

ON A ROCK-TOMB NORTH OF JERUSALEM.

By R. A. STEWART MACALISTER, M.A.

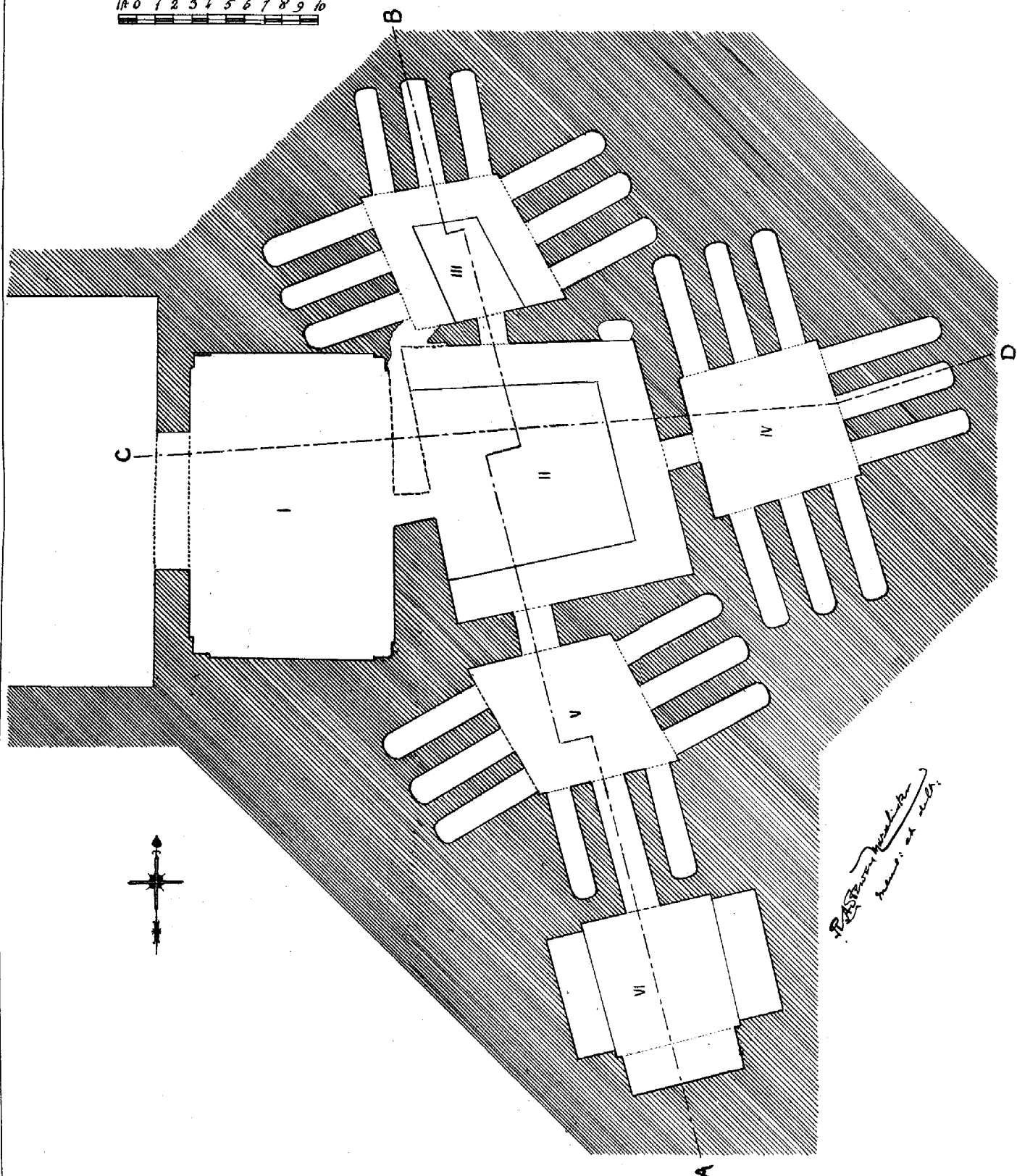
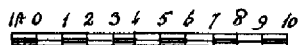
THE fine tomb which forms the subject of this notice has, since its comparatively recent discovery, attracted considerable interest and attention both inside and outside Jerusalem. It appears that a shepherd noticed the finial above the entrance doorway projecting from the surface of the accumulated *débris*, and that, through the proprietor of the land, word was brought to the Dominican Fathers of St. Étienne, Jerusalem, to whose zeal the archæology of the country owes so much. The credit of determining the interesting character of the excavation belongs partly to the Dominicans and partly to the Rev. J. H. Sedgwick, of Jerusalem, who was one of the first, if not the first, to enter the tomb, and by whose name the tomb is frequently called. Mr. Dickson, Her Majesty's Consul at Jerusalem, was also instrumental in having some of the *débris* which blocked the entrance cleared away, and thus rendering the interior accessible.

