

scraps of the Cuneiform scribe, who wrote here the answers to the celebrated tablets from Babylonia, discovered here a few years ago.

LETTERS FROM HERR SCHICK.

I.

RECENT DISCOVERIES AT THE "NICOPHORIEH."

JERUSALEM, *November*, 1891.

IN my last I mentioned that the Greek monks had made some excavations in their ground called "Nicophorieh" on the western hill outside the town. They found some things of much interest of which I now report.

In the Ordnance Survey plan of Jerusalem, scale $\frac{1}{25000}$, edited 1864-65, will be found marked west of the city, on the top just opposite the south-west corner of the present city wall, west of the "Birket Es Sultan," and 1,200 feet distant from the city wall (measured as a straight line in the air) a narrow long rock extending north and south, and on its side the word "cave," as there is a cave beneath it. This place is called "Awairiyeh," i.e., the place of "Awair" or of the Awair people. At several points the rock looks out from the ground with indications of scarps, and any one examining these points closely comes to the conclusion that there was once something of importance there. Here the monks were digging with the intention to make a cistern, as they wanted water there for gardening purposes.

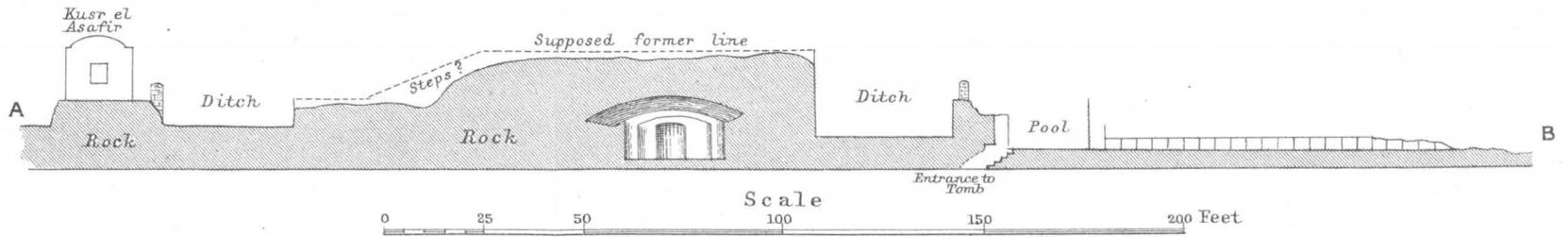
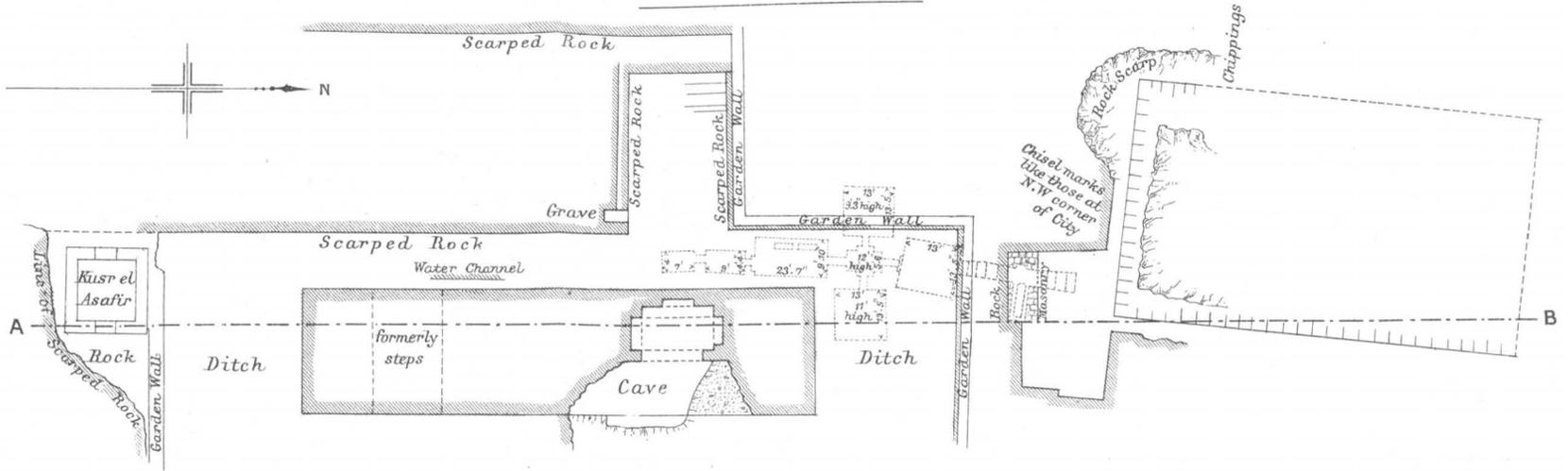
The late Dr. Schulz, the first German (at that time Prussian) consul at Jerusalem, says in his "Vorlesung" on Jerusalem, Berlin, 1845, page 39:—"A little south of the little Greek church St. George, and on the height of the ground are the ruins of an Arabic village called 'Aboo Wair,' which for 100 years has been deserted." In the Jerusalem volume of the Survey, also, page 343, under the number 87, the name "Abu Wair" is given. It had a small castle called "Kusr-el-Asafir"—"the birds' castle"—of which the ruin is still existing (*see* Ordnance Survey plan $\frac{1}{25000}$). At page 72, Schulz (when speaking of Titus's wall of circumvallation, according to Josephus, Bell. v., 12, 2) identifies the "Camp of Pompeius" with the hill-top Abu Tor ("Jebel Deir Abu Tor" or "hill of evil counsel" on the map) where the wall made a bend towards the north, and after which Josephus mentions as the next point the village "Eribinthaë," and after it the "Monument of Herod." Schulz put the said village at "Abu Wair," and the monument of Herod in the neighbourhood of the "Birket Mamilla," as there are there some ancient rock-cut tombs. This identification is open to objections, so Baron von Alten, German Consul in Jerusalem from A.D. 1869-1874, points out that

