

THE HOLY SEPULCHRE.

II.—TOMB OF JOSEPH OF ARIMATHÆA.

IN an extremely interesting paper in the last *Quarterly Statement*, M. Ganneau has drawn attention to the tomb-chamber (Fig. 1) in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, known as that of Joseph and Nicodemus, and has given his reasons for believing that there is a second and somewhat similar tomb-chamber at a lower level. There is nothing improbable in this suggestion, though I think it rather hazardous, as the facts upon which M. Ganneau bases his argument might be explained in another way. My object, however, is not to criticise M. Ganneau's paper, but to give a



Fig. 1.

few additional details which came under my own observation whilst employed upon the Ordnance Survey of Jerusalem in 1864-5.

The first is that, contrary to the usual custom at Jerusalem, the tomb-chamber is excavated in the hard (*missæ*) and not in the soft (*malaki*) strata of limestone; the second is that the beds or floors of the *kokim* slope downward from the mouth, the general rule being to cut them horizontal. M. Ganneau mentions a door, E (Fig. 2), on the right of the chamber of which he does not appear to have been able to procure the key. I was more fortunate, and the following note on the chamber to which the door gives access may be of interest to the subscribers of the Fund. The chamber, as will be seen from the plan (Fig. 2A), is irregular in shape;

the wall on the right-hand side on entering is masonry; the remaining sides, as well as the roof, are rock. It is evident that the chamber was formed, probably when the church was built, by cutting away a portion of the original tomb-chamber in such a manner as to leave a sort of cave, and the floor was lowered at the same time for a certain purpose explained below. I think M. Ganneau is quite right in supposing

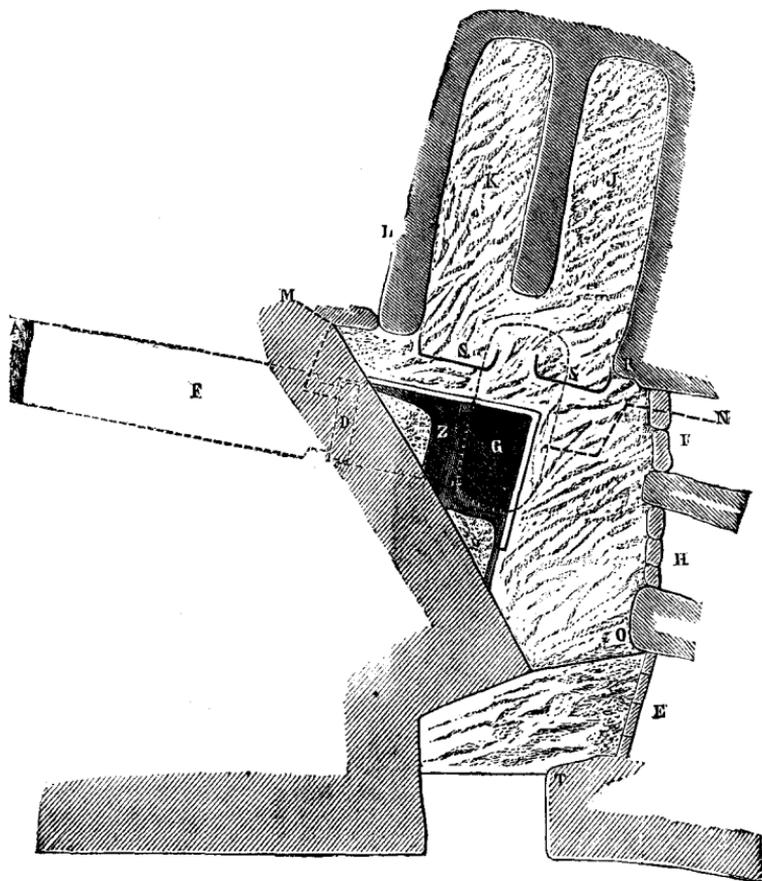


Fig. 2.

that the door, E, was originally a *kok*, though its shape is now rectangular; this *kok* has entirely disappeared, and so has that marked H, with the exception of the mouth and a small portion of the sides. The third *kok*, I, is of special interest; the right side and a portion of the roof have been cut away, but the bed has been left untouched, and the remaining portion of the roof forms a sort of rock-canopy over it.