During his recent stay in Jerusalem Sir Charles Wilson visited the tomb, and it appeared to him sufficiently interesting to warrant the undertaking of further excavation. Accordingly at the request of the Committee I proceeded to the tomb and had shafts dug at the entrance and in each of the chambers, besides clearing out the soil from round the sides of the chamber figured III in the accompanying Plan (Plate I). I was thus enabled to determine the height of each chamber and of the entrance, and to establish the (previously hypothetical) existence of loculi in the chamber mentioned.

I should mention at the outset that in preparing the following description I have had the advantage of referring to three articles upon the tomb—one by Mr. Paul Palmer in the "Mittheilungen" of the Deutscher Palästina-Verein (1898, p. 39); one by the Rev. Père Vincent in the "Revue Biblique" for April, 1899, p. 297; and an unpublished memoir by Dr. Schick. An earlier paper or note on the same subject, as I

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PLAN



understand, appeared in the "Revue Biblique" for January, 1898, but this I have not seen.

The tomb is one of the series that forms a great necropolis lining the valleys north of Jerusalem. It stands a little north of east from the absurdly named "Tombs of the Judges"; according to Dr. Schick, about 1,500 feet from that well-known excavation. It shares with the "Tombs of the Judges" many characteristics in common which distinguish both from the other rock-tombs in the neighbourhood. In the great majority the rock-cutting is left without ornament to relieve its severity. In one known to me there is a slight moulding round the entrance; in another an elaborate distyle portico has been cut out of the rock which even in its present ruined condition retains indications of good workmanship; but no other displays so elaborate a pediment and so much internal decoration as the tomb under discussion and its more familiar neighbour.

In excavating a rock-tomb the first step was the preparation of a vertical wall of rock of sufficient height to contain the doorway. When nature did not provide a convenient precipice it was obviously necessary to quarry a recess in a sloping mountain side, the back wall of which would supply the deficiency. The entrance to the present tomb has been recessed about 20 feet horizontally behind the original surface of the rock, and a court about 22 feet across has thus been formed. Whether this area was ever vaulted over with masonry—as was undoubtedly the case at the "Tombs of the Judges"—cannot be determined. There are a large number of stones lying about, but if they ever formed part of a building it has become completely disintegrated.

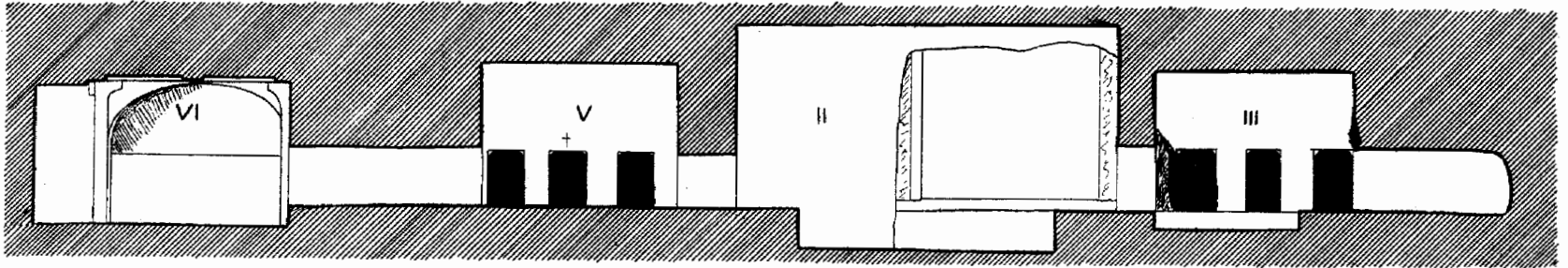
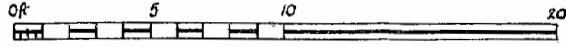
The doorway is 9 feet high by 7 feet 9 inches broad, in the clear. The jambs are 1 foot 10 inches thick. Round the door runs a moulding, angled in the orthodox manner. Along the lintel runs a row of dentils, cut on a plate with peculiar oblique terminations. Above the cornice rises a moulded pediment enclosing a sculptured tympanum; at the sides of the pediment are wreaths, and above is the usual anthemion finial. From the top of the finial to the sill of the entrance is a little over 15 feet.

