

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.

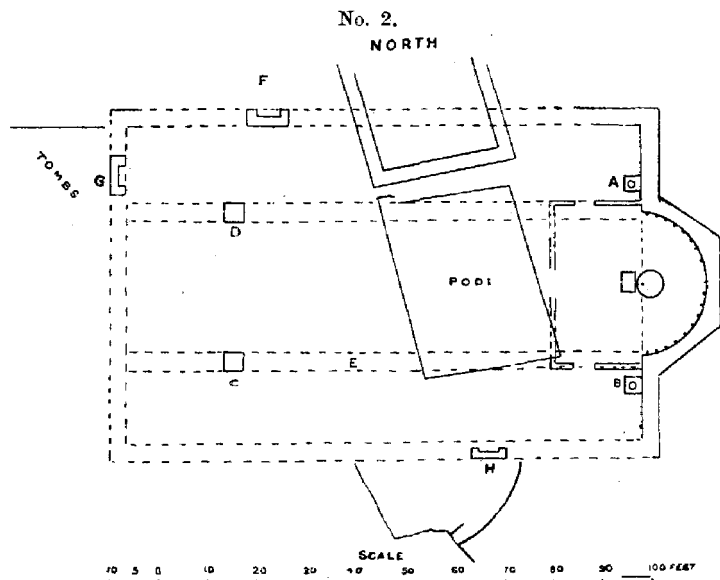
I was enabled to see this in 1886, owing to the kindness of Dr. Selah Merrill, the well-known author and American Consul at Jerusalem, who had specially noted it, and so much of it was then exposed as to show that it was the pavement of one long corridor, or other apartment, at least 50 feet long. But 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

that of our Lord, and so indicated in the sketch, &c., given in the *Quarterly Statement* of April, 1885.

The remains of the Church are shown to a larger scale on plan No. 2, which is from a careful drawing made by Mr. Schick, and from measurements taken by Mr. Petrie and myself.



It was evidently three-aisled, with an apsidal eastern end to the centre and square ends to the other aisles, the total length, exclusive of apse, being internally about 105 feet and the breadth 65 feet, being thus about the same width as St. James', Westminster, but 20 feet longer. The fine Church of St. Anne at Jerusalem is only 90 feet long.

It will be seen that the site of this edifice has been interfered with in a very singular way by two deep cuttings in the solid rock.

The southern one is cut perpendicularly down to a depth of 16 feet its shape being irregular, averaging about 36 feet by 27 feet. The northern one has only a trench dug round it, and Mr. Schick is no doubt correct in saying that these excavations were intended "to make a tank or pool, and to quarry stone for building at the same time."

It is tolerably certain, however, that the pool was never used as a tank, as a careful examination shows no trace of any cement lining.

It is unnecessary to enter further into the purpose or date of these rock-cut excavations, because they do not seem to affect in any way the description of the Church, except that they were supposed by the Friars to point out the site of St. Stephen's Tomb—but not the slightest trace of this has been found.

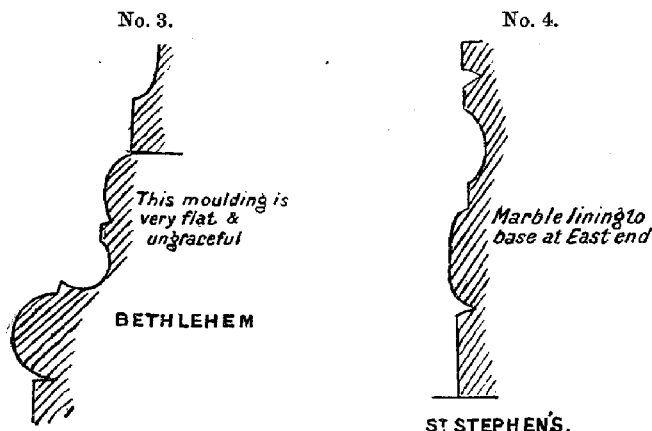
At the western end of the Church the wall has nearly disappeared,

but there are sufficient traces remaining to show its position, which seems to have been fixed by that of some ancient tombs shown near α on plan No. 2. One of them has been closed by a rolling stone.

