

LETTERS FROM HERR SCHICK.

I.—ACELDAMA.

SOME months ago a gentleman at Stockholm wrote to ask me to take for him the following measurements: "The length of inside of the house for dead bodies, called 'Acelanda,' also its breadth, measured from the northern wall to the large pier, and further on to the inner rock wall; also the height from the top of the building down to the rubbish; and the size of the holes in the roof, together with those in the rock, and their number."

Inclined to serve others whenever I can, I thought to go down and take these measurements, but could not effect it till the end of May, when I found things of much interest, at least to me, and now send to you also a report of my observations, together with plans and sections, and some remarks.

First, as to what I have found in books. The late Dr. Schulz says in his "Vorlesung," "Many writers speak of this house for bones and dead bodies, but only in general, and it deserves more attention than has been bestowed on it hitherto. With the help of a ladder I went down into the pit, and can now speak more positively on the matter." But his description which follows is not exact, and is liable to be misunderstood. Dr. Tobler, in his "Topography of Jerusalem," vol. ii, gives a fuller and more detailed description, but no plan or section, and his measurements were made some by steps, others by estimation. But the history of the place which he gives at length is very valuable. Dr. Sepp, in his "Jerusalem," vol. i, copies Tobler, and adds some remarks of his own: for instance, that this is the very first "Campo Santo" of the Christian world. Further, that the skulls found here are not Semitic but of the Caucasian race, and some even of the negro type. Professor Krafft, who also went down by help of a rope into the pit, gives similar facts in his "Topography of Jerusalem," adding that, with regard to the belief that dead bodies are here remarkably quickly dissolved and without bad smell, it is true, as was proved with a dog during his stay in the Holy City.

In searching through the publications of the English Exploration Fund, as far as they are in my possession, I found in the Jerusalem Volume, page 380: "There is a very fine rock-cut and masonry vault at this place, 30 feet long, and 20 feet wide, and 34 feet high, with two piers of drafted masonry with a rustic boss. The stones are of moderate dimensions and very white; the top course is arched out to support the roof, which is groined and of rubble. This vaulted building resembles Cru-

sading work. . . . The lower part of the vault is a great rock-cut trench. Tombs exist in the sides. . . . Immediately east of Hakk ed Dumm is the cave called Ferdûs er Rûm ;¹ it is some 35 feet high, and 10 by 6½ yards area."

Lewin, in his "Siege of Jerusalem," London, 1863, p. 170, says : "Aceldama is a little level plot overhanging the valley of Hinnom, with a few trees. On the east side is an old building over a quadrangular pit, sunk some 30 feet into the rock. This was many centuries the charnel-house into which the bodies of pilgrims who died at Jerusalem were thrown for interment. The custom of antiquity, therefore, corroborates the tradition that this was the field purchased with the thirty pieces of silver." And Ritter, in his "Erdkunde von Asien," Berlin, 1852, vol. viii, 2nd part, thinks in regard to this place that it was a loam pit, already exhausted or nearly void of clay, and therefore was sold by the potter to the priests for the betrayal money of Judas, as a fit place "to bury strangers in" (Matthew xxvii, 7). Ritter adds that "in the very neighbourhood, even to-day, clay is taken by potters," which last notice is repeated by nearly all following writers without sufficient ground. The place where a kind of clay² is found is higher up the "Hill of Evil Counsel," in the neighbourhood of the Aqueduct coming from Solomon's pools, near the road crossing from Zion Gate, which goes down into the valley of Hinnom, and up again on the opposite slope. In this neighbourhood also are rock-cut tombs.

Not improbably the potter's manufactory was lower down, possibly even in the valley in the neighbourhood of the waters of Siloah or Bir Ajûb. Similar manufactures are now often carried on in caves, or other places sheltered by rocks, and probably it was so in ancient times ; so, as long as there is not found a better place, we may with some confidence consider the traditional Aceldama as the genuine one, and that the potters had here a cave in which their work was carried on, till the place was bought by the priests for thirty pieces of silver, to be henceforth a burial-place for strangers.

