

SIXTEENTH QUARTERLY REPORT ON THE
EXCAVATION OF GEZER.

Third of the Second Series.

11 August—9 November, 1907.

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GEZER has this quarter excelled itself. For about a couple of months after sending off the last report the results of the work were not more than ordinarily interesting, and I was beginning to fear that the new report would not be up to the standard of some of its predecessors, when a discovery was made which ranks in interest and importance with the best things that the mound has so far produced. Indeed one competent visitor to the excavation has pronounced it as far surpassing even the High Place in suggestiveness.

The excavations this quarter have been confined to the Western Hill, a new trench having been dug west of that containing the city gate. As it happened, in the whole length of this trench not a single cistern was found—a fact on which the foreman and I congratulated ourselves; for though it is most important to empty out all cisterns, meagre though the finds in the majority of them may be, it must be confessed that they are a terrible hindrance and complication to the work. They prevent one following out the logical process of casting earth from one trench into the preceding, as, of course, while men are at work in them earth cannot be thrown anywhere near; and they themselves contribute an extra quantity of earth, the disposal of which is often a serious problem.

So, as the work advanced in the trench, and stage by stage was passed, we felt much satisfaction that no cistern-shafts made their appearance. Another strange phenomenon gave food for speculation

as the excavation progressed at the south end; that below the level which contained sherds of the great period of Mycenaean and Cypriote trade—say 1450 to 1200 B.C.—there were no walls whatever. Instead, we had to cut through some six or eight feet of a solid alluvial silt which contained nothing but stray fragments of pottery, and a few scarabs and such objects. All of these belonged to the same period of culture as that just mentioned.

Thus, before having any idea of the discovery awaiting me, I was able to infer that up to about 1450 B.C. there had been a slop-land at this point inside the city walls; that no houses were built there; that probably rubbish had been thrown there; that certainly water had accumulated there in large quantities; and that, after that date, the soil had become dry enough to bear houses, which were then built. It is not quite accurate to say that there were absolutely no traces of construction down to the rock, for on the surface of the rock were a few meagre scraps of very early First Semitic walls, with the characteristic pottery; but these for the present may be neglected.

The explanation of the existence of this waste land in the middle of a crowded city had to be sought. I continued the digging with some apprehension, having visions of a great reservoir, like the immense pool in the middle of the hill, the clearance of which had occupied six months under the first permit. When we reached the rock, the edge of a scarp made its appearance, and seemed to justify these apprehensions.

A few hours' work was enough to show that in the rock was sunk a large pool (Fig. 1), or what appeared to be such, shaped something like a keyhole in outline, the broader end being to the south. With a little further clearance steps were found, much broken, occupying the narrow end. The sides of the pool were vertical, and did not appear at first to expand or contract downwards, but after a couple of days, evidence of an extension eastward made its appearance, and soon a hole was opened in that side of the pit into which it was possible to creep.

The hole was found to lead into a passage, sloping downwards for an unknown extent at a sharp angle. As the earth with which it was filled almost to the roof was soft and powdery, and poised at the angle of limiting friction, considerable risk was involved in attempting to descend the passage. The danger was two-fold—the earth below might slide down, possibly precipitating the unwary



FIG. 1.—ENTRANCE TO THE TUNNEL (FROM THE NORTH).

explorer into a cess-pit or cistern, or the earth above might be loosened and come down in an avalanche upon his head.

My first idea was that I had opened an elaborate sewer. The explanation was not wholly satisfactory, though to some extent the condition of the earth above, as above described, lent some colour to the hypothesis. The difficulties in the way were considerable, however; such a drain (evidently at least as large as some of the main drains under London) could serve only a very small area of the city: and the hypothesis implied that the Canaanites were far more advanced in sanitary civilization than we have had reason to give them credit for.