"Eribenthae" was south of Abu Wair, and that the latter is the site of the Monument of Herod. He thought the long ledge of rock formed the basement of the monument, taking it not as a tomb but as a monument in memory of some event or deed of Herod. This identification I considered hitherto as correct, and what has been found now supports this idea. I send plan and sections of the spot. The rock rises about 14 feet above the present surface of the ground, originally its full height was 20 feet; in form it is a rectangular space 92 feet long and 31'4 wide, with perpendicular sides. On the south side it had a prolongation for 35 feet, but much less in height than the main rock, and this was very likely the place for a wide and fine flight of stairs, enabling people to go up to the top of the rock and to the monument itself. (See plan and section.)

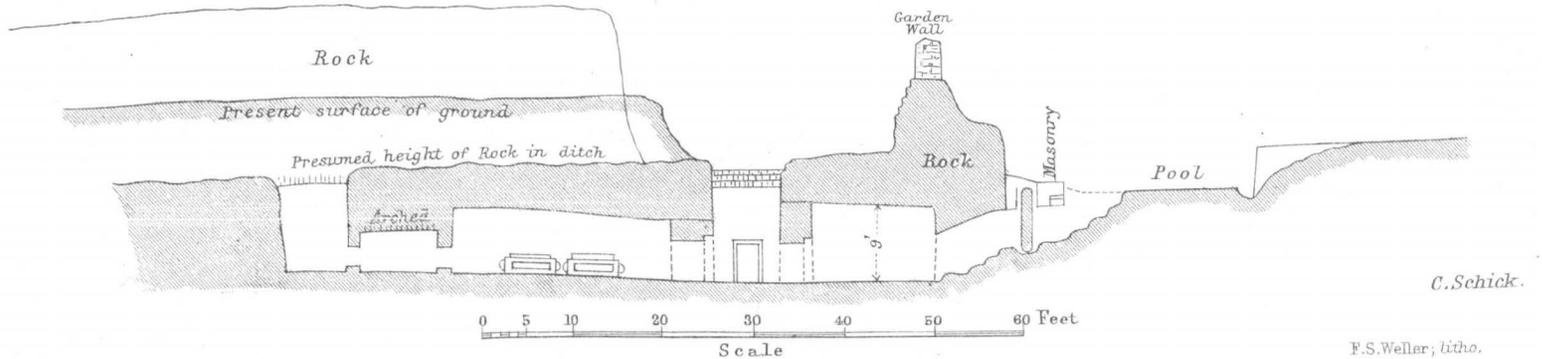
Round this mass of rock there is cut out a trench, on the south and north, 34 feet wide; west, 14 feet wide. On the east its breadth has not been ascertained, as there the rock is under the surface. The bottom of this trench is tolerably level, as far as has been ascertained. On the western side there is, near the foot of the rock, a water-channel hewn into the rock, so as to carry off the water running down from above. Under the rock is a cave, hewn, not natural. The opening is on the eastern side, and now rather large, as in course of time it has become wider and higher by the decay of the soft part of the rock, and by the hands of men. The inner and lowest part of the cave is very well preserved, and similar to the hall or vestibule of a large rock-cut tomb group; but it was not such, as there are no openings or loculi, and the ceiling is very different, being in steps, the height diminishing always—so that the innermost recess is the lowest, and the wide opening of the cave the highest, as shown in the section.

