

REPORTS BY DR. CONRAD SCHICK.

I. *The Columbarium or Cistern east of Zion Gate.*—The new shops of which I reported several months ago, south of the Jewish quarter and east of the Zion Gate, are now approaching completion. They are built by the Armenian Convent, and opposite the newly-made road Moslems also are building shops, as the ground there belongs to them. This undertaking is without question a great improvement to this quarter, but I am sorry that the rubbish and made earth are not enough taken away—only to the level of the western street—so that the half-buried houses, into which one has to go down by stairs from the street, the level of the street being higher than the flat roofs of the houses, will remain so. They are inhabited always by Spanish Jews. The level of the road is 2,490 feet above the sea, and the rock there is, according to Sir Charles Warren's "Contours," in a line of 2,460 feet, hence 30 feet under the present surface. The foundations for these new buildings they put on rubbish, and only 10 feet deep.

The cistern, or (as Sir Charles Warren calls it) *columbarium*, recently broken in through an arch giving way, is east of these new shops, and in the inner angle of the Burj el Kibryt, it is a large underground building (see "Jerusalem" volume, Plate XXXVI), of which I enclose plan and section. It is 104 feet long, and averages 41 feet wide—viz., in the east 32 feet, and in the west 50 feet—and has in the centre a row of huge square piers, five in number, of unequal dimensions, becoming wider and wider from east to west, in conformity with the widening of the room towards the west, as the plan will show. They are 27 feet high, bearing arches, and half-circled tunnel-vaults on the southern and cross-vaultings on the northern row. A stair (bending twice) leads down from the top into the large room below; but the stair is now blocked up, and the entrance to the place is simply the well-mouth. Two other well-mouths are also shut up. The most curious feature is a number of deep recesses in the northern wall, in two rows, one above the other, and this seems to be the reason why Sir Charles Warren called the place a columbarium.

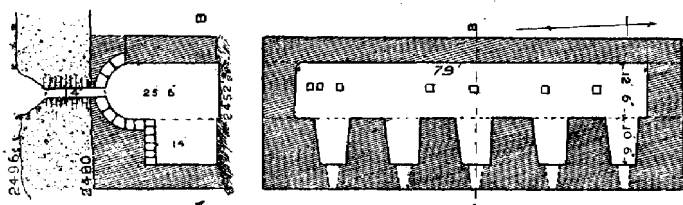
Neither in the "Jerusalem" volume, nor in the *Quarterly Statements*, nor in the "Recovery of Jerusalem" (London, 1871) could I find any description of it; but in Lewin's "Siege of Jerusalem" (London, 1863), p. 222, is the following.

"I found it 45 feet deep, and as some water was at the bottom, we still could not conceive what curiosities the well could contain. It was some time before the new ladder was brought, and we retired for shade into one of the embrasures of the wall. At length a second ladder made its appearance, and proved to be a very strong and substantial one, but it

was only 25 feet long. The two ladders, therefore, were spliced together and let down the well, and reached the bottom. A man was now sent down, and a plank let down after him. I was in hopes that the plank might have remained above, and the ladder be fastened to it; but no—one of the men held the end of the ladder in his hands and knelt upon it, and this was considered sufficient security. Mr. Barclay, who is quite an adept at diving into wells, was tied by the rope and descended, and soon shouted his arrival in the nether regions. The rope was then fastened round myself—not, as I expected, just under the arms, but about my middle, so that in case of accident I should have swung like the Golden Fleece. I got upon the ladder and descended also. For about the first 15 feet it was an ordinary well shaft, just large enough for a person to pass without difficulty, but after that I found myself in the air in the midst of a spacious cavern. On coming to the bottom, the man who was there ready hauled me, like a bale of goods at the end of a crane, on one side, and landed me upon the plank, which had been placed across the water. We now explored the subterranean abyss, and found it to be an enormous cistern. It was supported by massive pillars about 12 feet square. The roof was arched, and both roof and sides were, or had been, covered with cement. The ground, where free from water, was a fine black mould, gaping with great cracks. Here and there were recesses or cells on the side, and in one of them we found a skeleton. Some poor fellow had fallen or been thrown in, and had crept into this corner to die. At one end of the excavation was a gradual ascent, which had originally led to the light of day, but the earth had fallen in and choked it up. I observed here layers of Roman tiles, and, what I believe is not usual, the layers of tiles were equal in thickness to those of the stones. . . . For what purpose was this ancient cistern made? Certainly for the mansion of some important personage, and in the time of the Herodian dynasty. This would appear also from the numerous tesserae which we picked up on the surface above. I should imagine that the reservoir belonged to the house of the high priest Ananias, which, according to Josephus, stood on Mount Sion, and, so far as can be collected, on this part of it."