Robinson (vol. ii, page 354) says : "The tradition which fixes Aceldama upon this spot reaches back to the age of Jerome." Antonius passed the Siloah water and came afterwards to Aceldama, where the strangers were buried, and between the tombs were lodgings of the Church servants (or holy men). In A. D. 670 it is described by Arculph as on the south of Zion, "a small field (Aceldama) covered with a heap of stones, where the bodies of many pilgrims are carefully buried, while others are left to rot on the surface."³ In the Crusading time Aceldama was used to bury the pilgrims, and also all those who died in the Knight's Hospital. It was

¹ Ferdûs is the general name for the Christian tombs in this region.

² It is rather a kind of chalk used by potters for mixing with the real clay.

³ It seems that the Bishop did not visit the place itself, but saw it from a distance. In A. D. 1053, a monk, Wernifer, was buried here, and in 1059 the Abbot Walstan (*see* Sepp i, p. 300).

the place where it is shown now, as many of the writers of that time prove. In A.D. 1143 a church was there, which belonged to the Syrians, but was given over to the Latins. In A.D. 1218 earth was taken from here and brought by ships to Pisa in Italy for the new "Campo Santo" there.

In A.D. 1336 Baldensel says that the bodies of many holy persons were lying here, and Rudolph von Sachsen says: "Aceldama was situated south over the Valley of Jehosaphat, not large, but a deeply-excavated place, vaulted over in a spot surrounded by trees, having holes in the roof, through which the dead bodies were let down, of which after three days nothing was left but bones." In this time the Latins bought the place again, and built a church near, or on it, but the church was soon destroyed by the Muhammedans again, for in 1483 the monk Fabri found it destroyed. In A.D. 1560 the pilgrims Wormser and Villinger mention that there was a hole, where one could creep in and look into the inside, very likely a small window situated at some height, as in general visitors could look into the interior only through the holes in the roof. In A.D. 1583 the place was in possession of the Armenians, who allowed other denominations to bury there for payment. Quaresmius states that in A.D. 1625 and one hundred years later, the Greeks had the control of the place (Sepp H., "Jerusalem," Schaffhausen, 1873, i, p. 299). In 1697 Maundrell says, after describing its situation, "It is called 'Campo Santo,' a small plot of ground not more than 30 yards long, and about half as much broad; one half of it is taken up by a square fabric, 12 yards high, built for a charnel-house. The corpses are let down into it from the top, there being five holes left open for that purpose. Looking down through these holes one could see many bodies under several degrees of decay, from which it may be conjectured that this grave does not make that quick despatch with the corpses committed to it which is commonly reported. The Armenians have the command, for which they pay rent to the Turks." Good and bad here came together in death; for it is said that in 1681 malefactors were also buried there, where, according to Sepp H., the "arch offender" Judas Iscariot himself found his tomb!