South of the rock and its trench stands the ruin called the "Birds Castle," on a scarped rock 25 feet wide and about 8 feet high. The Kusr or castle itself is of no great interest. North of the rock and ditch is a scarped rock of about 14 feet thick, on the northern side of which the monks made their first excavations, and found there a kind of pool, or sunken ground with perpendicular rock-cut walls, of a somewhat irregular form, on an average 31 feet long, 23 feet wide, and 10 feet deep. The western half of the northern side is open—that is, has no rock wall—but is walled up with rather remarkable stones. They are very nicely and smoothly dressed, so that the joints in the wall can hardly be recognised, and look exceedingly *white*, as I had not seen any before. Since the rains came on and the stones are exposed to the sun, the whiteness has diminished in some degree. The stones are 2 feet 4 inches high, and on an average 2 feet 9 inches long, put exactly horizontal, and the lower row, of an inferior sort, inserted into the rock. There is one complete layer of the white stones going from the right angled corner northwards, and also for 20 feet westwards, whence there are two layers complete. The excavators followed the lines northwards for 100 feet, and the branch going west for 58 feet, where there is the corner in two layers preserved. The western line goes on only for 17 feet, and the last stone looks as if it had

PLAN OF EXCAVATIONS AT NICOPHORIEH.



SECTION OF TOMB CHAMBERS.



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been a corner stone, or if this western wall went parallel with the eastern wall to the same length, then there was a building 100 feet or more long and 58 feet wide. These walls enclose rocks and earth, so that what we now see was simply the basement for some building erected over it. Now there are a few olive trees standing there, one even on the white stones of the wall itself. At the south-western corner of this basement, the rock is cut out as if for the purpose of making room for the building to be erected. These cuttings are very similar to those found on the north-western corner of the city, on which I reported in one of my former papers¹ and appear to be of the same period.

Opposite the south-east corner of this building, on the southern wall of the "Pool" or sunken ground, they found a small opening going downwards into some chambers. But the Patriarch ordered it to be shut up again, and that no one should be allowed to go in, so they put large stones before it, and I cannot describe what really exists there. I was told by one of the labourers, who had been in, that there are six chambers, and in one, two stone sarcophagi, of one of which the lid is taken away, and the other undisturbed. When they had found this, they were, at the convent, encouraged to go on with the excavation, and to follow all the scarps. In doing so, they found, west of the scarped rock, a similar pool or sunken ground, much more regular in form, but hitherto no opening on either of its walls has been discovered. When I last visited the place it was only partly empty, much earth and small stones still lying there. This "pool" (if I may call it so) is 38 feet long from east to west, 25 feet wide, and 12 feet deep. It has, on its east side, no wall, but is connected with the trench. Near its south-eastern corner there is a grave cut into the rock, existing already when the pool was made. From this grave westwards, along the upper edge of the scarp, is a rabbet or broad cutting 2 feet 3 inches wide, as if intended for something to rest on.

Various Remains.—In the northern "pool," where the tomb-opening was found, and in the neighbourhood of the white stone building many pieces of stones of architectural forms were found—for instance, pillar shafts, which have a diameter, on an average, of 1 foot 6 inches; one of the best preserved basements I give in No. 6, but there were pieces of capitals of another kind belonging to pillars of only 10 inches diameter; in No. 7 I give a restored one. Then there were pieces once belonging to a cornice, of which I give two (Nos. 8 and 9), each in view and section. Between the dentils, which are 7 inches distant one from the other, are, on the under side of the covering plate (which is an Echinus), rosettes. On the flat front side of the abacus, which is $4\frac{3}{4}$ inches high, are engraved a few figures; one seems to be a very high triangle, and the other looks like a Hebrew *shin*. No. 10 represents a corbel or bracket, apparently of the same period as No. 7, and No. 11 of which I give plan and view. This seemed to me most interesting, as it is an imitation of "lilies," celebrated in Solomon's time. Only one of the leaves is perfect, the others