The reason (Fig. 3A) for lowering the floor (*g f*) is now apparent; it was to convert the bed of the *kok* (*d e*) into a raised bench or altar, and I believe on certain occasions it is still used as an altar by the Syrian community to whom the chamber belongs. Fig. 3A shows also in elevation the openings of the *kokim* H, I, and of the door E, in the thin wall of rock which separates the chamber from the original tomb-chamber

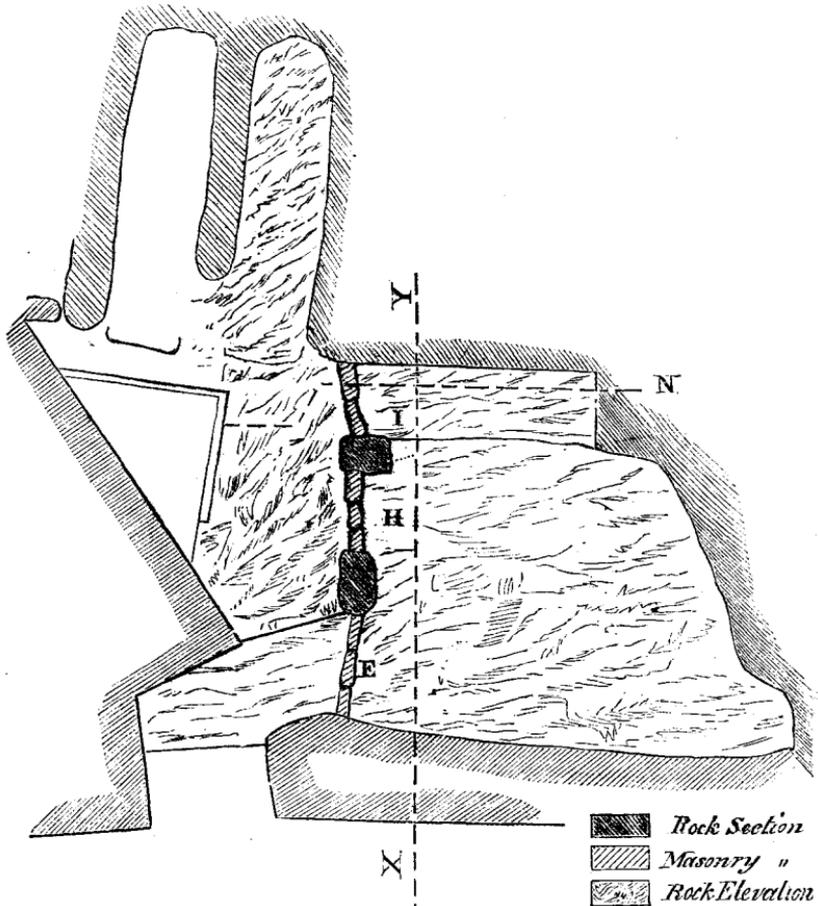


Fig. 2A.

of "Joseph and Nicodemus." In my notes to the Ordnance Survey of Jerusalem, I alluded to the light which the *kok*, I, might possibly throw on the primitive form of the Holy Sepulchre. My impression is that if the Holy Sepulchre were originally a *kok*—and I see no reason why it should not have been—the mode of proceeding was somewhat

similar to that described above; that is to say, the floor of the original tomb-chamber was lowered, the side of the *kok* was cut away, and a canopy of rock left over its bed. As time went on and changes were made the *kok* would probably be entirely isolated, the canopy of rock disappear, and the tomb assume its present form. I have endeavoured

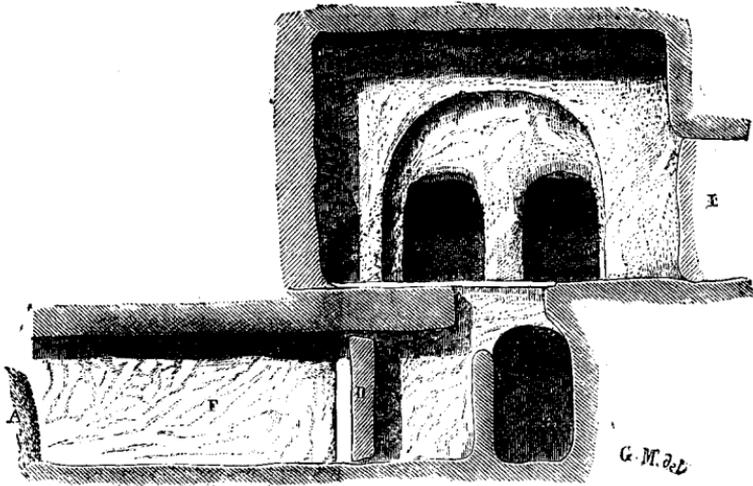


Fig. 3.

