

FIRST QUARTERLY REPORT ON THE EXCAVATION  
OF THE EASTERN HILL OF JERUSALEM.

By PROF. R. A. S. MACALISTER, LITT.D., LL.D.

§ I. *Narrative.*

WITH my colleague, the Rev. J. Garrow Duncan, I landed at Port Said on September 4th, and for the first time proceeded to Jerusalem by the railway route (convenient but wearisome withal) through El-Kantara. We arrived at our destination on the morning of the 5th, and on the same day we walked down to the Eastern Hill, and after some discussion selected what seemed to be a promising field for operations. The terracing and re-terracing of the soil on the ridge, which, with the adjacent parts of the Tyropoeon Valley, has been entirely turned into vegetable gardens, have completely abolished any surface indications of concealed ruins that might formerly have been seen on the site. We were therefore deprived of this valuable guide to selection. Our choice depended upon the following considerations: (1) The field should be sufficiently far from the wall of the Haram esh-Sherif to allay any suspicions of our having designs upon that sanctuary; (2) it should be a virgin field, that is, one not previously explored; (3) it should be fairly near the Virgin's Fountain, as an important building (such as a palace) would probably be placed in such a position as to use conveniently the waters of that source; (4) it should, if possible, have no valuable crops that would have to be purchased. The field which we selected seemed to possess all four advantages in full measure. It is about 200 metres from the Haram; it showed no sign of previous excavation; it is almost vertically above the Virgin's Fountain; and it was quite conspicuous among all the other fields of the hill for the blighted, scrubby appearance of its crop of cauliflowers. I communicated our choice without delay to the Department of Antiquities, and awaited developments.

Developments of a disconcerting kind came soon enough. I have been given to understand, by those who ought to know, that even before our arrival various quasi-political intrigues had been set on foot to prevent the work taking place at all. We found ourselves almost immediately faced with a scare that the Haram was once more in danger. The *débâcle* of the ill-starred treasure-hunting expedition of 1909 was still fresh in the popular memory: in the eyes of the Palestinian *demos* all archaeological

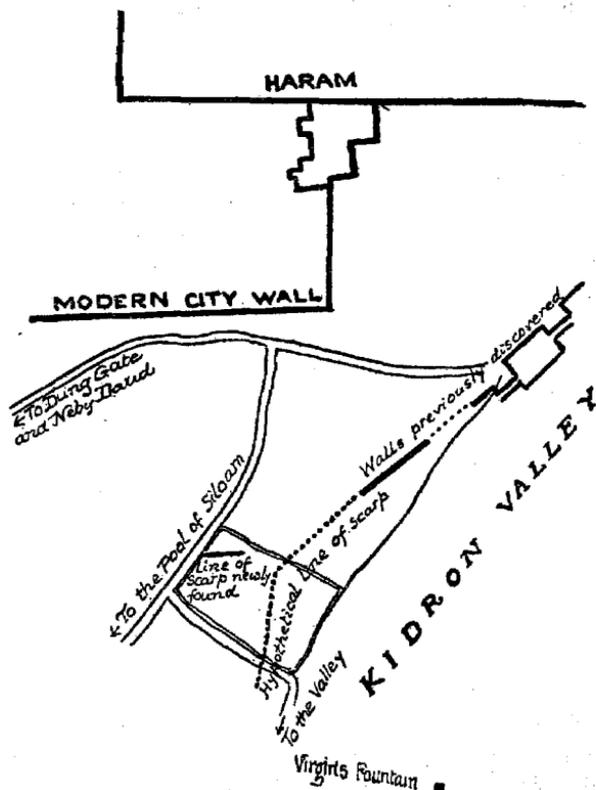


FIG. 1.—Map of part of land south of Jerusalem, showing the position of the field of excavation (surrounded by a double line).

excavators are *ipso facto* treasure-hunters, and the conclusion that our party had arrived with the same aims and methods in view was only logical (Fig. 1).