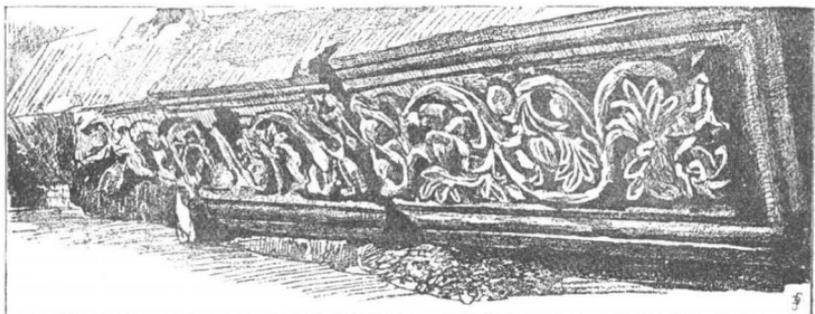
¹ *Quarterly Statement*, 1892, page 18.

No. 12 is also curious, and for a similar purpose, or merely a wall ornament. No. 13 was certainly an ornament on a plain wall, or a lintel, or bracket.

There is a kind of mason's mark engraved on one of the stones. 9

There are many other hewn stones found of no special interest, but all this shows that something of importance must once have stood here, and this leads to the question—What was this site? The monks told me that some of their learned men think there had been here the Moloch service, and on my remark, that that was near Bir Eyub at "Tophet," they said: there were two Molochs, one in the valley, and the other, having nothing to do with fire, here. But I think there is no room for doubt, that we have, in this place, the Monument of Herod, according to the passage in Josephus, quoted above.

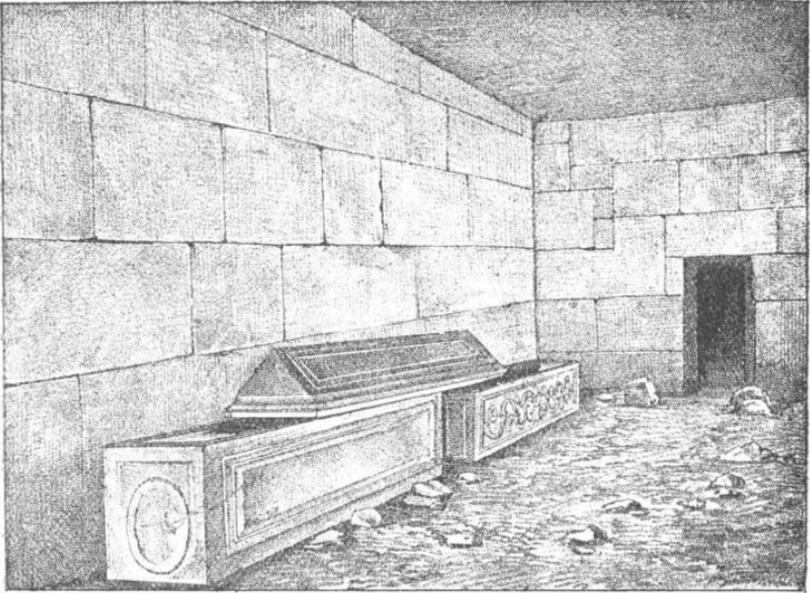
[M. KHITROVO, of St. Petersburg, has courteously sent to the Fund a plan of these chambers, with drawings of that in which the sarcophagi were found and of the ornamentation on the latter, which are here reproduced.—Ed.]



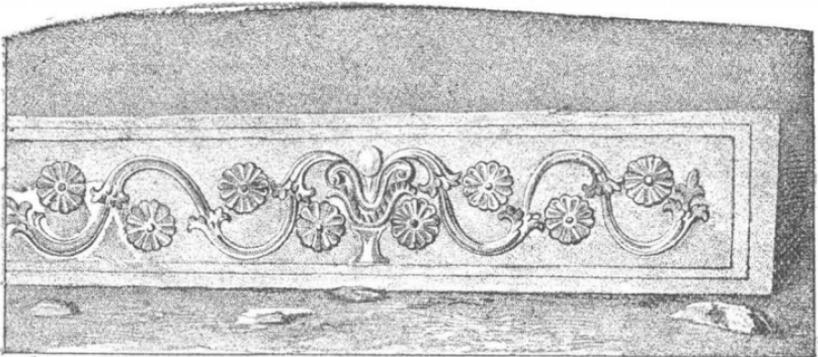
Ornamentation on other side of lid of Sarcophagus,



Ornamentation on lid of Sarcophagus.