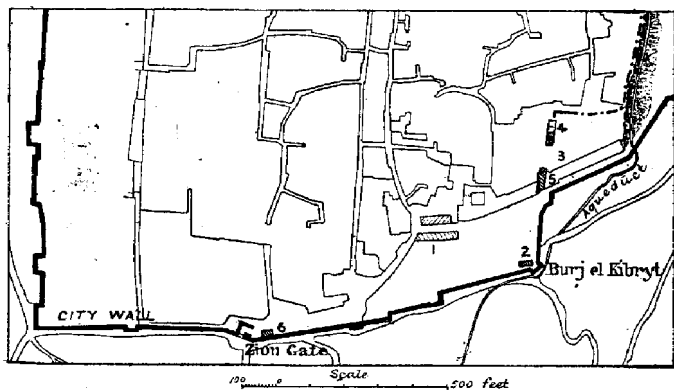
Some Jews told me that this place had been the school and synagogue of one of their celebrated heroes in learning. For such a purpose it was not lighted sufficiently, unless there were once windows in the walls and perhaps also in the roof—walled up when it was converted into a cistern. For a cistern it was originally not built, as the stair is too broad and wanted no recesses, so I think Sir Charles Warren is right in calling it a columbarium, and it seems to have been built with the idea to create further recesses in the spaces between the huge piers when the recesses were full, leaving a broad passage roundabout. That the place of the modern Burj el Kibryt was always an exposed and important one is shown by the aqueduct winding round it instead of going on straight; so any building here may date from remote times. During the last heavy rains the arches broke in, and there is now a deep sinking, so that no one is able to go down, except with much labour and care. For many years

all *débris* and earth, when removed, were cast there, so that the immense weight pressed the arching down—the more so, as already a few years ago (in 1888), when one of my friends went down he noticed an arch cracked west of the mouth.



PLAN AND SECTION OF AN OLD CISTERN.

II. *Another interesting Cistern.*—About 36 years ago the German Jewish community in Jerusalem bought a vacant piece of ground north-east of Burj el Kibryt, also along the city wall, with the intention to build houses there. In 1864-65, when the Ordnance Survey Plan of Jerusalem was made, already some new houses existed (marked 5 on general plan). A few years later, an old cistern was found, which I examined and measured at that time (*see* plan and section of this cistern made by me then). It is not so large as the former, but is also of great interest, having in its



GENERAL PLAN.

eastern wall similar recesses, but larger. My impression at once was that it was a piece of an ancient city wall, and that the recesses had at their eastern ends loopholes, as I show with dotted lines in the plan, and that a wide and high passage—now the main part of the cistern—ran along there. The stones are large and nicely cut—even those of the tunnel archings, as shown in the section. The many square openings in the

roofing were at that time light-holes or sky windows. When it lost its value as a fortification it was converted into a cistern, and the prolongations of the passage were shut up, and also the sky windows except one, which was left for a mouth of the cistern. In this view I became confirmed on finding out and examining the following.

III. *Remains of an Ancient City Wall* (marked 4 on general plan).—When building was begun here they found old remains of large and nicely-hewn stones—a little chamber like one of the recesses in the cistern described above and the old building running exactly in a line with this cistern. They were obliged to destroy some parts of these old remains, which was a hard task, as they were very strong, and built them on the rest, without further foundations, whereas not many feet eastwards they had to dig down more than 40 feet.