While attempts were being made to counter this popular delusion, enquiries were being prosecuted with regard to the

owners of the selected field; and here a fresh complication made its appearance. An ingenious gentleman, it appeared, had bought up a share in the field (and, for all I know, in others on the site as well), having heard that a scheme was on foot to excavate the Eastern Hill. His idea was to hold up the excavation in order that he might be bought out at a high figure. He claimed to have paid £500 for his share of the field, and wished for a good but undefined profit on the speculation: some £300 was, I think, alluded to. His partners merely demanded a trifle of £300 per annum rent and £200 compensation for crops. Allowing our speculating friend his profit of £300, this would all mean that the excavator would have had to pay £1,300 before a spade could be put in the ground.

If I were not personally working under a time-limit, set by my leave of absence from University duties, I might have fought these monstrous demands with greater determination. But it would probably have occupied the whole time I had to spare; and to have travelled to Jerusalem and returned, having accomplished nothing but a squalid dispute about the price of cauliflowers, seemed to me an unattractive prospect. After long-drawn negotiations, lasting over five distracting weeks, I succeeded in obtaining four months' use of the land, including the crops, for £250. This, of course, necessitates what may be described as intensive work, in order to get the greatest possible amount dug over in the time. The area of the field, it should be said, is 2,400 square metres.

The problem of wages came next, which also involved much time-wasting disputation. To cut short this unprofitable portion of the Report, I really count myself fortunate that, after the loss of over a month of excellent working weather, the work actually began on October 12th, with wages at the usual Jerusalem rates, and not something quite fantastic, such as was demanded at first.

I have to thank His Excellency the High Commissioner of Palestine; his deputy, Sir Gilbert Clayton; Mr. Ronald Storrs, the Governor of the Jerusalem District; Mr. Luke, the Assistant Governor; Ruhi Bey Abd el-Hadi, Commissioner for the Jerusalem District; Major Partridge, Commandant of Police for Jerusalem; and the officers of the Department of Antiquities, for much valuable help in the various difficulties which arose, and which in the foregoing narrative have been only outlined.

Unfortunately I was disappointed in my hope of securing the services of the old foreman of the Fund, Yusuf Khattar, who, having settled down to the care of a numerous family, is unable to leave a safe permanent position for a temporary one. The Egyptian foreman who worked with Prof. Garstang at Askalon has been placed in charge.

### § II. *The Byzantine Stratum.*

In excavating the site, the same method is being adopted as at Gezer: a large area having been marked out on the surface, and sub-divided into rectangular spaces, in each of them a gang was set to work. The area of the pit marked out was 60 feet square, and at first 90 labourers (men and boys) were employed, increased later to about 140. It is an indication of the way in which prices have risen in the interval, that the wages bill for each week is about equal to the sum which the Fund put at my disposal for all purposes each month, at Gezer, fourteen to twenty years ago.

The first eighteen or twenty inches of soil were found to be absolutely sterile of antiquities. They contained nothing but scraps of modern glass, and odds and ends of broken metal objects, all of recent date; the reed of a motor-horn was one of the most curious and unexpected of these. There were also a number of fragments of the roots of olive trees, showing (what in point of fact is still in living memory) that the field formerly formed part of an olive grove. This entirely modern soil must have been imported, probably with manure, in laying out the terrace for the cauliflower field. It was not till we were well into the second foot of depth that the remains of walls began to appear.

The uppermost stratum in the first pit proved to have been almost entirely destroyed. Being on, or just under, the former surface of the ground, it afforded a useful quarry for building-stones, and in consequence hardly any remains of it were left. The structural relics consisted of the following:—

(1) A doorway of a large house in the south-west corner of the pit.<sup>1</sup> Only the northern jamb and part of the threshold were exposed in the pit; the southern jamb is still hidden in a portion as yet unexcavated. The wall through which the doorway passed

<sup>1</sup> [Those photographs of this and of other objects which have not been reproduced in this report can be seen at the office of the Fund.]

ran approximately north and south, and clearly formed the eastern wall of a street running in that direction (Fig. 2). It is interesting to notice that the modern footpath from the Dung Gate down to the Pool of Siloam follows the same line, and doubtless preserves the tradition of this ancient street. The threshold was rebated to stop the door, which opened inward toward the west; the bolt-hole in the centre showed that the door was double: the breadth of the whole doorway was about 10 feet. Above it there had been an



FIG. 2.—View looking southward along the Byzantine street.  
(The line of street is just under the notice-board, intercepted between the wall on which two baskets are standing mouth upward and the side of the pit. The dry stone wall to the right of the picture is the modern revetment of the road to the Pool of Siloam.)

arch, some voussours of which had fallen on the threshold: one of these, presumably the central stone of the arch, bore on the face a roughly hammered cross, which may be taken as marking the house as the dwelling of a Christian.<sup>1</sup> But except a few paving-stones just inside the threshold of the door, showing that the latter had led into a paved court, no other recognizable fragments of the house remained.