This first examination of the tunnel revealed the interesting fact that flint tools had been used in its excavation. The marks were well preserved on the walls, so far as they were visible, and on the roof, and they displayed the well-marked teeth that the chipped edge of a flint knife leaves in the soft rock surface. It will be remembered that similar marks were noticed in the great cave under the Troglodyte Place of Sacrifice, discovered some years ago.

The men working in the tunnel were divided into two groups; one to take the loose surface earth off the silt filling the tunnel, the other to deepen in the entrance pit and ascertain the depth and the nature of the floor.

As the work continued it became more and more evident that the "sewer" theory had to be abandoned. The more the earth was cleared out the greater the tunnel appeared to be, and soon it was obvious that it was larger than any sewer ever made in the world. A happy recollection of the tunnels by which the town of Kerak is entered suggested another theory that seemed more plausible; namely, that this was a very ancient entrance to the stronghold of Gezer, and that the tunnel would be found to slope down to the level of the base of the hill, and open out at some place in the surrounding valley. The steps at the top of the entrance, above referred to, seemed to fit in with this idea; and I was interested to notice that, after the second step, they had been broken, apparently with intention, as though to prevent enemies who had discovered the lower entrance from climbing into the city.

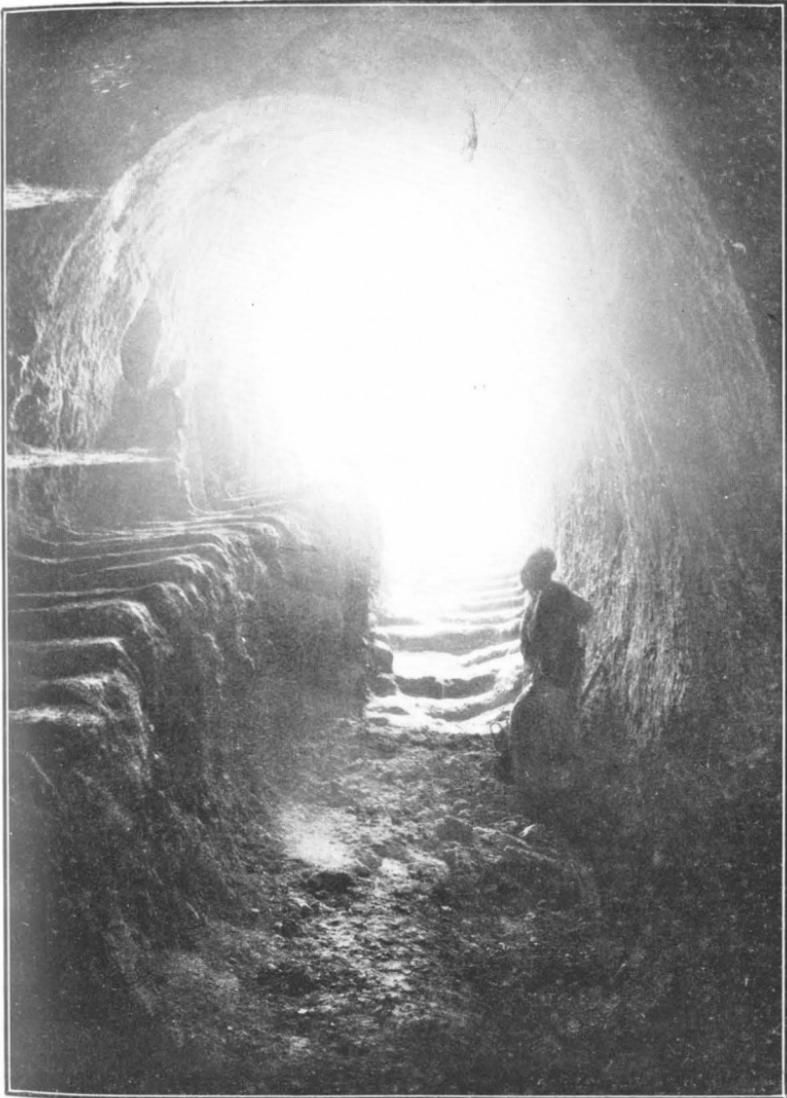
The test of the theory of course would be if steps were found continuing down the floor of the tunnel; and it was with considerable satisfaction that I saw, when the earth was at last cleared out, and the rock floor of the tunnel exposed, a well-cut flight of steps

running down it occupying its whole width, whose much-worn and broken condition testified eloquently to long-continued and heavy traffic.