The positions of the two aisle columns to the west are well marked (their foundations still remaining at c and d), and the Friars assured me that another one had been found at e , although again covered up. I could not, however, fix its *exact* position.

The sites of any other columns on the north side were still unexcavated when I last visited the place, and, of course, the pool (now entirely cleared out) has obliterated all traces of any work on its site.

Very fortunately one moulded base has been found, evidently belonging to the column mentioned below, its section being like those in the Basilica at Bethlehem (*vide* No. 3), the upper torus of which has a peculiar flat and ungraceful form.



A long length of one column has also been preserved; its diameter of 3 feet, supposing it to be Corinthian (as in all probability it was), would give a height, including base and capital, of about 30 feet.

The three door sills at f , g , and h , show the probable place of the old doorways.

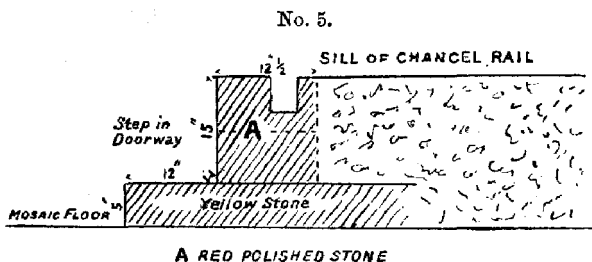
But the most interesting part of the Church, and, fortunately, the best preserved, is the eastern.

The stonework of its walls has been, indeed, to a large extent removed, but their external outline has been curiously preserved by a coating of plaster with which they were originally covered, and which now adheres tenaciously to the *debris* which lies against them, showing with complete distinctness the mark of every stone and joint.

I have not met with such another instance of this in any excavations, but Mr. Petrie tells me that he has found such an one in Egypt. There is not anything to indicate the precise form of the interior, but there can scarcely be a doubt that the centre was the usual circular apse.

At A is a square base of rough stone, but with a moulded marble casing fixed by bronze clips on one side, which still remains as I have drawn. When perfect it would have been 2·7 square.

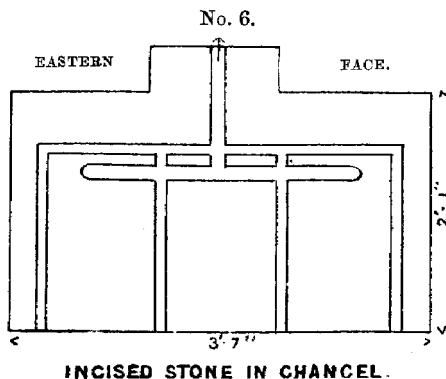
A corresponding base, but stripped of its casing, is at B. A portion of a column of white marble, broken, but 6 feet long, was found near. But it is only 12 inches in diameter, and could not therefore have been one of the aisle columns. Still more interesting are the distinct remains of the chancel rails (V. No. 5), showing the outlines of the choir and the steps leading to it.



The north and south sides of these are evidently *in situ*, but the western end was formerly further to the west than at present, as is clearly shown by the marks on the sills at each side.

The steps from the general level of the mosaic to the chancel floor are *in situ*, and so is, to all appearance, the curious slab in the centre of the apse.

There are no other indications of the original floor of the chancel, but at the east of the slab was found a large stone, roughly cut to a circular form, 5·2 in diameter and 2·7 high. Both its upper and lower surfaces were quite flat and even.



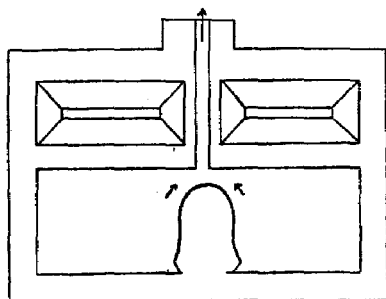
The slab is shown to a large scale in drawing No. 6, and it was found sunk to a somewhat lower level than that of the chancel floor.

The shape of the slab with its curious lip, and the channels made evidently for the purpose of receiving and pouring off liquids, will strike anyone conversant with Egyptian antiquities as having strong resemblance to the tables of offerings, numbers of which are in the Museum at Gizeh, and many also in the Museums of Turin and Paris.