<sup>1</sup> [Those photographs of this and of other objects which have not been reproduced in this report can be seen at the office of the Fund.]

(2) In the north-east corner of the pit, a rectangular pavement of white mosaic tesserae, with a red cross inserted in each of three corners; there probably had been a cross in the fourth corner also, but this was destroyed (Fig. 3). There was an irregular hole broken in the centre of this pavement, forming the mouth of a cistern, 16 ft. 7 ins. deep.

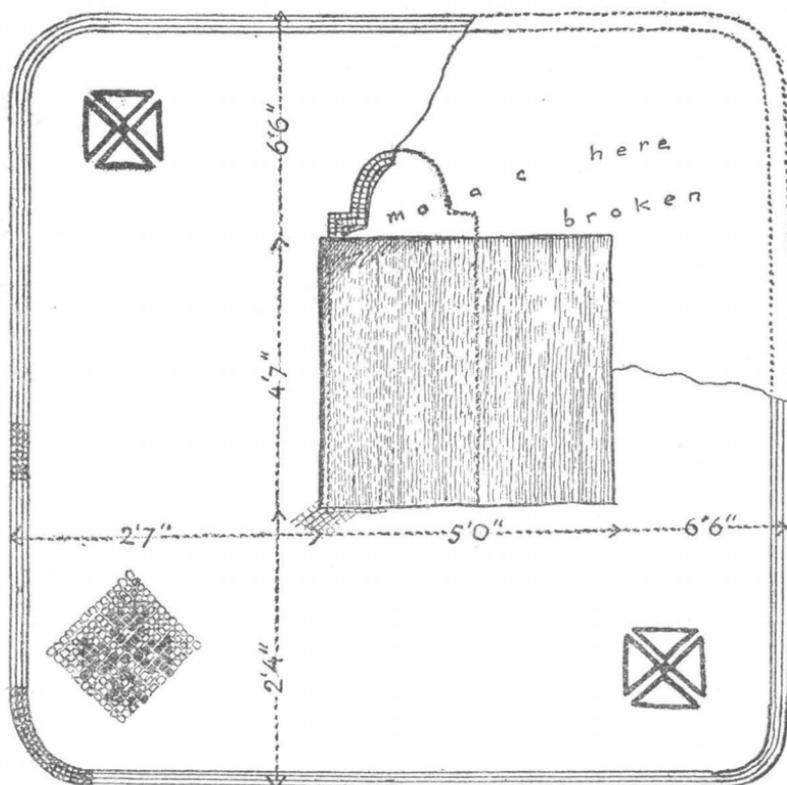


FIG. 3.—Diagram on mosaic pavement.

(3) As this Report is being written, the stylobate and column-bases of a distyle portico have just been unearthed in the second pit (an extension eastward of the first pit, and also 60 feet long). Mosaic pavements seem to be associated with this structure, as well as a drain of pottery pipes; but the excavation has not yet advanced

far enough to enable us to determine the nature of the building. I fear that the greater part of it is outside the limits of our field, and runs into the field to the north.

A cistern with vaulted roof, at present being cleared, probably belongs to this building; but we can say nothing definite about this as yet.

No inscriptions of any kind have been found associated with this stratum. A few Byzantine coins were produced by the labourers, alleged to have been found in the soil; but doubt attaches to such portable antiquities, which are among the commonest objects of Palestine, and can be quite easily carried into the field and exhibited at the delectable moment when baksheesh is assessed. The labourers are quite *au fait* with the art of "salting," as we have learnt by experience. More importance may be attached to the lamps here found, which resemble those found in Christian tombs of round about the 5th century A.D.<sup>1</sup> The general impression which I have from the very scanty remains of potsherds found in this stratum is that it is to be dated to about the time of the Empress Eudocia (438-439 A.D.).