There still remained the question of its destination. Having decided that this was probably the original purpose of the tunnel, I determined to make one more effort to explore it to its end, partly in the hope of finding the probable whereabouts of a lower exit, the discovery of which would enable me to expedite the work by attacking both ends at once, and partly to forestall any possible thieves who might make a night raid on the excavation. For I had also in mind the possibility that the tunnel might lead down to a system of catacombs, where there might or might not be rich deposits.

I found that the passage runs downward at a steep angle for a considerable distance, and in a direction more or less due east; that it then becomes horizontal, with a slight turn to the south (which is what we should expect if it be meant to open out in the valley); and that after running for some distance thus, it ends (at present) in a very large chamber. In this preliminary visit I did not bring a tape with me, so am unable at present to give the dimensions of the chamber; it seemed to measure about forty feet by thirty, but such eye-estimations of the size of underground chambers are notoriously untrustworthy.

The whole of the excavation is full of earth and stones; indeed at one part of the horizontal section of the tunnel it seemed impossible to pass through at all; and in the large chamber at the end the floor is so cumbered with debris (principally fragments shaken by earthquakes from the roof) that it was impossible to stand upright in any part of it. I am, therefore, at present unable to say what, if any, further extension of the system may lie beyond this chamber: if there be any doorways in its walls they will be revealed in good time, when the workmen reach them. That, however, will not be for two or three months yet, if so soon. But I cannot feel satisfied that there would be so much traffic on the steps, such as their worn condition indicates, merely to enter this chamber—unless, indeed, it be a much frequented sanctuary, in which case yet more interesting discoveries may await us when we come to examine it. I still think that the most likely theory is, that we have in this great engineering work a means of entrance and exit to the city.



SUBTERRANEAN GALLERY AT GEZER.

A minor limit of date is afforded by the objects contained in the silt that had penetrated into the excavation. This, of course, must have been allowed to fall in after the tunnel had gone out of use. These objects all belong uniformly to the dates given above—*i.e.*, about the Tell el-Amarna epoch, or a little later. It is not extravagant to assume 500 years as the time required for the steps to get into the condition in which we find them; so if we fix 2000 B.C. as a date for the excavation of the tunnel, we shall have a working hypothesis which, so far as the present state of the investigation permits us to judge, fits in with all the indications.

In any case, the rock-cutting must be very old, and this indicates that there is no inherent improbability in assigning a remote date to the great rock-cuttings of Beit Jibrin, to which it is not inferior either in design, magnitude, or execution. It is difficult to describe this entirely unexpected addition to our knowledge of ancient Gezer without appearing to exaggerate: it has to be seen for its full imposing effect to be appreciated.¹

Coming now to details, so far as the excavation has hitherto revealed them, we have at the entrance a hollow in the rock, 34 feet 6 inches in length along its western side, which is a straight perpendicular scarp, 7 feet 5 inches broad at the northern end, 14 feet 6 inches broad at the southern. In the middle of the edge of the southern side is a semi-cylindrical niche, 2 feet 8 inches deep, and 5 feet across; it bears a singular resemblance to the *mihrab* of a mosque. It will be seen between the two cranes in fig. 1. Some holes, like put-log holes, and, still more, a rebating of the east and west sides of the pit, as though to receive the foundations of walls, seem to indicate that a building of some sort was erected over the hollow, of which, however, no trace remains. That some protecting wall would be built to prevent persons falling into the pit may be taken for granted. The floor of the pit is entirely occupied by a flight of steps, cut in the rock, starting from the northern side; the steps run southward for the length of the narrow part of the pit, and then turn eastward. All the southward running steps, except the two uppermost, have been broken away with intention. The pit reaches a maximum depth, on the lowest step (which is also the first step of the series inside the tunnel), of 26 feet 6 inches.