Along the bottom of the tympanum runs a strip of egg moulding; the remainder of the surface is sculptured with a pattern of vine branches, with grapes and leaves, surrounding a central rosette. This composition is, on the whole, inferior to the beautiful design that fills the corresponding place in the "Tombs of the Judges." The general effect is good, but the details will not bear close investigation, and reveal much carelessness. Thus, the branch on the left hand side of the rosette does not spring from the circumference of the rosette, as it obviously should have done; and there are several places in which subsidiary twigs are made to spring from the parent branch in a direction contrary to the growth of the plant. Such solecisms betray the hand of the provincial sculptor (*see* Plate III).

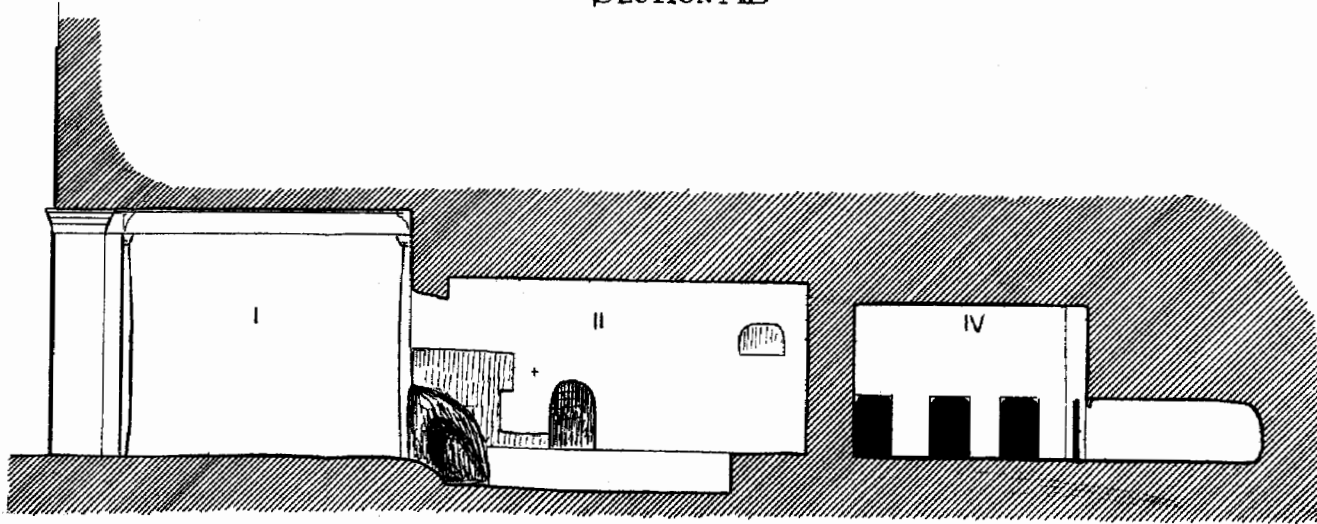
The jambs of the entrance have capitals of singular design. On the outside surface the ornamentation is weathered away. The moulding consists of a plain abacus and a cavetto, which latter is carried as a cornice round the whole of the vestibule inside the entrance. On the jambs the cavetto is naïvely divided into two portions by a horizontal fillet. The abacus is left plain; the upper half of the cavetto bears a row of egg and tongue (in the south jamb oddly interrupted in the centre by a palmette; in the north jamb the inner egg has two envelopes on the inner side); the lower half of the cavetto bears a row of palmettes, of poor design, arranged in couples symmetrically with respect to a single flower in the centre—each couple being of different design to the rest. The innermost palmette in the northern jamb is separated from the rest by a vertical bar. Beneath the cavetto is a row of roundels filled with rosettes of varied design. Details from these capitals are shown on Plate IV, *c*.