The only other object from this stratum worth mentioning is the top of an ornamental vase [?] in soft limestone. Four debased Corinthian columns support a frieze enclosing the central vase, which is in the shape of an inverted cone, and is decorated with a ring of knobs a little below the lip. The upper part of the object alone was discovered: someone had intentionally cut the capitals from the columns that had supported them, and snapped the central vase across. In the upper surface of the frieze, above each capital, there is a socket, presumably for receiving the supports of some kind of canopy above the top of the vase, worked in a separate piece of stone, and now lost. The height of the object in its present form is  $2\frac{3}{4}$  ins., and its maximum breadth is 3 ins.  $\times$   $3\frac{1}{8}$  ins.<sup>1</sup>

### § III. *The Late Roman Stratum.*

Underneath the scanty relics of the Byzantine layer, above described, there extends a fairly continuous series of small houses, grouped around a narrow street running approximately east and west, at the south side of the pit—that is to say, at right angles to the line of the Byzantine street mentioned in the preceding

<sup>1</sup> [Those photographs of this and of other objects which have not been reproduced in this report can be seen at the office of the Fund.]

section. Of these houses and their contents there is but little to tell. The masonry is very inferior, and fragments of ornamental stone—capitals, drums, and bases of columns—pillaged from earlier buildings, are used at haphazard as building materials. The rooms are small, the pottery is poor: altogether one gets the impression that at this stage of the city's history, which may be dated approximately at about 400 A.D., the quarter of the city that lay on our site was very poverty-stricken.

One room, however, in this series was floored with a mosaic pavement, having in the centre a lozenge containing a guilloche pattern, in a remarkable variety of colours—white, black, red, grey, and yellow. The edge of another mosaic floor lay close by, but this unfortunately runs northward into a field where we have no rights.

The only finds which this stratum has yielded that call for notice are:

(1) A jar-handle, in yellow ware, stamped with a potter's mark inscribed

CI·L·F·TRO  
LEONIS



FIG. 4.—A potter's stamp.

The left-hand end is fractured, carrying off a few letters from the beginning of each line. This is the most considerable inscription that has so far come to light (Fig. 4).

(2) An iron knife blade, and the handle of an iron dagger, which were found lying side by side in the street above mentioned (Fig. 5).

(3) A very large number of fragments (Fig. 6) of ornamental vessels in soft stone—the same kind of “clunch” chalky limestone as is used for the ossuaries or bone-boxes found in the tombs of the period. This is a very fragile material, and it is not surprising that no specimen even nearly complete has been discovered: only

small fragments have come to light. The curvature of these shows that they were of considerable size. They are ornamented with rather coarse mouldings, crudely turned.

(4) The hand of a statuette in white marble of pleasing though not first rate work. It holds a bunch of flowers: probably the figure represented Ceres (Fig. 7).

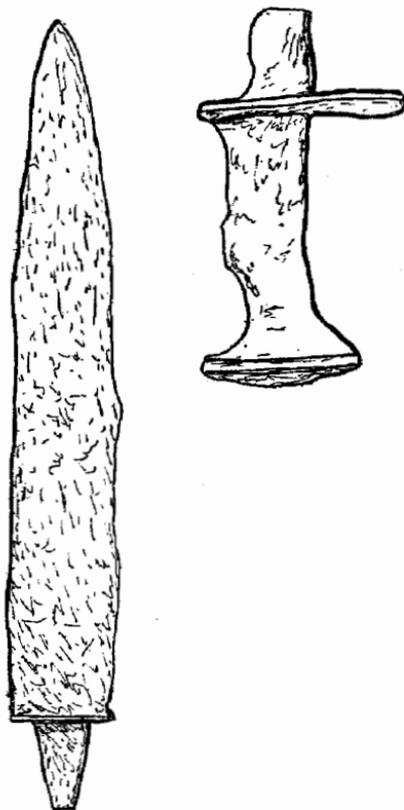


FIG. 5.—Iron knife blade and dagger handle.

