, decided me to leave it and attack the Tell. I had made the general investigations of the west town thoroughly, and to turn over the whole mass, *i.e.*, to investigate it particularly, would have taken all my time and money for this season. Starting at the *Well* on the Tell, I ran a line 60 feet to the west, and from thence a line 110 feet to the north, *i.e.*, above Manasseh's wall, and in the rectangle, bounded by the two lines, the wall, and the Tell east edge.

I placed my men in squares of 10 feet with orders to go down—the earth being taken to the edge by girls and women who throw it 100 feet and more into the river bed. First we uncovered a cemetery, apparently Arab from the bracelets, glass, &c. The cemetery being on top is, of course, later than any dwellings, and was probably used by the Bedawin. At a depth of 4-6 feet we came on traces of a town very much ruined, but with a few frail walls which I have planned. The town contained a lot of deep circular ovens such as are now used. The pottery continued Greek and Phœnician. We are now uncovering a second town, part of it was burned by a fierce fire, but at the north end we have found walls in a capital condition, with a smooth brick face. In one room were several bushels of burned barley. In another place we find burned wheat. The pottery does not change much, and the red and black Greek pottery still turns up. There seems to be much more of it than Petrie supposed. The workmen are doing splendidly; I have seen Petrie's Egyptians at work, and I can still praise ours.

My father was astonished at the amount of work they do. I have the advantage of Petrie's picked workmen, and of a capital foreman who is most clever in tracing walls. Then they all work together and are not scattered about, as they were last year to be visited only once or twice a day. In ten days we have got to a depth in some places of over 10 feet, having worked 60 squares with rather less than 30 men. Each man has two girls to carry off the earth. When the tram comes we shall move west, and go down to the same level, thus uncovering the northern half of the Tell, as far down as we can.

The Effendi is very nice and friendly, and we get on very well. The Arabs are quiet, and we have almost no small worries. I have not been four miles from the tent since I arrived. Of course I shall visit Tell es Sâfi. To-day the weather is clearing, but we have had a horrible sirocco. I should mention that the item for wages includes a few shillings for backsheesh for small finds of pottery.

TELL EL HESY, *April 21st*, 1891.

I keep very busy. The tram has been set up and is a help, although, owing to the contracted condition of the hill, and the single track, it does not carry earth as fast as we can dig it up.

Nothing new since I last wrote, only more of the same thing—unearthing interesting rooms, with pottery, seeds, &c., &c., which of course I am planning. So many granaries and weavers places this old town must have had. One rude Greek inscription—a few letters; Greek pottery abundant. The harvest this year is early and rich—last year it was late and poor, owing to Arab wars. I fear we will have hard work to keep men, who are already deserting. We shall get men from the other villages, and may have to raise the wages a trifle.

If the Committee desire to make an autumn season here, it will hardly be safe before October (so Dr. Elliott thinks), but then work might go on if the rains were slight until near to Christmas. It is important for me to know before I leave, for the tram and tents, &c., should be stored at Gaza with the good Doctor if the work is to go on in October, so as to avoid the expense of carrying them up to Jerusalem and bringing them down again.

Of course I hope to stay on till the 1st of June, but the heat and the lack of workpeople may stop the work before.

I have decided not to uncover the whole of the north half of the hill, but the north-east quarter of it, as it is very difficult to get rid of the earth. So in a day or two we will be *going down* again, and I hope my next letter may report something interesting.

TELL EL HESY, *April 24th*, 1891.

We are pushing the work hard this week before the harvest sets in; have to-day 39 men at work, each with two girls to throw away the earth, for now the earth carrying is the great problem. For Ramadan they are working splendidly. By to-morrow or Monday we shall begin to go down into the fifth period, as I distinguish now—

- (1) The Arab graveyard at the surface.
- (2) Rough stone dwellings, all fallen, with rough pottery.
- (3) The town of the ovens.
- (4) A lower town, full of granaries.

Number 4 had still some very good walls, all of which are planned. I think we have destroyed no wall unwittingly, as the men always cry "wolf" if the ground gets hard, and my man Yusuf (who is a perfect treasure—intelligent, keen, honest, politic and enthusiastic), is very clever at detecting brick *in situ*, fallen brick and brick decay. The weather for the past ten days has been delicious.

GAZA, *May 23rd*, 1891.