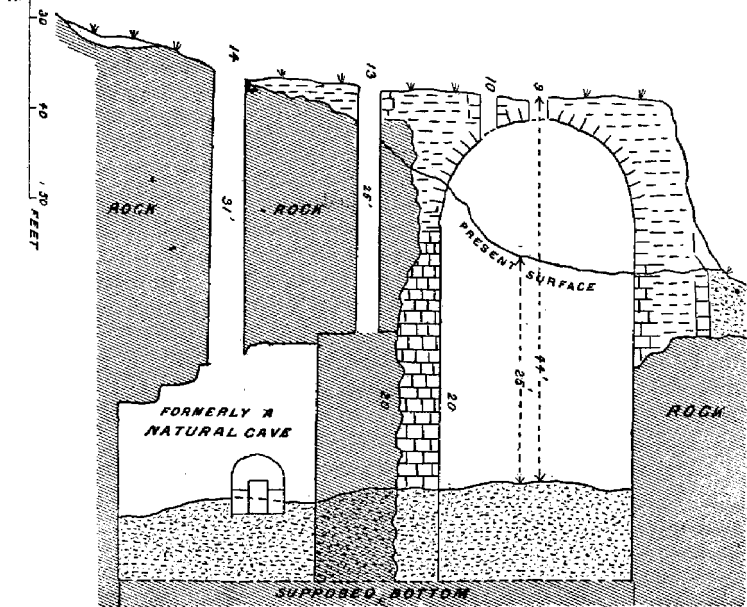
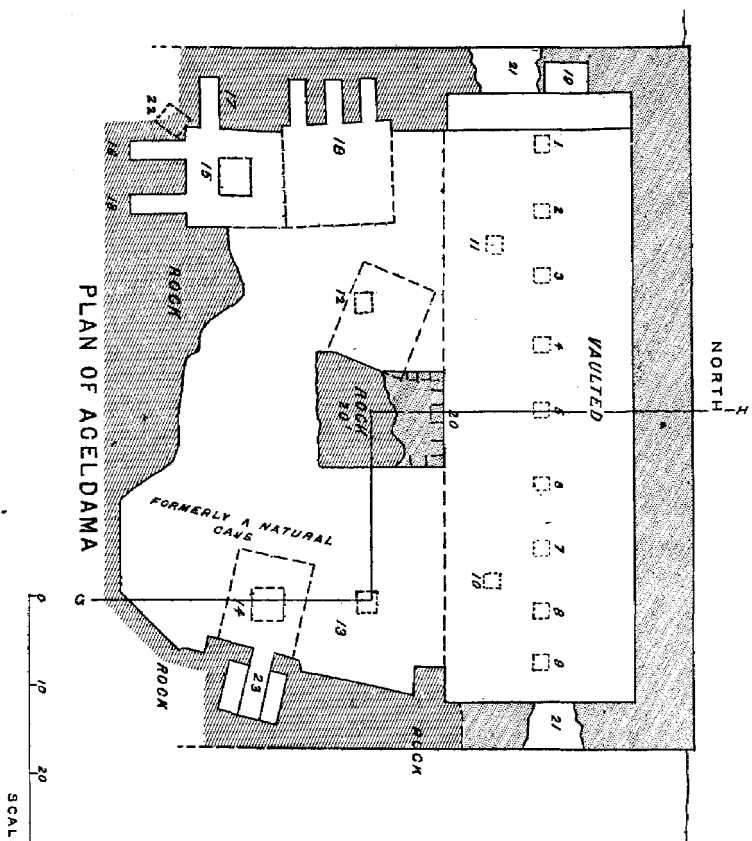
Many pilgrims and travellers visited the place, but not many went down into the vast grave. In the year 1845 Krafft let himself down by a rope, and Dr. Tobler on a rope ladder, and Dr. Schulz a few years before by a regular ladder, as I myself did in 1892.

2. My description of the place.—It is now a partly-ruined building, 78 feet long outside, and 57 feet wide, erected over rock-cut caves and a deep trench (*see* plan and section), situated on a steep slope of the rocky hill. At the southern part the roof consists of rock, and is level with the hillside, and the northern part, being about 20 feet lower, is walled up as a rectangular oblong building, roofed with a vault (*see* Section), just over the deep rock-hewn trench, which is 63 feet long and 21 feet wide, and from the present surface of the ground to the surface of the accumulation of bones, &c., 25 feet deep, or from the top of the roof to the accumu