¹ I much regret that my attempts to secure a flash-light photograph of the interior should, so far, not have been very successful: I hope to be able to present such a photograph with the next report.

The entrance to the tunnel is by an imposing archway, 23 feet high and 12 feet 10 inches across, cut in the rock. These dimensions are, generally speaking, maintained throughout its length, so far as its clearance has been carried. At the point where the excavation has at present reached—about 60 feet from the entrance—they appear to be decreasing. The roof is cut to a barrel vault, and the sides are cut well plumb. The whole floor is occupied by steps, which are much worn and broken. Indeed, towards the end of the time when the tunnel was in use, they seem to have been regarded as dangerous, for small hollows are cut at intervals in the sides just large enough, and of about the right height, to serve as hand-grips.

The angle at which the tunnel descends, as estimated by an Abney level, is 38° to the horizontal.

At 47 feet 5 inches from the entrance a well-cut archway is made in the upper part of the tunnel, ending abruptly about 5 feet above the adjacent step. The archway has a reveal of 6 to 8 inches on the outer side; on the inner side it dies gradually into the wall of the tunnel. There is a second archway about the same distance farther in, but this has not yet been reached in excavation, and only the top is visible. These two archways divide the oblique portion of the tunnel into three approximately equal parts.

On the sides, especially in the upper parts, are a number of square holes in the rock. These look like put-log holes for scaffolding, which they possibly are; they may also have been cupboards made by the workmen for holding tools and other property during the prosecution of the work.

For the present the description of this unique engineering work must be left at this point.¹ Whatever developments its further examination may reveal will be noticed in the next report.

The objects found in the tunnel were of minor importance, and need not at present detain us: potsherds, fragments of horn, flints, and the like. One of the common "Astarte-plaques" was found inside it, and a foot or two below the entrance was found a rather rarer object—a mould for their manufacture.

There is, however, one "find" that deserves to be recorded (fig. 2). This is a cake of clay on which a basket of straw had evidently, at some time, been laid. The clay has preserved the

¹ See, now, the postscript.

impression and shreds of the outer surface of the straw. The basket seems to have been made of a single rope of straw about a quarter-inch in diameter, twisted round into a spiral. The end of the rope is plaited in and out through the adjacent whorls of the spiral—it can be traced to the fifth whorl. One or two ill-defined grooves, radiating outwards from the centre, suggest that the whorls of the spiral were kept in position by being passed through loops of a string or thread. The basket had a base slightly convex externally, unlike the modern baskets used in transporting earth in such work as this excavation. These run up in a cone, like the bottom

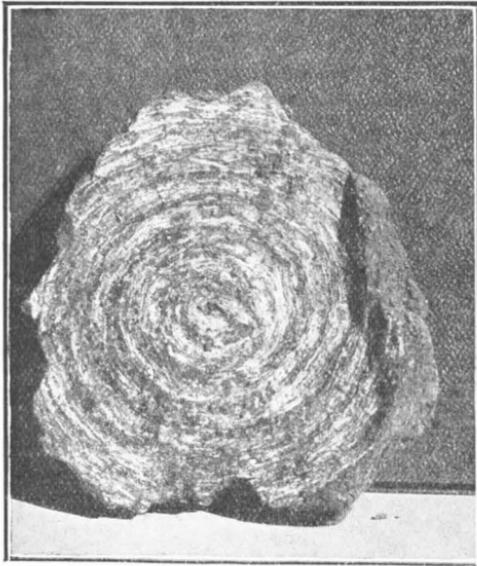


FIG. 2.—CLOD OF EARTH, WITH IMPRESSION OF THE BOTTOM OF A BASKET.

of a wine bottle, when new, though they rapidly flatten with use. The radius of the bottom of the old basket was about $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches, but the centre of the spiral was not precisely in the centre of the base. The sides then turn up sharply; but here we reach the edge of the clod, and can glean no further information. The peculiar interest of this object lies in its giving us indirect information on a technical point—the making of straw baskets—concerning which direct information can never be expected, owing to the perishable nature of the material involved.