Taking all this into consideration, one comes to the conclusion that we have in 2, 3, and 4 the line and the remains of a former city wall of the upper town towards the east, still on the height of the western brow of the Tyropœon Valley. It is most likely the continuation of the wall Dr. Bliss recently excavated from the Protestant burial-ground (plan, *Quarterly Statement*, 1895, p. 9; 1896, p. 109, and especially p. 208). From the point where the excavation was stopped the remains of the former wall will, by further excavations, be found west of the aqueduct running northward to the present city wall, or near to it,¹ and then eastward to Burj el Kibryt.

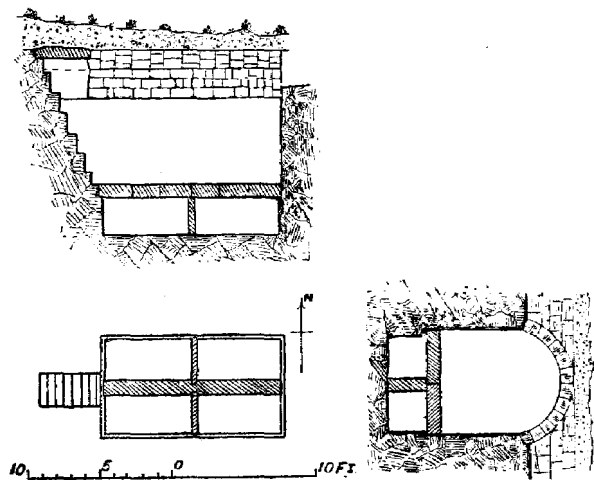
A short distance north of the cistern marked 4, the wall most likely turned towards the east for about 200 feet, and having there a similar tower like Burj el Kibryt, it turned northward, standing on the high and rocky ground of the western brow of the Tyropœon Valley, as I have shown on Plan A with dotted lines.

IV. About 40 years ago a new guard-house was built, a little east of Bab Neby Daud, inside the wall, which in course of time fell into decay. Recently it was restored, as the other guard-house, the so-called "Kalah," or fortress, standing at the place, where the new shops are built, had been removed.

V. *Another Rock-cut Tomb*.—In the *Quarterly Statement*, 1896, p. 306, are drawings and a description of a rock-cut tomb, found near the Tombs of the Kings, on which Colonel Conder makes some remarks in *Quarterly Statement*, 1897, p. 83, to which I wish to add one more, by submitting a plan and section of a similar rock-cut tomb found in 1870. It is also in north or north-west of Jerusalem, 1,830 feet distant from the Damascus Gate, on the south side of the Lifta road, and 90 feet east of the Neby Samwil road, and marked in Ordnance Survey Map as an "old cistern,"

¹ I think it ran to the southern wall of the large cistern, No. 1 on Plan B, as I have shown it with dotted lines there.

and this is repeated in the illustration plan, *Quarterly Statement*, 1895, p. 30, and the word "Tombs" erroneously put further in, at the place of an old cistern. It differs from the others spoken of, as it is arched over, with an opening like a well mouth at the west end, which gave the idea that it was a cistern. But when it was opened properly, a very steep stair, cut into the rock, was found leading down to an oblong rock-cut shaft, with right-angled corners, having four Christian tombs at its bottom, divided by a thin wall going along the centre and two



PLAN AND SECTIONS OF ROCK-CUT TOMB.

stone slabs (*see* plan); the graves are of the usual depth and length, and covered with stone slabs. On the latter were found also bones, &c., showing that in later times corpses were brought there without separating the graves.

It was cleared out and a hole made in the roofing, the sides and bottom cemented, and so converted into a cistern, which has since remained in use.

VI. *The Shekfee Sakhra* (additions).—To my paper on this building, sent some time ago to the office,¹ I wish to add the following:—In Mr. Guy le Strange's book, "Palestine under the Moslems," I find, on p. 167, that Nâsir-i-Khusrau writes, A.D. 1047:—

"In the court of the Haram Area, but not on the platform, is a building resembling a small mosque. It lies towards the north side, and is a walled enclosure (*hadhtrah*) built of square stones, with walls over a man's height. It is called the Mihrab Dâûd (or the Oratory

¹ *Quarterly Statement*, 1897, p. 103.

of David). Near (perhaps better translated—in it) this enclosure is a *rock* standing up about as high as a man, and the summit of it, which is uneven, is rather smaller than would suffice for spreading thereon a (prayer) rug. This place, they say, was the throne of Solomon (Kursi Suleimán), and they relate that Solomon sat thereon while occupied with building the noble Sanctuary.”