In our own (British) Museum there are several such tables, many of which have a short leg at each angle. But this is not seen generally, and the slab at Jerusalem does not have it.

I append a sketch (No. 7) of one of these Egyptian tables (all of which were connected with Pagan worship), which I made at the Gizeh Museum at Cairo.

No. 7.



**EGYPTIAN TABLE OF OFFERINGS
FROM MUSEUM, GIZEH.**

It shows the peculiar lip which all these tables have, and also the channels for receiving and running off the liquids.

I know, personally, of no example of such a slab in a Christian Church, and I cannot learn from those of my friends who are best acquainted with Christian antiquities that such another is known in Europe.

Mr. Butler, in his well-known book on the Coptic Churches in Egypt, describes several altar slabs with channels for washing, and also particularly one at St. Pudentiana in Rome of the 4th century. And the "Encyclopédie Méthodique Antiquités, &c.," vol. i, p. 377, also notices that "Quelques autels antiques sont creusés en dessus et percés de côté pour recueillir et laisser écouler ensuite les libations."

But the peculiar lip is absent, and there are no crosses in the Jerusalem slab such as one would expect to find in an altar stone, in any but a Coptic Church.

But Mr. Butler also mentions that beneath the Greek altar there was always a place to carry off the rinsings from the priests' hands, and the water used for washing the sacred vessels, and in reference to this I find many notices in ecclesiastical writers, *e.g.* :—

In Durandus, lib. i, "De Altaris Consecratione"; "Ecclesia quoque iterim aspergitur et aque residuum ad basim altaris funditur."

Again, in "Martigny's Dictionary of Christian Antiquities," he describes under the head of Autel (page 60), "A la base de l'autel se trouvait une piscine où le prêtre se lavait les mains, &c., on y jettait aussi l'eau qui avait servi à laver les vases sacrés."

The absence of crosses appears to me to show that the slab was not an altar, but that it was used as our piscina, to receive the washings. But the lip is a form which, so far as I know, is unique in a Christian Church.

The circular stone is equally curious.

Bingham, in his "Antiquities" (vol. ii, section viii), speaking of the French Council in A.D. 509, notices that "whereas before that time (in France) they were in the form of tables, they now began to be erected more like altars, either upon a single foot or pillar in the midst, &c., or upon an edifice erected like a tomb."

Such a tomb-like edifice exists in the subterranean Church of St. John the Baptist at Jerusalem (v. "Notes to Ordnance Survey," p. 59), but I have no recollection of an altar stone "on a foot or pillar."

Professor Middleton, however, states that there is one so constructed at the very early Church of St. Angelo at Perugia.

This example (which has escaped my notice) may certainly be taken as a confirmation of Bingham's statement. Probably, therefore, the circular stone may be considered as used for a similar purpose.

Finally, we have to consider the tessellated mosaic which formed the pavement of the church.

This is made of different coloured marbles, viz., white, black, red, yellow, and blue, there being no terra cotta or stone used anywhere.

The tesserae are $\frac{1}{2}$ inch to $\frac{1}{4}$ inch square, according to their position. The border is one of the ordinary Roman patterns, and the rest of the work is only peculiar as being very plain in design for so costly a material, no figures or foliage being introduced. The workmanship throughout to the border is good, but the tesserae to the main portion are laid very irregularly.

It is everywhere, so far as I could see, fitted to the walls, and was, to all appearance, laid after they were built.

For some clue as to the date of the floor we may turn to another example in Jerusalem, viz., in the Church of St. Cross, which is said to have been built by Justinian, and only partly destroyed by Chosroës. I have not seen this pavement, and only know it from a description kindly given to me by Mrs. Finn, and from Pierotti's drawings; but if these be correct it is very debased work, and the design very poor.

Many other mosaics are now being uncovered in the vicinity of Jerusalem, more particularly near the present Zion Gate, and these are of good workmanship, but plain, and much like that at the church which I am describing.

If we turn to other parts of Palestine we shall find, perhaps the best.

example in that given by E. Renan in his "Mission de Phenicé," of a Byzantine Church about 2 leagues from Tyre, and said to have been built in the 6th or 7th century; and there is an inscription which distinctly assigns the mosaic to that date. But in a long and careful treatise on the subject given by Renan it is clearly shown that this inscription is an interpolation, the mosaic itself being of a much earlier date.