MISCELLANEOUS OBJECTS.

As hinted at the beginning of this report, no constructional remains of special interest were found during this quarter, and the harvest of antiquities was, if anything, a little below the average in interest. Such few things as call for notice may be considered together in one section.

I. One of the historical problems on which light might be expected from the Gezer excavations is the name of Solomon's Egyptian father-in-law, which at present can only be selected by guess from among a number of his contemporaries. The plaque of terra-cotta here figured (fig. 3) is, therefore, in such a connection, peculiarly tantalizing. It was found in just about the right level, and evidently bears part of the royal cartouche. Unluckily it is all

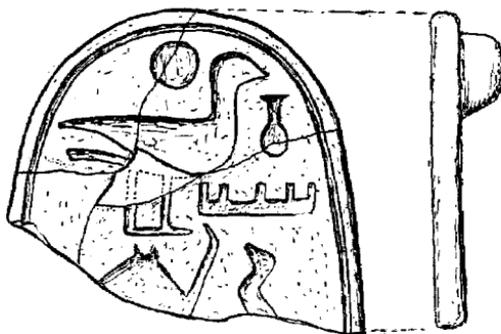


FIG. 3.—PLAQUE OF TERRA-COTTA, WITH
EGYPTIAN INSCRIPTIONS.

broken away except the conventional title *s'*, *R'*, which tells us nothing, and some other symbols insufficient to identify the royal name; at least I cannot see my way to do so. The characters broken across at the fracture are, to me, unintelligible. The object is not only imperfect, but is itself broken into five pieces, one which is missing. It measures $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches top to bottom by $2\frac{3}{4}$ inches across at the fracture; it is $\frac{3}{8}$ inch thick. There is a knob or foot at the upper end of the back, as though to attach it to a wall or other vertical surface; this also is broken across, otherwise the back is quite plain.

II. Of far greater interest, however, is the object represented in fig. 4. This was found in a deep stratum associated with remains

dating about 2000 B.C. Unhappily it is much broken, and only part of the object could be recovered; enough, however, remains to show that it was a pottery model of a shrine. It is made in hard homogeneous ware, black in the middle of a fracture, and of a light reddish tinge near the surfaces, and the whole is coloured with a cream-coloured slip. In the illustration, the lower drawing is a perspective sketch of the object in its present state, the upper drawing is a suggested restoration of the façade. These drawings have been made with the aid of a camera lucida, and accurately repeat the object.

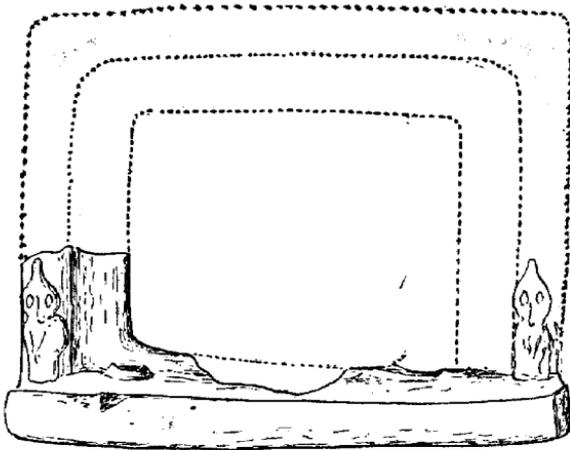


FIG. 4.—MODEL OF A SHRINE.