Interior of Chamber with Sarcophagi.



Ornamentation on side of Sarcophagus.

II.

"GORDON'S TOMB."

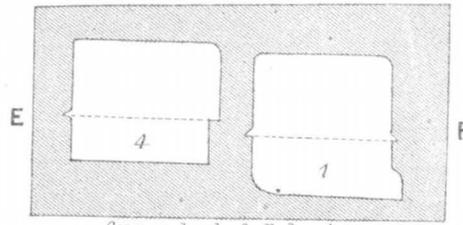
JERUSALEM, *November 17th, 1891.*

ACCORDING to instructions received I have prepared "plan and sections" of the tomb which the late General Gordon believed to be that of Christ, situated near Jeremiah's Grotto, on the western foot of the so-called "Skull-hill." The tomb is 860 feet in a straight line distant from the Damascus Gate, and 280 feet east of the main road going north, generally called the Nablus Road. It is a rock-cut cave, the entrance in a perpendicular rock-scarped wall.

The tomb was originally a rather small, rock-cut *Jewish* tomb, but

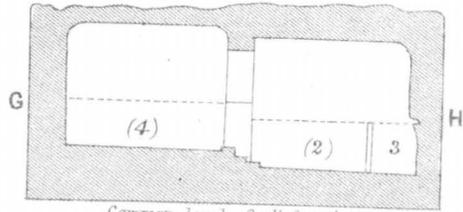
Nº 1.

Plan of the
ROCK-CUT TOMB
suggested by
the late General Gordon
to be the
SEPULCHRE OF CHRIST.



Common level of all drawings.

Nº 4.
Section E.F.
on plan.

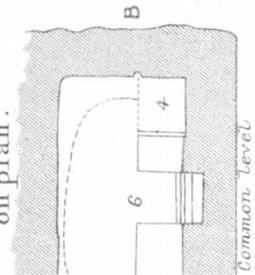


Common level of all drawings.

Nº 5.
Section G.H.
on plan.

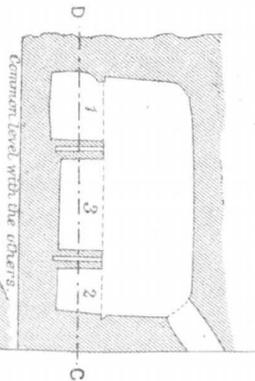


Nº 2.
Section A.B.
on plan.