We have, then, the following facts, viz. :—

That the church of which we have the ruins on Skull Hill was very ancient, as is shown by its single apse.

That the octagonal form of this apse, externally, proves that it was designed under Byzantine influence before the distinctive features given to it in the plan of St. Sophia at Constantinople, and nearly all later Byzantine works.

That the church was arranged according to the Roman rite, and with very antique arrangements of altar, &c.

That the pavement was Roman, and laid down at a time at which great activity prevailed in ecclesiastical work at Jerusalem generally, as is shown by other large remains of similar mosaic pavements in other parts near the city.

That the marble linings still remaining to the north-eastern base, together with the costly mosaic floor, show that this church was one of great magnificence.

There is no mention of its erection in the account of Justinian's work given by Procopius.

It appears to me that its authorship is explained satisfactorily in the annexed note, given to me for other purposes by Sir C. W. Wilson :—

"I do not think that sufficient attention has been given to the great building period at Jerusalem when the Empress Eudocia was there. She built St. Stephen's Church, and it was, too, about this period, or a little later, that I attribute the many Churches including that, in probatica, the Siloam Church of Antoninus, &c." The history of the Empress is well known. She married the Emperor Theodosius II, in A.D. 421, made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 438, and a short time afterwards began the erection of St. Stephen's Church, in which she was buried; her death taking place in 460.

It appears to me that the remains of this church fulfil the conditions which we might expect at such a time, when Roman work had been influenced by Byzantine.

The position of the Church appears to agree fully with the requirements of this opinion.

It is situate on the commanding hill which is well known as the Place of Stoning, close to the Gate (Damascus) which was formerly known as St. Stephen's, and answers to the description given by the Russian Abbot Daniel (1106-1167 A.D.), who appears to have entered by the Nablús road: "To the left, near to the road, there is the Church of the first martyr, St. Stephen—it was at this place that he was stoned by the Jews."

There is, however, the fact to be ceded that the pilgrim Theodorich (c. 1172 A.D.) says, in describing his tour from west to east, outside the walls of Jerusalem,¹ "before you reach the Northern Gate you find, upon a hill, the Church of St. Stephen, the protomartyr," &c., &c.

The pilgrim Antoninus (c. 570 A.D.) makes a similar statement, so that we have his description of the site of the ancient church before the destruction of the churches by Chosroës, and Theodorich's description to the same effect after its rebuilding by the Crusaders.

These accounts would, apparently, place the church on the hill to the west of the Damascus road and away from the Skull Hill, the position being that suggested by Dr. Chaplin, in the *Quarterly Statement* for 1876, page 9, and very close to the Tomb which Major Conder has suggested as being very probably that of Our Lord.

Some of the other pilgrims appear to support this view, but others place the site of the stoning and of the church in entirely different positions from the above, and the various statements are otherwise singularly confused and at variance with each other.

They are given clearly, and collated, in the Appendix A. to the description by the Abbot Daniel [P. Pilgrims' Test. Soc.], and I will not attempt to reconcile them.

All that can, I think, be said at present is that we have no remains except those of the church which I have above described, which appear to fulfil the conditions of the Empress Eudocia's Church.

The sarcophagus which was found on the Western Hill (V. *Quarterly Statement*, 1876, page 9), though of great size, was, I believe, quite destitute of ornament, and not likely to be that of an Empress.

The position of her sarcophagus may possibly be indicated by the chamber to the south of the church entered from it by the door H.

T. HAYTER LEWIS.

THE HOLY SEPULCHRE.

By MAJOR WATSON, R.E.

IN an interesting note by Mr. Simpson in the *Quarterly Statement* for April, he has alluded to the idea that part of the original rock can be seen in the entrance to the so-called Holy Sepulchre, and has pointed out that this appears to require authentication. Having heard a similar statement made on several occasions, I took the opportunity when recently in Jerusalem, to make a careful examination of the so-called tomb with a view to ascertaining whether any rock was visible or not. After doing so I was

¹ Palestine Pilgrim's Test. Soc., page 43.