The "shrine" itself has gone save for some insignificant fragments of the walls and floor. Separating it from the open forecourt is a doorway, which has been about 8 to $8\frac{1}{4}$ inches in breadth. The sill of this doorway is raised half an inch above the level of the forecourt and $\frac{5}{8}$ inch above the level of the floor of the shrine. The section of the sill is triangular, the apex being rounded. The forecourt measures 12 inches in length (across the front of the façade), $4\frac{1}{4}$ inches in width. It is a slab of pottery $\frac{7}{8}$ inch thick. The vertical edges are rounded.

There is, of course, no evidence as to the height of the entrance doorway or the roofing of the "shrine."

The jamb of the doorway is $2\frac{3}{4}$ inches broad, and is intercepted by a moulded ridge running up about the middle of the face of the

jamb. On the outside of this there is, in the surviving part, a quaint, seated figure, the front and side aspects of which are shown in enlarged drawings in the figure (fig. 5). It seems to be wearing a high peaked cap. The face is remarkable for its prominent rounded nose; the eyes (as is so often the case of early human and animal figures found in Palestine) are separately moulded pellets. The lower part of the face is quite overshadowed by the nose. The ears are large and prominent. The figure is seated with its hands

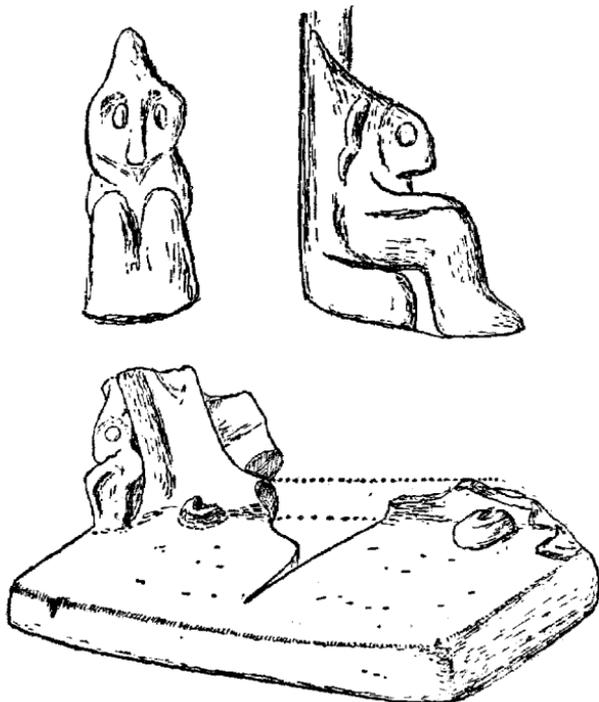


FIG. 5.—SEATED FIGURE ON THE SHRINE.

on its knees. Except the cap, the modelling is not definite enough to show anything of the costume of the figure, or even if it be meant to be undraped.

A fracture in the surface of the forecourt shows that a precisely similar figure was placed in the corresponding position on the opposite side. This is sketched in in outline in the restoration.

On the inner side of the moulding against which the figure is seated, and just under the corners of the door, there are two vats or

stoups, one on each side. These are $\frac{1}{4}$ inch high, a little more than semi-circular, and about 1 inch in diameter. They represent libation vessels, or possibly lavers for ablutions.

This remarkable object enables us to form a conception of a Canaanite covered temple (as distinguished from an open-air High Place), such as excavation may yet at some time bring to light.

III.—It may be recollected that on the top of the brick tower that formed the west jamb of the southern gate a number of curious pottery figures were found, consisting of birds and pomegranates mounted on rings, and the like. The most important of these are illustrated in the plate facing p. 219 of the *Quarterly Statement* for 1904. It almost seems as though there were here living a potter



FIG. 6.—GROTESQUE POTTERY FIGURE.

with what may be described as a talent for freakishness, for several other objects of the same genre came to light in the southern end of the new trench.