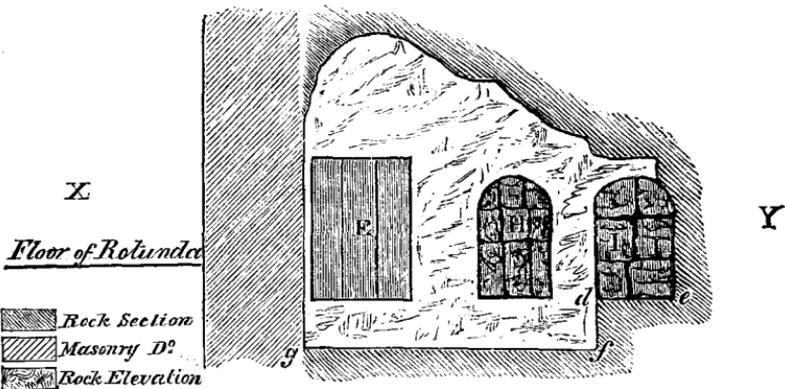


Fig. 3A.

to show this in the sketch (Fig. 4). Felix Fabri, 1480 A.D., mentions that pilgrims were in the habit of knocking off little pieces of the rock to carry away as relics, and it is possible that this may partially account for the disappearance of the roof of the *kok* (*ef*). Some of the earlier pilgrims mention a cave; this may be explained by reference to the little

Syrian chamber in which a roof of rock has been left, and the Holy Sepulchre may have undergone similar treatment.

M. Ganneau, in his opening paragraphs, alludes to the doubt which at one time existed as to the nature of the so-called tombs of Joseph and Nicodemus; I cannot understand how any one who had ever seen the rock-hewn tombs near Jerusalem could have any doubts on the subject. The chamber in which they are situated is unmistakably a Jewish tomb-chamber, and the tombs themselves are as clearly Jewish *kokim*. Whether this tomb-chamber was inside or outside the second wall is quite another question; I think myself it was inside, but the question is one which would require more space for argument than can be given at present.

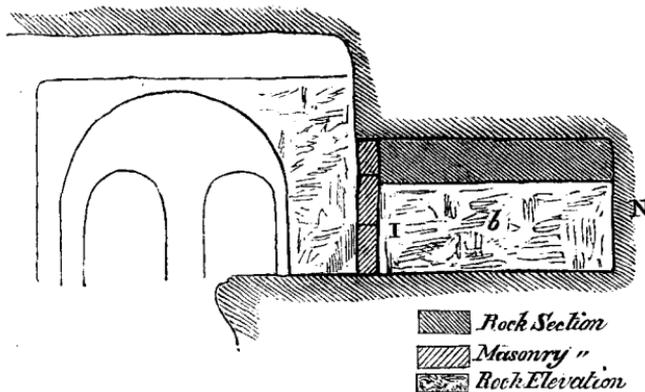


Fig. 4.

- a b.* Present floor of chapel of Holy Sepulchre sunk below floor.
- l c.* Of the original tomb-chamber.
- c d.* Bed of original *kok* now covered with marble slab.
- e f.* Roof of *kok* cut away at some period of alteration.
- h k i.* Rock cut away at some period of alteration.
- g h.* Masonry above level of rock.

There is no rock visible in the chapel of the Holy Sepulchre at the present day; it is entirely concealed by the marble casing.

C. W. W.

III.—NOTE BY LIEUT. CONDER.

“And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre.”—Matt. xxvii. 60.

It has long been pointed out that the stone closing the door of our Lord's tomb was not a mere shapeless mass of rock, but a carefully-constructed apparatus peculiar to Jewish tombs. There are one or two

points with regard to the rolling stone which I have not, however, seen noticed in any account of such tombs.

