

THE ROCK-CUTTINGS OF KHURBET EL-'AIN.

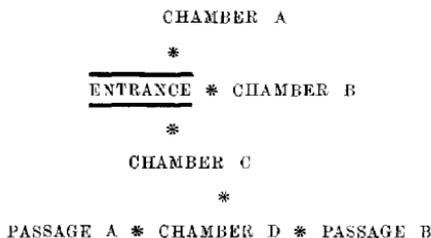
By R. A. STEWART MACALISTER, M.A.

KHURBET EL-'AIN is the name given to a hill by the side of Wâdy ej-Judeideh, immediately opposite to the Tell of the same name. Between it and the next hill (Khurbet Medawwir) runs the road from Wâdy ej-Judeideh to Deir en-Nakhkhas. Near the side of this road, at its junction with the Wâdy, there are certain fragments of pillars and other architectural remains of the Roman period, which tradition asserts to be the remains of a fountain ('ain) that once existed here, and from which the hill derives its name. The building, whatever it was, has become completely disintegrated, most of its stones having been removed for boundary marks and other purposes; it is now quite impossible to recover its plan or design.

Among some half-dozen pits of the common bell-shape, a few columbaria, rock-cut graves, and tomb-chambers with kokim, is a number of rock-cuttings which yield to none in interest or variety. I have found no group more worthy of careful study and richer in promise of instruction; and, therefore, have thought it worth while to prepare a short preliminary account of the three most important. Full details and measurements, with plans (precluded by their necessary size from appearing in the *Quarterly Statement*) will be given in the section on rock-cuttings in the forthcoming memoir on the recent excavations.

I.—The first of the three that I have selected for present notice is situated on the summit of the *col* connecting Khurbet el-'Ain with the next hill to the south. It is called *Mughâret Abu Haggein* (مغارة حقين) by the natives: a name which seems to mean "Cave of the Father of two truths," though its application is beyond my comprehension. There are two types of labyrinth among the Shephelah caves. In the first, of which the Great Souterrain at Tell Zakariya is an excellent example, the chambers communicate one with another either directly or less frequently by intervening passages. In the second a long creep-passage is the backbone of the system, and subsidiary passages and chambers radiate from it on each side.

Mughâret Abu Haggein is an admirable specimen of the second, which is much the rarer type.



As a temporary substitute for a plan, which cannot be reduced satisfactorily to the size of the *Quarterly Statement*, the above diagram (based on a system adapted from Tobler's plans of rock-tombs) is offered in elucidation of the description. The entrance is a downward sloping passage, open to the sky. At its lower end are three doorways (represented by stars), each leading into a chamber. These chambers communicate internally as well: indeed, the external entrances to A and B are now blocked. Beyond Chamber C is Chamber D, which has four little subsidiary cells opening off from it (not indicated in the diagram) and two passages. Passage A is 69 feet long; four small cells open off it in its course, as well as a subsidiary passage, communicating by a further subordinated passage with a fifth cell. The main passage terminates in a chamber of considerable size, having four small cells opening off it. Passage B is open for 95 feet of its length, after which it is blocked. Eight cells open from it. A sudden drop downwards in its floor seems to be meant to put an obstacle in the way of invaders.

The cave, therefore, consists of three large main chambers (B, C, D) and one smaller (A); of main lines of passage open for a total length of 160 feet; of one large chamber and 21 small cells subordinated to the main chambers and passages; as well as of certain subsidiary galleries. Besides the open entrance, nine doorways, apparently ancient entrances, are visible at various places inside, blocked up; these were probably merely holes made for convenience in removing waste material.

II.—This is a bell-shaped pit of the ordinary pattern; but it is distinguished by its great size, and by the complicated history

written on its walls, from others of the type. The depth is 60 feet, the diameter at the bottom 40 feet. The bottom is accessible by a staircase.

The most remarkable feature of the cave is a great cross *pattée*, cut neatly on the wall at a height of about 30 feet from the ground. This must either have been made when the cave was being made, or else have been cut with the aid of a ladder or scaffolding. The former view would, of course, date the cave in post-Christian times, and therefore, by analogy, all like it as well—a conclusion which to me seems all but inconceivable. Five other crosses are scattered over the wall in more accessible situations.

In any case, whatever the date of the cave may be, these crosses attest a Christian occupation; and a subsequent non-Christian occupation as a columbarium is indicated by the fact that two of these crosses are interfered with by the encroachment of loculi. In all there are 445 holes for urns cut in the walls of the cave.