The most remarkable of these is here illustrated (Fig. 6). It is the head and shoulders of a human figure. Through the chest is a hole, doubtless to allow the object to be suspended on a wall by means of a peg driven through it. It is in a light reddish ware, covered with a fat cream wash. Two holes have been made in the surviving portion, one on the back, the other under the chin, to allow the steam to escape while firing. The figure is wearing a flat head-dress, not unlike the modern "Tam o' Shanter" cap, with a braided rim, and with six ribbons streaming behind. Unlike most "household gods," under which general heading the figure must,

I suppose, be classified, it is male, as indicated by the moustache and short beard: the former is almost worn away (by kissing?). Such representations of the hair of the face are exceedingly rare in figures found here: as I write I can recall no other instances, with the special exception, of course, of the side-whiskers with which Bes is generally endowed. The eyes are conical protuberances: on the apex is a round dot to represent the pupil, around which is a black circle for the iris. The brows are continuous across the nose. Down the ridge of the nose runs a red line. The curved outline that the nose at present presents is due to a fracture of the tip: the dotted line in the side view shows approximately its original outline. The red colour with which the lips were no doubt emphasized has disappeared: indeed the cream-coloured paint (which was added after firing) has itself disappeared from this region of the face. The tongue is protruded, and also seems to have been coloured red. On the neck is a chain of seven pendant beads, apparently meant to represent those in use in Egypt under the XVIIIth dynasty, to the period of which the figure is to be assigned. Some red lines on the shoulders are apparently meant to indicate the folds of a cloak resembling the modern 'abba. The figure, in spite of its grotesquerie, has a singularly life-like appearance; the artist was superior to most of his local contemporaries in his power of representing the human form.

CONCLUDING NOTE.

By the time this report is in its reader's hands, the first of the two years of the Permit will be drawing to its close. It has been, so far, a fruitful year. The Canaanite castle, the "Philistine" graves (with their valuable indications of Aegean trade), the Roman bath, such smaller objects as the stone altar, the zodiac-tablet, and the model shrine described in the present report, are in themselves almost sufficient to compensate for the continued absence of written documents: to say nothing of the great rock-cut tunnel just come to light. If during the four months that, at the moment of writing, still remain of the exploration year the results continue at the same average level of interest, the Society will have every reason to congratulate itself on its decision to return to Gezer rather than to attack another mound.

May I, however, before I close, call special attention to the map prefixed to this report, which shows the present condition of the

excavation? It will be seen that there are large areas as yet untouched within the walls, anywhere in which *the* prize of the excavation may lie hidden. A difference of 5 feet in the position of a trench would have caused us to miss the Troglodyte Crematorium, described in the first report, with its valuable information on the early inhabitants of Palestine. With a difference of 20 feet the tunnel described in this notice, which promises to be one of the most important discoveries so far made here, would have remained unknown. When I say that on the map in question a length of 20 feet is represented by about $\frac{1}{16}$ inch, it will easily be seen how near we might go to something of great value and yet miss it altogether.

Nothing but turning over the whole mound will assure us that we have missed nothing. Now, at the commencement of a new year, which will also be the last of the Society's work at Gezer, may I make a final appeal for means to enable me at least to go as near the ideal as possible? The average expenditure at present is £100 per month, which includes not only labour, but also salaries, camp expenses, and other necessary items of outlay. As the latter are fixed, every addition to the expenditure is laid out on wages only. Thus with £100 a month I can employ about eighty labourers: with another £50 I could employ between fifty and sixty more.

In the Annual Report for 1906 I count the names of about 1,450 subscribers, of whom some 600 subscribe under £1. If half the latter would for this year double their subscription, the extra labourers could on that extra gift alone be kept going for about three months. If 1,000 of the subscribers could each induce one friend to give a guinea, it would, I think, be possible to wrest all the secrets that this ancient city still has to tell to the world.

POSTSCRIPT.

The continued excavation of the tunnel has resulted to-day (30th Nov., 1907) in the discovery of a powerful spring of water at the bottom, which is, no doubt, its primary *raison d'être*. At the moment of writing, in haste to catch the *Quarterly Statement* before it goes to press, there are still some unanswered questions. But at present it appears as though the excavation is less important than its imposing nature at first gave grounds to expect.