The soffit of the entrance is also sculptured—a feature that distinguishes this tomb from all others known near Jerusalem. This portion of the ornamentation is quite the most successful. It consists of three panels, two in relief, and one, which is smaller, sunk; each containing geometrical and floral patterns, the details of which can best be understood by reference to the drawing (Plate III).

ROCK-TOMB NORTH OF JERUSALEM SECTIONS



SECTION AB



SECTION CD

*Flashed on Melville
1891 at Delhi.*

The entrance above described gives access to a vestibule which, from its large size, is another unique feature of this tomb. In most rock-cut tombs in the neighbourhood, not excepting the "Tombs of the Judges," the vestibule, when it exists at all, is of small size. The dimensions of the vestibule in the present tomb are about 11 feet by 17 feet, but neither it nor any other of the chambers is truly square.

Round the top of the wall runs the cavetto cornice already alluded to, and in each angle of the chamber is a pilaster. The shafts of these pilasters display an exaggerated entasis (1 inch in 7 feet). The capitals are decorated with discs (merely blocked out and never finished in the two southern angles), above which is a moulding not returned round the edge of the capital (*see* Plate IV, *a*). The ceiling and walls of this chamber have been finished off with a fine chisel about a quarter of an inch in breadth.

A very narrow entrance, which cannot have been more than 2 feet wide, led originally to the chamber marked II on the plan (Plate I). Over this entrance was a finial, resembling that in a similar position at the "Tombs of the Judges": it is shown on Plate IV, *b*. The whole of the eastern side of the vestibule, however, between this entrance and the north-eastern corner has at some time been quarried away, so that a large irregular hole is now broken in the wall that once separated the two chambers; the corner of Chamber III also has been removed, with part of an adjacent loculus.

Chamber II, which, roughly speaking, is about 14 feet square, is the central hall from which the sepulchral chambers radiate. Of these there are three, one on each of the north, east, and south sides. Round these sides of the chamber runs a raised step. In the north wall is a niche near its eastern end, probably intended to hold a light. The elevation and sections (vertical and horizontal) of this niche are shown (Plate IV, *g*).

Chambers III, IV, and V, the sepulchres proper, may be described together. The plans of these apartments, as can be seen from the drawing, are very irregular—more so than would appear at first sight to a visitor.¹ In each of the three

¹ The directions of the sides of the chambers were determined with a prismatic compass.

sides of each chamber¹ not containing the entrances are three kokim or loculi for inhumation, radiating at right angles from the walls, and provided with the usual recess for a closing slab. In Chamber III the kokim are a little over 6 feet deep; in V they are about the same; in IV they are 6 feet 9 inches. In Chamber IV their general uniformity of appearance is broken by the eastern loculus on the south side, which for some reason is higher than the rest by about 4 inches. Round the north, east, and west sides of Chamber III runs a step similar to that running round Chamber II. Unlike the "Tombs of the Judges" the present tomb shows kokim in one row only in each chamber, and has but one storey of apartments.