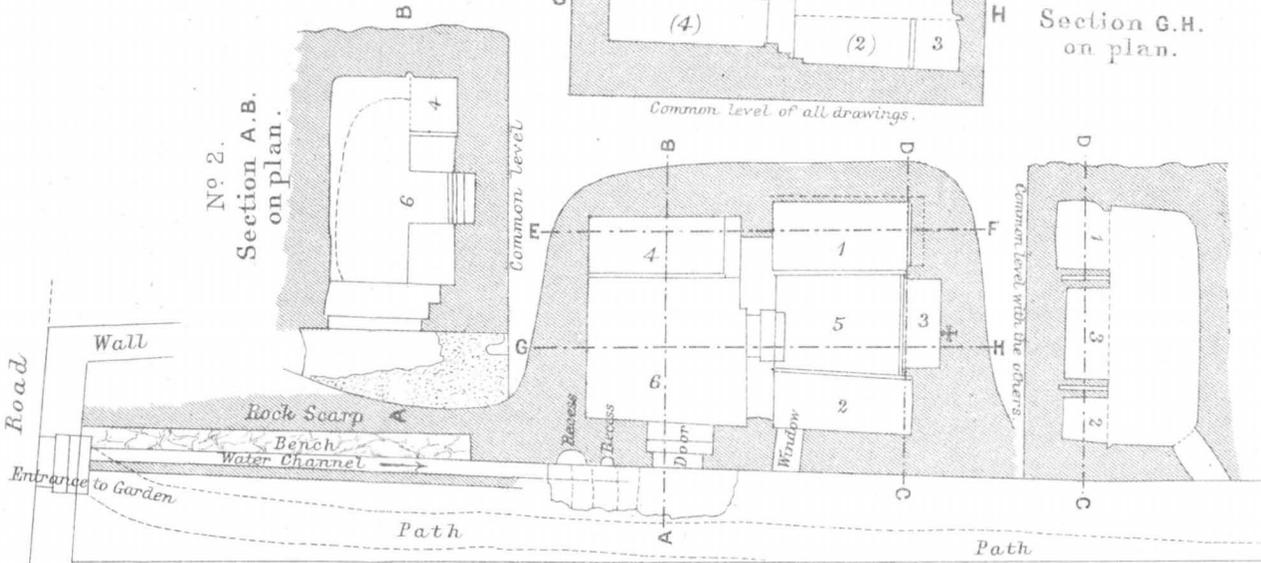


Common level

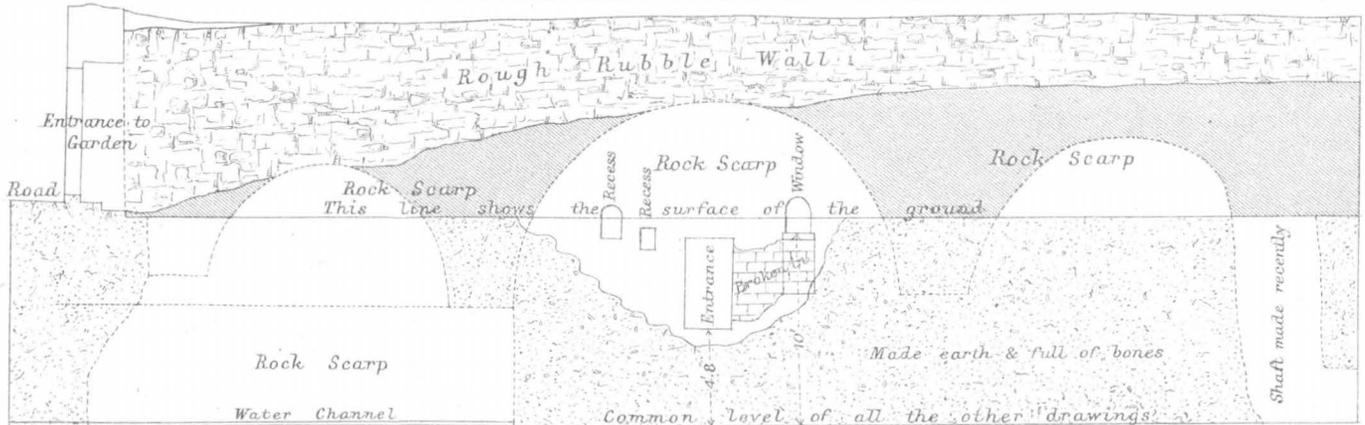
Nº 3.
Section D.C.
on plan.



Common level with the others.



0 5 10 20 30 Feet



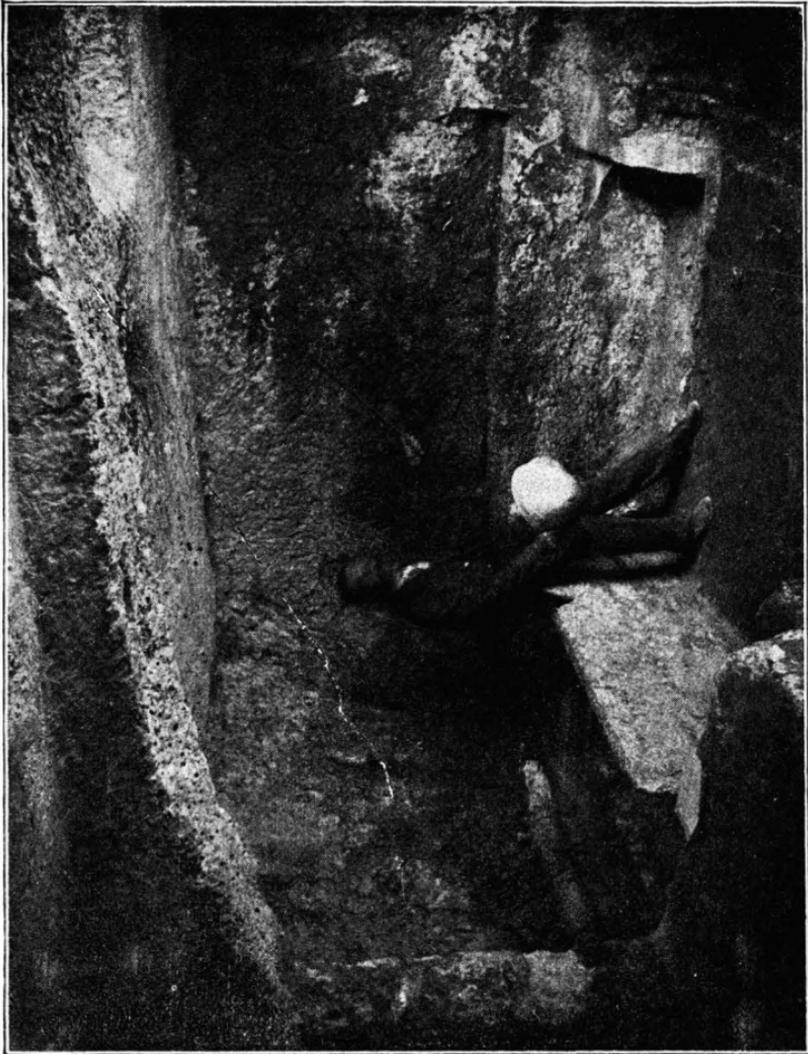
Nº 6. Front View of the **ROCK-CUT TOMB**, suggested by the late General Gordon to be the **SEPULCHRE OF CHRIST.**