lation, 44 feet deep. The depth of the accumulation is not known, but I conjecture it to be from 10 to 15 feet, perhaps even more, so that the whole height would be on an average of about 60 feet. The trench is cut into the rock about 30 feet deep, or the half of the whole height, a gigantic grave of the usual form! In order to make it still larger, caves already existing to the south of it, some natural, others artificial, as rock-cut tombs, were added, and their bottoms made deeper, and parts of their roofs broken out, leaving piers at the corners, and especially one in the middle, bearing the roof of rock, and also one side of the vault. This addition added to the large tomb a space about 60 feet long, 28 feet wide, and from 30 to 35 feet high, as the drawings will show. That these were originally, especially on one side, rock-cut tombs, can be seen by the six loculi (numbered 16-18 in the drawing), and it is nearly certain that there were on the other side natural caves, in which the potters may have carried on their trade in our Lord's time. I have shown by dotted lines in the Plan the outline, and in the section the height of the rock-cut chambers as they probably were. In the corner there is near the roof a door (marked 22), which seems to me to have been made afterwards for a more convenient entrance to the large tomb or charnel-house. Rock-cut tombs were only in the western part of these caves; in the eastern were none, except a small rock-cut chamber, with two benches for dead bodies (23).

The middle pier is only partly rock; it was squared and strengthened by masonry of white stones of moderate size, dressed nicely with some slight bevells round, so that I put them in the early Christian time, if not even in the Jewish (as Schulz, Tobler, and others have done), but the masonry work of the walls in west, north, and east, standing on the perpendicular rock scarps, seems to me to be Crusading; there are no large stones, and the whole is of very common workmanship. In the west wall is a door-opening now walled up (marked 19), which seems to have been made later. In the west and east wall are now breaches (21), which become every year larger, and so the building looks ruinous. Through these breaches one may look into the interior, and by means of a ladder go down to the surface of the accumulation, which consists of earth, small stones, and bones. I found the place quite dry, and without any bad smell.

The vault is not groined—as some writers have said—although it has a few ribs from the piers, but is tunnel-like, more than semi-circular, and slightly pointed. In the centre of the arch are in one line, and at equal distances, nine openings or holes of a square form, nearly 2 feet wide, which could be covered by flat stones, as one still is. These holes are marked in the drawings 1-9. Four feet distant are two holes, a little larger, marked 10 and 11, 30 feet distant one from the other, piercing the side of the vault. Fourteen feet south of these are again two similar holes, 12 and 13, also some 30 feet distant the one from the other, and cut through the rock roof, the western for 15 feet deep, the eastern for 25 feet. About twelve feet further south there are again two



SECTION ACCORDING TO THE LINE G.H.

similar holes of larger size, marked 14 and 15, also hewn in the rock, the western 20 feet, the eastern 31 feet deep. These four holes or shafts, cut into the rock, seemed to me the most remarkable feature of the whole edifice; they are on the top 3 feet 4 inches wide each way (being square like all the others), but below more than half a foot wider, so that anything which might be put in on the top would fall through, and not be stopped anywhere. The reason for all these holes was certainly to give light, and allow access of air; but they may also have served, as so many writers say, for letting down the dead bodies.

3. To all this I would add the following remarks. In a place like Jerusalem, to which in all ages many pilgrims and strangers flocked, of whom many died, it was necessary to have such a place of burial for them. And we find that even in the Jewish time there was such a place. In Jeremiah xxvi, 23, we read that Urijah was killed with the sword and his dead body cast into "the graves of the common people." In the time of the Romans, when many strangers came to the Holy City, the general burial-place for such people was not sufficient, so the priests bought in addition to it the "field of the potter," and very likely Judas, the betrayer, was also cast here. In the Christian time matters, or rather ideas, changed, and it became an honour to be buried at the "Aceldama." It was believed that those buried here had not to undergo the judgment of God, and that the bodies very soon, without unpleasant decaying, would be consumed, leaving only dry bones; so that even earth from here was taken to other burial-grounds, as mentioned above. There must have been some truth in this, otherwise the belief would not have survived so long, as the contrary might have been proved very easily. Professor Krafft, of Bonn, says, in his "Topography on Jerusalem" (now 46 years ago), that it was proved by a dead dog, which was cast down, drying quickly and giving no bad smell. It seems to me that the many shafts there occasioned continual ventilation, and so the bodies dried up. But without further proof, nothing positive can be said. That in all ages a great many bodies were brought here is quite certain, but how they were let down is rather a puzzle. The holes certainly may have been used for letting them down, but they are not wide enough for the body of a full-grown man to be let down in a horizontal position. To cast them simply down would have been unseemly, and is not likely; so I think they had some contrivance for the purpose, perhaps a kind of coffin with a movable cover or bottom. Some writers think that from time to time people had to go down and arrange matters, and Dr. Tobler takes it for granted that from time to time the bodies were cleared out again, which I think is rather doubtful. Certainly it was not done in the last centuries. It is said that dead bodies were buried there as late as the year 1829.