I am very sorry to report that I have been reluctantly obliged to close the work for the season. The harvest has proved a fatal rival to the work. As early as April 22nd we were obliged to fill our broken ranks of trained workmen with raw material from another village, and on April 25th (a Saturday) I announced that I would raise the wages from 9 Gaza piastres per day for a man to $11\frac{3}{4}$ piastres—over 30 per cent.—with a corresponding rise in the girls' wages. Well, even this increase failed to keep my trained workmen, of whom only seven came back on Monday, April 27th, and in their place we were obliged to put a lot of new raw workmen; a most unsatisfactory state of things it was, this seeing inferior labourers profiting by the rise in the wages, but I believe that it would have been hard to have secured a sufficient number even of these at the old price. At any rate, on Monday, May 4th, their numbers were much depleted, many having gone off to the barley harvest. Monday, May 11th, only nine men came, with the girls to carry the earth, and the quality had fallen off quite as much as the quantity—old men and little girls, the maimed and the aged. The work got most unsatisfactory. We were digging in a section more than 100 feet square, which had to be lowered pretty evenly, and which, at any rate, had to be left even, for the sake of next year's crops. Of course the Fund expects to return in the autumn, but in the meantime the owners of the land have a right to demand that the place be kept in a state for ploughing—indeed, I would not have felt it right to leave it otherwise. This hampered the work at the end, for in our uncertainty from day to day as to how many men might come the day after, we hesitated to go deep in any one spot for fear we would be left with an irregular plot of land with no one to level it. With a number of trained workmen back again in the autumn, we will in a couple of days be able to do as much work as was done in the last week and a half—and, of course, at far less cost. Our inability to work as late as Mr. Petrie did is owing to the peace among the Arabs, which has enabled them to sow full crops, which their peasant partners reap. The harvest also is earlier. For weeks past we have seen processions of peasants from distant villages pass the Tell on their way to the Arab encampments. First came the lentil crop, then the barley, and now the wheat has begun. I paid off the men Friday, May 15th. The next day visited Tell es Safi. I should say that the place was in just about the same condition as when Mr. Petrie visited it. But more of this later. We began to send in the tram stuff Monday, and by Thursday everything was in store here. Dr. Elliott is most kind. As to work in the autumn, I have written Mr. Dickson at Jerusalem, asking him if he will kindly represent to the Governor the necessity which occasioned the temporary cessation of the work. The law on excavations says that the Firman is null if the work is stopped for two months, but the blanks for permission say that the Firman is null if the work is stopped for more

than two months *without reason*. The harvest, the heat of summer, and the malaria causing typhoid from which the Arabs flee, will be represented to be sufficient reasons for prolonging the vacation to late September. I hope very shortly after my arrival in Beirût, to send in my report for the season.

RUINS OF CHURCH ON THE SKULL HILL, JERUSALEM.

DURING the last few years building operations to a large extent have been carried on in the environs of Jerusalem, and several objects of interest discovered during the attendant excavations have been duly noted from time to time in our *Quarterly Statements*.

Amongst these discoveries was that of the small Crusaders' Church near the road, north of the Damascus Gate, a full description of which by Lieutenant Mantell, R.E., together with drawings of details of great interest, were given in the *Quarterly Statement* of January, 1882, p. 117. It is marked (CHURCH) in the annexed plan, No. 1.

The remains of the Crusaders' Church still exist as so described, but the stone on which were the very interesting paintings (representing our Lord and His Disciples) has been exposed to the air, and only faint traces of them can now be seen.

The land to the eastward of this Church was purchased some years since by the French Dominican Friars, whose excavations for the erection of their buildings soon exposed one of the most interesting series of tombs near the City.

They have been preserved by the Friars with great care and at considerable expense. Continuing their excavations westward, a trench 8 to 10 feet deep uncovered portions of a tessellated pavement in good condition, and composed entirely of different coloured marbles.

I was enabled to see this in 1886, owing to the kindness of Dr. Selah Merrill, the well-known author and American Consul at Jerusalem, who had specially noted it, and so much of it was then exposed as to show that it was the pavement of one long corridor, or other apartment, at least 50 feet long. But there was nothing in the design of the mosaic or any of its surroundings to disclose the nature of the building.

Since then, however, the excavations have so far proceeded as to uncover the greater portion of it, and when I saw it again last year it was clearly shown to be the remains of a Church, presenting several peculiarities of much interest.

It is on the well-known Skull Hill and north-west of Jeremiah's Grotto, and about north of the tomb suggested by General Gordon, as probably