C. Schick.

became afterwards a *Christian* tomb, not only by its being used again, but by being greatly altered. As it is *now* it is a specific Christian tomb, exactly like some which were found on Mount Olivet, and especially at the Khirbet Mir, four hours distant east of Jerusalem, in the neighbourhood of Mar Saba, which certainly are of the fifth century after Christ, at the time when at Khirbet Mir there existed a Laura, and later on a convent of Enthymios. So this tomb, as it is now shaped, is from the fifth or sixth century, A.D. Jewish tombs have always a comparatively *small* entrance, and the places for the dead bodies are arranged so that each one is by itself, but the Christian tombs are arranged collectively; the departed were *brethren*, so they are united also in the silent chamber.

This tomb, of which so much is now spoken and written, was discovered (if I am right) in the year 1867, and I was one of the first who saw it. The proprietor of the ground, a native Greek, came one day to me, stating that he had found an interesting "cave" with a *cross* in it, and asked me to come and see and give my opinion about it. So I went there, and found that the rubbish and made earth, which was about five feet deep, had been removed for a short distance along the rockscarp wall, so that an *opening* (or rather two—the door and the window—see view) was visible, through which we could creep into a kind of cave of moderate size, filled to within about two feet of the roof with skulls and other bones and mould. On the east wall I observed a cross made with red paint, and at the four corners were Greek letters. We left the place, and when coming out I saw in the rubbish and earth a skeleton of a man in its whole length, lying three feet under the surface of the ground. The proprietor said he thought of making a cistern from the cave, and asked me whether this was advisable or not. I said, "No, for here is apparently a former cemetery, and to make a cistern into such is not advisable! I would leave things as they are, and stop up the hole and fill up the trench again." But the man, very likely in the hope of finding some treasure, cleared out the whole cave, so when after a few months I came there again I found the skeleton still in its place, but the whole cave empty, and that there were four or five troughs or Christian graves, formed by stone slabs only $2\frac{1}{2}$ to 3 inches thick, and about 7 feet long, and 3 feet 6 inches high, inserted as the plan shows; also it now appeared that the cave consisted of two chambers. From the doorway, which is 5 feet high, and 2 feet 4 inches wide, two steps lead downwards into the first chamber, which is 10 feet long, nearly 8 feet wide, and 6 feet 6 inches high. It has only *one* trough grave on its northern side. On the eastern side is a door in the wall, which latter does not go up to the ceiling, but only as high as the trough graves are, and this is the reason that at my first visit, when the place was full of mould, I could not see that there were *two* chambers. From this door three steps lead down into the *second* chamber as shewn in plan. In this chamber were *three* trough graves (1, 2, 3), and 5 was originally simply the place where people could stand when they brought the dead bodies to be laid in one of these troughs. These troughs are

very much too large for one body (being from 3 to 4 feet wide, and $2\frac{1}{2}$ to 3 feet deep), and they were apparently intended to be filled with a number of bodies; and when the troughs were full, the places 5 and 6 were also filled, and so on, till no more could be brought in. This way of burying



[From a Photograph.]

INTERIOR OF "GORDON'S TOMB."

dead bodies is even now practised by the Mohammedans. The proprietor of the ground died about the year 1870, and his widow sold the ground. Nothing more was done there except that some of the slabs were removed, and very likely utilised elsewhere. In 1883 General Gordon saw the tomb, and according to his "skull idea" considered it to be the *tomb of Christ*.

I have to add a few remarks more :

(a) The trough 1 is not only the largest, but has at the bottom of the east end a recess, and at the opposite, or west end, is slanting, which is not the case in the others (*see* Plan and Section No. 4).