§ IV. *The Third Stratum.*

The stratum underlying that described in the foregoing section proved to be much more important. The most important building in this stratum is a large mansion, the greater part of which was found in the first pit. Entrance was obtained by a large arch, the voussoirs of which indicated a span of just under 10 ft. This arch had collapsed and fallen (Fig. 8) in a row somewhat above the

level of the spring. When the house fell into decay this arch, which spanned the entrance into the courtyard, remained standing for some time. Materials accumulated in the way in which they do in an unscavengered Oriental town. The arch gradually became buried—those who know Jerusalem will be familiar with arches which are buried in the same way: the old arch under the Damascus Gate is one well-known example; another is the archway sometimes called "Gate Gennath." At last it collapsed, and the voussoirs lay in a row on what was then the ground level. There they remained until

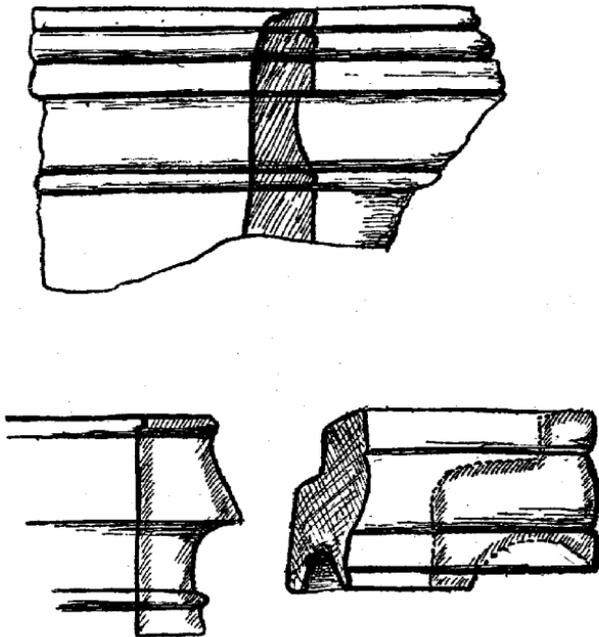


FIG. 6.—Fragments of stone vessels.

they were uncovered in the excavation. I have set them together, reconstituting the arch, which proves to have had a span of slightly under 10 ft. when complete.

The arch most likely was originally double, although there were no traces of the second arch found. The arch stones are drawn out in Plate II (a). The plan (Plate I) will show better than any description how the mansion seems to have been disposed. The *shaded* lines of walls indicate structures actually existing. The unshaded are those of which foundations are remaining, the dotted

more or less probable restorations. The main entrance from the court, and the vestibule behind it, have both disappeared completely, nothing being left but two scraps of mosaic, one from each. The "entrance" mosaic consisted of purely white tesserae,



FIG. 7.—Hand of a marble statuette.

the vestibule mosaic of V-shaped dots in black and red on a white ground.

Round the vestibule are grouped three rooms, *B*, *C*, and *D*. *D* is a small chamber with an absolutely perfect mosaic, similar in pattern to the vestibule. *C* seems also to have had a mosaic

pavement, a few tesserae of which were scattered through the soil filling it up, but this had been completely destroyed. *B* had a pavement of white tesserae only. Underneath this was a cesspool, 10 ft. deep, with a drain leading into it apparently from the vestibule. The walls were covered with plaster, and they had been impressed with hollows made with the point of a knife. These were probably meant to key a finer layer of plaster to the surface; but this, which might possibly have been decorated in colours, has quite disappeared. The only feature worth mentioning is a window in the southern wall. All the rooms were covered



FIG. 8.—Fallen arch stones.

with stucco, but this is the only one which presented the feature described. A doorway at the side led into room *A*.

Chamber *A* was a handsome room. Its architectural features were: an alcove at the north end of the western wall; a step in the centre of the northern wall, which probably formed the pedestal of a column or pier that divided the wall into two alcoves. Most probably an arch opening the whole chamber supported roofing lintels, covered, we may presume, with plaster. The floor was decorated with a simple but very pleasing pattern

in mosaic: of this some three-fourths were preserved, the north-eastern quarter being destroyed, probably by the fall of the adjacent parts of the building. This mosaic has been lifted, and, having been kindly presented by the Department of Antiquities to the Palestine Exploration Fund, will be shortly on its way to England, and will probably have arrived before this report appears in print. An attempt at a restoration of this room is shown in Fig. 9.