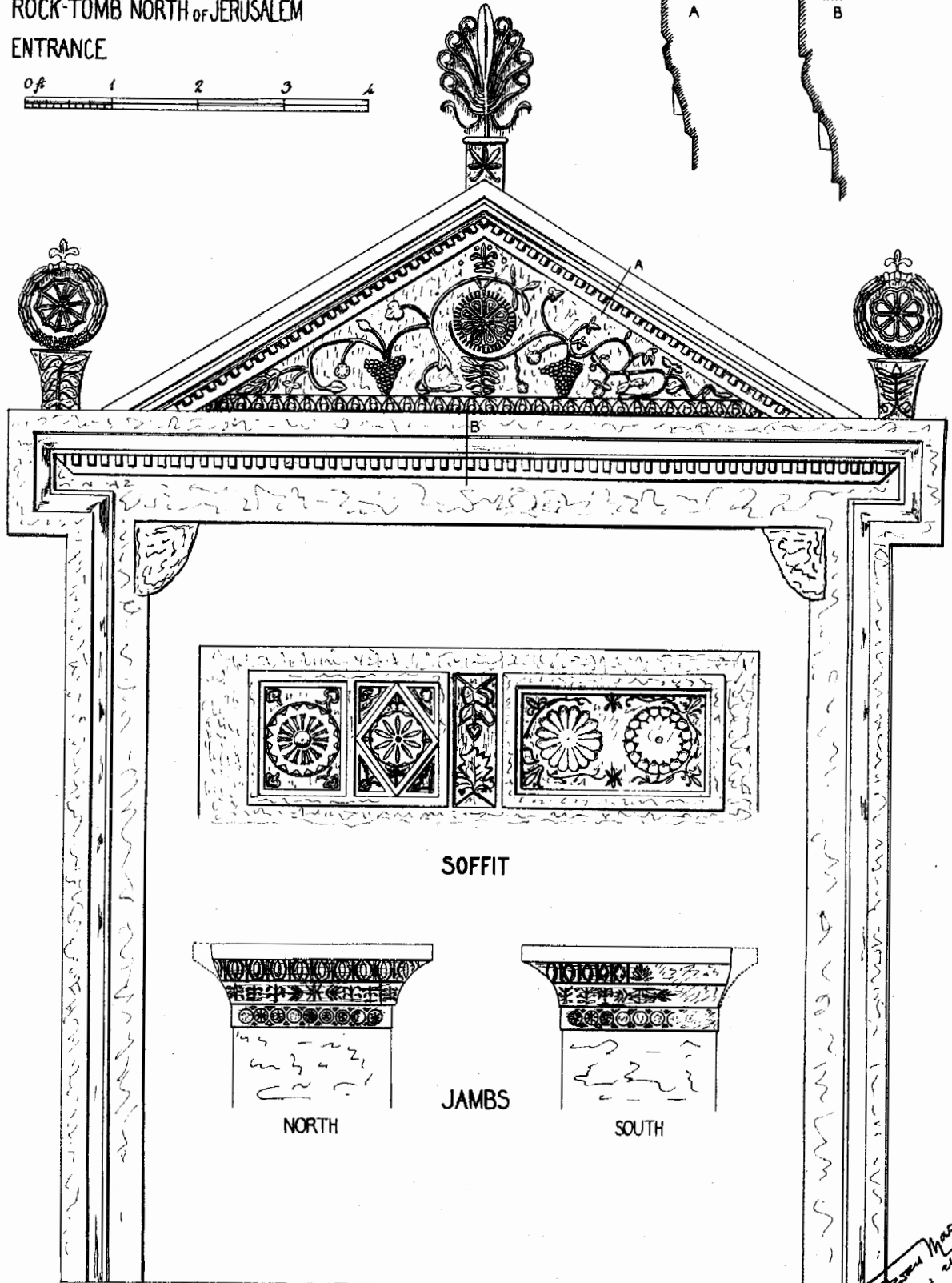
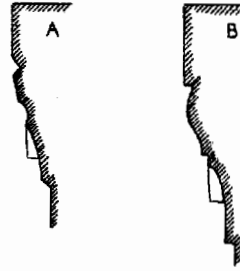
Chamber VI is more symmetrical than the others. It is about 7 feet 6 inches square. In each of the three sides not occupied by the entrance is an arched recess, from 2 feet 3 inches to 2 feet 6 inches deep, and between 6 feet 6 inches and 7 feet broad. The recess opposite the entrance runs from roof to ceiling: the two other recesses are filled with benches (*see* the section, Plate II, also Plate IV, *d*, where the ornamentation of these benches is shown to a larger scale). We thus have a sepulchral chamber with the bench receptacles found in such later tombs as the "Tombs of the Kings" and the series in the St. Étienne grounds.