The rolling stone is not a very common method of securing the entrances of the rock-cut sepulchres, and it is natural to suppose, from the great advance in mechanical simplicity, that it is a late contrivance. The large majority of the rock-cut sepulchres, some 500 of which have been examined in the course of the survey, are not fitted with the groove necessary for the use of the stone. They are closed in some instances by a sort of portcullis of stone, but most frequently by a stone door on pivots fitting into holes bored above and below the entrance, and closed by a lock. The lock was probably of metal, since in every instance yet examined it has disappeared. The rolling stone generally measures about 3 feet diameter, and is 1 foot thick in some instances, resembling a cheese set on end. It rolls right or left of the doorway, which is some 2 feet wide, and it is kept up by a ledge of rock having a groove behind it, into which the stone is pushed back to open the tomb. The bottom of this groove is slightly sloping in some cases, so that the stone would roll down to close the door by its own weight. The weight, taking the specific gravity of the rock at 2·7, would be about 6 cwt. Thus not only is it entirely impossible to open the tomb from within, but it is difficult to do so from without; and a shock of earthquake would not, as has been lately suggested, cause the stone to roll back up hill, nor would it remain in that position unless scotched beneath.

The principal point to be noticed is that this kind of door seems to belong to the later Jewish tombs. This accords exactly with its use in the new tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. The only dated example known is that of the tomb of Helena, Queen of Adiabene, mother of Izates, who was buried in Jerusalem in the first century (Ant. xx. 4. 3). In addition to this, it may be remarked that in the country north of Cæsarea, where there are many examples of this kind of door, the tombs are of the *loculus* description, and not *kokim* tombs. The same remark applies to the instance of a tomb near Endor, and in other cases the tombs contain both *loculi* and *kokim*; but we have collected no instance of a tomb with *kokim* only closed by a rolling stone. In a former paper I have shown reasons for supposing the *kokim* tombs to be the older form used by the Jews, the *loculi* to be the later form, also used by them. (See *Quarterly Statement*, Jan., 1876, p. 19.) In the Mishna (Baba Bathra vi. 8) a description of a tomb is given having *kokim*, but no account of a rolling door is added, and the form of antechamber prescribed precludes the possibility of such a method of closing the entrance, but the description applies exactly to the majority of the more ancient Jewish sepulchres.

The conclusion which may be drawn from the above notes seems to be that the Holy Sepulchre was in all probability a *loculus* tomb.

This deduction is in accordance with the description in the fourth Gospel (xx. 12)—“two angels in white sitting, the one at the head and the other at the feet where the body of Jesus had lain”—a dis-

position which is evidently impossible in the case of a tomb with a *koka*, which is, as has often been explained, a sort of pigeon-hole running in from the wall of the chamber some 5 to 7 feet in length, and 2 feet 6 inches to 2 feet broad, the feet of the corpse being at the nearer end, the head at the further. The *koka* was closed by a slab 2 feet broad, 2 to 3 feet high. The *loculus* tomb has a sort of sarcophagus under an arched roof, the body lying parallel to the wall of the chamber.

An argument for the identity of the present site has been drawn by De Vogüé and by M. Ganneau from the existence of an ancient *kôk* tomb in the church. This position has been considerably strengthened by the quotation of the Mishna furnished by Mr. Hepworth Dixon (Baba Bathra ii. 9), which runs as follows:—

“Corpses and sepulchres and tanneries are separated from the city fifty cubits.”

Still there is evidence from the same sources to show that sepulchres dating from an early period existed within the walls of Jerusalem, and I may perhaps be allowed to collect these passages for the use of those interested in the argument.

Mishna Parah iii. 2: “The buildings (*Hazereth*) of Jerusalem were founded on the rock, with caves beneath them, because of the *Kabr Hat Tahtum*” (or “Sepulchre of the Abyss”).

The passage continues to explain that for the same reason the children sent to fetch water for the Red Heifer Sacrifice from Siloam were mounted on bulls, in order to have their feet off the ground, so as to escape pollution from the same source.

The explanation of the term “Sepulchre of the Abyss” is given by Maimonides, commenting on another passage (Nezir ix. 2), where he speaks of it as a hidden tomb, the depth of which was not known to any man. Thus it would appear from the Mishna that the Jews were aware of the existence of ancient tombs in and beneath the surface of the city.

The Tosiphtah gives us further information. It is a work of authority almost equal to that of the Mishnah, being attributed to Rabbi Hijah, about 120 A.D. Commenting on the same tract (Tosiphtah Baba Bathra, ch. i.), it states that all the sepulchres within Jerusalem were transferred outside the walls except those of the family of David and of the prophetess Huldah.

Another passage of the Tosiphtah is given by Neubauer (*Edouyoth*, ch. ii.): “Bones had once been found in a house of wood. The Rabbis wished therefore to declare the capital unclean, but Rabbi Jehoshua objected, saying, ‘It would be shameful if we declare our houses unclean.’”

C. R. C.