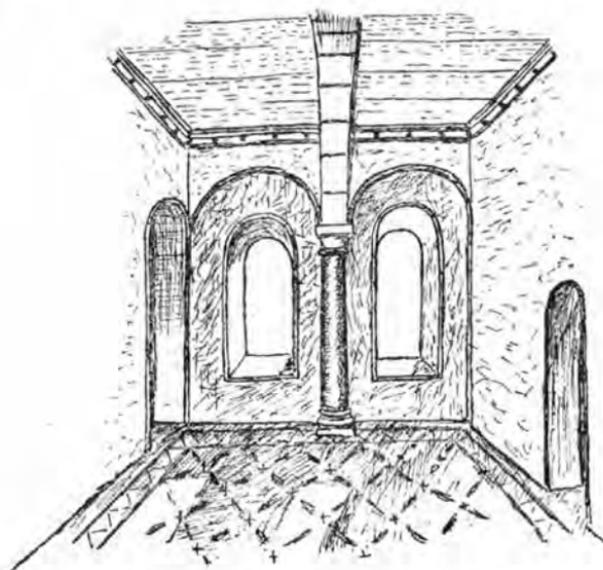


FIG. 9.—Restoration of Room A.

West of *A*, and with a floor of flat slabs at a rather lower level, is a chamber, the connexion of which with the mansion is not clear. In the middle stood two column drums, one on the other (dimensions in Plate II, *b*), with a capital lying beside them. A square mortice for the reception of a balustrade(?) was cut in the abacus and bell of this capital (Plate II, *g*) on two opposite sides.

In the poor walls that were built over the mansion some architectural fragments, which probably belonged to this mansion, were found used as building material. These were the column base (Plate II, *b*); the capital (Plate II, *c*), which was morticed in the

places indicated by dotted lines in the drawing, on opposite sides, for receiving a beam; the Attic base (Plate II, *f*), and the base of a pilaster, with moulding on one side only, represented in elevation and half-plan (Plate II, *k*). The fragment of a hexagonal capital with a Greek fret or swastika (Plate II, *e*) was lying loose in the debris on this level, and probably belongs to the house also; as well as some fragments of moulded cornices in plaster, of which drawings will be published later. A number of column drums were also found, one of which had a B upon its end (Plate II, *d*), probably as a guide to the builder in setting it up.