(b) The thin stone slabs inserted as partitions were fitted into *grooves* cut into the rock.

(c) At the entrance door the holes for the pivots of the wooden or iron door are clearly seen, and it appears that this door could be locked.

I think the original Jewish opening was small, as shown in the view (No. 6) with dotted lines, and afterwards, in the Christian time enlarged, at which period the arched window was hewn in order to have the necessary light inside ; and that later, when the caves were already half filled with dead bodies, the window was enlarged by lowering, so as to form a kind of door, as may be seen in the view. Still later, when the tombs became rifled, the rock wall between the two openings was broken away, as the view shows. This was open when I first saw it, and remained so till recently, when the opening was filled up with masonry.

(d) On the western side of the main door there are, on the surface of the rock wall, two *recesses* ; the smaller has a square form, the larger is arched at the top (*see* View and Plan No. 1).

(e) The real bottom *in front of the grave*, I am sorry to say, is not ascertained, but as, 9 feet west of the door and 14 feet east of it, the rock is at least 5 feet lower than the sill of the door, one may conclude it will be so also in front of the tomb itself ; the door, therefore, is 4 feet 8 inches and the window 9 or 10 feet above the old ground. How could St. John stoop down and look into the tomb without having with him a ladder ?

(f) If the door was at that time as large and high as now—which the advocates of this tomb being the tomb of Christ generally believe—how could a great stone be rolled before the entrance, when the latter was so large and so high above the ground ?

(g) The front face of the rock is so shaped that one look is enough to show that *there was once an arched building in front of the cave*. It would be well to find, under the 10-feet-thick layer of earth and mould the opposite wall, or perhaps only the two piers. Some years ago I searched along the rock wall west of the tomb (as shown in the view). Once an arched building was there also, but smaller. I hoped to find there another cave, but failed to do so. Nine feet west from the main door the rock has a rabbet, or setting back, which forms a kind of bench 17 inches broad, 4½ feet under the present surface of the ground. The scarp goes perpendicular 6 feet further down, where there is a level bottom of *rock*. Hewn into this rock is a water-channel about 1 foot wide, the decline going east, and so towards the large cistern I have described in *Quarterly Statement*, 1890, page 11. I cleared the rock surface for 20 feet, but was obliged to give up advancing further, as there was danger that the boundary wall, with the garden gate, &c., would

tumble down. Recently some excavations were made east of the tombs but without result.

(h) About 160 feet south of this tomb were found, at the time when the tomb was discovered, the cribs or mangers of the "Asnerie" of the Middle Ages, about 7 feet under ground; so at that time the level of the ground was 9 or 10 feet lower than now, and the whole face of the tomb was above ground, and visible. Very likely the *arched buildings* then stood in front of the tomb. The whole accumulation of earth is of later date.

(i) Captain Conder, in *Quarterly Statement*, 1881, page 202, gives a view and plan of another rock-cut tomb found in this region 500 feet west of this one, which he thinks might have been "the real tomb of our Lord" (page 205), so that every one may choose which he likes from the three we now have.

III.

JERUSALEM, *January 2nd*, 1892.

A few months ago the American Consul here, Dr. Merrill, made some excavations at the American burial ground, near the Neby Daud building, and invited me to come and see what he had found. It was the basement of once a large building, standing on a floor of concrete 5 feet under the surface. There is only *one* layer of well dressed but large stones, over 3 feet high. A projecting pier has no indications, except northwards, of having been connected with walls, but was a pier standing by itself; it seemed to me to be Christian work, and not Jewish; perhaps a part of the large old Church of Zion. North of it other pieces of masonry, very likely from the same or some adjoining building, were found, but I could not make much out of them.

LETTER FROM MR. G. R. LEES ON LAMPS, &c.

JERUSALEM, *December 16th*, 1891.

Two other tombs have been opened below the Mount of Olives, and one contained a lamp and tear bottle, exactly like those found in the tombs containing the sarcophagus on which was the name Drosos, see *Quarterly Statement*, 1891, page 243.

The acquisition of this lamp is of great value to me, as it enables me to date a large number, and I think I can trace several changes in lamps of this and an earlier period. I hope soon to send you photographs with descriptions of lamps.

In passing, I may say that whenever lamps are found in the vicinity of Jerusalem, I visit the place, if possible, and purchase the pottery direct from the owner and finder, giving commission to my informant. I have intimate friendly relations with a native here, who works well and