

wide, and three times as long, or 135 feet from one road to the other. This "Market place" was nicely paved—a piece of the pavement was found when the Russians cleared their property. It is now occupied by the main street and the row of shops on each side.

I may add that the basement of one of the pillars, marked *a*, is hewn out from the solid rock, and the flooring there is rock well smoothed, like a pavement.

This Market Hall was not built by the Crusaders; it is, I think, anterior, and must have stood when Constantine's Basilica was built, although the arches are to some degree pointed.

I have to add, that in the street Khan ez Zeit, on its west side, at one of the shops, stands also a pillar, *b*, which has lost its capital. I have an impression that the paved market place was perhaps bounded there by a colonnade, in a line as shown by red dots.

REMARKABLE SCULPTURE AT MEJDEL.

By Rev. J. E. HANAUER.

WHILST itinerating lately amongst the Jewish colonies in Philistia, I stopped for the night of May 25th at the town of Mejdel, situated about 2 miles from the ruins of Ascalon. There being no hotel in the place, my companions and I knocked for admission at the door of a stone house, which was pointed out to us as rented by the English C.M.S. missionaries working at Gaza, and occupied by a dispensary.



SKETCH OF SCULPTURE FROM ASCALON BUILT INTO A HOUSE AT MEJDEL.

Observed May 25th, 1896.

J. E. Hanauer.

Whilst awaiting the arrival of the native caretaker I noticed, built into the wall over the house door, and at the height of from 10 to 12 feet from the ground, a white marble stone 0·73 centimetre long and 0·33 high. Sculptured upon it in very low relief was a striking picture which I at once sketched, and of which I send you two squeezes. The carving is divided into three sections or circular panels surrounded

by conventionally represented foliage, evidently intended to indicate forest or thicket scenery. I was told by several of the bystanders that the bas-relief had been found at Ascalon. I will now endeavour to describe it.

In the *first* section, beginning at the left, is seen the figure of a hunter of great muscular development and strength striding along. His beardless face is looking backward, and his left arm is outstretched as if urging others to follow him. His face is given in profile, only the nose and eyes being depicted and not the mouth. It is the same in the case of the other figures. With the exception of the characteristic Egyptian head-dress (so often seen in pictures of monuments in the land of the Nile), and a short cloak or chlamys fastened round his neck and fluttering in three folds over and behind his right shoulder, he is perfectly nude. He carries a live goat, gazelle, or antelope, the head and horns of which are seen over his right shoulder, and the hindquarters over his left. His right arm is bent, and the hand grasps a short but thick and ponderous spear or javelin (*pilum*¹ or ἰσσοῦ) remarkable for its small² and broad barbed head, which points upward over the right shoulder of the hunter.

The *second* section, or panel, in the middle of the sculpture, contains the figure of a huge human-headed lion, or sphinx, with Egyptian head-dress and amiable-looking feminine features. The face is looking backward. Here, also, the mouth is not indicated. A barbed javelin, like that carried by the figure in the first section, has been struck into the head of this creature, but the spear-head is only half embedded in the wound. The short, thick spear-shaft slopes upward from the head, and passes through the foliage into the third *panel*. It is evident that it has just left the still uplifted hand of the human figure represented in this section as crouching or kneeling upon its right knee. The Egyptian head-dress, the beardless features, and the short cloak fastened round the neck, but (in this case in order to give symmetry to the design) fluttering above and behind the *left* shoulder, enable us to identify this figure with that of the individual represented in the first panel. His left hand holds what may be taken either for a sword or for the shaft of a second javelin. It was usual for soldiers to carry two such (Polybius vi, 23¹). The outlines of the carving are very shallow, and it is therefore very difficult to obtain a good squeeze, or even, because of the very small amount of shadow, a photograph of the sculpture. In order to give greater vividness to the picture, and to compensate for the very low relief, the foliage is not only carved, but also painted a light green, the contrast between which and the white of the living figures (which are drawn in a very spirited style) is very striking. A crack runs through the stone just behind the

¹ "Smith's Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities." Article "Hasta."

² The heads of Roman *pila* extended often half way down the shaft, therefore those in the sculpture are comparatively small.

head of the sphinx, whose features, though more feminine, have a family likeness with those of the two other figures.

The sculpture is, I venture to think, Greco-Egyptian in character. The Greek element is indicated by the animated drawing of the figures, and especially of the sphinx. We are told by the writer of the article "Sphinx," in "Smith's Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology,"¹ that "The Egyptian Sphinx is the figure of an unwinged lion *in a lying attitude*" (the italics are mine), "but the upper part of the body is human. . . . The common idea of a Greek Sphinx, on the other hand, is that of a *winged* body of a lion, having the breast and upper part of a woman. Greek Sphinxes, moreover, *are not always* represented in a lying attitude, but appear in different positions, as it might suit the fancy of the sculptor or poet."

If so, then the Mejdél Sphinx, being neither *winged* nor *recumbent*, may possibly be assigned to a middle position between Egyptian and Greek Sphinxes. This, however, is a question which I must leave to others to determine.

A JOURNEY TO PETRA—1896.

By GRAY HILL, Esq.

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In the *Quarterly Statement* for January, 1896, I gave an account of an unsuccessful attempt (the fourth) made by my wife and myself in the spring of 1895 to reach Petra from the north. In our fifth attempt, made in the spring of 1896, we were completely successful; but the difficulties had faded away. Perhaps we may claim the merit of perseverance, but if there had not been a change in the condition of the country lying between Jerusalem and Petra I am afraid that perseverance would not have been sufficient for the purpose. Our attempts made in 1890, 1891, and 1893 were foiled because of the dangerous state of the country in those years, and the fighting going on amongst the tribes on the road; and that in 1895 because the Mutesserif of Kerák stopped our progress at that place for want of an order from Constantinople allowing us to visit Petra.

The military posts now established by the Turkish Government at Mádeba, Kerák, Shobek, and Ma'an, and the military escort granted to travellers, greatly facilitate the journey from Jerusalem to Petra, which was made by several Europeans in the spring of 1896; and indeed, Mr. Fordér, the English missionary of Kerák, made the journey from Kerák to Petra, *viâ* Shobek, in September, 1895, being the first, I believe, to reach Petra, either from north or south, for about 12 years. He

¹ Volume iii, p. 895.