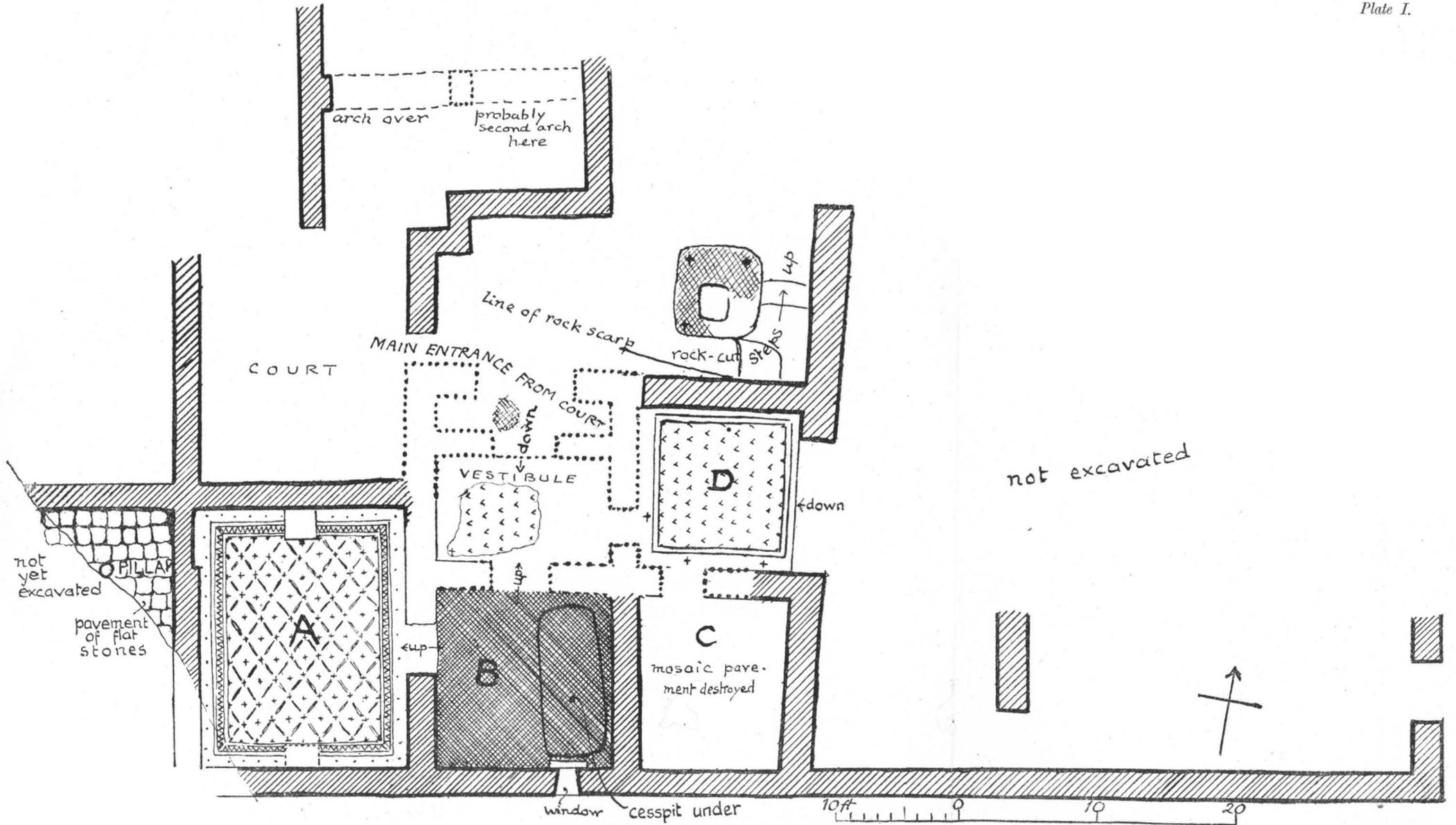
North of room *D* ran the rock-scarp described later. Some rock-cut steps connected with this scarp, probably much older than the mansion, had been utilized to lead up to a height of about 5 ft. above the general level of the mosaic pavements to a cistern-mouth. The disposition of the tesserae showed clearly that there had been a central panel, bearing either an inscription in some ornamental device, which had been destroyed by those who made the cistern. The original hole for water-pots, which was of small size and was contained within a panel marked on the mosaic, was rudely enlarged in Early Arab times by roughly breaking away the south side of the hole. The cistern must then have been completely cleared out, for nothing was found inside it but Arab pottery.

The side of the projecting block of masonry containing the cistern-mouth as well as the rock-cut steps and the wall face to the south were covered with strong cement, to make them capable of holding water.

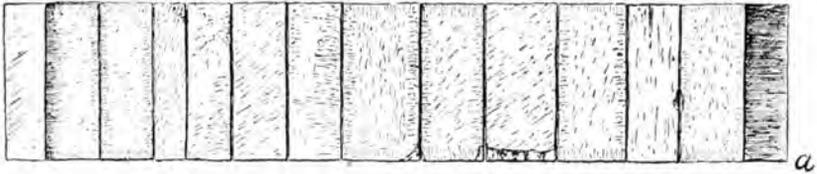
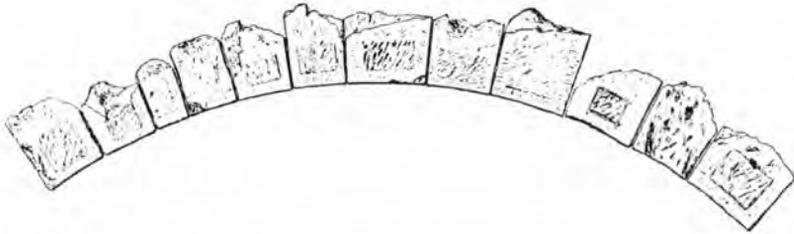
The eastward extension of the mansion is not yet worked out. There is a large doorway in the west wall of room *D*; further to the east is a wall with a doorway at the end between it and the main external wall (which still retains its outside face of stucco at this point). Some 30 ft. further on the wall comes to an end, and there is a doorway in the return; but some buildings which cover this part of the structure will have to be removed before it can be fully studied.