This refers apparently to the place in question, the Shekfi Sakhra, which had then no Mastabeh, but an enclosure, probably of the size and form of the present Mastabeh, and had two names—Kursi Suleimán (the rock) and Mihrab Dáúd (the building).

As Násir speaks of an “enclosure,” calling it also a “building” resembling a small mosque, the present Kubbet Shekfi Sakhra was at that time already standing. To a mosque belongs not only an enclosure but also a building; and we can hardly imagine that the *rock* was unprotected under the open air. So I think the state of things *was as it is now*, only the flooring was lower, and with an enclosure round about. The flooring became higher when the Mastabeh was made, hence one has to step down from it to the rock, inside the building.

On p. 169 it is said:—“This passage is copied by Mujir ad Dîn, who, however, adds that, according to the received tradition of the day, the place is known as the Kursi Sulaimán, is within the dome known as the Dome of Sulaimán, near the Bâb ed Duwaidariyyah.” As the latter is identical with the present Bâb el Atem, this proves my suggestion to be right. On the plan facing p. 172 it is marked as Kursi Isa, or the Throne of Jesus. So one sees that names were always changed after some time, and it is no wonder that it is now called “Shekfi Sakhra.” Further, on p. 169 we read:—“Násir mentions two other domes as standing in the northern part of the Haram Area. The first of these, the Dome of Jacob (Kubbet Ya’kûb),” he says, “stood near the colonnade running along the wall from the present Bâb Hittah—then called the gate to the cloisters of the Sufis—to the north-west angle of the Haram Area. . . . The other dome stood apparently in the north-east angle of the Haram Area. . . . It was called the Oratory of Zachariah.” Mr. Guy le Strange thinks that of the latter nothing is left, but I think the Mastabeh (or prayer place named on the Ordnance Survey Map south of the barracks) is the remains, and the kubbah has gone. So we see there were three kubbets in one straight line, and at nearly equal distances apart one from the other, as we have it even to-day: (1) Just south of Bâb el Atem and the fountain, Kubbet *Jacob*; (2) Kubbet David Sulaimán or Kursi Sulaimán, or ‘Isâ, the present Shekfi Sakhra; and (3) Kubbet Zakariyyâ, the present prayer place.

VII. *The Book: “Palestine Under the Moslems.”*—On reading this work I found that several things (especially those of Jerusalem) could in various places be more satisfactorily explained. For instance, p. 122, it is said that the total number of the present pillars supporting the dome of the rock is 28, whereas “Ibn al Fakîh says there were 30 in his

day. The difference, however, is not very material." In reality there is *no* difference when the two pillars bearing the stair house leading up to the roofs are counted with the other larger ones. They are in all plans omitted; I cannot say why, but think as they are standing so near the wall, only leaving 2 feet 8 inches space between, and generally the place there is dark, so they were not properly observed or taken notice of, although they are not so small, but with the capitals 12 feet high and having 13½ inches diameter. So very likely Ibn al Fakih counted them with the others.

VIII. *The Madeba Mosaic.*—The mosaic in the floor of the ancient church at Madeba will throw some light on orthography and topography. As Jerusalem is divided in two by a long street with colonnades, it doubtless represents the *Ælia Capitolina*, and hence the mosaic must be of the fourth century. A Greek priest professor in the Convent of the Cross went over and made careful copies on several sheets, which afterwards were reproduced on one sheet and on a much smaller scale by a Roman Catholic priest, which drawing was then photographed and issued by the Franciscan Convent, and sent to many persons. I also received a copy, together with a small pamphlet, written in Greek, explaining the picture. The architect of the new German Church in the Muristân recently went over with his assistant and made new copies of the actual size, so his may, perhaps, come out improved, but I think much time will elapse before these can be published.