In the ceiling of this chamber is a wide circular sinking, $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches deep, in the centre of which is a 16-pointed rosette (*see* Plate IV, *e*).

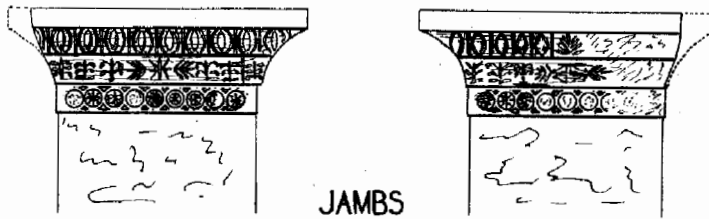
Dr. Schick regards this chamber as a later addition to the series—a conclusion to which at my first visit to the tomb I had independently arrived. According to this theory the central loculus of the fifth chamber was enlarged and prolonged so as to form a passage. Père Vincent, however, regards it as contemporary with the rest, and as being the principal place of sepulture—no doubt for the heads of the family at whose expense the tomb was cut. Subsequent visits to the tomb, and comparison with the arrangements of other rock-tombs in the vicinity, have led me to reconsider my own view and to

¹ Except, of course, the south wall of Chamber V.

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ENTRANCE



SOFFIT



NORTH

JAMBS

SOUTH

Handwritten signature and notes:
R. A. S. M. Macalister
measured at site.

conclude that the latter theory is more probably correct. In favour of the theory of subsequent addition might be urged the variation in style of sepulture, and the destruction of the symmetry of the plan of the tomb by the presence of Chamber VI. These arguments, however, are both inconclusive. Close by the present tomb is another in which kokim and bench-graves are found side by side in adjacent chambers; and while symmetry was often sought in planning these tombs, this is by no means invariably the case. The technique of the pick-marks on the walls is powerfully in favour of the hypothesis of contemporaneity, for the disposition of the marks is similar in Chambers I, III, V, and VI, and is, moreover, rather peculiar. There is not enough decoration inside Chamber VI to make a comparison between it and the carving at the entrance instructive; if anything, the rosette in the roof of Chamber VI is more roughly executed than anything to be seen at the entrance. This, however, is only to be expected, considering the difficulty of working by artificial light, and the small encouragement which the sculptor had to take trouble over a chamber that would be entered so rarely.

In an endeavour to assign a date to the monument, the total absence of inscriptions compels us to rely solely upon a consideration of its architectural and decorative details. The influence displayed is Greek throughout, and the mouldings are all good, though the floral work is in places rather suggestive of the striving of a local sculptor after originality. There is nothing to add to Père Vincent's conclusion, that the tomb probably dates from the Hasmonean period.

It was not, however, allowed to remain in the undisturbed possession of the family which originally cut it out, whoever these may have been. Three stages of its subsequent history have left their traces upon its walls.

(1) The presence of crosses, rudely scratched upon the walls in certain of the chambers, indicates that some at least of the loculi were reappropriated for the interment of Christians. Such crosses are frequently to be seen in rock-cut graves, as in the portico of the distyle tomb already referred to, and in the so-called "garden tomb." In the present tomb crosses occur in

the following situations:—In Chamber II, over the entrance to IV (perhaps indicating that all the graves in that apartment were reappropriated), and another a little further to the right; also one, finely scratched, to the left of the entrance to III; and in Chamber V, over the middle loculi on the eastern and the western sides. These are all mere roughly-scratched combinations of a vertical with a horizontal line. There is no other graffito of any kind (except the inevitable candle-smoking of brainless modern visitors), unless we include some indefinite strokes, some vertical, some horizontal, on the west wall of Chamber II.