Chamber *D*, as I write, is as yet incompletely excavated. It has a seemingly unbroken floor of mosaic, though the pattern is less artistic than that of the chamber first described.

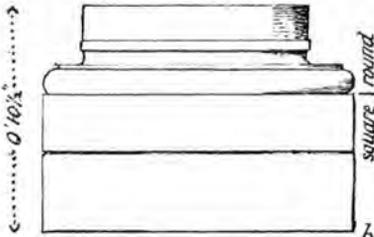
There are still some other parts of the house to be fully uncovered, but the greater part of the remains are included in the foregoing description.



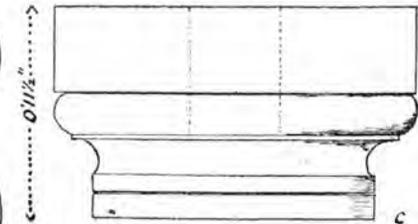
PLAN OF HOUSE WITH MOSAIC FLOORS.



a



square | round  
0 3 1/2"

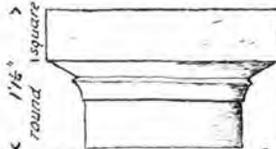


square | round

c



e



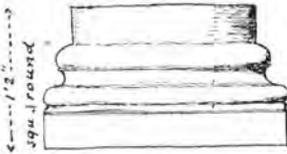
1 1/2" square  
round

g



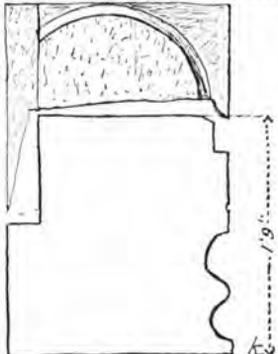
1 3/4"

h



1 1/2" square | round

f



1 9/16"

ARCHITECTURAL FRAGMENTS FROM THE HOUSE WITH MOSAIC FLOORS.

A limit of date is suggested by a paving tile with a stamp of the Tenth Legion (Fretensis) impressed upon it, which was found underneath the mosaic in room *A*. It is not improbable that the house was the residence of some grandee of Hadrian's short-lived city of Aelia.

#### § V. *The Fourth Stratum.*

Underneath the palace with the mosaic floor there was found a small portion of a pavement of stone slabs, with a pillar standing upon it. Two drums of the column remained standing, and the capital lay beside them, inverted. There is nothing to show what this building may have been, and no other structures contemporary with it have been unearthed. I regard it as of Maccabean date, but it may be later.

#### § VI. *The Rock Scarp.*

No earlier remains were found in our field; the rock is reached immediately. There are no traces, therefore, of the Hebrew or the Jebusite fortress so far north on the Eastern Hill. This in itself is an important fact gained.

I have applied for, and have to-day (8th November, 1923) obtained the concession of the next field to the south of the field in which we are working. In this field I have hope of better success in the search for earlier remains, as I learn that it was here that a cave, containing a valuable collection of very early pottery, was discovered in the Parker excavation. So soon as terms have been settled with the land-owners, I shall put a body of men at work in it.

We have not, however, been left wholly without traces of Pre-Maccabean activities. Besides some vats cut in the rock, wine-presses or the like, there is a striking scarp, which I cannot but regard as of importance, running approximately east and west through the pit. I have so far found it only in the first clearance: no doubt when the superincumbent buildings are removed it will be found in the second also. It would be premature as yet to make any very dogmatic statements about it; but I feel it highly probable that we shall learn from it much as to the nature and situation of the mysterious structure called "Millo," and also as to the transverse valley running out of the Tyropoeon and cutting off the "City of David" proper from the Temple Hill.

---