In the neighbourhood there are many Jewish rock-cut tombs, which, were used again by Christians. Some were turned into chapels, and others became the lodgings of hermits or anchorites, who were

afterwards buried there. But under the long rule of the Muhammedans, all things of this sort had to be given up, and the place became waste and neglected. The whole Necropolis here bore the name of "Paradise," as the resting-place for the bodies of the believers, and this name is kept up even to this day. The Greek Church now has it in possession, and is about to clear and bring it into veneration again. The bones are collected and covered with some cloth; lodgings for watchmen are arranged by putting iron bars and shutters in the openings, and wooden doors in the entrances. Two places I found already converted into chapels, where lamps and candles are now continually burning, and the altars are decorated with pictures, &c. In one of them, which has a nice entrance dating back to the Jewish time, it is said that the frightened disciples took refuge on the night when our Lord was betrayed. The ceiling of this one has round about a cornice and is flat, whilst another has a dome resting also on a cornice, which is supported by half-round pillars. See "Survey of Western Palestine," Jerusalem Volume, p. 380.

II.—A POOL CLEARED OUT.

On the Ordnance Survey Map of Jerusalem, scale $\frac{1}{25000}$, is inserted north of the city, between the trees of the olive-grove, a square marked "old cistern;" it is 850 feet west of the Damascus road, and 1,740 feet (in a straight line) from Damascus Gate. This pool has recently been cleared out, and it was found to be entirely hewn in the rock 18 feet deep, having at the north-eastern corner a stair, as such pools generally have. Inside it is partly cased with modern masonry, and on the bottom are remains of two former piers. Apparently the old pool had been arched over, and for carrying the arches the two piers in the middle and the casing on the sides were made. The roof has long since fallen in, and the stones of it were now found and cleared out. They were rubble and scarcely dressed.

South of this pool, and passing near it, is now a new road, and south of this road are remains of an old wall, which has been recently excavated, but nothing of interest was found. Further south, a native is building a house, and on clearing the ground found a cistern hewn in the rock 25 feet long, 18 feet wide, and 15 feet deep.

III.—AN ANCIENT STONE WEIGHT.

The Algerine brethren at St. Ann's have found in their ground a rounded stone of soft *mizzeh*, with an inscription on it. On ascertaining its weight and deciphering to some degree the writing upon it, they formed the opinion that it is probably an ancient "Talent." Though

rounded in form it is not a ball, being longer (15 inches) than wide ($12\frac{1}{2}$ inches), and also not so high as broad. All the sides are rounded, not polished, but to some degree smoothed by use. It has in the smaller end a half ball-like excavation 4 inches wide and $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches deep. Its weight is (as I am told) $41\frac{8}{10}$ kilos. The inscription seems to be Phœnician, but many letters are indistinct. I send a copy (reduced $\frac{1}{10}$), made from a squeeze. One of the St. Ann's school-teachers gave a lecture on the subject in the lecture-room of the Dominican brethren at St. Stephen's place, near Jeremiah's Grotto, where a lecture is given every Friday in the French language, which anyone may attend. In this lecture the stone was stated to be a "Talent." The lecture will shortly be published in the "Revue Biblique," Paris.

