

company goes up by those stairs in a journey which seems to begin somewhere near the Jaffa gate, and end at the Temple.

(3.) The obstruction to Nehemiah's progress seems to be accounted for by the nature of the spot. There being two walls running parallel to one another for some distance along the sinus, the destruction or dilapidation of both would result in double heaps of ruins in a narrow space.

(4.) It will be observed that the greatest desolation is found on the south side of the city, as though the last assault had taken place on that side. Nehemiah surveys the southern walls and gates first—surveys them leisurely—mentions one spot after another, and the impossibility of getting along; and then hurries over his journey by the brook and round the north of the city homeward. The impression we thus get of greater destruction on the southern side is confirmed by the description of the work of restoration in chapter iii, where it would appear that a larger number of independent workers find occupation on the southern side than on the northern. It is generally assumed that because the northern part of the city afforded higher ground, from which the assault could be delivered more easily, that, therefore, the city would always be assaulted on that side, and the southern and south-eastern parts would not suffer much. But even supposing this to be so during the actual assault, the conqueror might take all the more delight in demolishing afterwards the walls which had defied him.

GEORGE ST. CLAIR.

## SEPULCHRES OF THE KINGS.

WHY should not excavations be made at Jerusalem with the direct object of finding the tombs of David, Solomon, and their successors? The area of search would be limited, for most of the kings were laid to rest "in the City of David."

1. We may assume that the tombs would be excavated in the hill-side. In a country so rocky as Palestine, the dead could not be buried in the soil as a general rule, for the soil would be absent and an excavation must be made. Tombs could be excavated in the side of a hill with less labour than from the upper surface, and would be more accessible.

In ancient Egypt tombs were built of brick and stone, or hewn in the rock, according to the position of the necropolis; and whenever the mountains were sufficiently near the latter was preferred (Wilkinson's "Ancient Egyptians," chap. x).

Tombs thus excavated in the hill-side may be seen at Jerusalem, on the eastern side of the valley of Jehoshaphat.

At the so-called Tombs of the Kings, north of the city—the most noticeable sepulchre at Jerusalem, and regarded as the tomb of Helena, Queen of Adiabene—a trench is indeed sunk in the rocky level, and a large court also, open to the sky; but this artificial hollow is made for the

purpose of *obtaining* a hill-side where none existed, and the tombs are then excavated laterally.

The graves in the modern cemeteries at Jerusalem may be dug in the soil, but this exception is not to the point, because the "soil" is artificial *débris*, which has accumulated since the days of the early kings of Judah. Where the Mohammedan cemetery exists, under the east wall of the Haram Area, Sir Charles Warren found loose stone chippings and other rubbish to a depth of 70 or 80 feet; but on various parts of the rocky bottom the remains of stone walls, showing that the rock at one time formed the surface.

The Scripture statement that the kings were buried *in* the City of David is not inconsistent with the idea that the sepulchres were excavated from the outside; for the bodies, though carried out of the city for burial, and deposited in the rocky chamber, might very well be under the city streets, perhaps under the royal palace, and accessible by a shaft from the palace grounds.

2. The valley in which the tombs were cut would be some part of the Tyropcean, so that the area of search need not be very large. Much of the ground, fortunately, is accessible, either lying outside the walls, or covered only by cactus gardens within.

Certainly there is the moot question, on which hill was the City of David? and until this is decided we cannot tell whether we should keep to the eastern or the western side of the valley in our search. The Egyptians preferred western hills for their tombs, because they afforded a face to the east. The necropolis of Thebes was on the western side of the Nile. The temples built in front of a pyramid, for the worship of the king, and the *mastabas* erected above ordinary tombs have their entrance always from the east. We cannot be sure that the Hebrews would follow this example, but their temple on Mount Moriah opened to the east.

In the excavation made by Queen Helena, also, the portico is on the west side, and so, of course, is open to the east. On the other hand, some of the tombs on the eastern side of the Kedron Valley open to the west.

3. It is quite feasible that the tombs and the sarcophagi, perhaps even the bodily remains, should be found. They are not yet 3,000 years old, and we have recovered and identified the mummies of Egyptian monarchs of much older date. Wilkinson reminds us that the custom of embalming bodies was not confined to the Egyptians. "The Jews adopted this process to a certain extent, 'the manner of the Jews' being to bury the body 'wound in linen clothes with spices,' as Lazarus was swathed in bandages." We have no historical account of the sepulchres having been disturbed. While the Kings of Judah were in power the tombs of their ancestors would be safe, and after the accumulation of *débris* in the valley the mouth of the cave or excavation would be covered and hidden. Besides, even when tombs are rifled and bodies stolen, stone coffins remain, and inscriptions abide to tell us of the past—as we see by the sarcophagus of Cheops in the heart of the Great Pyramid. Think of the

intense interest that would attach to the discovery of David's tomb, with an inscription in the oldest form of Hebrew ever found!

4. Might not this question be submitted to a committee of experts who should decide upon the most promising points for probing the ground?

GEORGE ST. CLAIR.

## THE SAMARITANS.

I. *Their Numbers.*—There appears to be some mistake abroad concerning the actual number of the Samaritans, and this, of course, affects the question of the probable survival of this interesting people for a longer or a shorter time. In Dean Stanley's "Lectures on the Jewish Church," Part I, Appendix II, mention is made of "the whole community—amounting, it is said, to 152, from which hardly any variation has taken place within the memory of man." This was during the Prince of Wales' visit to Palestine in 1862, and it does not lead us to expect any early decline. But Captain Conder, in "Tent-work in Palestine," assures us that year by year the Samaritans are dying out. "Clinging to Shechem and the Holy Mountain, they are the last left of the nation which in the fifth and seventh centuries spread far over Palestine and Egypt." "In 1872 the little community numbered 135 souls, of whom no less than 80 were males. The Moslems say that the number is never exceeded, and that one of the 80 dies as soon as a child is born. By the defection of Jacob Shellaby with his family they have been reduced to a total of 130 souls."

A decline of 17 souls in ten years—reducing the numbers from 152 in the year 1862 to 135 in the year 1872—would bring the numbers down to 110 in 1887, if the decline continued, and end in the speedy extinction of the race. On a recent visit to Nablus I made inquiry on this point, and my questions were put to the High Priest himself. His reply was that his people numbered from 96 to 100, but this (he said) was without counting certain women and children, who might bring up the number to 165. If these women and children were included in Dean Stanley's estimate, there would appear now to be some increase in the number of souls; but if they were not taken into account either by Dean Stanley or Captain Conder, it would seem that the decline of the little community is proceeding at an accelerated pace.

II. *The Ancient Copy of the Law.*—Travellers have spoken of the great difficulty they experienced in obtaining a sight of the most ancient Samaritan roll. In 1865 it was considered a great favour, I believe, shown to Sir Charles Wilson, that he should be allowed to photograph it for the Palestine Exploration Fund. Captain Conder describes the difficulties raised, in a later year, when he and Mr. Drake visited the Synagogue. The High-Priest Amram first brought out the latest scroll—written in black ink on parchment, rolled on two rollers, and enclosed in