There are two characters scratched high up on the wall, near the entrance, which merit attention. The first of these resembles a character in the West Asiatic hieroglyphs; it is the letter like the handle of a bucket, which occurs three times in line 1 of the first three Hamath inscriptions as figured in Wright's "Empire of the Hittites." The difference between this character and the Khurbet el-'Ain symbol lies in the loops, which are open in the latter, closed in the former.¹ The other symbol is more interesting. It is a Swastika, with the lower arm developed into a spiral surrounding the figure. This, I believe, is the first Swastika yet found in the Phoenician archæological area; it is common in districts under Mycænæan and Greek influence, but has hitherto been regarded as foreign to Phoenician and *native* Egyptian art or symbolism.

It is only fair to mention that the credit of first noticing this very interesting pair of symbols belongs to a promising youthful archæologist, Master J. Palmer (son of my friend Mr. R. G. Palmer, late of Jerusalem), who, during a visit to the explora-

¹ In column D, line 2, of the first Jerabis inscription (*op. cit.*), a form of this letter appears more nearly resembling the character in question. But I do not suggest that we have a specimen of the West Asiatic hieroglyphs at Khurbet el-'Ain, which is probably too far south for such a discovery. The comparisons are merely intended to be descriptive, not explanatory.

tion camp, gave me much useful assistance in measuring these caves.

III.—Of all the 120 or 130 caves, large and small, which I examined in the district round Beit Jibrin, none appeared to me more interesting than the third of those selected for the present notice.

It consists of a long hall, 47 feet in length, and maintaining a fairly uniform breadth of 18 or 19 feet, approached by a vestibule, or rather open passage, sloping downwards. Round the hall is arranged a series of rooms—mostly small cells—opening off its sides by well-made square doorways, which have been prepared for wooden frames; there are in all 14 of these cells connected with the main hall, beside a large number of shallow niches. One of these chambers, on the west side, is connected by a short tunnel (now blocked with stones) with a series of four chambers, one of them a great room of bell shape, about 40 feet in depth.

In the south-west corner of the principal hall is a passage, raised 3 feet 7 inches above the surface of the ground, which, after passing through a very low and narrow doorway, ends at the foot of a straight, steep, narrow staircase, of a form quite unique in these caves. There are 20 steps, ranging in tread from $5\frac{1}{2}$ to 8 inches, and in rise from 13 to 20 inches. The top of the staircase is blocked up; but two passages open off the left-hand side wall, near the top; the upper passage is short, and leads to a small system of three cells; the lower winds for about 50 feet, after which it suddenly comes to an end in a block. Not impossibly it would end in a raised doorway, inaccessible without a long ladder, to be seen in the wall of the large bell-chamber already described.

One more interesting feature of the main hall deserves careful consideration. This is a cupboard above a kind of apse in the centre of the east wall. It is a receptacle of small size—1 foot 3 inches to 1 foot 5 inches in all dimensions, and therefore could not have held many or large objects, but these must have been of considerable intrinsic value, as the cupboard was closed with a board, carefully secured in position by a heavy beam. The sockets for all these are visible in the rock; and it is interesting to notice that for extra security the board must have been slightly warped, so as to fit more tightly.

In my opinion the caves at Khurbet el-'Ain are of much greater interest than even the colossal excavations of Beit Jibrîn; and of the series on this hill none can compete in importance with that now described.

Close by it is another, of very similar type, but not nearly so extensive.

DISCOVERY AT THE POOL BETHESDA.

By PÈRE LÉON CRÉ.

IN the *Quarterly Statement* for 1888 (pp. 115-134) there is a description, with plan and sections, by Dr. Schick, of the twin pools near the Church of St. Anne, which are called by the earlier historians of the Crusades *Piscina Probatica* or Bethesda. The pools, then recently discovered, were only partially examined; and, as more than half of them lie beneath private Moslem houses, complete exploration is still impossible. It was thought, however, that something more might be done, and in 1899 the Committee of the Fund placed a small sum at the disposal of the "White Fathers" who had conducted the previous excavations. The result has been the discovery of the outlet of the western pool, and of the drain connected with it.

Père Léon Cré, to whose initiative the work of exploration is due, writes that when the south part of the western pool was cleared of rubbish they noticed, against the south wall, two masses of rock which resembled the piers that support the sluice-gates of European reservoirs. Digging between these, they found a channel 2 feet $11\frac{1}{2}$ inches wide and deep, and then a rock-hewn opening, 3 feet $3\frac{1}{4}$ inches high, in the south wall, at a depth of 62 feet 4 inches below the present level of the ground. Beneath this opening was another, 1 foot $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches square, which allowed the pool to be emptied for cleansing purposes. Passing through the opening, they found themselves in a high passage with rock sides, which was roofed with large flag-stones, and at the bottom of the shaft by which men passed up and down, by means of small foot-holes cut in the rock, to open or shut the sluice-gate. Beyond the shaft the passage was covered with stalactites, which wainscoted its rocky sides or hung in rows, like petrified snakes,