IV.—NEW SEWER NEAR THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE.

In several of my former reports, especially in one published in the *Quarterly Statement*, 1890, p. 20, I have noted that east of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre there was in ancient times a rock platform to which I gave the name of "Acra," following in this Sir Charles Wilson's Plan of the Ordnance Survey (1864, 1865). In the *Quarterly Statement*, 1889, p. 67, I pointed out that there was under this platform a cave, and how in the Russian ground, at one place, the rock stands up higher than the street, and that near to it is a trench $47\frac{1}{2}$ feet deep, in which old hewn stones were found, which had apparently fallen there when the walls tumbled over. Compare also *Quarterly Statement*, 1888, p. 57. To this I may now add:—

That the Greek Convent recently made a sewer from the little gate which leads from the churchyard of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre to Harat ad Dabbachin eastwards, under the ground of Harat ad Dabbachin, between the new buildings and the Muristan, bending at the end of the Russian building northwards, and then eastwards again to the above-mentioned cave north of the threefold "sûk." Now I observed that the whole sewer is made through *débris*, at no place was the rock met with, but only a few cross-walls of no great importance. East of the Russian building the ancient pavement was met with (*see* 1888, p. 58), and also some hewn stones similar to those found in the Russian ground, as related above.

V.

Some twenty or thirty years ago the Roman Catholic "Sisters of Zion" built a Convent and Church opposite the barracks at the north-west corner of the Haram es Sherif, and in this church one of the

remaining arches of Hadrian's Triumphal Arch was included, forming the choir. The Church is vaulted and had a flat roof, but the Sisters have recently erected over it a very nice and rather high dome, giving the town in this region quite another aspect. The dome rests on a new drum pierced with windows and decorated with a kind of pillars.

TELL EL ARMARNA TABLETS IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM.

Letters from Syria and Palestine.

By W. ST. CHAD BOSCAWEN, Esq.

THE publication of the collection of tablets from Tell el Amarna, in the British Museum, has long been awaited by students, and now that the work has been issued, the whole of this important find has become accessible. Though not so large as the collection at Berlin, the British Museum series are most important, and contain several letters of great historical value.

The most valuable inscriptions is the long letter from Amenophis III to Kallima-Sin, King of Babylonia, a document which supplements other inscriptions in the collections of Berlin and Gizeh, which together restore to us a most important chapter in Oriental history. The collection is, however, extremely rich in letters from Syria, Phœnicia and Palestine. There are thirteen letters from Rib-Adda, the Egyptian Consul in Gebal, or Byblos; two from Ammunira, of Beyrût, and three from Abi-Milki (Abimelech), of Tyre. There are two letters of great geographical interest from Akizzi, Governor of Kātna, a city near Damascus. There are twenty-six letters from Palestine, from Hazor Gezer, Askelon and Urza. Several of these are of special interest, as they are from Amorite sheiks, and give us valuable names and phrases of the Amorite speech.

The letters of Akizzi 𐎏 𐎎 𐎗𐎕 𐎗𐎕 𐎗𐎕𐎗, of Kātna, are of much value, as they supply us with considerable information regarding the geography of North Syria, especially the districts adjoining Damascus.

There are two paragraphs in the second of these letters (B.M. 37) which afford us an important list of names. The writer says :—

“Oh my Lord *Arzauya*, of the city of Rukhizi, and *Teuwa* (𐎗𐎕𐎗) *et-te*, of the city of Lapana, dwell in the land of Ubi 𐎗𐎕 𐎗𐎕𐎗 𐎗𐎕𐎗 and Dasa, in the land of Am. 𐎗𐎕 𐎗𐎕𐎗 𐎗𐎕𐎗. Now the land of Ubi is not for my Lord, and each day (*yūme samma*) to Aitugama they send, and thus they say come and take the whole of the land of Ubi.