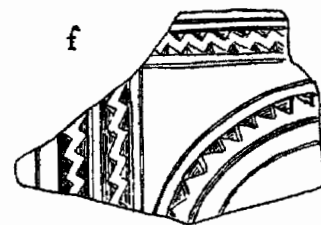
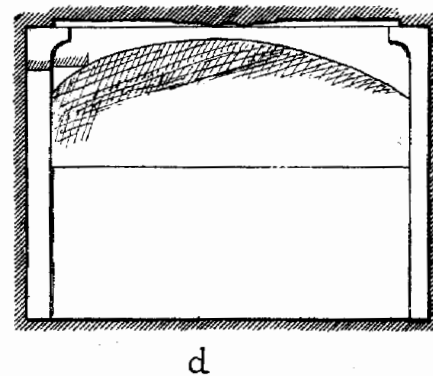
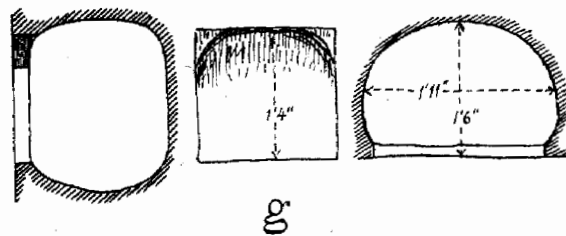
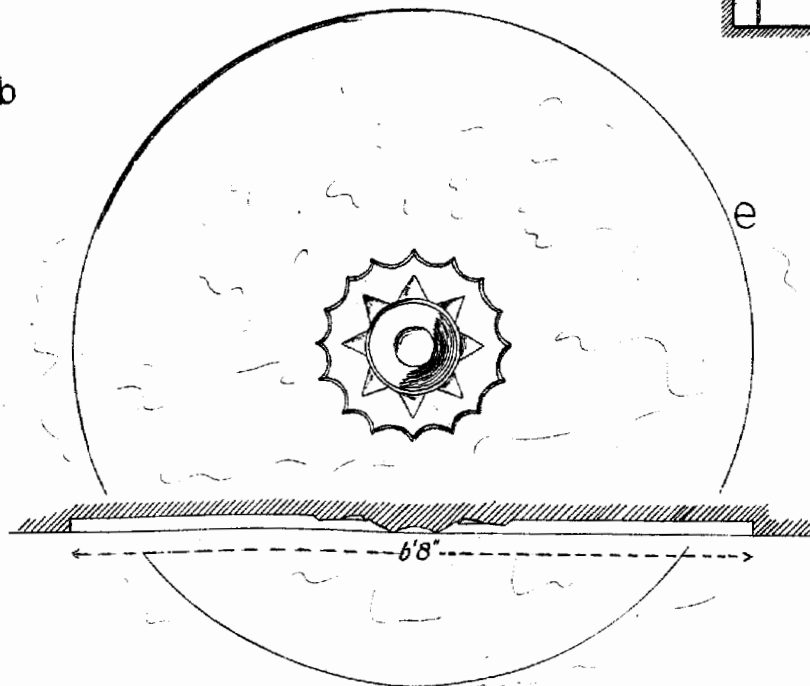
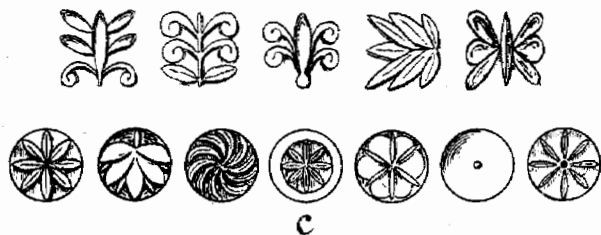
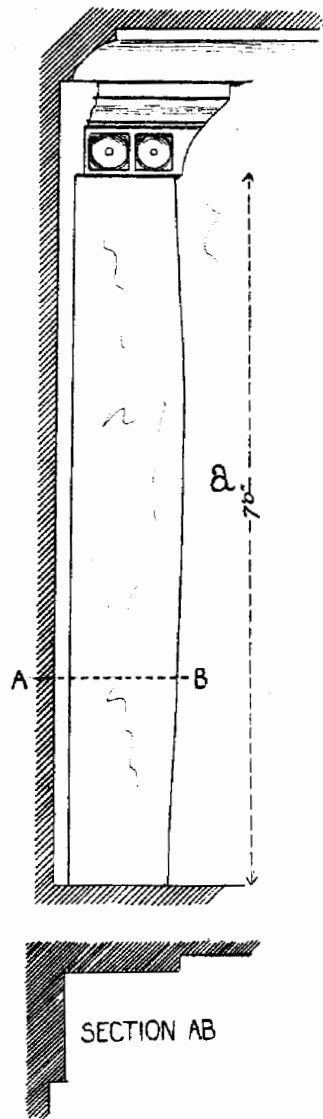
(2) A little plaster on the lower part of the walls of Chamber II and on the step that surrounds it indicates that at some time this excavation was converted into a receptacle for water—the common fate of such rock-tombs and columbaria as are at all capable of it. A noteworthy illustrative example occurs in the immediate vicinity. The tomb already mentioned as displaying the combination of kokim with *mas̄aba* bench-tombs has had an elaborate water-groove cut in its face, leading downwards to a lower chamber, which thus became a cistern. A fissure in the rock-scarp above the entrance to the present tomb was by Dr. Schick taken for a similar water-groove, but after careful examination I could not satisfy myself that it was other than the effects of mere natural weathering.

Apparently the water was confined in the chambers by forming a concrete block before the entrance, for in digging the shaft at this point great difficulty was caused by the large quantities of solid cement intermingled with the soil; indeed, two picks were broken by it.

(3) I have already referred to the fact that the wall between Chambers I and II has been quarried away; from part of the north wall of Chamber II also blocks have been removed, as may be seen from the section (Plate II). It has been stated that a niche, similar to that still remaining at the north-east corner, was partly destroyed by the quarrymen, but of this there is no definite evidence.

Quarrying inside rock-tombs was apparently a frequent proceeding. Other examples of its results may be seen in the

ROCK-TOMB NORTH OF JERUSALEM DETAILS



*R.A. Stewart Macalister
meas: et del:.*

puzzling lower chamber of the "Tombs of the Judges," and in the interesting tomb with the water-groove just mentioned. It is probable that the stone from inside these excavations was sought because, being protected from the weather, it had not acquired a hardened surface, and so was more easily worked than stone from an open quarry would be.

That the tomb was thoroughly rifled before it was closed up and forgotten goes without saying. I found in it nothing but some scraps of Arab pottery and the minute fragment of a soft limestone sarcophagus, $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches by $5\frac{3}{4}$ inches by $1\frac{1}{4}$ inches in thickness, which is shown on Plate IV, *f*. Père Vincent mentions having found minute fragments of sarcophagi and also some beads, all of which he assigns to the latest period of sepulture. I have seen a fragment of sarcophagus, decorated very similarly to that here figured, from a neighbouring tomb; and Père Vincent has informed me that the fragments found by him were of the same character.

REPORTS BY DR. CONRAD SCHICK.

I.—JACOB'S WELL.

IN the *Quarterly Statement*, 1894, is a plan of the church which once stood over Jacob's well, made by Dr. Bliss five years ago, when some excavations had already been made. Recently I sent to the office of the Fund in London a few photographs of the ruins, and to-day I send an exact plan, containing not only the church, as far as it is excavated, but the whole ground and neighbourhood. The place is now surrounded by a new boundary wall set upon the old foundation, and marking the form and extent of the ancient enclosure with the old Christian Church, the Convent, and gardens.

At the north-west corner of the place, outside the wall, is an old pool, with a spring or outlet of a spring, I am not sure which, in it, running off as a little brook and once driving a mill lower down. A short distance west of the pool are the gardens of the hamlet Balâta. The etymology of this word is in some degree uncertain. Balâta means in Arabic a pavement of flat stone slabs, but there is now nothing there but gardens and a few huts among them, so one thinks of *Baluta*, *i.e.*, an oak tree, and is reminded of Genesis xxxv, 4: "Jacob hid them (the idols and earrings) under the oak which was by Shechem." The place is just at